



Home Office

# **Report of a Home Office Fact-Finding Mission Albania**

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# Introduction

This document provides information obtained from the Home Office's Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) to Albania. It does **not** provide advice on handling particular types of protection and human rights claims. For this, see the Albania country policy and information notes on the [Gov.uk website](#).

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## Background

The FFM was conducted between 31 October and 7 November 2017 by three officials from the Home Office's Country Policy and Information Team (CPIT), with support from the British Embassy in Tirana. The team visited Tirana and Kukës.

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## Purpose of the mission

The purpose of the mission was to gather accurate and up-to-date information from a range of sources about domestic abuse towards women and trafficking of women.

This information is to complement existing publicly available material.

A full Terms of Reference (ToR) is available at [Annex B](#).

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# Methodology

The FFM was undertaken with reference to the [EU \[European Union\] common guidelines on \(Joint\) Fact Finding Missions: a practical tool to assist member states in organizing \(joint\) Fact Finding Missions](#), November 2010 (EU Guidelines 2010).

## Identification of sources

The FFM Team sought to interview a wide range of sources, including Albanian Ministers and government officials; international, national and local non-governmental organisations, social workers, and representatives of the Albanian Ombudsman amongst others.

That a particular source was interviewed and the notes of that interview have been included should not be considered as the Home Office's endorsement of that source or the information provided. Rather, all sources and information provided needs to be critically assessed and considered against other publicly available material.

In identifying interlocutors, the FFM Team consulted with Foreign and Commonwealth staff at the British Embassy in Tirana.

The sources contacted and interviewed represent the sources that the FFM Team were able to identify as relevant to the mission. But, as with any Fact-Finding Mission, factors including time constraints and availability meant that the list of sources consulted and information provided are not exhaustive.

A list of sources interviewed is at [Annex C](#).

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## Arranging and conducting interviews

The FFM Team met 53 people during 22 face-to-face interviews.

At the start of each interview the FFM Team explained the purpose of the mission including that the notes may be published in a report and that the sources would be able to review the notes before publication. A copy of this explanation can be found at [Annex D](#).

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## Notes of interviews/meetings

The FFM Team made notes of meetings with sources, which were sent by email for review and approval. 17 sources approved the notes, with a number making amendments to the original drafts.

All sources were asked how they would prefer to be referenced. A number of sources requested varying degrees of anonymity to protect their professional privacy or to protect their safety. In these cases, the FFM Team asked sources to provide a description of how they preferred to be referenced. All sources are described according to their own request where this was specifically made.

No sources refused to have their notes used, but the FFT were unable to contact one source and therefore their notes have not been used.

The notes of all interviews with sources are available at [Annex E](#).

## Terminology

Although the term 'domestic abuse' is a more encompassing term for the violence experienced by women in Albania, 'domestic violence' was the description used by all the sources interviewed and this term is therefore used throughout the report.

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## Structure of this report

The report is split into:

- An executive summary
- A thematically arranged narrative, including some direct quotes from sources interviewed, reflecting the Terms of Reference; and
- Annexes.

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# List of abbreviations

CEDAW	The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CCR	Coordinated Community Response
CLIC	Centre for Legal Civic Initiatives
DV	Domestic violence
EPO	Emergency Protection Order
FFM	Fact-finding mission
FFT	Fact-finding team
GoA	Government of Albania
GBV	Gender-based violence
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
MHSP	Ministry for Health and Social Protection
Mol	Ministry of Interior
NRCVDV	National Reception Centre for Victims of Domestic Violence
NRCVHT	National Reception Centre for Victims of Human Trafficking
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NRM	National Referral Mechanism
ONAC	Office of the National Anti-Trafficking Coordinator
PO	Protection Order
PVoT	Potential victims of trafficking
SOP	Standard operating procedures
TiP	Trafficking in Persons
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNW	United Nations Women
VDV	Victims of domestic violence
VGBV	Victims of gender-based violence
VoT	Victims of trafficking
WCSSC	Women's Counselling and Social Services Centre

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# Executive summary

This Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) report covers domestic abuse against women and the trafficking of women in Albania. It looks at the prevalence of both domestic abuse and trafficking and the protection and reintegration into society available to women from the state and civil society organisations.

The team were based in Tirana, and also travelled to Kükës in the north east, close to the Kosovo border.

Albania is small country which emerged from Communist isolation at the end of the 1980s. It has a macho male culture with deep rooted patriarchal values where traditionally women are not regarded as the equal of men. It is a poor country with high unemployment, particularly in rural areas. These circumstances and values have contributed to a culture where domestic abuse is widespread and sometimes regarded as acceptable by both men and women.

Domestic abuse is widespread throughout the country and seemingly not defined by class or education.

Attitudes to women are gradually changing and the government is seeking to address domestic abuse both through legislation as well as increased police awareness of the issue and a professional response to it.

National Protection Orders are enforced but the economic practicalities of couples often having to share a home make it difficult for these to always be effective.

Although women in the more rural and remote areas of Albania may find it difficult to access services locally, women who relocate to Tirana can obtain help and shelter there. Shelters are provided to house victims of domestic abuse (both state- and NGO-run) which: have sufficient capacity, are professionally run, have effective safeguards against being detected; and a re-integration programme to help women re-establish themselves into the community. Women are increasingly aware of the services available to them and how to access them.

Trafficking is not as prevalent as it has been, with kidnapping of women from the streets being almost non-existent. Women may be coerced into marriage or falsely promised a job abroad, but the government and NGOs are working to raise awareness of the problem, particularly in schools.

A National Referral Mechanism is in place and functions across the country linking victims with government services and NGOs to ensure they get the services they need. Shelters with sufficient capacity are also available for victims or potential victims of trafficking and they are also well run with protection safeguards and extensive reintegration programmes.

Societal stigma does exist to some extent for both victims of domestic abuse and trafficking, but this is less of a problem for women in Tirana where it is not uncommon for women to live alone.

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# Summary report

## 1. Domestic violence

### 1.1 Prevalence

- 1.1.1 The UN said domestic violence (DV) was the biggest gender issue they faced in Albania and the last survey conducted in 2013 showed that 1 in 2 women had been exposed to at least one form of domestic violence during their lifetime (in Europe the average is 1 in 4). They also said that sexual violence was under-reported by both the victim or family member, it still being a taboo issue<sup>2</sup>.
- 1.1.2 Several sources agreed that gender-based violence is a national problem, particularly in the rural areas in the north east<sup>3 4 5 6 7</sup>. The reasons for this included a macho male Balkan mentality, low standard of education, the economic situation and gender based inequalities<sup>8 9 10 11 12</sup>. Poor court functioning and inadequate police training were other contributory factors<sup>13</sup>.
- 1.1.3 The UN also stated that the number of cases of DV and GBV reported to the police is higher than the number of convictions (for example, in 2014 out of 1189 cases only 476 were convicted). Although in the last two years the number of cases going to court has increased, the total number of convictions still remains low. However, the data collected from the police, prosecution service and the judiciary are not always compatible<sup>14</sup>.
- 1.1.4 The UN also noted that in the period January to August 2017, 2963 cases of DV were reported to the police. Of these 962 were not convicted and the rest have pursued Protection Orders (POs). A small number of cases go on to prosecution. During this period, DV led to nine people being killed of whom seven were female<sup>15</sup>.
- 1.1.5 Sources reported that the number of reported cases of DV had gone up in recent years and this was seen as a positive thing; people know where they can get support and are more trusting in the criminal justice institutions and

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<sup>2</sup> [UN 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Tirana Legal Aid Society, 31 October 2017](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Director of Curriculum in Kukes, 3 November 2017](#)

<sup>5</sup> [BIRN 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Kukes Police Department, 3 November 2017](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Director of Social Services in Municipality of Kukes, 3 November 2017](#)

<sup>8</sup> [BIRN 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>9</sup> [Kukes Police Department, 3 November 2017](#)

<sup>10</sup> [Director of Social Services in Municipality of Kukes, 3 November 2017](#)

<sup>11</sup> [Kukes Police Department, 3 November 2017](#)

<sup>12</sup> [Ministry of Health and Social Protection, 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>13</sup> [BIRN 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>14</sup> [UN 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>15</sup> [UN 2 November 2017](#)

processes<sup>16 17 18 19</sup>. However, the Albanian Ombudsman commented that their figures do not show an increase in the numbers. They said that although information presented by the media shows an increase, their statistics don't show this<sup>20</sup>. Two judges from the Family Section of the Tirana District Court however, told the FFT that during the last 6-7 years, the volume of cases brought to court has increased but they were not able to judge whether that is a result of social conditions or not<sup>21</sup>.

- 1.1.6 In October 2017 Kukes Police Department noted that so far this year, they had identified 26 cases of DV and 11 had been issued with a PO. The others have been prosecuted as criminal proceedings, of which 2 had been put on remand in prison and the others acquitted.<sup>22</sup>
- 1.1.7 The Director of the Centre for Youth Progress in Kukes noted that there were 15 cases of DV in the area that went to court last year (2016), but he didn't know the numbers for this year. He commented that findings from different projects developed in the region by a local NGO, show very high figures and that government statistics might not be accurate<sup>23</sup>.

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## 1.2 Societal attitudes

- 1.2.1 The FFT was informed that the country has a macho male mentality and that patriarchy is particularly rooted in the poorer parts of the country. This is in part due to the long period of isolationism the country faced under its former dictator, Enver Hoxha, and the roles of men and women are quite dated. There is a prevailing culture of acceptance of domestic violence, and women are usually pushed to breaking point before they file a complaint, which they will often subsequently withdraw due to family pressure. Many women don't report DV as they don't like to publicly air their problems and become the subject of gossip and a percentage of women accept DV or emigrate instead<sup>24 25 26 27 28 29</sup>. However, in the past decade things have changed and new generations are becoming more open minded<sup>30 31</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> [D&E 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>17</sup> [Director of Social Services, Municipality of Tirana, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>18</sup> [Director of the National Centre of Victims of Human Trafficking, the Director of the National Centre of Victims of Domestic Violence and the specialist of the Albanian Social Services for the issues of tracking unaccompanied minors and domestic violence, 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>19</sup> [Ministry of Health and Social Protection, 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>20</sup> [Albanian Ombudsman, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>21</sup> [Tirana District Court, 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>22</sup> [Kukes Police Department, 3 November 2017](#)

<sup>23</sup> [Center for Youth Progress in Kukes, 4 November 2017](#)

<sup>24</sup> [BIRN 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>25</sup> [Tirana Legal Aid Society, 31 October 2017](#)

<sup>26</sup> [Center for Youth Progress in Kukes, 4 November 2017](#)

<sup>27</sup> [Director of Curriculum in Kukes, 3 November 2017](#)

<sup>28</sup> [Center for Youth Progress in Kukes, 4 November 2017](#)

<sup>29</sup> [Director of the National Centre of Victims of Human Trafficking, the Director of the National Centre of Victims of Domestic Violence and the specialist of the Albanian Social Services for the issues of tracking unaccompanied minors and domestic violence, 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>30</sup> [BIRN 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>31</sup> [Director of Curriculum in Kukes, 3 November 2017](#)

1.2.2 The Director of the Women’s Counselling and Social Services Centre (WCSSC) in Kukes noted that ‘violence causes violence’. Men feel frustrated because they are limited in their means to support their families. They are unemployed and can’t provide a better life for their family. They channel that frustration in aggression towards their wife. There is also a traditional saying that ‘a man is someone who has to discipline his wife’<sup>32</sup>.

1.2.3 The WCSSC went on to say that although old attitudes remain in Kukes changes are happening:

‘There is an example of a husband taking the washing in from the garden when it was raining – but a female neighbour made a derogatory comment about it.

‘We also recently engaged some elderly men and asked them to go and do the shopping to show the community that it is not for the woman to have to do everything. Young men are seen helping with the children.

‘The situation is improving; more people are taking a more equal role. Also in other areas, and in reverse, now men are doing what were traditional female jobs – like cleaning. Men are now sometimes also nurses, teachers.’<sup>33</sup>

1.2.4 The Director of the Centre for Youth Progress in Kukes felt that culture and tradition does not allow women to take the initiative and raise their voice to protect themselves and that society hides the real situation:

‘I know personally a recent story where a couple is fighting almost every night, and this husband violates his wife, and she does not like to report the case, because she does not want to be the one who goes to the court to report her husband. This is the success of the culture and tradition. In similar cases, women and girls prefer better to emigrate, rather than report in the police or court the violence against them. I can also confirm that women or girls are not protected by their parents, since they don’t play a role in reporting the violence. This is because of the culture as well, and in some cases their parents of violated women and girls, are violators for other cases, so how they can report the common behaviour?’<sup>34</sup>

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### 1.3 Legislation

1.3.1 The UN said that since 2006 the Albanian government had made a lot of progress and had put in place a legislative framework to tackle DV, but there are organic laws which need to be improved, especially related to definitions, in line with CEDAW (Convention on the elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women) and the Istanbul convention<sup>35</sup>.

1.3.2 The UN commented that although there is legislation in place that addressed domestic violence in family relations, it required some amendments and they were in discussions with all the relevant stakeholders under the leadership of

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<sup>32</sup> [Women’s Counselling and Social Services Centre in Kukes, 4 November 2017](#)

<sup>33</sup> [Women’s Counselling and Social Services Centre in Kukes, 4 November 2017](#)

<sup>34</sup> [Center for Youth Progress in Kukes, 4 November 2017](#)

<sup>35</sup> [UN 2 November 2017](#)

the Ministry of Health and Social Protection with a view to adding support and expertise<sup>36</sup>.

- 1.3.3 Josif Shtembari, the Director for Crimes, at the General Directory for Police in Tirana noted that the new law, introduced in 2007, had created an organised structure to tackle the problem of DV. This legislation set out a structure with coordination between the local police office, district police office, social services and NGOs in the particular region.
- 1.3.4 He explained that prior to 2006, DV was a civil claim under the law and not provided as a criminal offence. Since 2006, an entire chain of law enforcement institutions follow up on incidents of DV. Urgent cases are brought before the court without delay making it easier for the perpetrator to be arrested and charged.
- 1.3.5 The Criminal Code was updated in 2012 and DV was provided as a specific offence<sup>37</sup>.

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## 1.4 Reporting of cases

- 1.4.1 Josif Shtembari, the Director for Crimes, at the General Directory for Police in Tirana commented that although the victim may go straight to court, the social services or the Prosecutor's Office, in 99% cases they come to the police. He said that they connected the rise in cases (thirty per cent increase in reporting since 2006) to the increased sensitivity of the police. Also the change in the law in 2006, which made it easier to report cases and that people have a better understanding of the law and are more confident in coming forward<sup>38</sup>.
- 1.4.2 The Social Services Department of the Municipality of Tirana noted that in Tirana:
  - There is a rising trend in the cases of DV which are reported and then managed in Tirana
  - there were 580 'demands for issuing Protection Orders' between Jan & Sept 2017 (474 demands between Jan & Sept 2016)
  - 76 cases of DV had been managed by the CCR (Coordinated Community Response Mechanism) in 2017 (compared to 43 cases in 2016)<sup>39</sup>

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## 1.5 Access to justice and legal aid

- 1.5.1 The UN said that it had just finalised the 'Access to Justice' assessment with a particular focus on women who are VDV<sup>40</sup>. They and several other sources said women face barriers and discrimination to an equitable access to justice system including lack of free legal aid services and that the lack of such

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<sup>36</sup> [UN 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>37</sup> [Tirana Police Department, 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>38</sup> [Tirana Police Department, 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>39</sup> [Director of Social Services, Municipality of Tirana, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>40</sup> [UN 2 November 2017](#)



services have left women without legal representation<sup>41 42 43</sup>. The UN said it was partnering with four NGOs who provide free legal aid services and running a small pilot, offering free legal services at four district courts in Tirana, Fier, Durres and Lezhe. They are also supporting the drafting of the new legal aid law in parliament which they hope will allow marginalised communities to access the court system<sup>44</sup>.

- 1.5.2 Several NGOs noted that the state offer legal aid, that there is legislation for this and a state commission that should be providing support. But in civil cases, reports show this is not being fulfilled<sup>45 46 47</sup>.
- 1.5.3 The UN stated that lack of legal aid for VGBV has been highlighted by CEDAW (2016) as one of the reasons of the low number of reported cases. The lack of services and legal aid keep women victims of violence from coming forward<sup>48</sup>. Last year, a recommendation of the Ombudsman to the Ministry of Justice was to extend the categories who can access legal aid. The new categories include VDV; victims of discrimination and a draft law has been presented to parliament<sup>49</sup>.
- 1.5.4 Both the Tirana Legal Aid Society (TLAS) and the Centre for Legal Civic Initiatives (CLCI) offer free legal services to women, particularly victims of domestic violence, to increase their access to public institutions – in particular the justice system<sup>50 51 52</sup>. The CLCI has provided support for 15 VDV a day and also monitor the court sessions and court decisions on DV cases and prepare monitoring reports to suggest recommendations to institutions to improve VDV's rights<sup>53</sup>.

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## 1.6 Support for victims

- 1.6.1 Several sources noted that one of the major recent changes to the justice system has been in the position and role of the victim. The victim can now make claims and has expanded rights<sup>54 55 56</sup>.
- 1.6.2 The Social Services Department of the Ministry of Tirana said there are 24 administrative units in Tirana who have the responsibility of supporting women through the justice system. Of these 24, 13 are new and have been

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<sup>41</sup> [UN 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>42</sup> [D&E 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>43</sup> [Albanian Ombudsman, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>44</sup> [UN 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>45</sup> [Tirana Legal Aid Society, 31 October 2017](#)

<sup>46</sup> [The Centre for Legal Civic Initiatives, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>47</sup> [Caritas, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>48</sup> [UN 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>49</sup> [Albanian Ombudsman, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>50</sup> [Tirana Legal Aid Society, 31 October 2017](#)

<sup>51</sup> [The Centre for Legal Civic Initiatives, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>52</sup> [Albanian Ombudsman, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>53</sup> [The Centre for Legal Civic Initiatives, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>54</sup> [Tirana Legal Aid Society, 31 October 2017](#)

<sup>55</sup> [Albanian Ombudsman, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>56</sup> [The Centre for Legal Civic Initiatives, 6 November 2017](#)

set up in villages outside the city where DV has not been viewed as a serious issue, and that this is a big challenge for them<sup>57</sup>.

- 1.6.3 Two judges from the Tirana family court told the FFT that there were no court fees charged to a victim and the legal report is paid for by the state. Normally, the fees are charged to the perpetrator at stage 2 and the state at stage 1. They commented that good work has also been done by the NGOs to make the system accessible<sup>58</sup> (See [procedures](#) for details of stages).
- 1.6.4 CLCI said that the police and the Tirana District Court will sometimes approach them to make representations on behalf of a victim when a case is in court<sup>59</sup>.
- 1.6.5 The Director of the WCSSC in Kukes noted that they have always accompanied women in court, and have also compiled psychological reports. Even where the court has engaged others, they have always been present during the public trials and have been part as interested parties. There is only one woman lawyer in Kukes and she has helped them on a pro-bono basis<sup>60</sup>.
- 1.6.6 The Director of Social Services told the FFT that the government is planning to enhance the legal framework between 2016-2020. It will replicate the same system as VHT so that the first denunciation can start the proceedings<sup>61</sup>.

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## 1.7 Processing cases of domestic violence

- 1.7.1 Josif Shtembari, the Director for Crimes, at the General Directory for Police in Tirana, described the process for dealing with claims of DV once the victim has notified the police:
  - The police officer looks for visual signs of physical injuries
  - The victim is referred immediately to a doctor who will make a report
  - Either a claim is made to a court for a Protection Order (PO), or
  - Proceedings are started for further evidence and the case is referred to the Prosecutor's Office
  - Once sent to court an urgent PO will be decided in 24 hours, others take up to 15 days<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> [Director of Social Services, Municipality of Tirana, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>58</sup> [Tirana District Court, 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>59</sup> [The Centre for Legal Civic Initiatives, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>60</sup> [Women's Counselling and Social Services Centre in Kukes, 4 November 2017](#)

<sup>61</sup> [Director of the National Centre of Victims of Human Trafficking, the Director of the National Centre of Victims of Domestic Violence and the specialist of the Albanian Social Services for the issues of tracking unaccompanied minors and domestic violence, 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>62</sup> [Tirana Police Department, 2 November 2017](#)



- 1.7.2 The law requires that when a VDV is interviewed by the police a psychologist or social worker is present<sup>63 64 65 66</sup>.
- 1.7.3 Mr Shtembari told the FFT that the police will take control of the scene of violence looking for weapons, as well as photographs or videos of it, and they will also talk to witnesses.
- 1.7.4 He said that the police regard the moment the person makes a declaration as the crucial point in the case and they recognise that the victim may be in shock when they first arrive at the police station so they have tried to create a friendly environment in which victims can make their statement<sup>67</sup> .
- 1.7.5 Mr Shtembari told the FFT that any person who has knowledge of violence or crime must report it. This can be neighbours but this does not happen very often. Usually it is member of the family, and in particular the victim themselves<sup>68</sup>.
- 1.7.6 Mr Shtembari noted that the Albanian law does not provide that the victim can have a copy of the police report (see however the Kukes police para 1.5.7 below) but a record of court proceedings is available<sup>69</sup>. CLCI said the police are obliged, by law, to give a copy of the law-suit to the victim, although they often don't<sup>70</sup>.
- 1.7.7 Mr Shtembari further noted that if the person withdraws her claim, it usually stops there but if the person is subject to repeated violence, the police will continue with the investigation. If the case was initiated by the court, then it continues until the court decides the outcome.
- 1.7.8 He said they do not have a figure for the number of cases that are withdrawn. It usually happens at the court, when the person doesn't show up, or at the Prosecutor's office<sup>71</sup>.
- 1.7.9 The Kukes Police Department confirmed the details given by Mr Shtembari, in that the law provides for a set practice on how to deal with VDV, and that they follow this in Kukes:

'When the victim first comes, and they are usually women, there is a medical check if needed. Then it is referred to the psychologist under the municipal social services, if necessary. We emphasise very much the first moment of contact, or first communication with the victims to create a warm environment to make them feel confident, safe and if there is a need for medical treatment, we send them to the hospital.

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<sup>63</sup> [Tirana Police Department, 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>64</sup> [Women's Counselling and Social Services Centre in Kukes, 4 November 2017](#)

<sup>65</sup> [Kukes Police Department, 3 November 2017](#)

<sup>66</sup> [Caritas, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>67</sup> [Tirana Police Department, 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>68</sup> [Tirana Police Department, 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>69</sup> [Tirana Police Department, 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>70</sup> [The Centre for Legal Civic Initiatives, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>71</sup> [Tirana Police Department, 2 November 2017](#)

‘After the victim has come to us, we interview them in the presence of the psychologist and ask them about the incident, the background etc. After that, we fill in a form for a Protection Order and lodge it in court.

‘Depending on the PO issued by the court, we either accompany the person to the Centre for VDV in Tirana, or to their accommodation and explain to the perpetrator his obligations under the law...

‘The person gets a copy of the report. It is the right of the victim to read and get informed of what was written in the report. They get this automatically. It is a legal obligation and procedure to give a copy to the victim.’<sup>72</sup>

1.7.10 The Kukes Police Department stated that the offence is based on the word of the victim and treated as ‘beating’ and if the victim withdraws her case then the case is closed. However, in serious or high risk cases, they ask the community police officer to keep the case under close supervision as well as the specialist for DV cases in Kukes to have close contact with the victim and check how the situation has progressed. The community police specialist would also meet the perpetrator<sup>73</sup>.

1.7.11 The Director of Social Services in Kukes noted that there is a round-table committee on issues surrounding DV headed by the mayor of the municipality and that such a committee is required by law:

‘We are trying to coordinate our work with the police. Sometimes cases are referred to the municipality unit for DV; some are referred to the police. In most cases, the police doesn’t follow-up these claims of DV to the prosecution office or to bring them to the municipality office. They try to bring the conflicts to a close in their own way. In cases where the problems are very pressing, the police contact us and we they try to resolve them together.

‘The head of DV unit has accompanied the women to court. They have to bring a complaint and apply for a Protection Order. In most cases, the police don’t have enough information and capacities to follow-up the cases in court. Because the administrator of the village (appointed by the municipality) doesn’t give enough information, it is mostly based on the victim’s allegations. This means that when the claim goes to court, there isn’t enough evidence to issue the PO. The court, most of the time, they tend to work on reconciliation between victim and perpetrator.’<sup>74</sup>

1.7.12 The Director of the WCSSC in Kukes noted that there has been a change in the reporting of DV cases over time, and the victims now go more readily to the police, although often it is when they have reached breaking point. She said that she sometimes asks the prosecutor and the police to continue with cases, even where a woman withdraws her case<sup>75</sup>.

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<sup>72</sup> [Kukes Police Department, 3 November 2017](#)

<sup>73</sup> [Kukes Police Department, 3 November 2017](#)

<sup>74</sup> [Director of Social Services in Municipality of Kukes, 3 November 2017](#)

<sup>75</sup> [Women’s Counselling and Social Services Centre in Kukes, 4 November 2017](#)

## 1.8 Sentencing

- 1.8.1 Sentences are often lenient and this can lead to re-offending<sup>76</sup>. The Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN) commented that the court system is quite corrupt and many don't see VDV as important and it is unlikely a woman would have the money to influence the outcome<sup>77</sup>.
- 1.8.2 Two judges from the Tirana family court told the FFT that if a person breaks the conditions of the PO imposed by the court, they can go to prison. Even if the perpetrator has an open criminal case or is already in prison, it doesn't stop the civil court proceedings from going on<sup>78</sup>.
- 1.8.3 The Director of the WCSSC in Kukes noted that men have been imprisoned, but not enough such that it can serve as an example to other men<sup>79</sup>.
- 1.8.4 The Kukes Police Department noted that out of the 11 POs issued this year, two men had continued to violate the victim, but they had taken measures against these men and put them in prison. In the other cases: 'these have been treated with constant supervision; going to the accommodation; speaking to the perpetrator; making sure he understands the red line.'<sup>80</sup>

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## 1.9 Rehabilitation

- 1.9.1 Several sources said that there are no rehabilitation programmes or shelters for perpetrators of violence<sup>81 82 83</sup>. However, the Centre for Legal Civic Initiatives (CLCI) said that when they represent cases of VDV in court they ask for the perpetrator to undergo a rehabilitation programme. CLCI said there is an NGO in Tirana and one in Shkoder who run rehabilitation programmes<sup>84</sup>.
- 1.9.2 The Albanian Ombudsman noted that 'We are at a stage where we maybe should not be creating more shelters for victims, and focus more on the perpetrator, maybe the perpetrator should be the one to move.'<sup>85</sup>
- 1.9.3 The Ministry for Health and Social Protection (MHSP) said that the state social services are fully focussed in order to help perpetrators. They have established that often a lack of employment is behind DV and perpetrators are, in some cases whilst in prison, trained to get a job<sup>86</sup>. The Department of Mental Health and Addictology (DMHA) said that although there are no specific provisions for working with perpetrators of violence, they do offer

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<sup>76</sup> [BIRN 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>77</sup> [BIRN 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>78</sup> [Tirana District Court, 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>79</sup> [Women's Counselling and Social Services Centre in Kukes, 4 November 2017](#)

<sup>80</sup> [Kukes Police Department, 3 November 2017](#)

<sup>81</sup> [Tirana Police Department, 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>82</sup> [Director of Social Services in Municipality of Kukes, 3 November 2017](#)

<sup>83</sup> [Tirana District Court, 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>84</sup> [The Centre for Legal Civic Initiatives, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>85</sup> [Albanian Ombudsman, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>86</sup> [Ministry of Health and Social Protection, 2 November 2017](#)

support for the general population on addiction which might cover alcoholism and toxicology and there is a toxicology clinic in Tirana<sup>87</sup>.

- 1.9.4 There is an NGO 'Action Plus' which the DMHA said helps treat addiction with free Methadone. There are specific units across Albania and people can be referred or self-refer<sup>88</sup>.

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## 1.10 State protection mechanisms

- 1.10.1 The UN have supported the government to develop a Coordinated Community Response (CCR) which brings together all the local and regional actors to tackle DV. Victims of violence can enter the system from any of these points, and once in, it is a coordinated local mechanism. CCRs only operate in half of the country at present (36 out of 61 municipalities) although there are 5 more coming soon.

- 1.10.2 The UN commented that it had done a study on the functionality of CCRs at local level and found that financial and human resources were lacking<sup>89</sup>.

- 1.10.3 The Director of Social Services at the Municipality of Tirana listed the members of their CC Local DV Coordinator in the municipality:

- Police Department
- District Court
- Prosecutor's Office
- Bailiff's Office
- Forensic Institute
- Regional Directory of Public Health
- Mother Teresa Hospital
- Directory of Social Services
- Regional Education Directory
- Employment Office
- Shelter for Women and Girls
- Community Development Centre 'Today for the Future'<sup>90</sup>

See [Annex A: General Directorate of Social Services Tirana's report on the Referral Mechanism against Domestic Violence](#).

- 1.10.4 The UN supported the former Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth to establish an online database – REVALB – that enables local authorities to record and track every case of violence against women and girls and this is coordinated and monitored centrally by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection<sup>91 92</sup>.

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<sup>87</sup> [Ministry of Interior, 31 October 2017](#)

<sup>88</sup> [Ministry of Interior, 31 October 2017](#)

<sup>89</sup> [UN 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>90</sup> [Director of Social Services, Municipality of Tirana, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>91</sup> [UN 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>92</sup> [Ministry of Health and Social Protection, 2 November 2017](#)

## 1.11 Referrals

- 1.11.1 The FFT were told that the law provides that the victim can come and make their case at the local police station, or at any office at municipality level – it then gets referred to the local board level to determine the best course of action – this is called the Mechanism for Case Referral<sup>93</sup>.
- 1.11.2 The Department of Social Services at the Ministry of Tirana stated that they have 24 administrative units and a DV case is referred to them after it has been through the police, prosecutor and EPO (Emergency Protection Order). They have a 24-hour free phone number and a national number (which women in Tirana can also use) which can be used to notify or refer cases of DV. There is also an NGO which refers cases. This is usually in the 24-48 hours it takes for an EPO to be issued by the court<sup>94</sup>.
- 1.11.3 The same source said they try to encourage people to report the perpetrator, but leave it up to the individual. However, if they think the woman's life is in danger they will refer the case to the police<sup>95</sup>.

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## 1.12 Protection orders

- 1.12.1 The FFT were told that a person goes to the desk of the police office, and immediately fills out a form to get a PO or an EPO, depending on the severity of the case. The PO can also be requested by the police or social services and is decided by the court<sup>96</sup>.
- 1.12.2 We were told that an EPO is easy to obtain, but a long-term PO can sometimes be more of a challenge – the courts sometimes say there is not enough proof for one to be issued<sup>97</sup>.
- 1.12.3 The Albanian Ombudsman noted that, usually, an EPO is given before the full process is before the court. Then the PO is decided and, if issued, usually lasts for a year<sup>98</sup>.
- 1.12.4 The law provides that a wide range of subjects can apply for a protection order, for example the victim, a minor (with the involvement of a NGO), family lawyers, the prosecution office, but the main source is the police. There is a standard form that is filled in and that is presented to court<sup>99 100</sup>. Time limits for POs are: for minors - 24 hours, for adults - 48 hours<sup>101</sup>.
- 1.12.5 Tirana court judges added that 90% of protection orders are granted<sup>102</sup>.

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<sup>93</sup> [Ministry of Health and Social Protection, 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>94</sup> [Director of Social Services, Municipality of Tirana, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>95</sup> [Director of Social Services, Municipality of Tirana, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>96</sup> [Ministry of Health and Social Protection, 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>97</sup> [D&E 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>98</sup> [Albanian Ombudsman, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>99</sup> [Ministry of Health and Social Protection, 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>100</sup> [Tirana District Court, 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>101</sup> [Tirana District Court, 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>102</sup> [Tirana District Court, 1 November 2017](#)

## 1.13 Procedures for obtaining Protection orders

### 1.13.1 The Tirana Family Court explained the procedures for obtaining a protection order:

‘As per Albanian law, the courts start from the rule of law principle. The judges start from the criteria within the provision of the law. There is not any concrete or specific requirement to provide specific proof; it comes from the police or the victim.

‘Usually the first phase when protection is given, on the file there is data or reports or statements or evidence from the police, third parties or the victim. Can also be visual proof.

‘It has two phases:

‘Urgent, to decide whether to have a PO based on the proof that is on the file.

‘Second, further information - phone calls, medico-legal reports, more info from police possibly on perpetrator - then they decide on what to do.

‘90% accepted at the first stage. Then investigate further.

‘As well, during the 2nd stage, is a request given to the police to provide a psychological report in the case of minors. This is to determine whether to apply a stronger reaction from the court if necessary.

‘Also, a source for getting proof of the violence is the Social Services Office, and also the statements of the other family members. But this latter one is a problem, given the strong family ties that exist here in Albania. Depending on the full access and the statements on the file will determine how long the PO will remain in place. There are also cases where the victim is a repeat person, and the length of time is one year. Sometimes the evidence is not so strong, but the judge believes that the person is a victim, in which case they give a shorter time (e.g. 3 months).’<sup>103</sup>

### 1.13.2 The Ministry for Health and Social Protection said the main stakeholder is the local courts and once the proceedings have taken place, a copy of the order is sent to the victim, the police and the local municipality social services<sup>104</sup>.

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## 1.14 Conditions attached to protection orders

### 1.14.1 The Tirana Family Court described the usual conditions attached to a PO:

- No violence
- No contact, including by phone
- Perpetrator to leave the house
- In extreme cases, to pay for the rent of the victim
- Stay a certain distance away from the victim<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> [Tirana District Court, 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>104</sup> [Ministry of Health and Social Protection, 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>105</sup> [Tirana District Court, 1 November 2017](#)



1.14.2 If there are incidents involving the breach of a PO it is the police and local social services who are responsible for resolving them<sup>106</sup>.

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## 1.15 Number of protection orders

1.15.1 The Tirana Legal Aid Society stated that around 2000 POs had been issued in 2017 up to the end of October<sup>107</sup>.

1.15.2 The Tirana Family Court said that the reason for the rise in number of POs is because there is an increased belief in the criminal justice system: 'With evolution of society, information, social media – they understand there is a solution. They also see themselves less as just victim, but with a solution available and the belief that the court will do something, the law is more on their side.'<sup>108</sup>

1.15.3 The Director of Social Services in Kukes noted the number of POs issued in the Kukes municipality was 16 in 2016 and so far, to end of October 2017, 7 for women plus 2 for minors. He stated, 'This year, 20 cases of DV have been referred to us. We don't know what happened to the other 13 cases. We have women who approach us, as a municipality, every day for issues related to DV but don't have capacity to help them.'<sup>109</sup>

1.15.4 The Kukes Police Department stated that 11 POs had been issued so far in 2017<sup>110</sup>.

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## 1.16 Effectiveness of Protection Orders

1.16.1 Many sources observed that a challenge in the area of DV is the violation and lack of enforcement of protection orders. Often the courts decide to leave the victim and the offender in the same household for economic reasons which has led to further violence and, occasionally, murder<sup>111 112 113 114 115 116 117 118</sup>.

1.16.2 Courts blame the police for not enforcing the POs, whereas the police blame the courts for issuing POs that are not enforceable<sup>119 120</sup>.

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<sup>106</sup> [Tirana District Court, 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>107</sup> [Tirana Legal Aid Society, 31 October 2017](#)

<sup>108</sup> [Tirana District Court, 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>109</sup> [Director of Social Services in Municipality of Kukes, 3 November 2017](#)

<sup>110</sup> [Kukes Police Department, 3 November 2017](#)

<sup>111</sup> [D&E 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>112</sup> [UN 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>113</sup> [BIRN 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>114</sup> [Tirana Legal Aid Society, 31 October 2017](#)

<sup>115</sup> [Albanian Ombudsman, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>116</sup> [Women's Counselling and Social Services Centre in Kukes, 4 November 2017](#)

<sup>117</sup> [Director of Social Services in Municipality of Kukes, 3 November 2017](#)

<sup>118</sup> [Tirana District Court, 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>119</sup> [BIRN 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>120</sup> [Tirana Police Department, 2 November 2017](#)

- 1.16.3 The Social Services Department at the Municipality of Tirana commented that POs do work, but effective social services were needed to make that happen. Their opinion was that if a victim doesn't get support (including housing and a job) then it is difficult for a PO to be effective. Tirana has a lot of services, NGOs and international agencies to help people, but it is more difficult for people in the regions outside of Tirana which don't have these resources<sup>121</sup>.
- 1.16.4 The Tirana Legal Aid Society noted that lawyers are allowed to ask for a Protection Order:
- 'A Protection Order is free of charge; but the expert is not free. This is why we are involved. We also cover the costs of judicial process. We ask for the most effective actions from the court. In some cases, I have asked for parental custody orders.
- '...A problem of execution of Protection Orders. Once a person hasn't respected a Protection Order, it switches from a civil to a criminal matter. But it depends on whether it is reported.
- 'Don't really think these are effective. They need other things to accompany it. For example, if the person is to stay away from the other person, you need to provide that they can. Or, subsequent meetings should be supervised or monitored. But these don't happen often. And there is a problem with people being encouraged to report breaches of a Protection Order. When the cases are reported, the police are effective and do respond.'<sup>122</sup>
- 1.16.5 Several sources referred to a case in August 2017 where a judge from Shkoder was murdered by her husband who was subject to a protection order: <http://www.balkaneu.com/a-judge-gunned-down-in-tirana/>.
- 1.16.6 There are cases of people going to prison for breaching a PO<sup>123</sup> <sup>124</sup>. The minimum sentence is three months<sup>125</sup>.
- 1.16.7 The Director of the WCSSC in Kukes stated that POs were a big step ahead and were really necessary but the infrastructure to implement them was not fully in place. She said the state is obliged to give women victims food, education, accommodation, employment, but they don't. However, POs were generally reviewed by women judges who have been very considerate<sup>126</sup>.

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## 1.17 Police attitudes

- 1.17.1 Several sources noted that the number of reported cases of DV showed an increased awareness and increased trust in the police to investigate cases. The police are usually the first institution a VDV approaches. They are now more receptive to complaints and more likely to follow up on them; helping women get an EPO and PO; also advising them about how to pursue a

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<sup>121</sup> [Director of Social Services, Municipality of Tirana, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>122</sup> [Tirana Legal Aid Society, 31 October 2017](#)

<sup>123</sup> [D&E 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>124</sup> [Director of Social Services in Municipality of Kukes, 3 November 2017](#)

<sup>125</sup> [Director of Social Services in Municipality of Kukes, 3 November 2017](#)

<sup>126</sup> [Women's Counselling and Social Services Centre in Kukes, 4 November 2017](#)



case<sup>127 128</sup>. The Albanian Ombudsman said every case referred to the police is followed up<sup>129</sup>.

1.17.2 However, traditional values do impact on police thinking sometimes. Several sources commented that there have been cases where police have tried to negotiate with the victim to go back to the perpetrator of the violence. They said that there is still a lot to be done on capacity building, attitude changing and professionalism – and also enforcing POs properly<sup>130 131 132</sup>.

1.17.3 The Albanian Ombudsman explained how the police are involved in obtaining a PO:

‘As per Albanian legislation on DV prevention, the police are obliged to take the person to make a report and take the person to court to get a PO. The legislation provides that a person can go to court directly, but the police usually assist them in getting the PO.

‘As per the law, the police are obliged to help and are the first institution – they gather evidence, medical report, investigate. Then it passes to the Prosecutor’s Office. The courts see this as a priority, and they are treated very quickly.’<sup>133</sup>

1.17.4 The FFT was told that sometimes the police take the side of the male, but that is not always the case, and is becoming less common<sup>134 135 136</sup>.

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## 1.18 Police staffing and training

1.18.1 Several sources noted that there is a frequent turnover of police staff who have been trained in GBV<sup>137 138 139 140</sup>. Josif Shtembari, the Director for Crimes at the General Directory of Police agreed that there is turnover of police. But said that the department for violence against women has not experienced this so much, save for people being promoted. The movement of the structure is down to reforms going on, or career movement<sup>141</sup>.

1.18.2 The spokesman from the Kukes Police Department however said that the changeover of staff is a big problem. He said that they are often reassigned

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<sup>127</sup> [UN 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>128</sup> [Albanian Red Cross, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>129</sup> [Albanian Ombudsman, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>130</sup> [Center for Youth Progress in Kukes, 4 November 2017](#)

<sup>131</sup> [UN 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>132</sup> [Women’s Counselling and Social Services Centre in Kukes, 4 November 2017](#)

<sup>133</sup> [Albanian Ombudsman, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>134</sup> [Women’s Counselling and Social Services Centre in Kukes, 4 November 2017](#)

<sup>135</sup> [Center for Youth Progress in Kukes, 4 November 2017](#)

<sup>136</sup> [BIRN 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>137</sup> [UN 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>138</sup> [Human Rights Officer, USA Embassy 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>139</sup> [ARSIS, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>140</sup> [Police Attaché French Embassy, 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>141</sup> [Tirana Police Department, 2 November 2017](#)

officers who have not been working properly elsewhere and he was frustrated with being seen as a 're-education centre' for the police<sup>142</sup> .

- 1.18.3 The French Embassy police attaché also said that if a police officer should get close to the international community, he becomes a bit of a threat to the others and is moved away; so many police officers keep a low profile and are not proactive<sup>143</sup>.
- 1.18.4 Whilst recognising that the government has made efforts to increase the capacities of the police, and making clear that the role of the police in the fight against violence has improved over the last year, the UN stated that the professionalism of the police varies a lot, and that they have supported the Police Academy to update their curriculum. In 2012 and 2013 the Criminal Code underwent amendments with regard to criminalisation of DV and the law on State Police underwent improvements, therefore, there was a need to upgrade curricula on DV with the Police Academy.
- 1.18.5 All the newcomers of the police have to undertake a curricular on DV. The UN have also trained members of the CCRs, of which the police are a key member<sup>144</sup>.
- 1.18.6 Mr Shtembari provided more detail:
- 'Since 2006, when the new law was enacted, there is a constant programme of training for police officers. There is also the Police Academy. We have also arranged training with law enforcement in other countries – this can be short-term or longer-term – and includes a month-long one on DV.
- 'The Albanian police constantly plans training not just at headquarters, but also regional. For example, we have had recent training at Korce, which included police from neighbouring regions (in the south of Albania).
- 'Throughout the years, we have also had involvement of international organisations in training, OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe), EU, and lately a Swedish project with involvement of the authorities, where 240 officers have been involved in the training. And then also train-the-trainers. With the support of the Swedish project, this also led to a manual being produced on how to treat victims of DV.
- 'The Directory for DV, in connection with the Police Academy, arranges regular 3-day training for 20 officers at a time. And the Police Academy integrated this into the new training induction, they have a week (and sometimes more) training on treating DV issues.
- 'The training part of the police force was an important factor in the improvement for the proceedings of DV reporting – the environment they created. A police officer will not take any proceedings without the presence of the psychologist.'<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> [Kukes Police Department, 3 November 2017](#)

<sup>143</sup> [Police Attaché French Embassy, 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>144</sup> [UN 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>145</sup> [Tirana Police Department, 2 November 2017](#)

- 1.18.7 The Kukes Police Department stated that they have training on how to treat VDV, on clarifying the procedures to follow and on how to react and cooperate with other people involved in these cases<sup>146</sup>.
- 1.18.8 The Commissioner for Protection against Discrimination noted that they have trained 500 officers at national level with a focus on some particular groups including women, that have more contact with the police. It was not regular training though, it was a particular project they did in conjunction with the Albania police in 2015<sup>147</sup>.
- 1.18.9 The FFT were told that the Ministry of Education is involved in police training and is also part of the 'police in the community' training. The police sometimes also invite teachers to be part of the training – they train together/receive the same training – so they can understand how they can treat cases of DV and VoT<sup>148</sup>. The Ministry for Health and Social Protection said that they had done a lot of training with the police force at regional and local levels to raise levels of understanding and awareness of DV and to continue to maintain this because of the frequent turnover of police<sup>149</sup>.

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## 1.19 Female police officers

- 1.19.1 The UN also noted that a positive development is the amendment to the criminal code which includes provisions for the protection of victims of gender-based violence and human trafficking. In particular, the new provisions require that that victims of sexual violence and human trafficking communicate with the same gender officers. The new amendments have been in force since July 2017<sup>150</sup>.
- 1.19.2 The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare said that experience had shown that a victim of DV is more comfortable talking to a female police officer<sup>151</sup> and the General Directory of Police stated that they have increased the numbers of female police officers so that a female officer usually deals with the case<sup>152 153</sup>. This was confirmed by sources in Kukes<sup>154 155 156</sup>.
- 1.19.3 The French embassy police attaché said that the numbers of female police officers are going up, but there are not many in senior positions<sup>157</sup>. The General Directory of Police noted that about 14% of police are women – and about 9% with grades<sup>158</sup>.

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<sup>146</sup> [Kukes Police Department, 3 November 2017](#)

<sup>147</sup> [Commissioner for Protection against Discrimination, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>148</sup> [Ministry of Education 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>149</sup> [Ministry of Health and Social Protection, 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>150</sup> [UN 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>151</sup> [Ministry of Health and Social Protection, 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>152</sup> [Tirana Police Department, 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>153</sup> [Ministry of Health and Social Protection, 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>154</sup> [Kukes Police Department, 3 November 2017](#)

<sup>155</sup> [Women's Counselling and Social Services Centre in Kukes, 4 November 2017](#)

<sup>156</sup> [Director of Social Services in Municipality of Kukes, 3 November 2017](#)

<sup>157</sup> [Police Attaché French Embassy, 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>158</sup> [Tirana Police Department, 2 November 2017](#)

## 1.20 Community police officers

1.20.1 The Department of Social Services at the Municipality of Tirana explained that a community police person, for the moment, is just someone who is appointed by the police in their local area to mix with the police and administration units. Their role is currently not clearly defined, but the Mol is writing a law that should clarify this<sup>159</sup>. Other sources commented that the police community officer is not a police officer, but is a person who is appointed by the police to report situations to them<sup>160 161</sup>.

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## 1.21 Police work within the community

1.21.1 Mr Shtembari, the Director of Crimes at the General Directory for Police, noted that during the last year, they have been implementing a strategy called 'Policing in the Community' in which they discuss DV with interested parties, such as schools, within the community. He explained that when the cases of DV exceed the national average in a particular area, the national police force arrange a meeting with the local schools, local police, universities and the prosecutor's office to discuss it. Part of this strategy is also use of the media for which the government provide special funds<sup>162</sup>.

1.21.2 The Kukes Police Department provided more information about this at a local level:

'We have a collaboration with the regional education department. We have a plan. We identify and visit some of the schools and speak, not only with this – the community police – and the specialist who deals with DV here also goes and gives talks or training to the school. But this is not enough. More needs to be done with the community in general, as they are the ones who are the potential victims.

'There is a need to go into the community to raise awareness, but there are so many other issues we try to tackle, like: drink, drugs, driving under the influence. But if we had to go and give talks about all these things, we would become an education institution, not a law enforcement agency. We would like to do more, even things like drafting leaflets, but only have so much capacity and resources. It is hard to go in depth into these issues. We just work on the surface.'<sup>163</sup>

1.21.3 The same source also said that they have advertised phone numbers which victims of domestic violence can use to contact the police<sup>164</sup>.

See also [Awareness raising](#).

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<sup>159</sup> [Director of Social Services, Municipality of Tirana, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>160</sup> [Albanian Ombudsman, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>161</sup> [Women's Counselling and Social Services Centre in Kukes, 4 November 2017](#)

<sup>162</sup> [Tirana Police Department, 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>163</sup> [Kukes Police Department, 3 November 2017](#)

<sup>164</sup> [Kukes Police Department, 3 November 2017](#)

## 1.22 Government initiatives

- 1.22.1 Government sources told the FFT that the Government is planning between 2016-2020 to enhance the legal framework<sup>165 166</sup>. It will replicate the same system as VHT so that the first denunciation can start the proceedings<sup>167</sup>.
- 1.22.2 There are plans to further improve women's participation in decision-making<sup>168</sup>.
- 1.22.3 The Social Services Office drafts a yearly report which outlines the needs of the government shelters and reintegration programmes which goes to the Ministry of Health and Social Protection <sup>169</sup>.
- 1.22.4 The Ministry of Health and Social Protection told the FFT that there are several government mechanisms in place to monitor the implementation of strategies relating to DV. This starts with the National Council headed by the Minister in charge of the new Ministry of Health and Social Protection and nine vice-ministers from other ministries.
- 1.22.5 This filters down to case-by-case implementation at local, municipality level, which is a micro-level of the national model. This local council is headed by a representative from the municipality and includes representatives from the local state social office, health, police and education departments. The function of this board is to assess the cases that come from the local court or from the local police<sup>170</sup>.

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<sup>165</sup> [Director of the National Centre of Victims of Human Trafficking, the Director of the National Centre of Victims of Domestic Violence and the specialist of the Albanian Social Services for the issues of tracking unaccompanied minors and domestic violence, 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>166</sup> [Ministry of Health and Social Protection, 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>167</sup> [Director of the National Centre of Victims of Human Trafficking, the Director of the National Centre of Victims of Domestic Violence and the specialist of the Albanian Social Services for the issues of tracking unaccompanied minors and domestic violence, 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>168</sup> [Director of the National Centre of Victims of Human Trafficking, the Director of the National Centre of Victims of Domestic Violence and the specialist of the Albanian Social Services for the issues of tracking unaccompanied minors and domestic violence, 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>169</sup> [Director of the National Centre of Victims of Human Trafficking, the Director of the National Centre of Victims of Domestic Violence and the specialist of the Albanian Social Services for the issues of tracking unaccompanied minors and domestic violence, 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>170</sup> [Ministry of Health and Social Protection, 2 November 2017](#)

## 2. Victims of trafficking

### 2.1 Statistics

2.1.1 This data for 2016 was provided by the Office of the National Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Persons at the Ministry of Interior<sup>171</sup>:

Data on victims/Potential victims of trafficking January-31.12.2016	95 VoT/PVoT	
	Status	
	VoT	PVoT
	33	62
	Age	
	Adults	Children
	51	44
	Sex	
	M	F
	11	84
	Nationality	
	Albanian	Foreigners
	87	8

2.1.2 Sources said that the central data base indicated that from 1 Jan 2017-25 Sept 2017 there were 77 victims notified (22 VoT identified; 55 PVoT identified)<sup>172 173</sup>. 38 adults; 39 children (62 children). 70 Albanian and 7 people from other countries<sup>174</sup>.

<sup>171</sup> [Ministry of Interior, 31 October 2017](#)

<sup>172</sup> [IOM 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>173</sup> [Human Rights Officer, USA Embassy 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>174</sup> [IOM 2 November 2017](#)

2.1.3 This data for 2017 was confirmed by the Office of the National Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Persons at the Ministry of Interior<sup>175</sup>:

Data on VoT/PVoT identified during January - 25.09.2017	77 VoT/PVoT	
	Status	
	VoT	PVoT
	22	55
	Age	
	Adults	Children
	39	38
	Sex	
	M	F
	15	62
	Nationality	
	Albanian	Foreign
	70	7

2.1.4 Although it appears VoT figures have decreased over recent years<sup>176</sup> sources expressed concern about the focus being on the number of cases identified rather than those who aren't, and that numbers were not being recorded adequately<sup>177</sup>. The FFT were told of a case where the police had caught a team of traffickers with a group of girls and none of the girls were referred for assistance – the police claimed they were referring women only on a voluntary basis<sup>178</sup>.

2.1.5 Sources felt there is an exaggeration of the numbers related to asylum claims from Albania. BIRN felt that talk of 50,000 women being trafficked was 'ridiculous' and it was likely to be 5,000 over ten years<sup>179</sup>.

2.1.6 When asked about the disparity between Albanian and UK figures of trafficked women, both the Ministry of Interior and the Director of the National Reception Centre for Victims of Human Trafficking (NRCVHT) said that this could be because in Albanian they don't accept that a person has been a victim of trafficking just because the person declares it, which may be different to the UK<sup>180 181</sup>. The Director of the NCVHT went on to say:

<sup>175</sup> [Ministry of Interior, 31 October 2017](#)

<sup>176</sup> [Director of the National Centre of Victims of Human Trafficking, the Director of the National Centre of Victims of Domestic Violence and the specialist of the Albanian Social Services for the issues of tracking unaccompanied minors and domestic violence, 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>177</sup> [D&E 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>178</sup> [D&E 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>179</sup> [BIRN 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>180</sup> [Director of the National Centre of Victims of Human Trafficking, the Director of the National Centre of Victims of Domestic Violence and the specialist of the Albanian Social Services for the issues of tracking unaccompanied minors and domestic violence, 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>181</sup> [Ministry of Interior, 31 October 2017](#)



‘There are concrete steps that must be undertaken before a person is a VHT. The Albanian legislation says anyone can report to the police if they think a person is a VHT, and after that, a multi-disciplinary group gets together. The database contains all the information about the person – the initial report; the police report; the papers from the NRCVHT. So, this is why no self-declaration as a VHT can take place in Albania. Getting proof of a VHT requires this legal requirement.

‘There is an easy flow of information if the UK contacts the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Albania where we can verify these cases. We have been to the families to check and then provide information to the UK authorities. UK needs to supply information to the Albanians. Time taken to gather depends on the level of information requested.’<sup>182</sup>

- 2.1.7 The Albanian Ombudsman said that their figures do not show an increase in the numbers of VoT. They said information given by the media may show an increase, but their statistics don’t<sup>183</sup>.
- 2.1.8 The Director of Curriculum in Kukes noted that trafficking of women and girls is not a big issue in their area. She said that this is due to family ties and very strong family morals. There may be some sporadic cases, but it’s not a big issue<sup>184</sup>.

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## 2.2 False claims of trafficking

- 2.2.1 Several sources felt that people may falsely claim to have been trafficked in the hope of being granted asylum when they have actually just migrated to Europe to get work. It is easy to travel to Europe now as Albanians are able to travel freely in the Schengen area<sup>185 186 187 188</sup>.

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## 2.3 Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)

- 2.3.1 The Office of the National Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Persons at the Ministry of Interior (Moi) explained the SOPs:

‘These deal with the investigations of victims of trafficking. There are two stages:

‘Initial - This can be done by police or by any stakeholder.

‘Formal - This is to provide a formal status as 'trafficked'. But need a proper interview, by the State Social Services and the police.

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<sup>182</sup> [Director of the National Centre of Victims of Human Trafficking, the Director of the National Centre of Victims of Domestic Violence and the specialist of the Albanian Social Services for the issues of tracking unaccompanied minors and domestic violence, 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>183</sup> [Albanian Ombudsman, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>184</sup> [Director of Curriculum in Kukes, 3 November 2017](#)

<sup>185</sup> [BIRN 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>186</sup> [Center for Youth Progress in Kukes, 4 November 2017](#)

<sup>187</sup> [Ministry of Interior, 31 October 2017](#)

<sup>188</sup> [Director of Social Services in Municipality of Kukes, 3 November 2017](#)



'In the SOPs, the police can interview and offer support to a victim regardless of their cooperation with the judicial process. In cases of children, the interview is conducted by a Child Protection Officer and the police.'<sup>189</sup>

### 2.3.2 The Mol went on to describe how a reported case is investigated:

'Had many cases where family come forward to report.

'When a case is reported, the police are obliged by law to start an investigation of a missing person. After investigation it can be re-classified. There is always a preliminary investigation.

'Had cases from Facebook – the NGOs forwarded a message they received from a person on Facebook, and we started an investigation. Also had referrals from the British Liaison Officer who forwarded information, and again we started an investigation. The police must forward the case to the Prosecutor's Office.'<sup>190</sup>

### 2.3.3 The Mol also explained that a review of the SOPs is underway:

'This is led by the Office of the National Coordinator, and supported by IOM. Also linked to changes of law on the rights of children since June 2017.

'We have also been around the 12 districts of Albania and had many stakeholder comments. It started in 2011, we started reviewing what went right and what went wrong, but may have to review again and review the institutions involved, depending on new Government structure.

'We want more people to be involved in the NRM. But all NGOs are involved in the identification of victims of trafficking, depending on expertise and what stage it is at.'<sup>191</sup>

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## 2.4 Effectiveness of the police

2.4.1 Concern was expressed by various sources about the police's response to VoT. There are no indicators in place to measure police response to VHT and the focus for police targets is on arrests made rather than identifying and referring VoT<sup>192 193 194</sup>.

2.4.2 Caritas Albania (an NGO working in anti-trafficking) commented that although 'the police are not the best' they know how the NRM works and that they have to refer victims to social services<sup>195</sup>.

2.4.3 Although police respect the procedures for interviewing VoT (e.g. presence of social worker and psychologist), Caritas said that interviews are often done in public spaces in police stations. Caritas has renovated some friendly

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<sup>189</sup> [Ministry of Interior, 31 October 2017](#)

<sup>190</sup> [Ministry of Interior, 31 October 2017](#)

<sup>191</sup> [Ministry of Interior, 31 October 2017](#)

<sup>192</sup> [IOM 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>193</sup> [D&E 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>194</sup> [Human Rights Officer, USA Embassy 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>195</sup> [Caritas, 6 November 2017](#)

interview rooms for VoT in police stations such as in Vlore and Lezhe and provided a room with beds in Kukes, Muriqan and Durres<sup>196</sup>.

- 2.4.4 Mis-identification of crimes affects convictions, there is often an over focus on one specific offence and trafficking is sometimes not properly identified<sup>197</sup>. Caritas said that the police who work on trafficking cases know the SOPs well, but others only know the basics – for example that they have to refer cases and may not recognise practical indicators of PVoT<sup>198</sup>.
- 2.4.5 Sources the FFT spoke to had not experienced, or were aware of, police collusion with traffickers<sup>199 200 201</sup>.

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## 2.5 Training

- 2.5.1 The Ministry of Interior told the FFT that they have started common training with prosecutors and police. This is a new way of investigating and special skills are required. Experiences from the Serious Crimes Courts are being shared. The police are being trained and are pushed to do more<sup>202</sup>.
- 2.5.2 Caritas has provided training on protection of victims of trafficking for police officers. A training module has been developed with the collaboration of the National Coordinator against Trafficking and is used as a school curricula in the Police Academy<sup>203</sup>.
- 2.5.3 UN agencies have invested considerably in the training of the police<sup>204</sup>.

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## 2.6 Judiciary

- 2.6.1 UN agencies have invested considerably in the training of the judiciary which is arguably the weakest part of the system<sup>205</sup>. Traffickers have been able to escape justice due to its corruption or inefficiency. This makes it difficult for the victims to trust in, and seek redress from, the justice system. There is hope that the on-going justice reform and the vetting process of the judges and prosecutors will improve the judicial system<sup>206 207</sup>.
- 2.6.2 Several sources told the FFT that the Serious Crimes Court will no longer deal with trafficking cases, they are being decentralised and trafficking cases will now be tried at district courts and there are concerns about the

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<sup>196</sup> [Caritas, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>197</sup> [Human Rights Officer, USA Embassy 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>198</sup> [Caritas, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>199</sup> [D&E 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>200</sup> [Human Rights Officer, USA Embassy 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>201</sup> [Police Attaché French Embassy, 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>202</sup> [Ministry of Interior, 31 October 2017](#)

<sup>203</sup> [Caritas, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>204</sup> [UN 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>205</sup> [UN 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>206</sup> [UN 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>207</sup> [BIRN 1 November 2017](#)

professionalism and suitability of these courts<sup>208 209 210</sup>. The MoI clarified this saying that if a single person is accused of trafficking this will be tried at a local level, but if it is more structured – a group - this will remain with the Serious Crimes Court<sup>211</sup>.

- 2.6.3 Caritas said that as there is no protection programme available for VoT whilst a trial is proceeding, victims can be too scared to make a denunciation of a trafficker. Diocesan Caritas operating of the north of Albania have centres where the VoT can stay with nuns until their case is concluded<sup>212</sup>.

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## 2.7 Compensation for victims

- 2.7.1 Several sources said that although compensation for victims is recognised in law, it doesn't really happen in practice: if someone is awarded money from a trafficker often the government can't find the perpetrator to seize the money<sup>213 214</sup>.
- 2.7.2 However, The Tirana Legal Aid Society noted that, 'Legislation has gone through major changes, and in our opinion this expands the victims' rights. This is a good thing. Contains elements that were missing before, like demanding compensation.'<sup>215</sup>

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## 2.8 National Referral Mechanism (NRM) and database

- 2.8.1 The NRM is an organisation of 13 agencies who come together to identify, refer and protect VoT <sup>216</sup>.
- 2.8.2 The IOM gave a detailed assessment of the NRM:  
'Since 2005, Albania has the National Referral Mechanism for identification, referral and assistance of victims and potential victims of trafficking and the IOM is a member of the NRM. Currently, in Albania, the framework is a good one. The Responsible Authority follows all the cases identified outside of Albania, at the border and in the territory in accordance with the Standard Operating Procedures approved in July 2001 with decision of Council of Ministers. The penal code and others relating to TiP internal and external and are in line with the international conventions. The identification, referral and assistance of unaccompanied children could maybe be improved a bit. It's the implementation that needs improving. Albania created the SOPs, for clear procedures for VoT and PVoT – in Albania, outside Albania and at the border. Clear steps for people to follow. In 2012, revision of NRM process – to get more involved in the identification of VoT. All cases are referred as PVoT and a group composed of anti-trafficking police and social worker

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<sup>208</sup> [BIRN 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>209</sup> [Human Rights Officer, USA Embassy 1November 2017](#)

<sup>210</sup> [Caritas, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>211</sup> [Ministry of Interior, 31 October 2017](#)

<sup>212</sup> [Caritas, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>213</sup> [D&E 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>214</sup> [Caritas, 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>215</sup> [Tirana Legal Aid Society, 31 October 2017](#)

<sup>216</sup> [D&E 1 November 2017](#)

conducts the formal interview for determining the status of victim of trafficking. They are then entitled to access all the packages that are available in Albania. Albania also has the Strategy and action plan to combat trafficking in persons and the current one is 2014-2017. As it ends in 2017, and Ministry of Interior, Office of the National Anti-Trafficking Coordinator has initiated the process to prepare the new one and IOM has been approached to support with the preparation of the new country action plan up to 2020 which is in parallel with the Strategy on Organised Crime. This process is aiming to be concluded for Q1, 2018. There has been an open approach to review the current SOPs. This means that indicators for spotting victims at the border were improved. ONAC (Office of the Anti-Trafficking Coordinator) is in the revision process. But may need reviewing again once new Government is settled with the changes in different involved line Ministries and change in the criminal code entered in force in August 2017 referring the trafficking cases from Serious Crimes Court to regional level. It foreseen that a capacity level increase is a need for district prosecutors and judges.’<sup>217</sup>

- 2.8.3 IOM commented, positively, that there is more focus on referrals from Albanian embassies abroad and they have also heard of two referrals from a school psychologist. This is the result of the work of all the stakeholders under the coordination of the ONAC and as a result of national information awareness raising campaigns conducted during the October anti trafficking month<sup>218</sup>.
- 2.8.4 The Director of Social Services in Kukes explained ‘When we get cases, we refer to the NRM. There is a place online where we refer cases. But we are stuck in this phase at the moment where we make the referral, but we don’t get a reply. When it comes to the re-organisation of the Ministries, we are in a limbo. We don’t know who to refer to for now until it is settled. We are sceptical, because we didn’t get enough help from the MoSW; now that it is moving to the MoH, we are concerned<sup>219</sup>.
- 2.8.5 The NRCVDV can update data on victims. But because of the confidential nature of the data, it can only be accessed by Social Services and by an order of the court<sup>220</sup>.
- 2.8.6 Anila Trimi at the Office of the National Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Persons at the Ministry of Interior explained that they also have a database with data about identification to reintegration. It can also identify trends, for example, where people are moving around. It contains the data from the forms that accompanies the standard operating procedures that are sent. It is the responsibility of the Office of the National Coordinator who are the only people with access.

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<sup>217</sup> [IOM 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>218</sup> [IOM 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>219</sup> [Director of Social Services in Municipality of Kukes, 3 November 2017](#)

<sup>220</sup> [Director of the National Centre of Victims of Human Trafficking, the Director of the National Centre of Victims of Domestic Violence and the specialist of the Albanian Social Services for the issues of tracking unaccompanied minors and domestic violence, 1 November 2017](#)

- 2.8.7 She went on to say that personal details are included on the database, but this is done only with the consent of the victim and to the best of her knowledge no women had refused consent to date.
- 2.8.8 She was also not aware of unauthorised access. The name and address of the shelter is not included; only the name of the city. And where people go back to the community, that is what it says<sup>221</sup>.

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## 2.9 Help Line

- 2.9.1 A 24/7 anonymous hotline to help VoT is promoted by the government <sup>222</sup> <sup>223</sup>, but the police staffing it are elderly and on the verge of retiring and the line of questioning tends to be about trying to get a conviction and they may lose sight of the victim<sup>224</sup>.
- 2.9.2 However, the UN commented that it had helped put standards in place concerning the national helpline, which is currently administered by the NGO, though a cooperation agreement with the former Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth but it's the responsibility of the state to continue with that service<sup>225</sup>.

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## 2.10 Re-trafficking

- 2.10.1 D and E commented that they had had a few cases, maybe 4-5% of women who had ended up being re-trafficked. These were women who willingly left their programme<sup>226</sup>. BIRN said that sometimes people are willingly re-trafficked because they know nothing else and see no other way of getting out of the country<sup>227</sup>.

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## 2.11 Methods of traffickers

- 2.11.1 IOM commented that the most common route to the UK at the moment is through the Netherlands and Belgium.
- 2.11.2 They went on to say that there is no concerted effort from the government in the form of a migration policy. They felt there is a need for a more comprehensive approach to migration with migration related actions currently being carried out on an ad-hoc basis. IOM is currently supporting the government in the development of a new migration policy through a project funded by the IOM Development Fund<sup>228</sup>.
- 2.11.3 Several sources said that kidnapping was rare now as awareness has risen and trafficked women are more commonly duped into marriage or conned

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<sup>221</sup> [Ministry of Interior, 31 October 2017](#)

<sup>222</sup> [Human Rights Officer, USA Embassy 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>223</sup> [Ministry of Interior, 31 October 2017](#)

<sup>224</sup> [Human Rights Officer, USA Embassy 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>225</sup> [UN 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>226</sup> [D&E 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>227</sup> [BIRN 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>228</sup> [IOM 2 November 2017](#)

into jobs<sup>229 230 231</sup>. Traffickers always have ready recruits because parents are keen for their children to go abroad and they are sending them younger and younger<sup>232</sup>.

- 2.11.4 Different networks sell the trafficked woman on and on, the first person they encounter isn't usually the one who will use violence <sup>233 234</sup>.
- 2.11.5 Anila Trimi, from the Office of the National Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Persons at the Ministry of Interior, said she didn't believe that the UK was one of the main trafficking destinations. She thought it was more likely to be Kosovo and other neighbouring countries, as well as Germany, Switzerland, Greece and Italy. This is because travel is easy in the Schengen area and there is more demand for sexual services in these countries<sup>235</sup>.
- 2.11.6 Ms Trimi also told the FFT that people are mainly recruited through marriage, and increasingly through the use of social media. She said they are also starting to see girls recruiting girls on behalf of the trafficker: one girl shows another pictures of a 'beautiful life'.
- 2.11.7 Typical women are 18-25 year olds, but there are also younger victims. Other than that, there is no typical profile. Ms Trimi explained that she had seen cases from all different types of background.
- 2.11.8 At the same time, there are also cases where there is some degree of agreement or prior knowledge – at least at the start. For example, some know they will work in the sex industry. They are already working as prostitutes in Albania, but they think they will have more of the money or more control over what they do. Some are also promised better jobs and she had seen a few cases of young women being promised better education<sup>236</sup>.

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## 2.12 Strategies to combat trafficking

- 2.12.1 Several sources said that there is a system in place to create an alert for people returning to the country without the children they had previously left with, although airports are reasonably well covered in this respect, land borders are less so<sup>237 238 239</sup>.
- 2.12.2 With the financial support of the Netherlands and Belgium an awareness raising campaign 'Choose opportunities, not irregular migration' started in October 2017 and will be implemented in 12 regions of Albania until March 2018. It is not just about information, but also about providing resources to

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<sup>229</sup> [IOM 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>230</sup> [BIRN 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>231</sup> [Human Rights Officer, USA Embassy 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>232</sup> [BIRN 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>233</sup> [BIRN 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>234</sup> [D&E 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>235</sup> [Ministry of Interior, 31 October 2017](#)

<sup>236</sup> [Ministry of Interior, 31 October 2017](#)

<sup>237</sup> [IOM 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>238</sup> [Albanian Ombudsman, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>239</sup> [Ministry of Interior, 31 October 2017](#)



enable people to build a life in the rural areas – health, education etc. However, IOM commented that there is not really an underlying strategy and legal framework to effectively enable this <sup>240</sup>.

- 2.12.3 The Department of Social Services at the Ministry of Tirana stated that they have a dedicated person who works with the NGO Different and Equal (D&E) on preventing trafficking by going to schools and talking about the subject<sup>241</sup>.

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## 2.13 Regional Anti-Trafficking Committees (RATC)

- 2.13.1 Caritas explained that there are 12 Regional Anti Trafficking Committees in Albania, coordinating on counter trafficking actions headed by the Prefect. They receive information on cases of VoT by the technical round table. All the local institutions such as Education Directorate, Border and Migration Police, Local Police, Health Directorate, Social Services etc. are part of the RATC<sup>242</sup>.

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## 2.14 Witness protection scheme

- 2.14.1 Several sources commented that this is not used effectively<sup>243 244</sup>. There is one person in it at the moment<sup>245</sup>.

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## 2.15 Police investigations, prosecutions and sentencing

- 2.15.1 An Albanian MP has been imprisoned as part of a trafficking network<sup>246</sup>.
- 2.15.2 Since 2013, there has been an increase in sentences by the Serious Crimes Court. In 2013, there was one conviction, compared to 22 in 2016<sup>247</sup>.
- 2.15.3 The Office of the National Coordinator for Combating of Trafficking in Persons provided the following statistics<sup>248</sup>:

2016			
	Trafficking in adults	Trafficking in minors	Exploitation of prostitution
State police data	47	22	81
Prosecutor's office	19 (24 under investigation)	8 (13 under investigation)	
Sentenced	11	7	

<sup>240</sup> [IOM 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>241</sup> [Director of Social Services, Municipality of Tirana, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>242</sup> [Caritas, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>243</sup> [D&E 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>244</sup> [Human Rights Officer, USA Embassy 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>245</sup> [Ministry of Interior, 31 October 2017](#)

<sup>246</sup> [BIRN 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>247</sup> [Ministry of Interior, 31 October 2017](#)

<sup>248</sup> [Ministry of Interior, 31 October 2017](#)

Up to 25 September 2017			
State police data	16	7	36

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### 3. Reasons for migration

3.1.1 As travel to and through the Schengen zone is now simple many people, both men and women, find it easy to migrate<sup>249 250 251 252</sup>. The internet gives people ideas on how to travel, and one successful migrant fuels the next<sup>253</sup>.

3.1.2 When asked why people migrate from Kukes to the UK, The Director of Social Services in Kukes said:

‘We don’t have official answer about this. They travel illegally, and women travel under false promises of marriage in the UK. Many women who left for the UK were victims of DV. There are cases [of women] who have been lied to by UK citizens of Albanian origins who lie to them and promise them marriage. There are also cases who don’t accept the marriage because they don’t like the bride or groom. There are quite a few arranged marriages in Kukes municipality.

‘We have been poor and have been for a long time; but we had hope. Now we don’t have hope. I have been discussing with young couples and young men. They are unemployed. In the villages, the schools are closing down because there aren’t enough pupils. The healthcare is closing down. They can’t get employment and can’t buy a home. They can’t survive on social welfare (35 EUR per month). Although we as a municipality are trying to work on this issue, there is a lack of funds from the central Government. For example, the day centre is not open yet because the furnishing isn’t finished because we haven’t had the funds. This is shameful. We haven’t been able to open a centre to inform the population about the legal routes of migration. We can’t also provide educational facilities to provide things like foreign languages. We have a four-floor building where we want to open this multi-functional operation, but we don’t have enough funds to do so. We have collaborated with the German authorities to open this centre and they have assisted us<sup>254</sup>. (See photograph of centre in [Section 6](#)).

3.1.3 The Director of the Centre for Youth Progress in Kukes noted:

‘We know of one particular example of a family with three children – two girls and one boy. And here, the son is very important for the family. But because of peer pressure, he made the family get the money to help him leave otherwise he would leave anyway. They tried to convince him not to leave. They were poor, and they borrowed money to give him to enable him to go. He got very aggressive in the family because he wanted to leave.

‘There are other cases I’m sure who push their children to leave.

<sup>249</sup> [BIRN 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>250</sup> [Center for Youth Progress in Kukes, 4 November 2017](#)

<sup>251</sup> [Ministry of Interior, 31 October 2017](#)

<sup>252</sup> [Director of Social Services in Municipality of Kukes, 3 November 2017](#)

<sup>253</sup> [BIRN 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>254</sup> [Director of Social Services in Municipality of Kukes, 3 November 2017](#)



‘But I’m not aware of people sending remittances back much any longer. This is a recent change. In the past, they did; now it feels like they don’t know or don’t care. Maybe they don’t work. But we know of many cases where people abroad in the UK are not sending money back.

‘UK is a special case compared to other EU countries. In other EU countries, parent can go and visit their children. Whereas, you need a visa for the UK and they don’t get one.’<sup>255</sup>

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## 4. Shelters and emergency crisis centres

- 4.1.1 There are four NGO shelters that can handle VoT and two more specifically for VDV. The NGO shelters for VoT are in Tirana, Vlore and Elbasan plus the state run shelter in Tirana<sup>256 257</sup>. There are two shelters for VDV in Tirana, one of which is the state run National Reception Centre for Victims of Domestic Violence (NRCVDV)<sup>258 259</sup>. The Albanian Ombudsman stated that they have an inspection strategy, that they regularly inspected the national centres and they inspected the Centre in Vlore for the first time in October 2017<sup>260</sup>.
- 4.1.2 The director of the NRCVDV told the FFT that there is a plan for another shelter for VDV (this is projected to be in the north part of Albania, but is not finally settled)<sup>261</sup>. The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare said that the government is undertaking a feasibility study to look at the possibility of opening three new shelters for VDV before 2020<sup>262</sup>. However, the UN doubted the state had the budget for new centres, and felt they needed to consolidate what they had got<sup>263</sup>.
- 4.1.3 The shelters operate in close cooperation with each other to prevent over reach. Their combined capacity is sufficient to address the need from adults and there is no national capacity problem<sup>264</sup>. The centre in Elbasan is just for children<sup>265 266</sup>, which can house 15-20<sup>267</sup>, and when it is full they are referred to orphanages<sup>268</sup>. The Municipality of Tirana said they have a good relationship with the shelters, referring cases to each other<sup>269</sup>. The Albanian Social Services confirmed this, stating that an initiative created ten years ago

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<sup>255</sup> [Center for Youth Progress in Kukes, 4 November 2017](#)

<sup>256</sup> [Ministry of Interior, 31 October 2017](#)

<sup>257</sup> [D&E 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>258</sup> [D&E 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>259</sup> [Ministry of Health and Social Protection, 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>260</sup> [Albanian Ombudsman, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>261</sup> [Director of the National Centre of Victims of Human Trafficking, the Director of the National Centre of Victims of Domestic Violence and the specialist of the Albanian Social Services for the issues of tracking unaccompanied minors and domestic violence, 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>262</sup> [Ministry of Health and Social Protection, 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>263</sup> [UN 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>264</sup> [D&E 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>265</sup> [D&E 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>266</sup> [Ministry of Interior, 31 October 2017](#)

<sup>267</sup> [Ministry of Interior, 31 October 2017](#)

<sup>268</sup> [D&E 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>269</sup> [Director of Social Services, Municipality of Tirana, 6 November 2017](#)

by the Ministry of Interior effected cooperation between the state and the NGO run shelters<sup>270</sup>.

- 4.1.4 The shelters are licensed and regulated by the Inspectorate of Social Services so they must adhere to the official standards regarding the level and quality of care and the standard of security they provide for clients<sup>271</sup>. The Human Rights Officer from the US Embassy thought the shelters were very good, particularly those run by the NGOs who are among the best civil society organisations in Albania. He commented that once the girls are there they are generally happy and well taken care of<sup>272</sup>.
- 4.1.5 The UN said it had worked with the government to set up the NRCVDV which now takes women without a PO<sup>273</sup>.
- 4.1.6 Several sources noted that the government now funded the salaries of staff in NGO shelters and there had been efforts to use the funds from confiscated, seized assets<sup>274 275</sup>. The government also funds food and support for vocational training and health care<sup>276</sup>.
- 4.1.7 The Albanian Red Cross told the FFT that they support both VoT and VDV in shelters with such things as food, blankets, clothes and toys for children<sup>277</sup>.

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## 4.2 Procedures when entering government shelters

- 4.2.1 At a meeting with the Directors of the NRCVDV and the NRCVHT plus the specialist of the Albanian Social Services for the issues of tracking unaccompanied minors and domestic violence, the FFT was told:

‘For VDV: The presence of the psychologist is obligatory. Once the decision of the court is made, the person is referred to the shelter. We offer a range of support, including the psychologist. It depends on the person and their needs.

‘For VHT: Similar to victims of DV, but with a different approach. For entry to this shelter, you don’t need a referral from the court. The police start the proceedings and they send the person to the shelter. It’s also a multi-disciplinary approach to evaluating the needs of the person.

‘It includes a doctor, a lawyer and a person from Social Services

‘They all make their own separate evaluation of the case, including the psychological evaluation.

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<sup>270</sup> [Director of the National Centre of Victims of Human Trafficking, the Director of the National Centre of Victims of Domestic Violence and the specialist of the Albanian Social Services for the issues of tracking unaccompanied minors and domestic violence, 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>271</sup> [D&E 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>272</sup> [Human Rights Officer, USA Embassy 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>273</sup> [UN 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>274</sup> [IOM 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>275</sup> [D&E 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>276</sup> [D&E 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>277</sup> [Albanian Red Cross, 6 November 2017](#)

‘Due to the fact that there are different proceedings, each shelter has its own approach.’<sup>278</sup>

#### 4.2.2 The same source continued:

‘The first impact when the person arrives at the centre is to understand their specific, immediate needs. Then we look further, including at mental health needs.

‘Each of the shelters is fully-equipped with:

1. Psychologist
2. Lawyer
3. Social services
4. Education/teacher

‘Every aspect is covered, and while they are there, they are monitored by all of the above.’<sup>279</sup>

#### 4.2.3 For details of treatment of mental health issues see [Mental health provision](#).

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### 4.3 National Reception Centre for Victims of Domestic Violence (NRCVDV)

#### 4.3.1 The Albanian Ombudsman said that they had done an inspection of the National Centre on 27 October 2017 which was an update of their previous February inspection:

‘The conditions and infrastructure were optimal, and the care and attention of staff perfect. The resources are stretched, because they do a lot of things: accompanying people to court, taking children to school.

‘There were 12 staff working there which is on yearly contract, which is renewable.

‘Legal advice and a psychologist was not available at that time; it was being provided from the Centre of VoT.

‘The mechanics of each centre – how many staff etc. – are decided by the Prime Minister’s Office. They underestimated the legal support and psychologist need here. The PM’s Office said it is provided by the other shelter, but we pointed out that they have their own needs at that centre.

‘The NGOs also provide support. But NGOs provide support only with funding. So, we cannot rely entirely on these. Our concern is about making this sustainable.’<sup>280</sup>

#### 4.3.2 Usually the period of stay in the NRCVDV is decided by the court, up to a maximum of one year. However, if the Centre thinks it is necessary to extend

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<sup>278</sup> [Director of the National Centre of Victims of Human Trafficking, the Director of the National Centre of Victims of Domestic Violence and the specialist of the Albanian Social Services for the issues of tracking unaccompanied minors and domestic violence, 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>279</sup> [Director of the National Centre of Victims of Human Trafficking, the Director of the National Centre of Victims of Domestic Violence and the specialist of the Albanian Social Services for the issues of tracking unaccompanied minors and domestic violence, 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>280</sup> [Albanian Ombudsman, 6 November 2017](#)

the woman's stay, it can apply to the court for an extension. The obligation of the shelter is only to implement the court order and a person can leave when they wish<sup>281</sup>.

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#### 4.4 Capacity of the NRCVDV

- 4.4.1 The NRCVDV has capacity for 32 people<sup>282</sup> <sup>283</sup>.
- 4.4.2 Since 2011, when the centre opened, it has treated 370 people. Last year, it treated 95 people (including children)<sup>284</sup>.
- 4.4.3 Since the NRCVDV opened in 2011, there has been only one occasion – in January 2016 – when it had more people than capacity, but the situation was successfully managed by sending some people to the NGO-run shelter<sup>285</sup>. The UN thought there had never been a situation where it had been over capacity<sup>286</sup>.
- 4.4.4 However, two judges from Tirana family court said that capacity for families with minors within the state run shelter was lacking and they often had to send women with children to NGO run shelters<sup>287</sup>.

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#### 4.5 Security at the NRCVDV

- 4.5.1 The FFT were told security is provided by private police contracted by the centre and that victims are accompanied by officers from the shelter if they are visiting, for example, a doctor. However, when attending court the shelter or the court will do an evaluation and usually request that the police provide security as it is likely the perpetrator of the violence will be present<sup>288</sup>.

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<sup>281</sup> [Director of the National Centre of Victims of Human Trafficking, the Director of the National Centre of Victims of Domestic Violence and the specialist of the Albanian Social Services for the issues of tracking unaccompanied minors and domestic violence, 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>282</sup> [Albanian Ombudsman, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>283</sup> [Director of the National Centre of Victims of Human Trafficking, the Director of the National Centre of Victims of Domestic Violence and the specialist of the Albanian Social Services for the issues of tracking unaccompanied minors and domestic violence, 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>284</sup> [Director of the National Centre of Victims of Human Trafficking, the Director of the National Centre of Victims of Domestic Violence and the specialist of the Albanian Social Services for the issues of tracking unaccompanied minors and domestic violence, 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>285</sup> [Director of the National Centre of Victims of Human Trafficking, the Director of the National Centre of Victims of Domestic Violence and the specialist of the Albanian Social Services for the issues of tracking unaccompanied minors and domestic violence, 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>286</sup> [UN 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>287</sup> [Tirana District Court, 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>288</sup> [Director of the National Centre of Victims of Human Trafficking, the Director of the National Centre of Victims of Domestic Violence and the specialist of the Albanian Social Services for the issues of tracking unaccompanied minors and domestic violence, 1 November 2017](#)

#### 4.6 National Reception Centre for Victims of Human Trafficking (NRCVHT)

- 4.6.1 For the NRCVHT, length of stay depends on age; and where a minor is involved custody transfers to the centre. Usually victims stay for 3 to 6 months; but there have been cases where people have stayed for two years<sup>289</sup>. The Ministry of Interior stated there is no time limit<sup>290</sup>.
- 4.6.2 The Director of the NRCVHT stated 'Another important factor when it comes to the NRCVHT is the proceedings that are going on with the trafficker. We evaluate the risk to the person. Depending on that, it affects the length of the stay. But when the person feels safe, or ready for reintegration, they leave. But the NRCVHT maintains contact with regional authorities, NGOs and others to ease integration and maintain support and contact.'<sup>291</sup>

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#### 4.7 Capacity of the NRCVHT

- 4.7.1 The capacity of the NRCVHT is 80 people<sup>292 293</sup>.
- 4.7.2 Since 2003, when the centre opened, it has treated 620 people. The average is about 20-30 people per year<sup>294</sup>.
- 4.7.3 The Director of the NRCVHT said that it has never had a situation where it has had to refuse a person<sup>295</sup>. They have more capacity than requests at the moment<sup>296 297</sup>.
- 4.7.4 The Albanian Ombudsman said that the NRCVHT has only 9 residents as at November 2017 so there is capacity for supporting other regions that don't have a safe house – e.g. northern regions – or returnees<sup>298</sup>.

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<sup>289</sup> [Director of the National Centre of Victims of Human Trafficking, the Director of the National Centre of Victims of Domestic Violence and the specialist of the Albanian Social Services for the issues of tracking unaccompanied minors and domestic violence, 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>290</sup> [Ministry of Interior, 31 October 2017](#)

<sup>291</sup> [Director of the National Centre of Victims of Human Trafficking, the Director of the National Centre of Victims of Domestic Violence and the specialist of the Albanian Social Services for the issues of tracking unaccompanied minors and domestic violence, 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>292</sup> [Director of the National Centre of Victims of Human Trafficking, the Director of the National Centre of Victims of Domestic Violence and the specialist of the Albanian Social Services for the issues of tracking unaccompanied minors and domestic violence, 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>293</sup> [Albanian Ombudsman, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>294</sup> [Director of the National Centre of Victims of Human Trafficking, the Director of the National Centre of Victims of Domestic Violence and the specialist of the Albanian Social Services for the issues of tracking unaccompanied minors and domestic violence, 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>295</sup> [Director of the National Centre of Victims of Human Trafficking, the Director of the National Centre of Victims of Domestic Violence and the specialist of the Albanian Social Services for the issues of tracking unaccompanied minors and domestic violence, 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>296</sup> [Director of the National Centre of Victims of Human Trafficking, the Director of the National Centre of Victims of Domestic Violence and the specialist of the Albanian Social Services for the issues of tracking unaccompanied minors and domestic violence, 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>297</sup> [Caritas, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>298</sup> [Albanian Ombudsman, 6 November 2017](#)

## 4.8 Security at the NRCVHT

- 4.8.1 The NRCVHT has high security provided by the Albanian state police at every stage – at the shelter and when moving to and from it<sup>299 300</sup>.

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## 4.9 Leaving the centre

- 4.9.1 With regard to moving on from the centre the Director explained that victims are asked if they want to remain in the centre, or move to an NGO-shelter where the security is less tight<sup>301</sup>.

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## 4.10 Accommodation of children in government shelters

- 4.10.1 The age limit for children remaining in the centre with their mother is 18. There are also cases where the victim of DV is the child who is accompanied by their mother. This is usually provided for by the court<sup>302</sup>.

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## 4.11 Employment and education whilst living in government shelters

- 4.11.1 The FFT were told that a person can stay at the NRCVDV, work outside it and come back. But this does not apply to the NRCVHT. The same applies for children who may need to go to school. But some of this depends on the severity of the case and the security of the person<sup>303</sup>.

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## 4.12 NGO shelters

- 4.12.1 The UN commented that there is need to increase funds and support to NGO shelters, which are the main providers of services for VGBV. It is also trying to create a network of women's organisations to lobby the government on this and the implementation of other international human rights obligations in relation to violence against women<sup>304</sup>.
- 4.12.2 Different and Equal (D and E), an NGO operating in Albania since 2004, runs a shelter in Tirana which is open to women from all over Albania suffering from sexual abuse, DV or trafficking. It can house 15 women plus 4/5 accompanying children. It can also house pregnant women. They also

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<sup>299</sup> [Ministry of Interior, 31 October 2017](#)

<sup>300</sup> [Director of the National Centre of Victims of Human Trafficking, the Director of the National Centre of Victims of Domestic Violence and the specialist of the Albanian Social Services for the issues of tracking unaccompanied minors and domestic violence, 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>301</sup> [Director of the National Centre of Victims of Human Trafficking, the Director of the National Centre of Victims of Domestic Violence and the specialist of the Albanian Social Services for the issues of tracking unaccompanied minors and domestic violence, 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>302</sup> [Director of the National Centre of Victims of Human Trafficking, the Director of the National Centre of Victims of Domestic Violence and the specialist of the Albanian Social Services for the issues of tracking unaccompanied minors and domestic violence, 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>303</sup> [Director of the National Centre of Victims of Human Trafficking, the Director of the National Centre of Victims of Domestic Violence and the specialist of the Albanian Social Services for the issues of tracking unaccompanied minors and domestic violence, 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>304</sup> [UN 2 November 2017](#)



support people outside of the shelter and can provide support to men by paying for apartments<sup>305</sup>.

4.12.3 D and E said they had been able to accommodate everyone who had been referred to them: they cooperated with other NGO and the state run shelter to ensure capacity<sup>306</sup>.

4.12.4 D and E described the shelter saying they decided support needs on an individual basis and build a bespoke reintegration plan. The shelter included:

- Case managers (their background is on social work mostly)
- A psychologist
- A doctor
- A lawyer
- A teacher<sup>307</sup>

4.12.5 D and E estimated they had supported 200 (70 VoT) people, including children throughout 2016, with 40 cases still on going<sup>308</sup>.

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#### 4.13 Security at NGO run shelters

4.13.1 Whereas the police provide armed security for the state shelters<sup>309</sup>, the NGO run shelters employ a private security company which operate 24/7. Cases are risk assessed and, for high risk cases, victims will be accompanied by security guards to court, school etc.<sup>310</sup>.

4.13.2 To enhance security D and E said that that they put the following in place:

- Victims only communicate with their families via the office phone in the staff room at the shelter so the location cannot be traced
- Family members, even trusted ones, are not allowed to know the location of the shelter
- The victim's civil registration is the NGO's office address rather than the shelter address so that even a corrupt or unprofessional police officer with access to the civil registration system cannot compromise the victim's location<sup>311</sup>

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#### 4.14 Emergency crisis centres and shelters

4.14.1 There are numerous small emergency DV centres throughout Albania which provide short-term assistance including the provision of immediate emergency accommodation<sup>312 313</sup>.

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<sup>305</sup> [D&E 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>306</sup> [D&E 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>307</sup> [D&E 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>308</sup> [D&E 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>309</sup> [Human Rights Officer, USA Embassy 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>310</sup> [D&E 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>311</sup> [D&E 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>312</sup> [D&E 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>313</sup> [UN 2 November 2017](#)



- 4.14.2 There are plans that every municipality in Albania will have an emergency centre so everyone can get their first treatment there<sup>314</sup>.
- 4.14.3 The UN is working with the Ministry of Health and Social Protection (MoHSP) to draft standards for emergency facilities for VDV and have had discussions with Ministry of Interior and state police on establishing centres for the victims of sexual assault<sup>315</sup>.
- 4.14.4 The Kukes Police Department noted that although they have an emergency centre for VoT there is a lack of premises where a possible victim of DV could be accommodated whilst the initial administrative procedures take place.<sup>316</sup>
- 4.14.5 The Director of Social Services in Kukes confirmed this, stating:
- ‘The municipality doesn’t have capacity to accommodate and employ these women (victims of DV). This means that there are no emergency shelters; this is a big problem. A regional shelter should be in the area to deal with the emergency cases. The most pressing, the most high risk cases are sent to Tirana. But it isn’t very helpful, because to get accommodated in Tirana you need a PO. These are issued in 72 hours.
- ‘Now we are working on a day centre, mostly aimed at VoT and VDV. We have renovated the building. We are now furnishing it. The capacity will be ten women a time to be assisted. We have problems with human resources; not enough staff; not enough education, skills or professionalism to deal with the issues. In this centre, we will have a 24/7 telephone service for victims of DV to use. The centre is just waiting to be furnished and will be opened soon.
- ‘We are very hopeful that centre will be open soon and will be a message for the victims of DV so they have a place to go, and men have a message that women have a place to go.’<sup>317</sup>
- 4.14.6 A day centre with emergency accommodation in Kukes was not open but was being refurbished when the FFT viewed it (in the photograph<sup>318</sup> workmen in the foreground are laying a children’s play area):

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<sup>314</sup> [Director of the National Centre of Victims of Human Trafficking, the Director of the National Centre of Victims of Domestic Violence and the specialist of the Albanian Social Services for the issues of tracking unaccompanied minors and domestic violence, 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>315</sup> [UN 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>316</sup> [Kukes Police Department, 3 November 2017](#)

<sup>317</sup> [Director of Social Services in Municipality of Kukes, 3 November 2017](#)

<sup>318</sup> Photograph taken by FFT, 3 November 2017



4.14.7 ARSIS (an NGO specialising in the social support of youth) run 72-hour shelters for children (or parents with children) who have been trafficked<sup>319</sup>.

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## 5. Support and reintegration

- 5.1.1 The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare told the FFT that an executive agency under its ministry is directly involved with re-integration programmes<sup>320</sup>.
- 5.1.2 The UN said it had been involved with reintegration programmes: the NRCVDV cooperates with the local directorates of employment, education etc. and is helping VDV to apply and benefit from the social housing schemes available from the Tirana municipality; cooperation with businesses to get women immediate work opportunities and support for children as many of victims have children (mostly teenagers)<sup>321</sup>.
- 5.1.3 D and E described their three-stage programme of support:
- Crisis intervention, typically for the first 3-6 months
  - Transition to independent living, typically for at least a year

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<sup>319</sup> [ARSIS, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>320</sup> [Ministry of Health and Social Protection, 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>321</sup> [UN 2 November 2017](#)

- Full independence, up to 3 years

The support they provide included arranging education/vocational training, in cooperation with both government and private industry, supporting job searches – including arranging internships and subsidising salaries and (with donor support) assisting in the set-up of a small business<sup>322</sup>.

- 5.1.4 D and E said that women who had been through the shelter/reintegration programme would come back to speak to those experiencing it now<sup>323</sup>.
- 5.1.5 The Tirana Legal Aid Society said they work closely with shelters, cases being generally referred to them from the shelters and they provide legal support and also other legal advice on things such as divorce and parental custody<sup>324</sup>.
- 5.1.6 The Director of Social Services in Kukes spoke about the centre and said he wanted it to help reintegrate families who are being returned (see also [education and young people](#)). He also said that they don't offer accommodation because of lack of funds - even though Kukes is one of the most problematic regions for DV, they don't receive sufficient funds. 'We don't have many possibilities to help these women. We can't provide housing and accommodation.'<sup>325</sup>
- 5.1.7 The director of the Women's Counselling and Social Services Centre in Kukes stated:

'We are part of the regional network to protect VDV... We have accompanied the women when they go to report the cases with the police. Because the law requires that when the police interview a VDV, a psychologist or social worker needs to be present, the police call us. We have been there to help them psychologically. We have always been very active in calling for the NRM to function and we have always made clear to the state apparatus that they need to give free services to these women.

'We have been very present with the violated women because we don't have a reintegration centre or shelter here in Kukes. So, we want to tell the women about the infrastructure available in the country so they know what is available. These centres have always been very collaborative and have come to collect women to take them to Tirana. We have always been very careful to include the stakeholders in this. Our focus has always been to include the state authorities. We have approached them on many times to say we cannot do this without their authority.

'... We have used venues where women and girls can come together, like dormitories, schools and health centres.

'At first, they were very ashamed and lost. So, we would start to talk about situations where we, as women (from the centre) felt violated. When we told our stories, they identified. They didn't have a concept that what they were being subjected to was violence. This is because of the mentality and how

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<sup>322</sup> [D&E 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>323</sup> [D&E 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>324</sup> [Tirana Legal Aid Society, 31 October 2017](#)

<sup>325</sup> [Director of Social Services in Municipality of Kukes, 3 November 2017](#)

they are educated. It is always the fault with women. So, we used media, leaflets, with teachers, tried to be available for the free hours they have in civic education to talk about rights. We were being called around Kukes “those women of the violence”<sup>326</sup>.

5.1.8 At a meeting with the NRCVHT, NRCVDV and Albanian Social Services, the FFT were told that they try to provide women leaving the shelters with social support and social housing from the state – both VDV and VoT receiving the same levels of support. They commented that state-run processes are sometimes more bureaucratic than that the NGOs can offer<sup>327</sup>.

5.1.9 Anila Trimi, at the Office of the National Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Persons at the Ministry of Interior when asked about re-integration, acknowledged that they are not 100% successful, saying that this is not unique to Albania, it being a small country with small communities. She also commented that there has to be a willingness from the person to cooperate:

‘We try to accommodate people. We try to assist them find a job or with vocational training. Since 2015, we have increased support. Then we funded 16 employees to the shelters; in 2016, this went up to 30. We also supplied money for food.

‘If the person does not want to go into a shelter, they could live in the community. Some women did not want to, for various reasons.

‘Additional funding had been supplied through money confiscated from seized criminal assets. Aiming for this to continue. It is only a small amount, but it goes direct to the shelters. The money doesn’t have to come direct from crimes related to trafficking; it can be any illicit criminal behaviour.’<sup>328</sup>

5.1.10 The Albanian Red Cross (ARC) said that they work with former VoT to integrate them into the labour market. They also work to try to reconnect returned VoT with their families<sup>329</sup>.

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## 5.2 Social housing

5.2.1 In some cases, as a result of social stigma, victims may be reluctant to return to their home community, or may be rejected by their families. If no family support is available to the victim when they leave the shelter, D and E assist with/subsidise payment of rent for their new accommodation, typically for 6-12 months<sup>330</sup>. The Municipality of Tirana also assists with this (this is the only municipality which does)<sup>331 332 333</sup>. This “Lease Bonus Programme”

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<sup>326</sup> [Women’s Counselling and Social Services Centre in Kukes, 4 November 2017](#)

<sup>327</sup> [Director of the National Centre of Victims of Human Trafficking, the Director of the National Centre of Victims of Domestic Violence and the specialist of the Albanian Social Services for the issues of tracking unaccompanied minors and domestic violence, 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>328</sup> [Ministry of Interior, 31 October 2017](#)

<sup>329</sup> [Albanian Red Cross, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>330</sup> [D&E 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>331</sup> [D&E 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>332</sup> [Municipality of Tirana, Director of Social Services, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>333</sup> [UN 2 November 2017](#)



is paid for a year and if the woman's situation is still the same after a year the Municipality carries on paying it, but they try to empower the woman to become independent<sup>334</sup>. The Municipality of Tirana said that they don't have a minimum level of rent and they have a scoring formula to work out how much help a woman needs; 18 VDV had benefited from the Lease Bonus Programme in 2017 (up to 6 November) with eight in 2016<sup>335</sup>. The Ministry for Health and Social Welfare said that the ministry which deals with social housing deals with the payment of rent bonuses<sup>336</sup>.

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### 5.3 Other economic help

5.3.1 The Municipality of Tirana offers support to daily centres which provide lunch for women and their children. A food package for use at home can be provided for women who do not want to be identified<sup>337</sup>. 68 VDV have benefitted from economic aid in October 2017 (59 in October 2016).

5.3.2 The Ministry of Interior told the FFT that the state can and does support women with children. For example, there is financial support to pay for kindergarten; they can also support paying for food/meals. Although acknowledged as not perfect, the basic needs are met. A single mother can send a child to nursery for free<sup>338</sup>.

5.3.3 The Director of Social Services in Kukes noted that the Municipality of Kukes is one of the poorest in Albania, with extreme poverty and crime. More than 50% – 10,000 out of 18,000 families – that make up the population in Kukes are supported by social welfare. The social welfare element is around 35 EUR per month<sup>339</sup>.

5.3.4 The Albanian Ombudsman commented:

'One of the recommendations of the Ombudsman is that there is not a legally recognised living standard as a benchmark. Based on our knowledge, it has become understood it is more a political will.

'Most of the claims are by economic reasons. The women don't define themselves as suffering because of being a woman but as the head of a large family with husband outside of Albania, or as single mothers.'<sup>340</sup>

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### 5.4 Foster care

5.4.1 Several sources said that this is not functioning<sup>341</sup>. The Ministry of Tirana however said they are beginning to develop it and they have just had the first case of a four-year-old boy who has gone to a foster family with funding from

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<sup>334</sup> [Director of Social Services, Municipality of Tirana, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>335</sup> [Director of Social Services, Municipality of Tirana, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>336</sup> [Ministry of Health and Social Protection, 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>337</sup> [Director of Social Services, Municipality of Tirana, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>338</sup> [Ministry of Interior, 31 October 2017](#)

<sup>339</sup> [Director of Social Services in Municipality of Kukes, 3 November 2017](#)

<sup>340</sup> [Albanian Ombudsman, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>341</sup> [D&E 1 November 2017](#)

the state budget. They also commented that they have a lot of cases of 'kinship' where a child goes to another family member<sup>342</sup>.

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## 5.5 Monitoring

5.5.1 The FFT were told that the government tries to build up women leaving the shelters to become independent, although that is sometimes difficult especially when there are children involved. However, government focus is in this area and they are monitored for two years after they leave the shelters to check on the re-integration process with the social services operating as a watchdog on the services that are provided once the woman starts the process of re-integration<sup>343</sup>.

5.5.2 The Social Services Department at the Municipality of Tirana said that they monitor all the adult cases they manage every six to twelve months, and this currently continues for two years. They are going to move to monitoring for as long as people need them<sup>344</sup>.

5.5.3 The Commissioner for Protection against Discrimination (CPD) noted that, with regard to discrimination:

'Usually, due to the position the CPD has in relation to DV cases, and that the victims go to other institutions, the monitoring of these cases is very difficult for the CPD. But due to the sensitivities the issue has, especially since 2015, we have arranged training with the police about discrimination issues. We have also arranged training with schools, other education facilities – anyone who has a direct contact with this issue.

'Lately, the CPD has opened three more offices – as a project – to create the possibility of being closer to the victims.'<sup>345</sup>

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## 5.6 Education and young people

5.6.1 Because the Ministry of Education is part of the NRM, they have been involved in raising awareness – in conjunction with the Ministry of Interior – about trafficking, particularly with those who have returned<sup>346</sup>.

5.6.2 In addition, there is a directive from the Ministry of Education which requires that all educational facilities must accept people back into schools who have returned from the diaspora abroad – whether a VoT or just as a migrant<sup>347</sup>.

5.6.3 The Ministry of Education said they also support returning migrants by providing special help with teachers or free books to help them get back into education. This might include women who left school or are older than

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<sup>342</sup> [Director of Social Services, Municipality of Tirana, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>343</sup> [Director of the National Centre of Victims of Human Trafficking, the Director of the National Centre of Victims of Domestic Violence and the specialist of the Albanian Social Services for the issues of tracking unaccompanied minors and domestic violence, 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>344</sup> [Director of Social Services, Municipality of Tirana, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>345</sup> [Commissioner for Protection against Discrimination, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>346</sup> [Ministry of Education 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>347</sup> [Ministry of Education 2 November 2017](#)

schooling age – but it is also done alongside working: they can do both half-and-half <sup>348</sup>.

5.6.4 The Ministry of Education told the FFT that it works with the shelters. 'It's a full-scale collaboration. The Ministry gets constant requests from the shelters from women who want to go to school. The same level of collaboration exists with the VoT shelters.' <sup>349</sup>

5.6.5 The Director of Curriculum, in the Regional Education Department in Kukes, spoke about the reintegration of returnees, especially children, noting they had had nearly 40 who have been returned with their families - mainly from Germany, but not the UK.

'There it was a big challenge. Some had stayed for 6 months, 1 year, 18 months. They had had some education in Germany, but some had not; they then lost some part of their education. The ones who had been to school in Germany had certificates, but were so poor they couldn't afford the translation. They got re-enrolled in school, but sometimes had to start a year lower. The parents were made aware and told it is better to get the full education, rather than risk missing out on something.

'Coming back was very traumatic for them. They were taken in the night and brought back. And they wanted to stay there, so were disappointed. But in some ways, it was good because they hadn't become accustomed to life in Germany and their customs, traditions etc.' <sup>350</sup>

5.6.6 The Director of the Centre for Youth Progress in Kukes said that they were seeing quite a few returnees, but they haven't identified where they are coming from. He said it was a difficult situation for them to integrate into the education system and that there are no specific programmes for young returnees who are struggling with the language and reading and writing<sup>351</sup>.

5.6.7 However, the Director of Social Services in Kukes said they have had many children who have gone through education abroad but this isn't recognised in Albania; or they have forgotten the Albanian language, so they have language courses available for them and he is hoping they will be able to use the centre that the FFT visited to accommodate this<sup>352</sup>.

5.6.8 He went on to say that for young adults, the challenges are related to employment, while for women and girls it is more complicated, because they are also facing cultural challenges, as they have to find a man to marry, which after emigration is very difficult<sup>353</sup>.

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<sup>348</sup> [Ministry of Education 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>349</sup> [Ministry of Education 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>350</sup> [Director of Curriculum in Kukes, 3 November 2017](#)

<sup>351</sup> [Center for Youth Progress in Kukes, 4 November 2017](#)

<sup>352</sup> [Center for Youth Progress in Kukes, 4 November 2017](#)

<sup>353</sup> [Center for Youth Progress in Kukes, 4 November 2017](#)



## 6. Awareness raising

- 6.1.1 The Director of Social Services in Kukes stated that awareness raising is a challenge as since an administrative territorial reform two years ago, their jurisdiction has expanded to cover all of the outlying villages as well as Kukes town itself. Because of the size and remoteness of the area, it is quite difficult for them to effectively raise awareness<sup>354</sup>.
- 6.1.2 The Director of Curriculum in Kukes noted, regarding violence in school, there has been a decrease because of the measures against the teachers who are violent towards the children. She continued:
- ‘We have had training with the teachers and students about gender equality, domestic violence. We have organised meetings between parents and teachers to talk about the issues.
- ‘Regarding specific material in the curriculum about violence in the home, there are three topics which deal with DV:
- ‘Civic education, Psychology and Social sciences.
- ‘These lessons have free hours where they talk about particular topics around violence in general, including DV (but others, like inter-personal violence in the streets). They make projects about this.
- ‘We have also invited police officers into the school to talk about violence about how to reduce it, how to address it and how to report it. Violence is not widely reported.
- ‘On anti-trafficking measures, there is not anything very specific on this, but they are included in the lessons mentioned above. We also talk about things like drugs, alcohol and smoking. These are phenomena that lead to violence (albeit not really trafficking).’<sup>355</sup>
- 6.1.3 In relation to awareness raising in schools, the Director of Curriculum in Kukes said that they were seeing an impact and although there are cases of violence involving young people these are mainly due to economic reasons. Things are changing and young men are treating their wives better than their fathers did<sup>356</sup>.
- 6.1.4 The Albanian Ombudsman said that they have seven regional offices and these work not only on prevention and detection, but also on identifying issues of DV and VoT. At an institutional level, there have been many developments on this and in each institution, they have someone who deals with DV and children and family issues<sup>357</sup>.
- 6.1.5 Several sources noted that October has been the month of action against VHT and November is now the month of action against VDV. These awareness-raising campaigns (for which the government has specific funds)

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<sup>354</sup> [Director of Social Services in Municipality of Kukes, 3 November 2017](#)

<sup>355</sup> [Director of Curriculum in Kukes, 3 November 2017](#)

<sup>356</sup> [Director of Curriculum in Kukes, 3 November 2017](#)

<sup>357</sup> [Albanian Ombudsman, 6 November 2017](#)

are a key factor in bringing forward victims of trafficking and domestic violence<sup>358 359 360</sup>.

- 6.1.6 Anila Trimi, of the Office of the National Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Persons at the Ministry of Interior said that they had just approved a module for pre-university education level on training – how to prevent trafficking, and how to report cases.

Ms Trimi said that they also have a free app for Android phones where people can not only report cases, but also see information about cases and understand more about what support and information is available.

Most of activities are done in schools, and done in cooperation with partners<sup>361</sup>.

- 6.1.7 The FFT met with Zamira Gjini, the Director of pre-University Education at the Ministry of Education. She spoke about a special programme started in 2015, implemented in cooperation with NGOs, called 'Stop Violence in Schools' and another started in 2016, in cooperation with the Council of Europe, to tackle bullying which is being trialled in 21 schools. These are quite broad programmes encompassing all kinds of violence<sup>362</sup>.

See also [Police work within the community](#)

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## 7. Mental health provision

### 7.1 Hospitals

- 7.1.1 There are four psychiatric hospitals in Albania: Tirana, Shkoder, Elbasan and Vlore. Stay is limited to three weeks<sup>363 364</sup>. The two largest in Vlore (St Patrick's) has 180 beds and Elbasan has 310. Around 75% of people in St Patrick's have chronic illnesses and have been there for many years<sup>365</sup>. The other two facilities are psychiatric wards of larger hospitals, Tirana has 90 beds (10 for children/adolescents) and Shkoder 35<sup>366</sup>.

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### 7.2 Number of psychiatrists

- 7.2.1 The FFT were told that there is a ratio of 1.5 psychiatrists per 100,000 of the population<sup>367</sup>.

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<sup>358</sup> [Director of the National Centre of Victims of Human Trafficking, the Director of the National Centre of Victims of Domestic Violence and the specialist of the Albanian Social Services for the issues of tracking unaccompanied minors and domestic violence, 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>359</sup> [Ministry of Interior, 31 October 2017](#)

<sup>360</sup> [IOM 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>361</sup> [Ministry of Interior, 31 October 2017](#)

<sup>362</sup> [Ministry of Education 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>363</sup> [D&E 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>364</sup> [Ministry of Interior, 31 October 2017](#)

<sup>365</sup> [Ministry of Interior, 31 October 2017](#)

<sup>366</sup> [Ministry of Interior, 31 October 2017](#)

<sup>367</sup> [Ministry of Interior, 31 October 2017](#)

### 7.3 Community provision

- 7.3.1 The FFT were told that Albania's reform of mental health is trying to change the situation to a more community based approach. There are community support clinics which are aimed at rehabilitating and supporting the transition from hospitalisation to home<sup>368</sup>.
- 7.3.2 D and E commented that the community centres are always full. Some religious organisations also have spaces but these are also always full. There are very few chances for long term support for really serious cases<sup>369</sup>.
- 7.3.3 There are nine mental health community day centres around the country which offer multi-disciplinary services with psychologists, psychiatrists, a psychiatric nurse, social workers and occupational therapists<sup>370</sup>.

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### 7.4 Referrals and access

- 7.4.1 People who live in remote areas are usually referred to specialist teams by their GPs<sup>371</sup>.
- 7.4.2 Primary health care is offered for free whether or not the person has insurance. If a person follows the referral system, they can access the secondary health services for free<sup>372 373</sup>. Mentally ill people have been positively discriminated against so they get access and treated for the associated social issues<sup>374</sup>.

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### 7.5 Women living in shelters

- 7.5.1 At the meeting with the Directors of the NRCVHT, NRCVDV and the Albanian Social Services the FFT was informed that, as in line with Albanian legislation, every person who approaches the shelters is subject to a mental health assessment and a report is produced. Depending on the level of treatment required and severity, it can be dealt with in either the shelter or the person can be sent to a specific centre<sup>375</sup>.
- 7.5.2 The Director of the NRCVHT spoke of a specific example of a person who has mental health issues, and they have been undergoing treatment in the centre for two years now<sup>376</sup>.

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<sup>368</sup> [Ministry of Interior, 31 October 2017](#)

<sup>369</sup> [D&E 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>370</sup> [Ministry of Interior, 31 October 2017](#)

<sup>371</sup> [Ministry of Interior, 31 October 2017](#)

<sup>372</sup> [Ministry of Interior, 31 October 2017](#)

<sup>373</sup> [Ministry of Interior, 31 October 2017](#)

<sup>374</sup> [Ministry of Interior, 31 October 2017](#)

<sup>375</sup> [Director of the National Centre of Victims of Human Trafficking, the Director of the National Centre of Victims of Domestic Violence and the specialist of the Albanian Social Services for the issues of tracking unaccompanied minors and domestic violence, 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>376</sup> [Director of the National Centre of Victims of Human Trafficking, the Director of the National Centre of Victims of Domestic Violence and the specialist of the Albanian Social Services for the issues of tracking unaccompanied minors and domestic violence, 1 November 2017](#)

- 7.5.3 Normally, the shelters are equipped with a psychiatrist. The law provides that every person in a shelter has the right to the same level of treatment as any other citizen<sup>377 378</sup>.
- 7.5.4 The Head of Mental Health and Addictology at the Ministry of Health said psycho-social support is offered to people who come out of shelters, they will get more support than others and there is no time limit on how long they are monitored in the community – it depends on the diagnosis<sup>379</sup>.
- 7.5.5 In terms of teacher awareness and response to trafficking and domestic violence, the Director of Curriculum in Kukes noted that teachers are usually more focussed on giving knowledge and teaching. Psychologists are now in schools and it is their responsibility to respond to these issues and they have tried to prevent it and encouraged the children to speak about it. She was personally not aware of any cases that have been reported to the police via the schools<sup>380</sup>.

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## 8. Women living alone

- 8.1.1 Several sources said that women can live alone in Tirana and women can internally relocate to Tirana to get away from violence in their home town or village. Social media is allowing more women to realise that they can live alone in Tirana, working and paying rent <sup>381 382 383</sup>. The Municipality of Tirana said they see about 67 people a day coming to Tirana from all over the country looking for a job<sup>384</sup>. It is easier for young women to live alone than older women<sup>385</sup>.
- 8.1.2 It was acknowledged though, that in rural areas it was more difficult for women to live alone without family or social support, although there are some women who do live alone successfully<sup>386 387 388 389 390</sup>.
- 8.1.3 The Director of Curriculum in Kukes said that if a woman wanted to become independent, there are ways to achieve it. For example, there are women who work on carpets or as seamstresses or in other similar small

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<sup>377</sup> [Director of the National Centre of Victims of Human Trafficking, the Director of the National Centre of Victims of Domestic Violence and the specialist of the Albanian Social Services for the issues of tracking unaccompanied minors and domestic violence, 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>378</sup> [Ministry of Interior, 31 October 2017](#)

<sup>379</sup> [Ministry of Interior, 31 October 2017](#)

<sup>380</sup> [Director of Curriculum in Kukes, 3 November 2017](#)

<sup>381</sup> [Director of Social Services, Municipality of Tirana, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>382</sup> [Albanian Ombudsman, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>383</sup> [Center for Youth Progress in Kukes, 4 November 2017](#)

<sup>384</sup> [Director of Social Services, Municipality of Tirana, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>385</sup> [Albanian Red Cross, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>386</sup> [Director of Social Services, Municipality of Tirana, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>387</sup> [Albanian Ombudsman, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>388</sup> [Center for Youth Progress in Kukes, 4 November 2017](#)

<sup>389</sup> [Director of Curriculum in Kukes, 3 November 2017](#)

<sup>390</sup> [Ministry of Health and Social Protection, 2 November 2017](#)

entrepreneurships which can be done at home. They also work in a family business or elsewhere<sup>391</sup>.

- 8.1.4 The Director of the Women's Counselling and Social Services Centre commented that Kukes is in the poorest region in the country with unemployment officially at 36%, although in reality its much higher, with half of families on social welfare of 50EUR per month per family.

She said that even if a woman had the economic means, it would be 'very scary' to live alone; she wouldn't be subject to physical violence, but the psychological pressure would be there<sup>392</sup>.

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## 8.2 Divorce

- 8.2.1 Divorce is becoming more and more common in Tirana, although generally among younger people<sup>393</sup>, however there is societal prejudice against divorce in northern Albania<sup>394</sup>.

- 8.2.2 The Tirana Legal Aid Society noted that last year, they handled 173 divorce cases; 28 involved domestic violence.

'...You can get it [divorce] through the courts. But if you are not represented, it is difficult. You need support from civil society organisations.

'Victims of trafficking are, however, a special category; they do get legal support and legal aid if they want it.

'Only have to prove to the court that you want a divorce. The law is quite easy, but it depends for example, if there are children involved. It can take 3-6 months, but there are complex ones that can take longer. However, a man still may have visitation/access rights. But if a man is subject to a protection measure, these are in conflict – but they have happened in some cases.'<sup>395</sup>

- 8.2.3 In 2017, up to the end of October, in Kukes state, but mainly in the town, there had been 30 divorces, of which the predominate reason was DV <sup>396</sup>.

- 8.2.4 The Albanian Ombudsman noted that even where a court order is issued difficulties exists for mothers to get maintenance for their children from the children's father. Children of 12 are given a psychological evaluation and asked which parent they would prefer to live with, however it is the psychiatrist's and court's decision which prevails<sup>397</sup>.

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## 8.3 Stigma and discrimination attached to divorce and living alone

- 8.3.1 The Commissioner for Protection against Discrimination noted that they had not had any complaints brought by divorced women. Discrimination might be

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<sup>391</sup> [Director of Curriculum in Kukes, 3 November 2017](#)

<sup>392</sup> [Women's Counselling and Social Services Centre in Kukes, 4 November 2017](#)

<sup>393</sup> [Director of Social Services, Municipality of Tirana, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>394</sup> [Caritas, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>395</sup> [Tirana Legal Aid Society, 31 October 2017](#)

<sup>396</sup> [Director of Social Services in Municipality of Kukes, 3 November 2017](#)

<sup>397</sup> [Albanian Ombudsman, 6 November 2017](#)

socially-based, but not specifically against divorced women or single mothers<sup>398</sup>.

- 8.3.2 Several sources said that although in some parts of Albania there may be a stigma to living alone, this is not true of Tirana<sup>399 400</sup>.
- 8.3.3 The Director of Social Services in Kukes noted, that in rural areas, there is a stigma for women to get divorced and live alone. He said that sometimes there is reluctance to employ a divorced woman and the social stigma also accompanies the children in their school and neighbourhood. He said the cases of bullying in these cases have increased<sup>401</sup>.
- 8.3.4 The Ministry for Health and Social Welfare said there is no prejudice in Albania against women from different areas<sup>402</sup>.

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## 9. Stigma attached to victims of domestic abuse and trafficking

- 9.1.1 Many sources said that Albania is a patriarchal society and victims of GBV are often blamed for what happened to them; communities are small and people don't want to become subject of gossip with an accompanying sense of dishonour of leaving their family<sup>403 404 405</sup>.
- 9.1.2 The French police attaché said that when VoT have been housed in a shelter in France, they don't want to return to Albania – and the families don't want them to come back either. He said it was matter of honour, but it was not linked to Kanun<sup>406</sup>.
- 9.1.3 D and E are working to counter stigma particularly in cases of VoT. They have produced a photo novella showing how a young girl could easily become an unwitting VoT. They shared a hard copy with the FFT. It can be found here <https://we.tl/BwMelV3lo0>. They have also shown it as film at various places across the country and they said it had a very positive impact, with one man approaching them to say he had rejected his daughter but having seen the film felt guilty<sup>407</sup>. The Ministry of Interior also said that some families do welcome their daughters back<sup>408</sup>.
- 9.1.4 The Directors of the NRCVDV and NRCVHT said that prejudice against people who have been in shelters has decreased a lot due to a change in mentality and it is now a very manageable issue. There are no problems for people who want to reintegrate and work – the only thing that could hold

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<sup>398</sup> [Commissioner for Protection against Discrimination, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>399</sup> [Director of Social Services, Municipality of Tirana, 6 November 2017](#)

<sup>400</sup> [Ministry of Interior, 31 October 2017](#)

<sup>401</sup> [Director of Social Services in Municipality of Kukes, 3 November 2017](#)

<sup>402</sup> [Ministry of Health and Social Protection, 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>403</sup> [D&E 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>404</sup> [Center for Youth Progress in Kukes, 4 November 2017](#)

<sup>405</sup> [Director of Curriculum in Kukes, 3 November 2017](#)

<sup>406</sup> [Police Attaché French Embassy, 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>407</sup> [D&E 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>408</sup> [Ministry of Interior, 31 October 2017](#)



people back are medical issues. However, for VHT leaving a shelter, because this situation is confidential, potential employers would not be told that the woman has been a victim<sup>409</sup>.

- 9.1.5 Regarding families who have unsuccessfully claimed asylum abroad the Director for Curriculum at the Regional Education Department in Kukes said that there is absolutely no stigma attached to their return. They were a 'bit sad' to come back, particularly the parents who had sold their belongings in Albania to fund the journey, but that is it <sup>410</sup>.

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## 10. Media

### 10.1 Media coverage of trafficking and DV issues

- 10.1.1 Several sources stated that there was a big problem with reporting by the media and that trafficking is often incorrectly reported as prostitution<sup>411 412</sup>.
- 10.1.2 Women are objectified and women journalists are not given the respect they deserve<sup>413</sup>. BIRN commented that stories about DV and VoT do not sell well and most reporting is about politics.<sup>414</sup>

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### 10.2 Training

- 10.2.1 The UN had implemented an EU funded project (UNDP-IOM-UNW joint project) in 2014-16 with a strong component on media education. UN Women trained media reporters on how to ethically and professionally report trafficking in women and girls and gender based violence. Part of the project was also a monitoring process of audio-visual and print media which disclosed huge gaps in terms of human trafficking reporting. The UN stated: 'Investigative journalism was completely missing; root causes were not looked at; words used carelessly. We had some improvements immediately after, but not much by way of quality of reporting. Further educational programmes are needed.'<sup>415</sup>
- 10.2.2 UN Women had developed a dedicated module on how to report trafficking against women and girls and it will be included in the Faculty of Journalism curriculum<sup>416</sup>.
- 10.2.3 BIRN is trying to train journalists in investigative journalism<sup>417</sup>.

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<sup>409</sup> [Director of the National Centre of Victims of Human Trafficking, the Director of the National Centre of Victims of Domestic Violence and the specialist of the Albanian Social Services for the issues of tracking unaccompanied minors and domestic violence, 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>410</sup> [Director of Curriculum in Kukes, 3 November 2017](#)

<sup>411</sup> [IOM 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>412</sup> [BIRN 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>413</sup> [BIRN 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>414</sup> [BIRN 1 November 2017](#)

<sup>415</sup> [UN 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>416</sup> [UN 2 November 2017](#)

<sup>417</sup> [BIRN 1 November 2017](#)



# Annex A: Report on the Referral Mechanism against Domestic Violence in Tirana



GENERAL DIRECTORATE OF SOCIAL SERVICES

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## Report on the Referral Mechanism against Domestic Violence

Tirana Municipality, pursuant to:

- **Law No. 9669, dated 18.12.2006 "On Measures against Domestic Violence"**, as amended
- **CMD no. 334, dated 17.02.2011 "On the Coordination Mechanism for Referral of Domestic Violence Cases and its Methodology of Proceeding"**

Set up the Referral Mechanism in Tirana in May 2012.

Moreover, in implementation of the Council of Europe Convention for Prevention and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, Tirana Municipality has taken a number of actions to:

*Protect women from all forms of violence, and eliminate violence against women and domestic violence (Article 1).*

The Sector for Social Inclusion and Gender Equality in Tirana Municipality manages and assists in cases of domestic violence and gender-based violence providing protection, information, psychological and legal counseling, and coordination with all network actors, in interest of the victim.

This Mechanism reacts promptly and responsibly with the following services:

- Multidisciplinary support for survivors of domestic violence.
- Psychological and legal counseling.
- Support for cases of domestic violence in the relevant institutions: Court, Police, Execution, Prosecutor etc.
- Community awareness raising activities.
- 24 hours Hotline 116 117

## **Interdisciplinary Technical Equip (ITE)**

With the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding, and the establishment of the Referral Mechanism in Tirana, all actors appointed a representative to be part of the **Interdisciplinary Technical Equip (ITE)**. The ITE gathers on a regular monthly basis to discuss and manage cases of domestic violence and is composed by representatives of these institutions:

1. The Municipality's Office for Gender Equality;
2. Police Department;
3. District Court;
4. Prosecutor Office;
5. Bailiff Office;
6. Forensic Institute;
7. Regional Directory of Public Health;
8. Mother Teresa Hospital (QSUT);
9. Directory of Social Services;
10. Regional Education Directory;
11. Employment Office;
12. Shelter for Abused Women and Girls;
13. Community Centres Network "Today for the Future";
14. "Human Rights in Democracy" Center (included in the Referral Mechanism recently through a Memorandum of Understanding).

The Technical Equip participates in the case evaluation process and commits to solving it. Institutions are encouraged to be actively involved in case management and to coordinate work with each other so they can best serve survivors of domestic violence in the first place, as well as other family members affected by violence, which often have deep economic-social problems.

The Referral Mechanism, apart from caring for the needs of women and girls who have suffered from domestic violence, it supports perpetrators of violence too by referring them to the **Counseling Line for Men & Boys**, which helps them change their violent behaviors and rehabilitate.

## **Online Database of Domestic Violence Cases**

The Sector for Social Inclusion and Gender Equality is responsible for filing cases of domestic violence in the national database. During 2016, **404 cases of domestic violence** were filed.

These cases are now categorized according to administrative units, which are informed and in cooperation with respective police stations, follow the progress of domestic violence cases in their community.

### **Training the Representatives of the Administrative Units**

With the expansion of Tirana Municipality, part of it became the former communes', where a person was appointed in charge of the problems of women who have been abused.

In March 2016, the Sector for Social Inclusion and Gender Equality organized a training session for representatives of 13 new administrative units, former communes, for orientation towards providing a better service to persons affected by domestic violence.

In May 2016, training session was organized with representatives of Tirana's administrative units no. 1-11.

### **Awareness Raising Meetings**

The Sector of Social Inclusion and Gender Equality, in cooperation with the institutions part of the Referral Mechanism, organizes awareness raising campaigns against and to reduce gender-based and domestic violence. Campaigns such as "16 Days of Activism Against Gender and Domestic Violence", "Orange Day", "International Women's Day" have been dealt with by this sector in the most comprehensive and innovative formats, promoting massive participation of citizens, young people, the private sector, national and international institutions.

Awareness raising meetings conducted in 2016:

- **Tirana Police Stations nos. 1-6**, where 107 specialists of the area police and judicial police officers have benefited.
- **13 new administrative units (ex-communes)** altogether 405 members of respective communities have benefited.
- **10 health centers in Tirana** where 129 doctors and nurses have benefited.
- **7 schools** where 270 students have benefited.
- **26 members of staff of Mother Teresa Hospital (QSUT).**

### **Other services in support of women and girls during 2016:**

In fulfillment of the legal obligations of the local government in the area of housing of persons affected by domestic violence, under Article 23 of the Istanbul Convention, "Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to provide safe shelter and to use proactive approaches to victims, especially women and their children," Tirana Municipality is carrying out the procedures for establishing an **Emergency Shelter for Domestic Violence Victims.**

The Municipality of Tirana, pursuant to **Law no. 9232**, dated 13.5.2004, "**On social programs for housing of urban dwellers**", as amended; gives priority to victims of domestic violence and persons with income below the minimum subsistence, including women who are head of households.

The Municipality of Tirana for the first time in 2016 allocated a special **fund of 6.000.000 ALL**, in the form of lending for **Women Entrepreneurs**, from 18 to 60 years of age. This fund aims to support sustainable and viable business ideas, created by women capable of surviving the competitive market, in various small or small business industries in the territory of the Municipality of Tirana as well as to promote employment by opening up new jobs. This project has supported **16**

**applicants** with the best business plans.

Women's participation at decision-making levels: gender quotas have increased from 30% to 50% for candidates on the list of municipal council members. At **Tirana's municipal council, currently 50% of the councilors are women.**

Also referring to Tirana's staff from **474 employees, 310 are women and 164 are male**; i.e. 65.4% are women.

# Annex B: Terms of Reference (TOR)

## Subjects for investigation

- **Domestic Violence**
  - Prevalence.
  - Societal attitudes and 'honour'-based beliefs.
  - Registration on moving to a new area:
    - Is it possible for someone to access personal data for illicit purposes through the civil registration system?
    - Are policemen or other officials able to gain access to personal data for illicit purposes through the civil registration system?
    - Is it possible for someone to use bribery to gain access to personal data through the civil registration system?
    - Is it true that when a person moves to a new area to live, they would be checked against the municipality record of their last place of residence? If so, is it true that a former partner could be alerted to their presence in the country through such a check?
  - Effectiveness of preventative and reactive measures from the state.
    - Arrests, prosecutions, sentences.
    - Other protective measures (restraining orders or similar)
    - Other forms of intervention/mediation available.
  
- **'Fallen'/Estranged women**

As per DV issues
  
- **Victims of Trafficking**

As per DV issues +

  - The risk of re-trafficking
  
- **Women's Shelters**
  - Numbers, locations, capacity
  - Funding – especially at NGO run shelters
  - Projects – whether projects run by IOM are still operating

- Acceptance criteria and referral mechanism(s)
- Security features and potential for contact/detection
  - DV – from spouses/family
  - Trafficking – from potential traffickers
- Is there evidence that government-run shelters are ‘heavily influenced by politics?’
  
- **Support and reintegration programmes** – especially for women with children – both via the shelters and the state more generally, including ongoing support for a woman on leaving a shelter.
  - Physical and mental health, incl. and other psychological support
  - Housing
  - Education and skills
  - Employment
  - Social support and access to benefits
  - Childcare
  - Relevant NGOs
  
- **Internal relocation options**
  - If/How registration affects this?
  - Actors of persecution locating a woman via the police (corruption/collusion)
  - How common is it for single women/single mothers to live alone in Tirana or elsewhere?

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## Annex C: List of sources

1. Albanian Ombudsman
2. Albanian Red Cross
3. Albania Social Services
4. ARSIS
5. Birn Albania
6. Caritas Albania
7. Centre for Legal Initiatives
8. Centre for Youth Progress, Kukes
9. Commissioner for Protection against Discrimination
10. Different and Equal
11. Director of the National Reception Centre of Victims of Domestic Violence
12. Director of National Reception Centre of Victims of Human Trafficking
13. French Embassy
14. General Directory of Police
15. IOM
16. Kukes Police
17. Ministry of Education
18. Ministry of Health
19. Ministry of Health and Social Protection
20. Ministry of Interior
21. Regional Education Department, Kukes
22. Social Services, Kukes
23. Social Service, Municipality of Tirana
24. Tirana District Court
25. Tirana Legal Aid society
26. UN
27. US Embassy
28. Women's Counselling and Social Services Centre (NGO)

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# Annex D: FFM background explained to sources

## Home Office fact finding mission: background

Officials from the United Kingdom (UK) are undertaking a fact-finding mission (FFM) to Albania. The team will be interviewing different people to obtain information about domestic violence towards women and women who are victims, or potential victims of trafficking.

The information you give to the FFM team may be quoted in a report which will be placed on the Home Office's website and made available to the public. It will be used to assist UK immigration officials and judges involved in the asylum and human rights decision making process. However, the FFM team will only publish information you provide with your consent. They will also give you an opportunity to review the notes of the interview to ensure they are an accurate reflection of the conversation and ask if you are willing to be identified as the source of the information you may provide in an interview.

You may not wish to be publicly identified. If so, the FFM team will ask if you are willing to be identified in more general terms – for example, by the name of your organisation, or as 'an official of an international humanitarian organisation'. Alternatively, the FFM team will ask if you are content for the information to be used without naming you or your organisation, simply referring to you as 'a source'.

The FFM team would also find it helpful if you could provide some background to your organisation (where appropriate) and your role in the organisation. This will help them to understand the context of the information you provide.

The FFM team consists of three officials from the Home Office, the government department responsible for immigration and asylum.

More information about the Home Office can be found on our website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/home-office>

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# Annex E: Notes from sources

## Ministry of Interior

Anila Trimi explained that, prior to her current post, she used to be a police officer, so some of this what is told comes from that knowledge and experience.

### **Prevalence and perception of prevalence of trafficking from Albania**

Large number of potential victims of trafficking in the UK, but this number not recognised in Albania. Too high. More than half were not genuine cases. AT believed they used the story to profit from asylum rights. AT also didn't believe that the UK was one of the main trafficking destinations. This is more likely to be Kosovo and other neighbouring countries, as well as GER, SUI, GRE, IRA.

AT also questioned the number of cases being identified as PVOT in the UK. It doesn't match the figures and the wider study of people they see in Albania. The numbers also concerned them.

### **Reasons why destination countries are as suggested, rather than UK**

Can travel very easily in the Schengen area. They can stay for 90 days. Also more of a demand for sexual services.

### **Statistics on convictions etc. - these were sent to the FFT at the Home Office (at end of this note).**

### **Profile of victims**

People are mainly recruited through marriage, and increasingly through the use of social media. Also starting to see more girls recruiting girls, on behalf of the trafficker. One girl shows another pictures of a beautiful life.

Typical women are 18-25 year olds, but does include those younger. Other than that, there is no typical profile. AT explained that she had seen cases from all different types of background.

At the same time, there are also cases where there is some degree of agreement or prior knowledge – at least at the start. For example, some know they will work in the sex industry. They do it now, despite it being illegal in Albania. However, they think they will have more of the money or more control over what they do (but they don't). Some are also promised better jobs and had seen a few cases of being promised better education. We still class these cases as victims of trafficking.

## **Extent to which families are aware or complicit**

Children are travelling with parents or cousins, then they are returning without the children. We are trying to establish an alert, so that we know. Parents know that there may be criminal proceedings for leaving their children in another country – it's on the notarial declaration for travel. There are also cases where the parents don't know.

## **Retribution against families**

AT was not sure, and would be better coming from the police. However, she thought it was not common. Also explained that they had one case under witness protection at the end of last year. They had had the initial assessment, were referred to a shelter, then entered the WPP. But this is the first case since 2011, so not common to use the WPP.

## **Number of cases being investigated at any time**

### **Statistics on investigations etc. - these were sent to the FFT at the Home Office (at end of this note).**

Since 2013, there has been an increase in sentences by the Serious Crimes Court. In 2013, there was one conviction, compared to 22 last year [2016]. Changes to the Criminal Code to move investigations to a more local level. If it is one person who does the trafficking, it is the District Court who investigate; if it is more structured – a group – it is the Serious Crimes Court.

Also explained that have now started common training with prosecutors and police. It is new for them – a new way of investigating. Need special skills for this. Explained we needed to share experiences from the Serious Crimes Courts. The police are being trained and are pushed to do more.

## **Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)**

These deal with the investigations of victims of trafficking. There are two stages:

1. Initial. This can be done by police or by any stakeholder.
2. Formal. This is to provide a formal status as 'trafficked'. But need a proper interview, by the State Social Services and the police.

In the SOPs, the police can interview and offer support to a victim regardless of their cooperation with the judicial process. In cases of children, the interview is conducted by a Child Protection Officer and the police.

## **Services offered**

There are two state-run shelters, this is a high security place guarded by the ALB state police.

Three NGO-run shelters in Vlora, Elbasan and Tirana. The Elbasan one deals mainly with children, and can house 15-20. Others deal with women, girls and men. But men and women are not put in the same shelter, they rent apartments for them.

## **Who can make a complaint**

Had many cases where family come forward to report.

When a case is reported, the police are obliged by law to start an investigation of a missing person. After investigation it can be re-classified. There is always a preliminary investigation.

Had cases from Facebook – the NGOs forwarded a message they received from a person on Facebook, and we started an investigation. Also had referrals from the British Liaison Officer who forwarded information, and again we started an investigation. The police must forward the case to the Prosecutor's Office.

## **Revision of SOPs**

This is underway. This is led by the Office of the National Coordinator, and supported by IOM. Also linked to changes of law on the rights of children since June 2017.

We have also been around the 12 districts of Albania and had many stakeholder comments. It started in 2011, we started reviewing what went right and what went wrong, but may have to review again and review the institutions involved, depending on new Government structure.

We want more people to be involved in the NRM. But all NGOs are involved in the identification of victims of trafficking, depending on expertise and what stage it is at.

## **Database**

AT explained that they also have a database with data about identification to reintegration. Can also identify trends, for example, where people are moving around. It contains the data from the forms that accompanies the SOPs that are sent. It is the responsibility of the Office of the National Coordinator. They are the only people with access.

Personal details are included on the database, but this is done only with the consent of the victim. No women had refused consent, to date, and to the best of AT's knowledge.

Also not aware of unauthorised access. The name and address of the shelter is not included; only the name of the city. And where people go back to the community, that is what it says .

## **Awareness raising**

So just had anti-trafficking month, and did lots of awareness raising. But AT explained it is not just about this; it's things all year round. For example, AT explained they had just approved a module for pre-university education level on training – how to prevent trafficking, and how to report cases.

There is also a hotline, which is 24/7 and anonymous.

Also have a free app for Android phones where people can not only report cases, but also see information about cases and understand more about what support and information is available.

Most of the activities are done in schools, and done in cooperation with partners.

### **Support & Reintegration Assistance**

AT acknowledged that they are not 100% successful, but then this is not unique to Albania. Small country and small communities. Also a contract between the person and the state, and therefore a bit of a willingness of the person to cooperate.

We try to accommodate people. We try to assist them find a job or with vocational training. Since 2015, we have increased support. Then we funded 16 employees to the shelters; in 2016, this went up to 30. We also supplied money for food.

AT also explained that the person did not want to go into a shelter, they could live in the community. AT was aware that some women did not want to, for various reasons.

Also added that additional funding had been supplied through money confiscated from seized criminal assets. Aiming for this to continue. It is only a small amount, but it goes direct to the shelters. Also confirmed that the money doesn't have to come direct from crimes related to trafficking; it can be any illicit criminal behaviour.

### **Mental Health Provision**

Accepted that mental health support is a problem. Albania does not have a dedicated place for this generally, and also can't leave a person with mental health issues in a hospital for too long. Despite this, there is free health care and, since 2015, amendments to the law made it easier to get health cards for free. So when the NRM receive a new referral, they refer it on so the person can access a health card.

Also, despite the lack of a dedicated mental health centre, there are specialists at the shelters, psychiatrists are not attached to shelters but may provide assistance, and other NGOs may also be able to assist.

### **Time at Shelters**

AT explained that there was no time limit on how long a person had to stay in a shelter – it all depends on the person. We just try to help them start a life as part of the reintegration program we help them to find jobs and rent an apartment with two or three girls.

### **Potential Stigma for Victims**

AT explained that it depended where you are. Some people stay in Tirana, and it was mostly not there (no stigma). But if a person stayed in a community where everyone knows each other, it would be more difficult. AT added that there have been examples of the family welcoming the person back, which really helped with the reintegration program, but also acknowledged that some can't.

## **Support for women with children**

AT explained that the state can and does support women with children. For example, there is financial support to pay for kindergarten; can also support paying for food/meals. It is not perfect, but the basic needs are met. A single mother can send a child to nursery for free.

## **Prevalence**

Not more in the north or south – across the country and across all classes.

## **Statistics provided by the MOI:**

### **STATISTICS 2016**

#### **I. STATE POLICE Data:**

1. Trafficking in Minors 22 cases
2. Trafficking of adults 47
3. Exploitation of prostitution 81 case

#### **II. Prosecutor's Office:**

1. Trafficking of adults 19 (persons under investigation 24)
2. Trafficking of minors 8 (persons under investigation 13)

#### **III. First instance of Serious Crimes Court:**

1. Trafficking of adults 11 persons sentenced
2. Trafficking of minors 7 persons sentenced

#### IV. Data on victims

Data on victims/Potential victims of trafficking January-31.12.2016	95 VoT/PVoT	
	Status	
	VoT	PVoT
	33	62
	Age	
	Adults	Children
	51	44
	Sex	
	M	F
	11	84
	Nationality	
	Albanian	Foreigners
87	8	

**2017**

##### I. State Police data:

1. Trafficking in minors 7 cases
2. Trafficking of adults 16 cases
3. Exploitation of prostitution 36 cases

##### 4. Data on victims

Data on VoT/PVoT identified during January - 25.09.2017	77 VoT/PVoT	
	Status	
	VoT	PVoT
	22	55
	Age	
	Adults	Children
	39	38
	Sex	
	M	F
	15	62
	Nationality	
	Albanian	Foreign
70	7	

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## Meeting with Tirana Legal Aid Society, 31 October 2017

CAFOD UK supported.

Working with Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

We provide legal aid support across a wide range of categories, for many years. Priorities have been to poor families, and those with children.

Not like an organisation that provides support like the shelters.

Cases are directed to us.

Mostly involved in fulfilling legal needs of victims, including victims of domestic violence (DV); children; elderly people; Roma – mainly people who can't get legal aid support from the state.

State offer legal aid. There is a law on this and a state commission that should be providing support on this. But in civil cases, this is not being fulfilled. Not an opinion; other reports show this.

Analytical report, linked to judicial reforms, which looked at this. Identified a more fundamental problem in the justice system in Albania.

So, they get some support on their status as a victim, but also need support on things like divorce.

Been an active part of the consultation process as part of the laws changing the justice system.

One of the major changes has been the position and role of the victim of the justice system. The victim can make claims and have expanded rights. Legislation has gone through major changes, and in our opinion this expands the victims' rights. This is a good thing. Contains elements that were missing before, like demanding compensation.

One of the last cases we have been handling has been a Romanian woman who had been trafficked through Greece. She got married and had three children who were facing potential statelessness. The man was controlling the money; using drugs and she was basically like a slave. The case was reported by relatives, who asked for anonymity.

A policeman was living by the house where the woman was and didn't do anything. We helped. Got her placed in a shelter. Got the children registered. Tried to contact relatives in Romania. We registered the children. We were notified by another person that she would be alone at a certain time, so we went round then. We notified the police, but they were slow to act. We then said that if they did not respond, we would report them to the MoI.

It is hard though. Neighbours don't always report. People are scared.

We work closely with the shelters in Tirana. They opened up, took the family in, gave them clothes. Then took knowledge about the children, to get them into the education system here. The man is now been arrested but we don't know if he will be in the court session. We are nervous that he will get a minimum sentence, for example for domestic violence, but we want to look properly as there are aspects of trafficking to this case too. The police also found knives and two unlawful firearms with 200 bullets. She also said she was used like a prostitute in the house.

Despite this, information and cases are generally referred from the shelters. When they get a victim, the shelters refer to us to get legal support when they need it. We can't provide information about identifying victims of trafficking; we provide legal support.

In majority of cases, information is provided by the shelter. They have lawyers there and can represent them if they want to. But they sometimes refer cases to us where there are other aspects, more legal advice needed on things like divorce, parental custody.

### **How to get divorce; how common**

You can get it through the courts. But if you are not represented, it is difficult. You need support from civil society organisations.

Victims of trafficking are, however, a special category; they do get legal support and legal aid if they want it.

Only have to prove to the court that you want a divorce. The law is quite easy, but it depends for example, if there are children involved. It can take 3-6 months, but there are complex ones that can take longer.

However, a man still may have visitation/access rights. But if a man is subject to a protection measure, these are in conflict – but they have happened in some cases.

Highlighted an example of one man who killed his wife after throwing her off a balcony; also locked their children in another room. When the case came to court, we asked that he have parental responsibility removed (as he was facing a 35-year sentence). But after the judge said he would, he did not. Corruption is a factor.

### **Provide other services available**

Yes, of course. It's not enough to be issued with a Protection Order. They need other actions that will protect them in the future.

Last year, we had 173 divorce cases; 28 involved domestic violence.

c. 2,000 Protection Orders issued this year.

Lawyers allowed to ask for a Protection Order.

A Protection Order is free of charge; but the expert is not free. This is why we are involved. We also cover the costs of judicial process.

### **Effectiveness of Protection Orders**

We ask for the most effective actions from the court. In some cases, I have asked for parental custody orders.

Lots of problems in implementing Protection Orders. The courts will say that the men cannot get close to the victim, but they live in the same house or so close together that it can't be implemented.

A problem of execution of Protection Orders. Once a person hasn't respected a Protection Order, it switches from a civil to a criminal matter. But it depends on whether it is reported.

Don't really think these are effective. They need other things to accompany it. For example, if the person is to stay away from the other person, you need to provide that they can. Or, subsequent meetings should be supervised/monitored. But these don't happen often. And there is a problem with people being encouraged to report breaches of a Protection Order. When the cases are reported, the police are effective and do respond.

DV is something that affects everywhere, but particularly in rural areas.

Women don't really report the domestic violence. They don't like to present their problems. They also know they have nowhere to go. They don't see a solution.

A percentage of women accept DV.

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## **Meeting with two judges from the family section at the Tirana District Court 1 November 2017**

The FFM Team met with two judges from the Tirana District Court and the Chancellor.

### **Prevalence**

There is not an actual benchmark or concrete data on this, and the court is just a decision-making part, we are unable to give a clear view.

In the last 6-7 years, the volume of cases brought to court has increased but we are not able to judge whether that is a result of social conditions or not – but it is a fact it has increased.

In the last couple of years, we are seeing more applications for protection from minors. Not able to judge the reasons for this.

### **Applying for a PO**

As per the ALB law, the application provides that a wide range of subjects can apply for it – the victim, a minor – the main source is the police. So, it starts by them going to the police. There is a standard form that you fill and that is presented to court.

As per the ALB law Prosecution Office can do this, but it does not happen often. The main source is the direct parties involved.

With minors, the NGOs are involved too. Also, the family lawyers, it can be a wide range of people depending on the law.

The procedures follow that, depending on who brings the case it has different time limits. For minors, is 24 hours. For adults it is 48 hours.

## Considering cases

As per ALB law, the courts start from the rule of law principle. The judges start from the criteria within the provision of the law. There is not any concrete or specific requirement to provide specific proof; it comes from the police or the victim.

90% of cases that are brought forward are accepted for protection.

Usually the first phase when protection is given, on the file there is data or reports or statements or evidence from the police, third parties or the victim. Can also be visual proof.

Due to the ALB law, it has two phases:

1. Urgent, to decide whether to have a PO based on the proof that is on the file (see above).
2. Second, further information – phone calls, medico-legal reports, more info from police possibly on perpetrator – then they decide on what to do.

90% accepted at the first stage. Then investigate further.

As well, during the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage, is a request given to the police to provide a psychological report in the case of minors. This is to determine whether to apply a stronger reaction from the court if necessary.

Also, a source for getting proof of the violence is the Social Services Office, and the statements of the other family members. But this latter one is a problem, given the strong family ties that exist here in ALB. Depending on the full access and the statements on the file will determine how long the PO will remain in place. There are also cases where the victim is a repeat person, and the length of time is one year. Sometimes the evidence is not so strong, but the judge believes that the person is a victim, in which case they give a shorter time (e.g. 3 months).

Sometimes, due to property issues, the people sometimes apply for a PO in order to avoid the other party. The judges are in a very difficult position. There is little evidence to go on; little history. This is a recent phenomenon. Just to avoid the other party, and have a stronger claim when it comes to the property. Most of the cases that come to court when it comes to property disputes are rejected. They direct the parties to civil proceedings. Rather than just leave the property, it is sometimes just a naïve way of thinking they'll get what they want.

## Terms and Conditions attached

In practice:

1. No violence
2. No contact, incl. by phone
3. Leave the house
4. In extreme cases, to pay for the rent of the victim
5. Stay a certain distance away from the victim
6. Also looked at the rehabilitation of the perpetrator, but this is difficult to enforce – partly due to a lack of capacity (e.g. centres to deal with alcoholism). Have had quite a few cases like that.

7. Also, families with minors want to go to a shelter, but can't because of capacity. Can only send the victim to a State-run shelter, not an NGO-run shelter. The capacities are lacking very much at state-level.

Difficult because the law is fine, but the capacity is lacking. One key problem has been the economic situation, which makes it difficult for people to live apart.

Another key reason for the rise in number of POs, is that people believe in the criminal justice system more. With evolution of society, information, social media – they understand there is a solution. They also see themselves less as just victim, but with a solution available and the belief that the court will do something, the law is more on their side.

### **Identifying victims**

Been part of family court for a long time. We have learnt to understand that it is a psychological point of view. It's easy to identify when a person has been a victim. Another benchmark, the victim comes to court unprotected; the other side is protected. There are some standards that help us identify a victim. But it is difficult to be precise. But it is a broad issue involving economic, education, geographic factors. Not always about proving in the first stage or the second. Sometimes also a matter of the person who comes to court – can tell if the person is a victim of physical violence, or you find out they are a repeat victim.

### **Numbers**

District Court has data available, for both stage 1 and stage 2. Can make a request to the court.

### **Other support/legal fees/legal aid**

No court fees for being a victim. The legal report – the psychological ones for minors – are paid for by the state. Normally, the fees are charged to the perpetrator (at stage 2). For the stage 1 process, that is charged to the state. Good work has also been done by the NGOs to make the system accessible. The problem is more about the implementation of the POs.

### **Imprisonment**

Yes, if they break the conditions of the court, they can go to prison.

Even if the perpetrator has an open criminal case or is already in prison, it doesn't stop the civil court proceedings from going on.

### **Enforcement of POs and role of the police (willingness/ability)**

Normally, the work of the police force is within the confidence and duty of the courts. We don't have a problem with the police. Problems are more with other institutions, but also the other things we said. In particular, the perpetrator is usually the male,

who is the main income provider and the economic situation creates a difficulty in enforcing the PO, which can also aggravate the situation.

Enforcement from state institutions is not about the police, it's the social institutions that lack the capacity to do things at times.

In 90% of cases, the complaint is brought from the police. The court is not able to judge whether they bring 100% of cases they are aware of, but they are the main source of cases.

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## **Meeting with the Director of the National Reception Centre of Victims of Human Trafficking, the Director of the National Reception Centre of Victims of Domestic Violence and the specialist of the Albanian social Services for the issues of tracking unaccompanied minors and domestic violence, 1 November 2017**

### **Background**

At the meeting: Specialist from General Directorate of Social Services, the Director of the National Centre of Victims of Human Trafficking and the Director of the National Centre of Victims of Domestic Violence.

In ALB structure, domestic violence (DV) and trafficking are two separate directorates.

When it comes to victims of human trafficking (VHT), the ALB SS has a special provision for interviewing victims. Once the interview has been completed, and the person has been found suitable, they are sent to a shelter which has measures to protect the victim.

In the cases of victims of DV, it's a different procedure. The social services office is an important stakeholder when it comes to activities that are about the focus of the victim, regardless of the cause.

### **Psychological support for victims when they enter a shelter**

For victims of DV

The presence of the psychologist is obligatory. Once the decision of the court is made, the person is referred to the shelter. We offer a range of support, including the psychologist. It depends on the person and their needs.

For VHT

Similar to victims of DV, but with a different approach. For entry to this shelter, you don't need a referral from the court. The police start the proceedings and they send the person to the shelter. It's also a multi-disciplinary approach to evaluating the needs of the person.

It includes

1. Doctor
2. Lawyer
3. Person from Social Services.

They all make their own separate evaluation of the case, including the psychological evaluation.

Due to the fact that there are different proceedings, each shelter has its own approach.

### **Ongoing mental health support**

Normally, both shelters have the support for the person. The main difference is around capacity. But in both places, the person is monitored on an ongoing basis until they are considered stable.

The first impact when the person arrives at the centre is to understand their specific, immediate needs. Then we look further, including at mental health needs.

Each of the shelters is fully-equipped with:

1. Psychologist
2. Lawyer
3. Social services
4. Education/teacher

Every aspect is covered, and while they are there, they are monitored by all of the above.

### **How deal with a person with difficult mental health issues**

As per ALB legislation, every person who approaches the shelters will be subject to a mental health assessment. After, when a report is written, we take measures. Depending on the level of treatment required and severity, it can be dealt with in either the centre or the person can be sent to a specific centre.

Centre of VHT (CVHT) had a specific example of a person who has mental health issues, but they have been undergoing treatment in the centre for two years now.

Normally, the shelters are equipped with the medic with knowledge of the situation. Under ALB legislation, every person in the shelters has the right to the same level of treatment as any other ALB citizen.

Have had cases of pregnancy, and the person is sent to the hospital.

### **Lengths of stay**

Usually the period of stay in the Centre of VDV (CVDV) is decided by the court, up to a maximum of one year. However, if the CVDV thinks it is necessary to extend the stay, they can apply to the court for an extension.

On the other side, the permanence of the period of stay is dependent on the person and how long they want to stay. The obligation is only of the shelter to implement the court order.

For the CVHT, it's a different approach – and depends on age. Where it's a minor, custody transfers to the centre. Usual cases stay for 3, 6 months; but also had cases where people have stayed for two years.



Another important factor when it comes to the CVHT is the proceedings that are going on with the trafficker. We evaluate the risk to the person. Depending on that, it affects the length of the stay. But when the person feels safe, or ready for reintegration, they leave. But the CVHT maintains contact with regional authorities, NGOs and others to ease integration and maintain support and contact.

### **What happens when people leave**

The procedure is like this: the person is asked about the centre. There is only one state-run CVHT. But there are also three NGO-run centres in Vlore, Elbasan and Tirana.

We ask if they want to stay here, or move to an NGO-shelter. The state-run one has highest security and we talk when we think they are ready, we talk about to them about moving.

We also try and provide them with social support, social housing (from the state). Final step of support is from NGOs, but Govt. also pays rents. When it comes to the process of re-integration, the victims of DV and victims of HT have the same levels of support. It comes from NGOs and the state. It can be getting a job; food. The main difference is that the state-run processes are sometimes more bureaucratic. On the other side, the NGOs have the funds more readily available and not the same levels of bureaucracy and people choose this option.

The ALB Govt. policies are such that main part of the funds and focus goes to re-integration and support. We try to build them up to be independent, which is sometimes difficult – especially when there are children. The Govt. focus is so much in this area that they are monitored for two years after they leave to check on the re-integration process.

The Social Services operates as a watchdog on the services that are provided once the person starts re-integration. They look at e.g.

1. Is she going to her job?
2. Are her children ok?

### **Children accommodated at shelters**

The age limit in ALB is 18. Sometimes have cases where the victim of DV is the child and the child is accompanied by the mother. This is usually provided for by the court.

### **Undertaking employment outside the shelter**

A person can stay at the CVDV and work outside it. So they can work outside it and come back. But this does not apply to the CVHT.

The same applies for children who may need to go to school. But some of this depends on the severity of the case and the security of the person.

## **Security arrangements at state-run shelters**

Depending on the type of victim, it depends.

When it comes to a VHT, it is a matter of law that the police provide the security at every stage – at the shelter, moving etc. When it comes to victims of DV, it is provided by private police contracted by the centre.

When it comes to leaving the shelter for victims of DV, e.g. to go to a medic, they are accompanied by officers from the shelter. When it comes to legal proceedings, they are accompanied by the police. We request this because the perpetrator will be there. In addition, usually the court requests it (that the police transfer the person to court) and/or the lawyer from the shelter specifically requests it, based on an evaluation of the particular case.

## **Capacity and throughput of state-run shelters**

For the CVHT, the maximum is 80 people. Since 2003, when the centre opened, it has treated 620 people. The average is about 20-30 people per year.

For the CVDV, the maximum level is 32 people. Since 2011, when the centre opened, it has treated 370 people. Last year, it treated 95 people (incl. children).

## **Problems with demand**

Since the CVDV opened in 2011, it was only one situation – in January 2016 – we had more people than capacity, but we managed by sending some people to the NGO-run shelter.

The CVHT has never had a situation where it has had to refuse a particular person. We have more capacity than requests at the moment.

In the last few years, the numbers of VHT have decreased; but the VDV have increased.

## **Reason(s) for rise in numbers of VDV**

Believes the main factor is the social one. People are more aware that they can raise it.

And the CVDV is more active in re-integrating and has expanded its service. People are more confident in the institutions.

Numbers may have always been there, but now more confident in coming forward.

Always an individual point of view, but have heard that some women accept it: “if the husband fulfils my obligations – provides needs at home – then it [DV] is ok”.

There are lots of factors: mental, educational.

One factor is also that the centre is here in Tirana. In the last two years, the municipality of Tirana has been paying bonuses (financial help with) the rent and women in shelters are the first priority to receive this. So it may also be a case of the policies.

Also, October has been the month of action against VHT, so this may also be behind the rise in numbers. November is now the month of action against VDV. From our experience, these awareness-raising campaigns play a key factor. ALB Govt. has a specific fund to pay for these.

Recent change in ALB Govt. unlikely to affect the funding for this. In the last few years, the focus of the Govt. has been on expanding the support services provided by the shelters.

The territorial reviews have also given a boost. Territories now have expanded capacity to follow-up. And changes to the law have helped. Cohesion between all parts have increased, and this is a real positive.

### **Key challenges with more victims of VDV coming forward**

The ALB Govt is aware of the increase in numbers. There is a Govt. strategic plan 2016-2020. Plan for another shelter (this is projected to be in the north part of Albania, but is not finally settled). There are also plans that every municipality in Albania will have an emergency centre so everyone can get the first treatment there.

Another approach the ALB Govt is planning between 2016-2020 to enhance the legal framework. It will replicate the same system as VHT so that the first denunciation can start the proceedings.

And, also further plans to further improve women's participation in decision-making.

The Social Services Office draft a report which outlines the yearly needs. This is a report that goes to the Ministry of Social Welfare. Further information on this can be obtained from them.

### **Relationship between shelters and NGOs**

Good relationship with NGOs.

For ten years, an initiative created by the Mol, effected cooperation between the state and the NGO-run shelters.

### **Societal attitudes to women who have lived in the shelters**

Prejudice has decreased a lot due to a change in mentality. It's a very manageable issue.

For the CVHT, because this situation is confidential, so we don't present when trying to get her a job that she is a victim.

100% of the people who want to work and reintegrate, this is fine. The only thing that might hold people back are medical issues.

### **Contribution to national databases**

Normally, both shelters have updated data on the victims. But because of the confidential nature of the data, it can only be accessed by Social Services and by an order of the court.

## **Prevalence of trafficking, and disparity of figures re: ALBs in UK**

Figures don't correspond to the fact that here in ALB, we don't just accept that a person has been a victim of trafficking just because the person declares it. Maybe that is the case in the UK, but it is not here – the person needs to be documented – and that might be the difference.

The concrete steps that must be undertaken before a person is a VHT. The ALB legislation says anyone can report to the police if they think a person is a VHT, and after that, a multi-disciplinary group gets together. The database contains all of the information about the person – the initial report; the police report; the papers from the CVHT. So, this is why no self-declaration as a VHT can take place in ALB. Getting proof of a VHT requires this legal requirement.

There is an easy flow of information if the UK contacts the MFA in Albania where we can verify these cases. We have been to the families to check and then provide information to the UK authorities. UK needs to supply information to the Albanians. Time taken to gather depends on the level of information requested.

Main part is whether it's part of the database here in ALB versus a potential victim.

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## **Meeting with the Human Rights Officer of the Embassy of the USA and the Police Attaché of the French Embassy, Tirana, 1 November 2017**

### **USA:**

#### **Prevalence**

US not covered DV in a great amount of detail. But trafficking we have. It is an issue. Previous Deputy Minister says it is at a steady level, and I agree. Definitely not the “abduction” style trafficking.

So, typical MO tends to be: work offers, sham marriages etc.

Was a shock about the 600 cases in the UK reported in the media. Also spoke to the shelters, who also thought that.

Should be an equal focus on internal trafficking, not least because they may end up going abroad.

#### **Government provision**

The Govt. don't do a great job of explaining the good things they do. We have the four shelters. They are good shelters, particularly with the NGOs – who are among the best in civil society organisations in the Albania. They don't just have the heart – they know what they're doing and good at fund raising.

So, victim gets identified. Good SOPs, that set out what happens when a victim is identified. So first step is the identification of a PVOT, which can be done by anyone. Then comes the formal bit.

77 PVOT this year with 22 Formally identified.

Problem is that not enough is done to look beyond that, and what might be the case. Sometimes leads to mis-classification, which has consequences. Police do

insufficient work to establish PVOT People could e.g. go to jail, or not get into the shelters. But in 2016, only one person went to jail. One of the main frustrations of the shelters is people being mis-identified.

The criminal justice system mis-apply the old law (exploitation of prostitution), and don't use the trafficking provisions. Should maybe take the former away.

Misidentification could also be due to laziness. Could be down to meeting a certain quota. Gets a bit trivial like that, at times. It's extra work to go through the further steps needed for formal identification of a VOT.

Let's also say that the police are doing a very good job, for the most part. If you can get a police officer stay long enough in a particular sector, say 6 months, they build a relationship with e.g. the shelters and that works well. But it doesn't happen often. Police identify things they've see before and know the steps.

Big issue is justice reform. Serious Crimes Court (SCC) is going to be replaced by another court (SPOC). So if you are trafficked by organised crime (O/C), you will be done by SCC. All cases are tried there now. Once that goes away, they will be tried at the district courts (if not O/C). Concerns about this. Lack of knowledge and expertise, or technical capacity. Practical things, like using screens – the softer issues.

Nothing about their issues as prosecutors, more the softer things.

Then, you have the shelters, which are well-run, but not well-funded. US money has gone on building regional committees and training of police.

Number 2 issue is new Govt. Before we have MSFY, they funded the shelters. Now it's going to Ministry of Health. New to the minister, and concern about the lapse in funding available to shelters. Most of the girls and kids at the shelter, are generally happy. Happy to be there. Once they are in that track, they are well taken care of. Problem is getting them in there. People lose heart in participating in the CJS. Also the witness protection programme (WPP) is not used very much, have one in it now, but first case for about 7 years.

For the ones in the UK, there are legitimate cases – either because they were trafficked to the UK; or trafficked internally in ALB and then left because they saw no other way.

[The US provided some statistics].

### **Risk to longer-term funding**

Vatra's (Vlore) shelter is going to lose a lot of funding come January. The one in Elbasan is also a bit hurt, but the one here is generally ok.

Awareness training is strong.

### **French perspective:**

Do not have experience in Domestic Violence (DV), but dealing with many cases of trafficking and organised crime. France (FRA) has c. 1000 asylum applications from Albania (ALB) per month. Used to be the case that many were based on vendetta/blood feud. Then moved towards claims based on threats of violence in general. Now about 10% get asylum status in FRA.

As a police officer, we handle many cases of forced prostitution in FRA. The main scheme is that the girls are taken away from their country when they are young. They are seduced by ALB pimps, who manage to bring them to FRA, usually via ITA. We have awful cases where the girls forced into prostitution, esp. in the south of France.

We have set up a very good relationship with the Serious Crimes Court.

There is a lot of turnover of police here, and no specialisation. No specialisation in the O/C division of the prosecutors, and that is not to mention what goes on in the regions. They handle cases based on requests from abroad.

Not just talking about organised crime groups. It's also smaller scale. Have also seen cases where the women agree to testify, but their families are then threatened here.

Most of the girls don't want to come back to Albania.

### **Commonality of threats against families**

**USA:** 10 cases of forced prostitution of Albanians in France. Not always Albanian girls. Some can be Kosovan; or Roma. Victims come from all over.

What keeps people in the shelter and what worries them the most, is this. The Witness Protection Program (WPP) is a tool to address this, but they don't make use of it very often. One in 2017. Understandable. They have had bad experiences. They had someone alone in a foreign country. Also a balance of managing the expectations of the WPP vs. the realistic expectation of how it can be used and the end result.

### **Turnover of police**

US have spoken to police and they didn't deny it. The Mol question it. But it comes down to:

1. Regular rotations
2. Promotions

**FR** Once a person gets close to the international community, it becomes a bit of a threat to the others. Also about doing what's required, but nothing more. People keep a low profile. Not proactive. And worried that if they miss a step in the process, they'll be moved out.

### **Many female police officers?**

**FR** Numbers are going up, but not many in senior positions.

## Effectiveness of the police

Mis-identifying the crimes, which affects convictions. No-one wakes up one day and becomes a trafficker. He starts further down. But he'll likely have a criminal history, and there is an over-focus on the one specific offence; should look at the whole package of offences.

Work done at a lower level creates work at a higher level and that is frowned upon.

## Complicity between police and traffickers

Shelters have never raised this as a huge issue.

**FR** doesn't think there is any strong tie between traffickers and police. It might happen, but it's not common.

## Hotline

Albania does well to promote and highlight this every year. But the people who staff it are people on the verge of retirement etc. So you potentially have old men fielding calls from trafficking victims.

Line of questioning is always about trying to get a conviction, but lose sight of the victim. And questioning tends to lose its focus a little.

## Stigma

Not looked into this a lot. But think there must be a little.

Reports of DV have gone up, but that is particularly the case for Tirana and Durrës.

In **FRANCE**, when an ALB are put in the shelter there, they simply don't want to come back – and the families don't want them to come back either, as it's matter of honour. Same thing for juveniles.

**FR** Not linked to Kanun. **US** agreed, it is definitely going down.

ALB Govt. is clamping down on NGOs issuing BF letters in support of claims abroad.

Have about 130 families in ALB who are involved in BFs. Most of these are one-person in the family. So its little more than 130 people.

## Security arrangements at the shelter

The Govt. shelter has an armed guard, and the women have to ask permission to leave. It's not formal, more just for organised things.

The 3 NGO-run shelters don't have armed guards.

Numbers aren't really going down. Need to look at this in more detail, but it is steady-state, based on the capacity and the will of people to identify a victim. Used to have higher numbers, e.g. because we had mobile units funded by IOM, to help identify people quicker. But the scale of the problem has definitely gone down since a decade ago.

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## Meeting with NGO: Different and Equal, 1 November 2017

### Background to D&E and the shelter they run

D&E has been operating since 2004. Focussed mostly on direct assistance to reintegrate victims of human trafficking (VHT). Then expanded to include victims of domestic violence (VDV) and victims of sexual abuse.

D&E also run a shelter. It is in Tirana but the women and girls in it come from all over Albania. It is for VDV, VHT and those who have suffered sexual abuse.

Capacity is limited; can only house 15 people plus 4, maybe 5, children. But we do accommodate children accompanied by their mothers. We also accommodate women who are pregnant.

### Services and Support

D&E decide support needs on an individual basis. The services are provided by the multidisciplinary team including case managers, psychologist, lawyer, doctor, teacher/caregiver, shelter manager and reintegration coordinator which all together evaluate and assist each case individually.

But within the shelter are:

1. Case managers (their background is on social work mostly)
2. A psychologist
3. A doctor
4. A lawyer
5. A teacher

We build a reintegration plan with the person.

### Funding

About two years ago, D&E were mostly funded by donations from international donors. The government only funded food.

Now the government provides funding for staff costs in the shelter. They also provide “in kind” support, e.g. to enable VDV and VHT to get support for vocational training. The Government pays for this. They also provide health care – the health card covers virtually everything.

### Referrals

D&E are a member of the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) in Albania. The NRM is 13 agencies who come together to identify, refer, and protect VHT.

There are four shelters for VHT in Albania, and referrals mostly come from NRM members, like police, social services, religious institutions, other NGOs and international agencies from overseas (where the victim is identified there).

D&E support people through the shelter who need it; but also, support those outside of the shelter. D&E don't have men in the shelters, but do provide support by paying for apartments.

## **Support**

It is a three-stage programme of support:

- Crisis intervention, typically for the first 3 – 6 months
- Transition to independent living, typically at least a year
- Full independence, up to 3 years.

The support they provide includes arranging education/vocational training, in cooperation with both government and private industry; supporting job search, including arranging internships and subsidising salary; and (with donor support) assisting in the set-up of a small business.

In some cases, because of social stigma, victims may be reluctant to return to their home community, or may be rejected by their families. If no family support is available to the victim when they leave the shelter, D&E assist with/subsidise payment of rent for their new accommodation. Municipality of Tirana also assist in this. D&E typically support accommodation costs for 6-12 months.

In some trafficking cases the victim has not denounced the trafficker to the authorities. In these cases, the victim is not at risk of retaliation from the trafficker so it is not necessary to accommodate them at the shelter. Instead, support is provided to them at their family home.

## **Throughput**

Had about 70 cases of VHT each year through the shelter. When adding VDV and children, it is 200 people who got support across the program we run (in full) in 2016. Some of that is immediate crisis intervention and also includes some ongoing cases (40). It depends on the situation. For example, trafficking cases; people with mental issues; women with children – these are all more complex and therefore need longer.

## **Capacity issues**

D&E have been able to accommodate everyone that has been referred to them. D&E cooperate with partners (other shelters) and the state-run shelter to ensure capacity.

D&E's shelter is one of a number throughout the country. There are 4 (including D&E) that can handle trafficking cases and 2 more specifically for victims of DV. The other 3 trafficking shelters are one each in Vlore and Elbasan, and the state-run National Reception Centre for Victims of Trafficking. The 2 DV shelters are both in Tirana, one of which is the large state-run National Reception Centre for Victims of Domestic Violence, which has capacity for up to 50 children.

Additionally, there are numerous small emergency DV centres throughout the country, at Municipality level, that can give short-term assistance including provision of immediate emergency accommodation.

The shelters operate in close cooperation with each other to prevent over-spill/over-stretch. Their combined capacity is sufficient to address the problem; there is no national capacity problem with regard to accommodation for adults. However, foster care for minors is scarce and it can be difficult to find age-appropriate foster care and accommodation for them upon leaving the shelters.

The shelters are licensed and regulated by the Inspectorate of Social Services, so must adhere to the official standards regarding the level and quality of care and the standard of security they provide for clients.

D&E explained that it was more difficult for minors. The shelter in Elbasan is just for children. They used to have a women's shelter there, but a lack of funding caused it to close. It's only the children's one now.

Until now, capacity across all of the shelters combined has not been a problem. The capacity issues are more for children. Once capacity is hit for children, they are referred to places like orphanages, which aren't really appropriate.

## **Security**

We have security. It is not the police, but a private security company. They operate 24/7. We also collaborate with police on other security-related matters.

Witness protection is available in Albania but, in practice, is rarely given by the authorities. Security is therefore instead provided by the shelters. Cases are risk-assessed and, for high risk cases, there is 24/7 provision of security guarding, e.g. victims will be accompanied to court, school etc. Of course, security concerns of this kind can make it difficult to work/train.

Other security protocols include victims only communicating with their families via the office phone which is in the staff room at the shelter so that the location at which the victim is residing cannot be traced; family members, even if they are trusted, are not allowed to know the location of the shelter, and the victim only meets them either at the office or off-site; and the victim's civil registration is at the NGO's office address rather than at the shelter address, so that even a corrupt or unprofessional official/police officer with access to the civil registration system cannot easily compromise the victim's location.

## **Experiences with reintegration**

D&E continue to look for long-term solutions. These [VDV and VHT] are difficult issues and there is a better chance of long-term success and we provide a total package of support and assistance in and out of the shelter.

D&E had had some cases – maybe 4-5% – who had ended up being re-trafficked. These were people who willingly left the programme.

## Challenges

D&E listed several challenges:

1. Security of the victim: especially those who cooperate with the criminal justice system. The risk doesn't necessarily end just because the perpetrator is in prison.
2. Stigma: Albania is a patriarchal society. Victims, esp. women, are blamed for what happened to them, whether VDV or VHT. D&E knew of a few cases where the professionals sometimes made comments like this.
3. System problems: e.g. long-term accommodation. Only Tirana municipality offers a bonus payment to pay for 50% of a person's rent if they are in employment. Also, VDV and VHT weren't in a special category for social housing prioritisation, but now are after the law has changed.
4. Documentary proof: Difficulties in obtaining this makes it also then difficult to obtain the services.
5. Law on foster care for minors: It is not functioning. Assistance focusses on residential care, and the family may exploit this. So D&E not sure where to refer this.
6. Limited support for long-term mental health issues.
7. Access to justice:
  - a. State could do more to provide information to victims at the start of the process, and make sure their rights are respected. This isn't just VDV and VHT, but all victims of crime. However, changes to the law should now change this.
  - b. Allow for compensation to victims. This has been around for many years, but doesn't really happen in practice. D&E referred to a case where they were awarded money but still not received it as it was hard to find and therefore seize the assets of the trafficker.
  - c. The witness protection program not being fulfilled and then linked to this is that justice takes time – often 2-3 years – and this puts people off.

## Work done to tackle stigmatisation

D&E try to do this via a special project. They work with victims, but need to change the culture and context in which we are working.

D&E explained how they had used one example of a case to create a video to show how a family welcomed a VHT's return and reintegration and we worked with them to do this. We supported some vocational training and then she later opened a hairdresser's. However, people in her community wouldn't go there because of her history. She and the family then left the area because the community couldn't accept it. D&E are trying to work with people to change this.

[D&E shared a hard copy of the photo novella. This can be found at <https://we.tl/BwMeIV3lo0> ]

We showed this as a film at various places across the country. This had a big impact, but we need to do a lot more. D&E had one person approach them during this process who explained that his daughter had been trafficked and he had rejected her – including taking her name off the registration papers. It was like she didn't exist. However, on seeing the film, he felt guilty.

In Tirana, it works differently. And it is different compared to say, the informal parts of Tirana. It is also different between, say, Durres town and the suburbs.

## **Numbers of VDV and VHT**

HO FFM Team asked about suggestion re: VDV figures up but VHT figures down.

D&E explained that VDV figures – the number of reported cases – was definitely up. It had really gone up and this was a good indicator. D&E saw this as a positive. It means that people know they can get support; and people are trusting the criminal justice institutions and processes more.

However, D&E added that the VHT figures weren't really a drop. They also expressed concern about the focus being on the number of cases identified; not those who aren't. D&E questioned whether ALB is doing enough. D&E had also heard about a potential rise in the number of ALB victims being identified overseas.

D&E also highlighted a case they were aware of from media reports where the police had caught a group of traffickers with a group of girls with them. None of those was referred for assistance, and the police said that they were doing it on a voluntary basis. So whilst it is good they apprehended people, it is contradictory that they don't treat the victims as such.

D&E suggested reasons for police not doing more was about:

1. Police performance targets. It puts the focus elsewhere as it includes the number of arrests etc., but doesn't include the number of VHT's identified.
2. Afraid to increase the statistics in case it suggests a bigger problem.
3. HO FFM Team asked whether collusion with traffickers may also be an issue, but D&E didn't think so; they had not experienced this. Couldn't rule it out, as they had heard of some situations where it has, but not really the issue.

## **Work with Government**

D&E explained that they worked well with the Govt. Pointed out that they are also members of the NRM, and this had institutionalised their arrangement. Discussing long-term problems. D&E also work particularly well with the anti-trafficking co-ordinator at the Ministry of Interior, as well as departments dealing with gender equality; with municipalities and with education.

## **Mental health support**

D&E stated that there are four psychiatric hospitals: one in Tirana, one in Shkoder; one in Elbasan and one in Vlore. However, the stay is limited to three weeks.

There are also mental health community centres around the country, but the problem is that they are full all the time. Some religious organisations also have spaces, but these are also always full. Mental health support doesn't really function because of capacity. There are very few chances for long-term support for the really serious cases.

## **Issues with DV**

You can get an Emergency Protection Order easily enough. The challenge is setting the conditions for a more long-term Protection Order. D&E also stated that sometimes the court say there is not enough proof for a Protection Order.

But the problem is with people breaching the Protection Order. D&E referred to the case of the judge in Shkoder who was killed by her husband. Protection in practice is difficult. The victim needs to live in the same house as the perpetrator. Or the perpetrator is the one who stays in the house whilst the victim has to leave and live in a shelter.

D&E knew of a few cases where people going to prison for breaching a Protection Order, and said it was likely statistics would be available on this.

## **Foster care**

D&E felt that the money was not invested in this, and that the national budgets needed adjusting for it.

But other issues included both technical support, and that few families are interested in it.

## **Long-term support to VDV and VoT**

D&E explained that they keep in touch with people and offer support, both after they leave the shelter and after they leave the programs. The maximum limit they monitor people for was five years after leaving; some people also stay in touch after this, willingly. They like to talk and ask questions.

There are also examples where women who had been through the shelter/program before would come to speak to those in it now. D&E felt this was a real bonus, as it gave those currently experiencing the situation a different voice to them and maybe enabled them to identify more, and know others have experienced what they have too.

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## Meeting with journalist from BIRN Albania, 1 November 2017

### Meeting with Besar Likmeta, Editor, Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN) on 1 November 2017

BIRN has covered domestic violence (DV) in the country. We have been training journalists, In particular, in court reporting. Most of our hands-on experience has been in this regard.

Have covered court cases about DV.

Gender based violence in ALB is quite rampant. You get this from many sources. There are many reasons behind this, from macho male Balkan mentality, to poor court functioning, inadequate police training, gender-based inequalities.

POs are issued, but people have to continue to live in the same house. So it is difficult to see how this will work.

We have looked at repeated cases in Shkoder. Lenient sentences create a situation where it can be repeated.

There is a prevailing culture of "Get over it". Women are usually pushed to breaking point before they file a complaint and often women will withdraw it due to family pressure.

Lengthy processes to get custody of the house, whilst still raising the children. Difficult to access the support necessarily to lift out of the situation.

#### Why leniency?

Court system in Albania is quite corrupt. Many don't see these cases as important – it is unlikely the woman would have the money to influence the outcome. When a wife files a complaint, the man is in a stronger position financially.

We haven't analysed the court cases on their merits specifically.

But if you look at the data, they don't get the same levels of convictions/sentences.

Social support network is not very strong. There are some good NGOs, but they can't support all the women in Albania that need it.

#### Role of police in enforcing the PO

Complaint from NGOs about this.

Courts blame the police for not enforcing the POs; police blame the courts for issuing POs that are not enforceable.

Also a bit of history. You've had the terror of the state but that has fallen away, and it takes time to build up the capacity of the state institutions.

You hear stories that the police sometimes take the side of the male; but that is not always the case. Just sometimes.



## **Sufficiency of protection?**

Financial support is meagre and the family is usually not supportive. The shelters provide support for VDV and victims of human trafficking (VHT). The social support system is not conducive to providing support. The mentality is the problem most of the time.

If you look at the total capacity of the shelters, they wouldn't be able to cope with all the battered women. But it depends on how much they are being asked.

## **Social attitudes towards VDV and VHT**

VDV and VHT are two different things. VHT face a really tough time. Family and society reject them. They may get re-trafficked, but also face a hard time to re-build their life. VDV also face a tough time.

Not specific to Albania, but look at it: the poorer and more rural the part of the country is, the more patriarchal the society. But in the last decade it has changed a lot. If you consider that the history of Albania and the Balkans generally, the roles of males and females is quite dated but down to situation in the country. But more generations are becoming more open-minded. But you won't get there in one day; it takes time.

Problems are still more a bit deep-rooted in the role of women. We have got better at being politically correct, but there is an under-current still there. Can also see it in the media, not just here but everywhere. You can see it in the media. Women are objectified and women journalists are not given the respect they deserve. The underlying current is still prejudiced against women.

Albania having being closed off for nearly 50 years during the Stalinist regime of former dictator E Hoxha means it will take time.

## **Media Reporting**

There are efforts to professionalise the media. It's quite weak in Albania. They are interested in politics, because it's quite central. The interests in what goes on outside of Tirana doesn't get covered all that much. Trying to arrange for journalists to look in more detail. Want to see proper stories being reported, but training them to enable them to do so. Then other NGOs can use this data for lobbying or whatever. Need also stories – proper stories, not tabloid-esque (sensationalised, or focussing on the wrong aspects of the story).

Media is controlled in a small number of people. Also a focus on politics. So don't cover the other issues. That is not what drives them – it's not about ratings, it's about fulfilling the people who fund them. Editors may not pay for stories about DV and VOT because they may not sell well.

We have a monthly (written) publication – in ALB and ENG – and online.

## **Trafficking**

There was an ALB MP who was imprisoned as part of a trafficking network. We've talked to victims. Talked to women who came back. Seen cases from the Serious Crimes Court. This paints quite a bleak picture. They suggest that the gangs use violence to kidnap people. Families were also so poor that they would be complicit in the trafficking – they either didn't know; or did, but turned a blind eye or otherwise convinced themselves it was not the case.

Also talked to women in the shelters in the Netherlands. Some are repatriated and go straight into the shelters here. Got some hard data from the police. Got some data from some studies by the police about the recruitment methods.

## **Recruitment methods**

Not as huge as it used to be. Lots of awareness now. More of a decline. Normally get duped into marriage or conned into jobs. Many cases where the person was already suffering DV, who just wanted to escape. Physical force is there. Different networks that sell on and sell on. First guy isn't the trafficker per se who uses violence.

## **Victims**

They get some re-training, some support, but they are usually very young and don't have family. This is a small country. People are a victim all the time and it's hard to re-build their life. People sometimes get re-trafficked; sometimes do it willingly because they know nothing else and see no other way. Violence will keep them in check.

## **Justice reform**

Justice reform is necessary in this country. Every ALB thinks it's necessary. It's hard-fought. Although the political elite quarrel with each other, they don't like to see change. They have undermined the independence and professionalism of the justice system. Start with the vetting of judges, then move on. It will take a lot of actors and actions to make it happen. It won't be perfect. And expectations are high. And maybe don't realise it will take a long time. Problem is that the political class is linked to organised crime. The elite is calcified, although good at speaking the language of reform.

The Serious Crimes Court was, in the beginning, successful in disrupting the trafficking cases. Now it will be more decentralised. But there are concerns about the professionalization of these. But also about prosecutors and the training and competence they have. These aren't simple cases.

Want to also see things like the anti-Mafia law – e.g. use the confiscation of money. Once you do that, you weaken them. Seizing the property of organised crime is a big problem. Have had a case of a person convicted in Italy – not even Albania – so all you need to do is confiscate the properties and businesses.

The problem is with the law and the interpretation of the law. There have been some suggested changes to the law, but is also about the political will to change the law.

## **Falsification of VOT claims?**

This hasn't been examined, there isn't the interest. Not sure how many there might be. Situation in Albania isn't the best, but it's not terrible. Just frustration with the political system etc. so there are false claims, but don't think it's necessary for VHT. It's tough to say this.

Has been exaggeration of numbers related to asylum claims from Albania. These are ridiculous. So talk of 50,000 women being trafficked is ridiculous. Figures were more like 5,000. But this goes back 5-10 years.

People go to Europe to work and send back remittances.

Working with a colleague who is working on stories of people claiming to be UASCs. When I was in school. If you didn't go to college, you migrated. Now with easier travel (to Schengen) so people go – and use asylum. Wouldn't think this is specific to VHT. But invariably there are people who will make up anything.

Complaints from local NGOs that Europe is returning UASCs, and there isn't the protection for them. Really sad part is that traffickers have ready recruits around the corner as parents are sending their kids abroad younger and younger. Remittances keep the country going. Devaluation of the pensions after fall of communism made it necessary for parents to survive. One successful migrant fuels the next.

In the 90's, it was easier to identify VHT. Only really the males travelled. The risks were high. But now you can travel to the Schengen zone. Now women go too as it is easier to migrate. The internet gives people ideas on how to travel.

Doing a story now. Albanians being picked up in Romania/Serbia border. Why do it? Because they read it on the internet – as a way of avoiding bans in the EU. But it goes to show the power of information sharing. And social networking.

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## **Meeting with the Director of Crimes in the Department for Public Order and the Head of Section of Domestic Violence and Minors, General Directory of Police, 2 November 2017**

### **Scale of domestic violence and trafficking**

Victims of trafficking (VoT) are covered by another Dept.

Re: Domestic Violence (DV), it is an a very important issue of the police institutions. Several policies have been developed in this regard.

### **Law on DV**

The ALB law, since introduced, has created organised structure considering DV. Since 2007, it has structure and coordinators. Main role of coordinator is to coordinate the role of the local police officer with district police office, social services, local NGOs in that region.

Prior to 2006, DV was not provided as a criminal offence under the law. After 2006, an entire chain of law enforcement institutions follow-up on incidents of DV. When cases are brought before the court, the urgent cases mean that the perpetrator can be easily arrested, charged.

After 2012, the ALB Criminal Code was updated and it was provided as a specific offence.

Before 2006, DV was a civil claim. In cases of aggravation, it was classified a criminal offence.

### **First steps when a complaint is made**

There are two moments for treating DV cases. Once the subject goes to the police office

1. The police officer makes a visual look for any physical injuries. Then they either make a claim to the court for a PO; or, start the proceedings for further evidence and refer to the Prosecutor's Office.
2. Once a claim has been sent to court for a PO, it will be decided for an urgent one; that takes 24 hours. After that, for others it takes 15 days.

Once the claim is sent to court, the doctor's report is included. Doctor does also look at the injuries at the time the case is reported.

In cases of DV, the ALB law and structures of the police have a special care re: DV and medical issues. The medic is not part of the police office, but they are notified immediately and the person is sent there for an examination.

### **Other kinds of evidence gathered**

Collection of evidence is regulated from the court in Albania. This requires:

1. Asking of witnesses
2. Control of the place where the violence was
3. Looking for weapons

Due to the social structure of the family, it is very hard to prove the cases. When the family are witnesses, they are reluctant to say this, which makes it hard to prove – particularly when there are no instruments to inflict the violence.

Also important are photos or videos where the alleged offence took place.

The ALB police regards the moment the person makes a declaration as the crucial point in the time a case is made. We have tried to make a friendly environment, to try and make the best environment in which they can make their statement, which helps the police investigation. We recognise they are in shock when they first arrive, so need to make sure they can give the best statement.

We speak to the family if they are witnesses.

### **Who can report a case**

As per the ALB legislation, any person who has knowledge of violence or crime must report it. Therefore it can be neighbours, family etc. but this does not happen very often. Usually it is member of the family, and in particular the victim themselves.

## **Reasons for rise in number of cases reported in recent years**

According to the police information, we connect the rise in cases due to the increased sensitivity of the police. Also the change in the law made a better cohesion since 2006, made it easier to report.

People have more information, but also a better understanding of the law and how to report a case. They are more confident in coming forward and have an enhanced belief in the law.

## **Obtaining copies of reports**

The ALB law does not provide that the victim can have a copy of this report. Also, sometimes the police have been punished for providing a copy of that report. So even where a person asks for a copy, they can't obtain one. So the police does not provide a copy, because sometimes the reports are used by the person inappropriately.

A record of court proceedings are available.

## **If women withdraw their complaint**

As per legislation, there are two options:

1. If the person withdraws the claim, it usually stops there (if it is treated by the police)
2. If the person is subject to repeated violence, the police will continue with the investigation.
3. If the case is treated by the court, then it continues until the court decides the outcome.

The police do not have a concrete figure on the number of cases that are withdrawn. It usually happens at the court, when the person doesn't show up, or at the Prosecutor's office. The MoJ or courts may be able to help with concrete statistics on this.

## **Difficulties in enforcing a PO**

The first and main factor of the difficulties in enforcing the decision of the court is the decision itself. They usually say that they must stay in the same environment, the same house. It is not always possible to remove the victim from the house. But the main problem is that there are no rehabilitation programs or shelters for the perpetrators.

## **Training of police on gender issues, and DV specifically**

Since 2006, when the new law was enacted, there is a constant program of training for police officers. There is also the Police Academy. We have also arranged training with law enforcement in other countries – this can be short-term or longer-term – and includes a month-long one on DV.

The ALB police constantly plans training not just at HQ, but also regional. Explained about recent training at Korce, which included police from neighbouring regions (in the south of Albania).

Throughout the years, we have also had involvement of international organisations in training, OSCE, EU, and lately a Swedish project with involvement of the authorities, where 240 officers have been involved in the training. And then also train-the-trainers. With the support of the SWE project, this also led to a manual being produced on how to treat victims of DV.

The Directory for DV, in connection with the Police Academy, arranges regular 3-day training for 20 officers at a time. And the Police Academy integrated this into the new training induction, they have a week (and sometimes more) training on treating DV issues.

The training part of the police force was an important factor in the improvement for the proceedings of DV reporting – the environment they created. A police officer will not take any proceedings without the presence of the psychologist.

This is a topic with which ALB police can provide a lot of information. Especially after 2006, the improvement of the police – with training and other technological improvements, such as numbers – have led to the increasing in reporting of DV. There has been a thirty per cent increase in reporting since 2006.

As per Albanian law, the victim may go straight to court, social services, Prosecutors Officer – but in 99% cases they come to the police, because this shows the faith in the system and the institutions.

### **Police training in community or with families**

In the last year, we have been implementing a strategy called Policing in the Community. It's not training, but with interested parties in the community, like schools, to talk about issues. It is something we have been developing in the last year.

The ALB police has a type of strategy that, when it realises that there are increased cases in a particular area, they arrange a meeting in the local area with schools, local police, universities, prosecutors office, to talk about this. It is usually done when a certain level is reached – when it goes over the national average.

Part of the strategy is also use of the media. We have spread lots of information about DV. The current Govt. are particularly interested in using media for this topic, so they provide special funds for this.

### **Numbers of female police officers**

Due to the further improvement of the services, we also now have an improvement in the policies to increase the numbers of women to try and make it so that a woman deal with the case, given the victim is usually a woman.

Stats on the figures of women, about 14% of the police are women – and about 9% with grades.

But in victims of DV, it's about 60% of women officers who deal.



## **Turnover of police**

Yes, there is turnover of police. But the Dept. for violence against women has not experienced this so much, save for people being promoted. The movement of the structure is down to reforms going on, or career movement.

## **Response to VoT**

It is a separate department that deals with this. We coordinate with them. It is very important, not just with the police but at Govt. level (Ministry of Interior). There is a specific structure, headed by the Vice Minister.

There are a certain number of indicators that are set out in Standard Operating Procedures. These are specific to every institution to help them identify a VoT. Once a person is identified, the victim is identified to anti-trafficking department in police.

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## **Meeting at the Ministry of Education, 2 November 2017**

Head of Dept. for pre-university; Head of Dept. for diaspora and minorities?

### **Background to education system and Ministerial programs**

In Albanian pre-university system, there are c.30,000 teachers and the majority are women. In the later years, the trend of enrolment at university for teaching has also been strongly women. In the last three years, in some places it has been strongly women. Now men are also studying teaching.

As per the ALB legal framework for education, and by law, there is a strong focus from the Govt. ministry and the law access on gender equality, particularly re: access to education. In the ALB education system, the monitoring of education facilities is done by a board. They have had a strong focus on women, and also having women be a part of the monitoring.

In Albania, the Govt. is also implementing a national strategy for gender equality, of which the MoE is a fundamental part of it.

The Ministry isn't just focussed on women for this, but also strategies for single mothers to get involved in their own education and encouraging their children to be education. There are 225 schools aimed at this which aims at schooling in the community. Depending on the region, the training is also separated or specialised in particular industries or skills. In one area training in carpet making.

As part of the Ministerial policy, we offer books free of charge for certain categories of teachers/schools. As part of this strategy, this is aimed at single mothers. School books in ALB are not paid for by the State; they are bought privately.

Another part of the policies is also to collaborate with the penitentiary system – prisons are separated by women and men – and we also support returning migrants. We provide special help with teachers or books to help them get back into education. This might include women who left school or are older than schooling age – but it is also done alongside working: they can do both half-and-half.



## **Awareness programs aimed at both girls and boys, particularly focussing on DV and VoT**

It is a special program that is implemented in cooperation with NGOs called “Stop Violence in Schools”. This began in 2015 (tbc).

Also, there is a cooperation with the Council of Europe, called “Stop Bullying” which started in 2016. These are quite broad programs – it takes a broad definition – to include all types of violence.

As part of the program, it is structured that the schools organise the events and activities on a daily basis, e.g. sports, club discussions, art, theatres, to keep the students busy in their spare time.

As well, the schools are involved in programs aimed at tolerance, peace, mediation and conflict resolution. There are established groups in school who arrange these.

There are also a strong bond and collaboration between the schools and the psycho-social services available in school. These programs are for children aged 6 (up to 18).

## **Measuring success**

For the “Stop Violence in School” programs, educational institutions produce annual reports which come to the Ministry. These gives figures and data about violence and how people are treated.

There is also a project to tackle bullying being trialled in 21 schools.

There is also a report prepared by the Ministry, based on a study in 150 schools, which looked at bullying.

The reports show things by educational facility, which show different results. Some show a drop; others do not. Sometimes it is regional, but it depends. For example, even in the Tirana regional area, the results are mixed.

Every year, the Ministry make a report about the background of the students (social, educational background). These date back further than the reports about the “Stop Violence in Schools” and “Stop Bullying” projects. Every class will implement a specific programme with regard to this.

Boards on schools are elected democratically (Governors, Student Councils etc.) and we are giving priority to involving parents with schooling. For the first time, this year the plan was signed off by the parents and they have the right to monitor and evaluate the performance of the school.

There is also now a National Council of Parents. This has a consultancy function which advises the ministry and has representatives from all parts of Albania. One of the key components of this when it was formed was a focus on gender equality.

## **Involvement in the NRM**

Due to the fact that the MoE has been part of the NRM, we have been involved in a lot of training – in conjunction with the Mol – about trafficking, particularly those who have returned.

In addition, there is a directive from the Ministry for all educational facilities which require people who have returned from the diaspora abroad – whether a VoT or just as a migrant – to accept them back in.

As part of the program, we have a two-tier part in addition to the providing of books mentioned earlier, but also about re-integration.

### **Involvement in National Database for VoT**

Yes, the MoE is involved in this. Unfortunately, the person who does this is not at this meeting.

### **Girls attendance at school/participation in the education system**

The MoE has values and figures re: this – and involvement in different levels of schooling – covering age, ethnic groups etc. it is a national strategy with a National Action Plan involving lots of other Ministries and institutions.

It is a strong issue that Roma girls, in particular, leave school after 12 or 13 years of age. They are trying to cope with this issue with various plans, also with local municipalities and their families. It is a cultural thing, because they tend to get married at this age.

### **Stigma for VDV and VoT**

These types of issues are usually coped with by the re-education programs mentioned earlier. Sometimes they have done not much schooling, and we create the environment to enable them to come back into and complete their schooling.

There is sometimes a prejudice regarding this issue. We are creating plans and strategies to tackle this but it is difficult.

### **MoE contributing to police training**

MoE is part of police training.

MoE is also part of the “police in the community” training. The police sometimes also invite to teachers to be part of the training – they train together/receive the same training – so they can understand how they can treat cases of DV and VoT.

### **Women’s position in society generally**

In the urban parts of Albania, and the big cities, there is not a big issue to do with differences between men and women. But in rural areas, you can see this phenomenon, where women are not equal to men.

Sometimes here (in Tirana) even, women are treated better than men. We are surprised sometimes when we read stories in the media and are shocked what happens in other parts of the country. And in recent years, the position of women has improved.

Minister was also in the North-Eastern part of the country, in Lezhe, where she saw women riding a motorbike. Previously, you would never even see them riding a bike or driving a car.

### **MoE's work with the DV shelters**

MoE works with the shelters. It's a full-scale collaboration. MoE gets constant requests from the shelters from women who want to go to school. The same level of collaboration exists with the VoT shelters.

As well, at the regional level, we have a coordinator who collects this requests for data.

### **Pre-University education module on identifying VoT**

MoE has concrete programs for sensitivity training on all topics relating to VoT and VDV.

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## **Meeting at Ministry of Health and Social Protection, 2 November 2017**

### **Position and priorities of Ministry of Social Welfare (MoSW) following change of Govt.**

We were in the MoSW previously. This building was part of that. If we consider the structure of the previous MoSW, I was in charge of the Dept. dealing with gender equality – which includes DV.

With the new structural changes in the ALB Govt., we have now been attached to the Ministry of Health. We are now the Ministry of Health and Social Protection. The function remains the same. The budget is not yet set, so can't say for sure what the size of the budgeting for this will be. As well, the functions and duties that I had before are the same; we are now just the same here.

### **Responsibility and focus of Ministry of Health and Social Protection (MoHSP)**

Issues of VoT have never been the jurisdiction here. Main focus is on DV.

The ALB Govt. policies regarding VDV are provided in an action plan from 2016-2020. It's an Action Plan which includes both gender equality and DV. This is a Govt. document which has been attached to the Govt. strategy on the same topic for the same period of the Govt.

The ALB public has a special domestic framework re: DV. From the institutional point of view, there are several mechanisms that monitor the implementation. The highest level is the National Council which is at the political level, which is headed by the respective Minister – which will be our minister under the new changes – and also 9 vice ministers from other Ministries. Besides this, are also 5 members of CSOs. This National Council is the highest authority which provides and watches the implementation of the policies. Both the implementation of the legislation and the action plans.

Coming down the hierarchy, it is the Dept. I am head of. Also have coordinators in all different departments, as well as at local level.

When it comes to the case-by-case implementation at local, municipality level, there are instruments. It is a micro-level of the national model. They monitor the individual cases. This local council is headed by a representative from the municipality but also local state social office, health, police, education from the local level. The function of this board is to assess the cases that come from the local court or from the local police.

The ALB legislation provides that the victim can come and make their case at the local police station, or at any office at municipality level – it then gets referred to the local board level to determine the best course of action. That is why it is called the Mechanism for Case Referral.

As per ALB legislation, the police are the first office that deals with it – immediately.

Once a person goes to the desk of the police office, immediately they fill in a form and immediately fill in a case for court to get an emergency protection order, depending on the severity of the case. The Protection Order can be asked for from the police or from Social Services and is decided by the police.

### **Relationship with shelters for VDV**

The hosting of the VDV in the shelter is done at their request. The person must ask for it. If the victim asks for accommodation at the shelter, they ask the police. They then put it to the local board and it is dealt with at that level. This is the same process for the National Centre as well as the NGO run facilities, as they are also part of the board/panel.

### **Funding of shelters**

ALB Govt. funds the national one through the State Social Service through the national one.

As for the NGO-run ones, the legislation does not permit us to fund them. We recognise the anomaly in this and are changing the law to enable this.

### **Involvement with re-integration programs**

The MoHSP is directly involved in these programs, but through the state social services. This is an executive agency under this ministry.

But, for example, we accompany the children to kindergarten for those in the shelter who go to school. We also provide education and training.

## **Key challenges on DV**

We understand DV phenomenon is important, and there are a lot of challenges ahead. I am aware it is as a result of many factors:

1. Lack of education
2. Lack of economic opportunities/poverty
3. Mentality of ALB society

And several other reasons.

We are aware that for easing DV, we need a coordinated effort from a range of institutions. By this, it is understandable is not just a burden for this Ministry, but for all involved. That is why a national council was established at a national level. At that level is the highest level at which decisions can be taken and policies made to change this phenomenon.

One person was the treatment of the perpetrator, not just the victim. The state social services are fully focussed in order to help them. For example, to try and help them find a job – in case this is what is behind the DV. We have evaluated that this has been successful, because in some cases the perpetrators have been found guilty and sent to prison and whilst they are there, they are trained to get a job.

## **Support for victims**

Once the person starts the proceedings for rehabilitation, the entire staff of the shelter support them in finding accommodation. The housing policies are not directly under this Ministry, but another who deal with social housing, and the payment of bonuses for rent. But the Ministry is fully aligned and integrated in drafting policies like this that support VDV. One of the main documents that has been drafted has been the one for social housing. Since 2016 it has been implemented. This provides for specific housing programs for categories in need, which includes VDV. There are several types of ways of implementing this.

1. The municipality arranges for this.
2. Another provides for providing credit to rent the house. This applies only in cases where the victim is employed and has guarantees to fund the rent.

The focus is on supporting people reintegrate.

## **Programmes in place to change attitudes towards DV in community**

At the current stage, the MoHSP is working on a feasibility plan to make a concrete evaluation in which areas domestic violence is more present, and to see what we can do to on this e.g. diversify the shelters.

Due to the fact that the ALB Govt. works on projections for budgeting, generally 3 years ahead. We plan to open another three shelters for victims of DV before 2020. As it is still an ongoing process re: the feasibility study, we are equipped with an online instrument “RevALB”, which records online data of incidents of DV and reports to the Ministry. We will probably use this to determine. It is a new system and we will evaluate it in early 2018. It started working in May/June 2017.

## **Reasons for recorded cases of DV**

If the MoHSP looks back over the last decade, there has been an increase year-by-year. Before the creation of RevALB system, the main source of data was from the police office. Every year, there has been an average increase of 10%. The first look at that data makes it look like a rise in numbers of victims. But it's not. The main reason is that the awareness of the victim has increased and they know how to make a case.

## **Effectiveness of Protection Orders**

The MoHSP is not direct stakeholder in the issuing of the POs. The main stakeholder is the local courts. The proceedings have been: once the district court is given to the victim; one is sent to the police and one is sent to the local (municipality) social services. And in cases where there are incidents involving breaching POs, it is the police and local social services who are responsible for resolving them.

Of course, the MoHSP understands it is not perfect. Sometimes it is an issue of coordination; but it is also an issue of capacity. This Dept. in the last four years have worked a lot to build capacity in this regard. We have worked with police and local authorities. We have also done lots of training with local police who deal with VDV. We have also covered the entire police force at national level. We have also arranged training at local/regional level. The main focus of the training has been the police force, due to the fact that they needed the understanding and awareness, whereas those with a social services background are already more familiar. The trainings are also focussed on the police force because police move around, so we need to train new people.

There is official data on the number of police trained.

## **Women police officers**

Experience has shown that presenting a declaration in front of a female police officer makes it easier and more comfortable for the victim.

## **Possibility of moving from North to South**

There is no limitation for moving around. The main issue is that the shelter is in Tirana and women from all over the country come to it.

Despite the fact that there is no limitation on moving, one main barrier is the employment. If you move from one part of the country to another, it makes it more difficult to get employment. Usually they move to where their family is to get support. It's a subjective barrier; not an objective one.

There is no prejudice against different women from different areas.

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## Meeting with UN agencies and IOM, 2 November 2017

UN Agency (1)

UN Agency (3)

IOM

UN Agency (2)

### Scale of the issue

**UN Agency (1)** – DV is huge. It is the biggest gender issue we are facing. The Swedes have a dedicated programme. 1 in 2 have either been exposed to one form of violence during their life time. Europe average is 1 in 4. (please refer to the prevalence study on DV and the infographics)

**UN Agency (1):** There is legislation in place that addresses domestic violence in family relations. There is also a National Gender Equality Strategy (2016-2020) and an Action Plan. The legislation needs some amendments, which are discussing tomorrow in a round table with all relevant stakeholders under the leadership of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection and expertise and support provided by UN. The Strategy and AP envisages a national roadmap on Gender Equality including elimination of GBV&DV, but it needs to be adequately implemented at the local level. UN have supported the Govt. to develop CCR – Coordinated Community response – which brings together all the local and regional actors to tackle the issue. Victims of violence can also enter the system from any of these points. Once in, it's a coordinated local mechanism.

**UN Agency (1):** UN supported the former Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth to establish an online database – REVALB – that enables local authorities to record and track each and every case of violence against women and girls and this is coordinated and monitored centrally by the now mandated Ministry of Health and Social Protection.

**UN Agency (1):** Albania had general election in June 2017 and this brought reconfiguration of the institutional landscape with newly structured ministries. The Gender Equality machinery is a structure that UN Women may be able to speak more, but the issue of GE&GBV&DV related responsibilities is not clearly defined and well established. This issue has a high level of political backing.

**UN Agency (1):** – Going back to the stats – according to last survey done in 2013, it showed an increase in this. All forms of violence, compared to national surveys. 1 in 2 had faced a form of DV. In 2007, was around 56% of respondents. In 2013, it was 59,4%. The psychological violence was another form that has increased. Sexual violence was also under-reported, it is still a taboo issue. It doesn't get reported by the victim or by family member. (for more info please refer to the study and infographics sent)

**UN Agency (1):** Lot of progress from 2006 made by ALB on this: putting in place the legislative framework on this and at institutional structures. There are organic laws that fight DV in ALB that need to be improved in line with CEDAW and Istanbul Convention, esp. related to definitions. We don't have a framework law on violence against women which could be compliant with all definitions envisaged in the Istanbul Convention.



**UN Agency (1):** As far as CCR mechanisms are concerned, I would point out that there is a lack of specialised services for VDV. We've had a study on the functionality at local level of CCRs In the municipalities that have them, specialised services that provide them. Also financial and human resources were lacking. (please refer to the study we sent by email on the functionality of the CCRs.

**UN Agency (1):** CCRs only operate in half the country. There are 5 more coming now. There are 37/61 that have them, including the additional 5.21 of the existing CCRs have been supported with expertise by UNDP during the last decade.

**UN Agency (1):** Issues of sexual violence is not easily discussed.

**UN Agency (1):** You need to think if you want to leave the house, esp. with the child, have you got somewhere to go, it's economic and practical issues. But also family pressure – both his and her (assuming the victim is female). So many connotations that take place, plus the financial implications.

**UN Agency (1):** UN is supporting the establishment and functioning of the emergency crisis centres, which at present are established in 3 municipalities. Provide for safe accommodation for the first 24-72 hours after the occurrence of the DV incident. These are established at municipal level and it will be managed by the local CCR and the local DV coordinator at municipal level. UNDP is supporting the Ministry of Health and Social Protection (MoHSP) to draft standards for such emergency facilities for DV victims. In addition, responding to the needs for specialised services, there have also been discussions with Ministry of Interior and state police on actually starting sex assault centres. This could be one of the things that could help with GBV in ALB. UNDP stay committed to support the MoHSP to start such an initiative and involve all relevant actors.

**UN Agency (1):** There is also the situation of how many go to court.

**UN Agency (2):** The number of reported cases for victims of domestic violence and gender based violence to the police is higher than number of convictions. e.g. in 2014, out of 1189 cases only 476 were convicted at court. (This is the case also for victims of trafficking). Although in the last two years, the number of cases going to court has increased, the total number of convictions remain low compared to the number of cases reported to the police. Also the data collected from the police, prosecution and the judiciary are not always compatible.

**UN Agency (2):** Another challenge in the area of domestic violence is the violation and lack of enforcement of protection orders and emergency protection orders. Often the courts decide to leave the victim of violence and the offender in the same household, which has led to extreme violence and homicides.

**UN Agency (2):** These issues have been raised by the Committee on Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in its concluding observations addressed to Albania in 2016 and are also expected to be raised by GREVIO – the group of independent experts in charge of monitoring the Council of Europe Convention on Combating and Preventing Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) in its upcoming report to be published by the end of November 2017.

**UN Agency (1):** Jan-Aug 2017, reported cases to police is 2963, no convicted = 962. Rest have pursued POs. small number of cases go on to prosecute. 9 were killed, 7 female.

**UN Agency (2):** In Albania, there are a number of NGOs very active in the area GBV, which provide services, including legal aid to victims of domestic violence. These organizations, report that there is a lack of accountability within the law enforcement agencies for failure to follow up and enforce Protection Orders. Despite efforts to increase the capacities of police - and it should be clear, that the role of the Police in the fight against violence has improved over the year– there are still gaps. One of the challenges, for example, is the turnover of police, who have been trained on gender based violence

**UN Agency (2):** Lack of legal aid for victims of gender-based violence has been highlighted by CEDAW (2016) as one of the reasons of the low number of reports. The lack of services and lack of legal aid keep women victims of violence from coming forward.

**UN Agency (1):** Just finalised the Access to Justice assessment with a particular focus on vulnerable communities. Women who are VDV were a particular focus in that. Showed that women were amongst those who face barriers and discrimination to equitable access to justice system. We have had reports of other NGOs, lack of free legal aid services, including VDV. Lack of services have left women who could have had legal representation through court process not getting it. We are partnering with four NGOs who provide free legal aid services. We are piloting offering free legal services at four district courts. We are supporting the drafting of the new legal aid law in parliament. Hope this will allow marginalised communities to access the court system.

**UN Agency (1):** only a small pilot, and using our own money to kick it off. Tirana, Fier, Durres, Lezhe.

## VOT

**IOM:** since 2005, Albania has the National Referral Mechanism for identification, referral and assistance of victims and potential victims of trafficking (NRM)<sup>418</sup> and the IOM is a member of the NRM. Currently, in Albania, the framework is a good one. The Responsible Authority follows all the cases identified outside of Albania, at the border and in the territory in accordance with the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)<sup>419</sup> approved in July 2001 with decision of Council of Ministers. The penal code and others relate to TiP internal and external and are in line with the international conventions. The identification, referral and assistance of unaccompanied children could maybe be improved a bit. It's the implementation that needs improving. Albania created the SOPs, for clear procedures for VoT and PVoT – in ALB, outside ALB and at the border. Clear steps for people to follow. In 2012, revision of NRM process – to get more involved in the identification of VoT. All cases are referred as PVoT and a group composed of anti-trafficking police and social worker conducts the formal interview for determining the status of victim of trafficking. They are then entitled to access all the packages that are available in ALB. Albania also has the Strategy and action plan to combat trafficking in persons and the current one is 2014-2017. As it ends in 2017, and Ministry of Interior, Office of the National Anti-Trafficking Coordinator has initiated the process to prepare the new one and IOM has been approached to support with the preparation of the new

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<sup>418</sup> [http://www.mb.gov.al/files/priorities\\_files/mkr\\_anglisht.pdf](http://www.mb.gov.al/files/priorities_files/mkr_anglisht.pdf)

<sup>419</sup> <http://www.mb.gov.al/al/k-k-a-t/baza-ligjore>

country action plan up to 2020 which is in parallel with the Strategy on Organised Crime. This process is aiming to be concluded for Q1, 2018. There has been an open approach to review the current SOPs. This means that indicators for spotting victims at the border were improved. ONAC is in the revision process. But may need reviewing again once new Govt. is settled with the changes in different involved line Ministries and change in the criminal code entered in force in August 2017 referring the trafficking cases from Serious Crimes Court to regional level. It foreseen that capacity levels increase are a need for district prosecutors and judges.

**IOM:** Main areas on the four pillars, Prosecution, Protection, Prevention and Partnership. In Albania, there are 4 national shelters: 3 NGO run shelters and one: the National reception Centre fully funded by government. The Responsible Authority is operational and deals with all cases including VOTs and PVOTs. From 01 Jan 2017-28 Sept 2017 = 77 (22 VoT identified; 55 PVoT identified). This is from the central database. 38 adults; 39 children (62 children). 70 ALB; 7 foreigners. This tells the dimension of the problem. It shows more internal victims. More focus on referrals from ALB embassies abroad. Have also heard, as a positive measure, two referrals from a school psychologist. This is the result of the work of all the stakeholders under the coordination of the ONAC office and as a result of national information awareness raising campaigns conducted during the October anti trafficking month.

### **MO of Traffickers**

**IOM:** Suggest contacting the shelters. But the data shows that they are using different MO. They are going to EU countries, particularly Holland and Belgium, and aiming to get to the UK.

**IOM:** There is also changes going on in the police, and have to see what happens with the new restructuring of the Albanian Government.

**IOM:** Linked to this as well as to migration management in general, There is a major gap in ALB in the policy context. Currently there is no migration policy in place which would allow for a more comprehensive approach to migration related issues, and migration related actions are carried out on an ad-hoc basis. It prevents harmonisation of policy and coordination of efforts. IOM is currently supporting the Government of Albania for the development of the new migration policy through a project funded by the IOM Development Fund.

### **Tolerance of migration**

**IOM:** We have been told that there is already a system for people leaving with children but returning without: to create alerts (UASCs). With financial support of Netherland and Belgium an awareness raising campaign "Choose opportunities, not irregular migration" has started in October 2017 and will be implemented in 12 regions of Albania till March 2018... Not just about information. But also about providing resources to enable them to build a life in the rural areas – health, education etc. there is not really a good strategy and legal framework to enable this.

## Methods of recruitment

**IOM:** Police have reported a rise in use of social media for this.

**UN Agency (2):** We do not seem to be hearing often about cases of kidnapping lately. Perhaps the recruiters use more sophisticated ways.

**IOM:** Big problem with the reporting by the media. They are reported as prostitution. We are working with this regular migration campaign. But it's the same issue here. But they are not correctly reporting the issue.

**UN Agency (2):** implemented an EU funded project (UNDP-IOM-UNW a joint project) in 2014-16 with a strong component on Media education. UN Women trained media reporters on how to ethically and professionally report trafficking in women and girls and gender based violence. Part of the project was also a monitoring process of audio-visual and print media which disclosed huge gaps in terms of human trafficking reporting. Investigative journalism was completely missing; not root causes look at; words used carelessly. We had some improvements immediately after, but not much by way of quality of reporting. Further educational programmes are needed. UN Women has developed a dedicated module on how to report trafficking against women and girls and it will get included in the Faculty of journalism curriculum.

**UN Agency (3)** we see the risk, based on migration flows, of foreign women being trafficked into ALB. The risk hasn't disappeared. The way we see it, there should be an increased cooperation between Anti-trafficking authorities and asylum authorities. We have given only one decision since 2002 when a VoT was given subsidiary status because they couldn't return. We have had clear cases of miscommunication. The right to seek asylum or the mechanism to do so is not always there. We hope to see safeguards in the SOPs that provide for this. For all the other categories are there right away. In case we have a problem with the border police. Sometimes they refuse to notify to fear a larger flow into the country, so don't note the numbers. Because of this, authorities covering different fields have misunderstanding or miscommunication.

**IOM:** New structure of MoI will cover asylum, migration and anti-trafficking.

**IOM:** The NRM has been the most effective of them all in the country. It has received the modest support available. Others have struggled. And they get referred to this mechanism. Need a NRM for UASC/UAMs.

**UN Agency (3)** also, on GBV, for asylum seekers. The law does not limit its effect to ALB nationals only. But, for foreigners, there is uncertainty and lack of knowledge about this. More training needed for public administration officials to allow them to intervene. Though should also point out that some claim asylum in ALB but ultimately leave after. There is some reluctance in the police to deal with it. Possibly take the view that, at some point, they will leave anyway. Groups of people who arrive are varied, but even those with an obvious claim to status (e.g. Syrians) the Govt. is not clear how to deal with them. The ones most likely to stay and see the process out are the most vulnerable. E.g. people with families. Decide they don't want to take any more risks. Or people with injuries/sickness, which gets a bit worse by now.

**UN Agency (3):** 11 recognised as refugees in 2017. Number of children among them, including a family of four.

## Efforts of the police

**UN Agency (1):** When it comes to DV, the number of cases that have built up shows an increased awareness and increased trust in the police to report cases. The police are usually the first door where a VDV goes. Now, the professionalism of the police varies a lot – and UNDP has invested a lot to increase capacity of this – we have supported the Police Academy to update their curricular. In 2012 and 2013 the Criminal Code underwent amendments with regard to criminalisation of the DV and the law on State Police underwent improvements, therefore, there was a need to upgrade curricula on DV with the Police Academy.

**UN Agency (1):** All the newcomers of the police have to undertake a curricular on DV on the police. Have also trained members of the CCRs, of which the police are a key member. Through VDV, and my own experiences, the police attitude has changed. They are more receptive to complaints; more following up of complaints; helping women get an EPO and PO; also advising them about how to pursue a case. But the traditional way of thinking – the family values; sticking together; think of the children – does impact on the police thinking sometimes. Have had some cases where they have already tried to negotiate with the victim to go back to the perpetrator. Already mentioned the turnover of staff. Still a lot to be done on capacity building, attitude changing and professionalization – and also enforcing POs properly.

**IOM:** In March/April 2016, the ONAC office with IOM support did an evaluation of the implementation of the Action Plan 2014-2017. One element raised by the police is that the Anti-Trafficking curriculum is included in the Police academia curricula and they are trained to perform on this but when it comes to measuring performance against their ability to identify PVoT, it isn't there so it makes it difficult to focus on it. There are no indicators to measure police response to VDV or VHT.

**UN Agency (2):** UNW and other UN agencies have invested considerably in the training of the police and judiciary. And with the police forces you can see improvements. But the judiciary is arguably the weakest part of the system. Traffickers have been able to escape justice due to corruption or inefficiency. This makes it difficult for the victims to trust in, and seek redress from, the justice system. There is hope that the on-going justice reform and the vetting process of the judges and prosecutors will improve the judicial system.

**UN Agency (2):** We don't have information to what extent the engagement of women police officers might have helped with the situation. However, a positive development is the amendment to the criminal code which includes provisions for the protection of victims of gender-based violence and human trafficking. In particular, the new provisions require that that victims of sexual violence and human trafficking communicate with the same gender officers. The new amendments are in force since July 2017.

## Shelters

**UN Agency (1):** Worked with Ministry to set up the NCRVDV. Now takes women without a PO, rather than before. There is a need though to have regional shelters to have more accessibility of such services for VDV. Have also supported the standards for services who are resident in the shelters. Also standards in place about the helpline, this is currently administered by the NGO, though a cooperation



agreement with the former Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth but it's the responsibility of the state to continue with that service. Tried to smooth the cooperation between the Central Shelter, the CCR and others, to help with reintegration programs. They have progressed a lot. The shelter cooperates with the local directorates of employment, education etc. and is helping VDV to apply and benefit from the social housing schemes with the Tirana municipality. Have already established cooperation with businesses to help get women immediate work opportunities and support for the children. A lot of victims have children. Needs also to support those. Most children are teenagers. UNDP has provided the shelter with a good practice for rehabilitation and reintegration programmes, nevertheless, a lot is needed to be done with sustainable resources.

**UN Agency (1):** Doubt state has the budget to build three more shelters. Need to consolidate what they have got.

**UN Agency (2):** There is need to increase funds and support to NGO shelters, which are the main providers of services for victims of gender-based violence. UNW is also trying to create a network of women's organisation to lobby the government on this and the implementation of other international human rights obligations in relation to violence against women.

**IOM:** The government has also funded salaries of social workers working in NGO shelters, this was a big achievement. Been efforts to use the funds from confiscated, seized assets.

**UN Agency (1):** In the national centre for DV, there are 42 rooms. There has never been a situation where it has been over-capacitated.

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## Meeting with the Director of Social Services at the Municipality of Kükes, 3 November 2017

Director of Social Services in Kükes

Coordinator of cases of DV

Coordinator of cases of Minors

There is a special unit within the muni that deals with children.

### Perceptions of the problems re: VoT

Muni of Kükes is one of the poorest in ALB. More than 50% – 10,000 out of 18,000 families – that make up the population in Kükes are supported by social welfare. I say this as an opening as we are aware that where there is extreme poverty and crime, and this has made the situation worse. The social welfare element is around 35 EUR per month.

The two problems you raise are two of the most important issues for our muni, esp. the DV. DV is quite a problem. Human trafficking is not that widespread. There must be some cases, and we (Kükes) share a border with Kosovo and with Macedonia, so it may be that.

Lately, two years ago, there was administrative changes. So Kükes is now responsible for all the villages around it. DV is present, especially psychological, emotional and physical. From what we have understood and researched it is mostly

economic reasons; it's mostly directed at women; and it is mostly perpetrated by their husbands.

Most of the facts and the consequences of the violence is huge trauma. For the women and the children. This is our most pressing issue. Sometimes, the perpetrator refuses to give a divorce to the victim. But when this is completed, it is a huge relief. In some cases this is due to social stigma.

From our statistics, so far in 2017 there have been 30 divorces where the main reason for it was DV. These divorces were mainly in Kükes town, in the centre of the muni. In the villages around Kükes, it does go on but it is hidden. Or there is a social stigma and they don't go to the police or courts. In the villages, even though it is not right, there is still the mentality that women are the right/property of the husband, and an acceptance by the woman that this is what happens. The reason for this is that, despite the fall of communism, there has been a lack of education and other support to change attitudes.

### **Initiatives in place to tackle DV**

There are two committees.

1. For human trafficking. Headed by the prefecture.
2. Round-table committee on issues surrounding DV. Headed by the mayor of the muni.

These are required by law.

We are trying to coordinate our work with the police. Sometimes cases are referred to the muni (unit for DV); some are referred to the police. In most cases, the police doesn't follow-up these claims of DV to the prosecution office or to bring them to the muni office. They try to bring the conflicts to a close in their own way. In cases where the problems are very pressing, the police contact us and we they try to resolve them together.

The head of DV unit has accompanied the women to court. They have to bring a complaint and apply for a Protection Order. In most cases, the police don't have enough information and capacities to follow-up the cases in court. Because the administrator of the village (appointed by the muni) doesn't give enough information, it is mostly based on the victim's allegations. This means that when the claim goes to court, there isn't enough evidence to issue the PO. The court, most of the time, they tend to work on reconciliation between victim and perpetrator.

### **No. of POs issued/requested**

2016 = 16

2017 to date = 7 for women + 2 for minors

The court of Kükes should have the statistics for the numbers of PO requested.

This year, 20 cases of DV have been referred to us. We don't know what happened to the other 13 cases. We have women who approach us, as a muni, every day for issues related to DV but don't have capacity to help them.



## **Preventative measures**

Yes, there is a challenge. Because of the administrative territorial reform two years ago, our jurisdiction has expanded a lot. We used to only cover the town of Kukes; we now have all the villages as well. Because of this area we have to work with, and because they are quite remote, it is quite difficult for us to raise awareness.

Now we are working on a day centre, mostly aimed at VoT and VDV. We have renovated the building. We are now furnishing it. The capacity will be ten women a time to be assisted. We have problems with human resources; not enough staff; not enough education, skills or professionalism to deal with the issues. In this centre, we will have a 24/7 telephone service for victims of DV to use. The centre is just waiting to be furnished and will be opened soon.

## **Shelters**

The other issue is that the muni doesn't have capacity to accommodate and employ these women (victims of DV). This means that there are no emergency shelters; this is a big problem. A regional shelter should be in the area to deal with the emergency cases. The most pressing, the most high risk cases are sent to Tirana. But it isn't very helpful, because to get accommodated in Tirana you need a PO. These are issued in 72 hours.

We are very hopeful that the centre will be open soon and will be a message for the victims of DV so they have a place to go, and men have a message that women have a place to go.

## **Effectiveness of POs**

We don't believe the POs are usually very effective. The court usually leaves the victim and perpetrator living in the apartment. This usually escalates the violence. And during the divorce proceedings, this can also be aggravated when property and children's rights come up.

## **Trafficking and migration to UK of people from Kukes**

We don't have official answer about this. They travel illegally, and women travel under false promises of marriage in the UK. Head X was previously head of a small village and many women who left for the UK were victims of DV. There are cases who have been lied to by GBR citizens of ALB origins who lie to them and promise them marriage. There are also cases who don't accept the marriage because they don't like the bride or groom. There are quite a few arranged marriages in Kukes muni.

We have been poor and have been for a long time; but we had hope. Now we don't have hope. I have been discussing with young couples and young men. They are unemployed. In the villages, the schools are closing down because there aren't enough pupils. The healthcare is closing down. They can't get employment and can't buy a home. They can't survive on social welfare (35 EUR p/m). although we as a muni are trying to work on this issue, there is a lack of funds from the central Govt. for example, the day centre is not open yet because the furnishing isn't finished

because we haven't had the funds. This is shameful. We haven't been able to open a centre to inform the population about the legal routes of migration. We can't also provide educational facilities to provide things like foreign languages. We have a four-floor building where we want to open this multi-functional operation, but we don't have enough funds to do so. We have collaborated with the GER to open this centre and they have assisted us.

### **Reintegration support for returnees**

We are experiencing many families who are being returned, and this is why we want to open this centre. It helps them reintegrate. We have had many children who have gone through some education abroad but this isn't recognised in ALB; or they have forgotten the ALB language, so we have language courses available for them.

We don't offer accommodation because of lack of funds. Even though Kukes is one of the most problematic regions for DV, we don't get enough funds. Places like Durres and Tirana get more money – which we understand a little because they have more people – but they have social housing. We don't have many possibilities to help these women. We can't provide housing and accommodation.

### **Referrals to the NRM**

When we get cases, we refer to the NRM. There is a place online where we refer cases. But we are stuck in this phase at the moment where we make the referral, but we don't get a reply. When it comes to the re-organisation of the Ministries, we are in a limbo. We don't know who to refer to for now until it is settled. We are sceptical, because we didn't get enough help from the MoSW; now that it is moving to the MoH, we are concerned.

### **Stigma**

In rural areas, there is a stigma for women to get divorce and live alone. However, we consider it a success that women go and report the case, because they have considered the possible consequences.

There is more awareness to report the violence and to get divorced. When a woman goes to the police to report the violence, in a way she is more convinced of carrying it forward but that is the time when she has to reflect on all this. There is employment, even privately, but there is a little bit of concern with them to employ a divorced women. But even her family do not support her. There is also little employment, as we have explained. So it is difficult for her to make a living on her own. The social stigma also accompanies the children in their school and neighbourhood. The cases of bullying in these cases have increased.

### **Women police officers**

There are women police officers in Kukes. The main focus point for issues relating to women and children is a woman police officer. It is not mandatory for the law for that person to be a woman, but the police thought this would be the most appropriate person. This has had a positive effect in enabling women to report cases. Women

feel more comfortable and open in talking about. In particular, for women travelling from a rural area, which is difficult in itself because of the logistics, it helps make them more comfortable.

The sources debated the extent to which men are victims of abuse too. There have been cases in court where men have been violated by women.

### **Further punishments e.g. for breaching POs**

There has been a change in the last two years. DV cases are taken more seriously by the police. People have been imprisoned for breaching the POs, and the minimum sentence is 3 months.

Unfortunately, there are no rehabilitation programs for these men. And sometimes, when they come out of prison, they are even more violent.

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## **Meeting with the Director of Curriculum, Kukes 3 November 2017**

### **Perception of scale of girls being trafficked from Kukes area**

Trafficking of women and girls is not a big issue in our area. This is because of family ties and family morals are very strong. There may be some sporadic cases, but it's not big. There may be some cases where women are trafficked as far as Kosovo, but it's not a big issue for us.

### **Discrepancies between figures re: ALB potential victims of trafficking (PVoT) in UK**

I don't have an official knowledge about that. But from what I have heard, they usually travel as far as they can legally, then illegally to the UK. But they pay for this.

### **Scale of the issue of DV in Kukes**

DV is a problem. It is widespread. This is because there is a patriarchal mentality. Everything is resolved through violence, especially problematic is the psychological violence towards women and children.

We have worked in school to try and diminish this, and it has worked in reducing physical violence. But the psychological part remains a problem.

There are many people from this region who live in the UK. There is a tendency for males who leave ALB to come back and marry with an ALB girl. There is big family pressure to do this. There are cases where men have married GBR women to obtain citizenship and the family here are unaware of the circumstances.

### **Specific programs done in schools**

Regarding violence in school, there has been a decrease because of the measures against the teachers who are violent towards the children.

We have had training with the teachers and students about gender equality, domestic violence.

We have organised meetings between parents and teachers to talk about the issues.

Regarding specific material in the curriculum about violence in the home, there are three topics which deal with DV:

1. Civic education
2. Psychology
3. Social sciences

These lessons have free hours where they talk about particular topics around violence in general, including DV (but others, like inter-personal violence in the streets). They make projects about this.

We have also invited police officers into the school to talk about violence about how to reduce it, how to address it and how to report it. Violence is not widely reported.

On anti-trafficking measures, there is not anything very specific on this, but they are included in the lessons mentioned above. We also talk about things like drugs, alcohol and smoking. These are phenomenon that lead to violence (albeit not really trafficking).

### **Teachers awareness of and response to PVoT or Victims of Domestic Violence (DV)**

Teachers are usually more focussed on giving knowledge and teaching. But now we have psychologists in school, it is their responsibility to respond to this. They have tried to stop it and encouraged the children to speak about it. They also tried to prevent it. Not aware of cases that have been reported to the police via the schools.

### **Reintegration of returnees, esp. children**

Have had returns of minors, but mainly from Germany there have been nearly 40 who have been returned with their families. Haven't had returns from UK.

There it was a big challenge. Some had stayed for 6m, 1yr, 18m. They had had some education in Germany, but some had not; they then lost some part of their education. The ones who had been to school in Germany had certificates, but were so poor they couldn't afford the translation. They got re-enrolled in school, but sometimes had to start a year lower. The parents were made aware and told it is better to get the full education, rather than risk missing out on something.

### **Measuring the success of returns**

Coming back was very traumatic for them. They were taken in the night and brought back. And they wanted to stay there, so were disappointed. But in some ways it was good because they hadn't become accustomed to life in Germany and their customs, traditions etc.

### **Stigma attached to returnees**

There is absolutely no stigma attached. They were a bit sad to come back, particularly the parents who had sold their belongings in ALB to fund the journey, but that is it.

### **Effect of awareness-raising in schools**

We are seeing an impact. Things are changing. Young men are treating their wives better than what their fathers did.

There are cases of violence involving young people, but these are mostly due to economic reasons. This is because women are not economically independent. If they were, they would divorce their husbands.

There are other factors, such as unemployment, entrepreneurship. But if a woman wants to become independent, there are ways to achieve it. For example, working on craft issues – there are women who work on carpets or similar small entrepreneurship things, like seamstress that they can do at home. They also work in family business or elsewhere.

If there were opportunities to work, e.g. by opening factories. It would enable opportunities.

### **Age of girls in school**

The girls in the city, 100% of them go to High School (15-18); nearly 80% of the girls from the city go to University. In rural areas, once girls finish the obligatory education, not many of them go on to high school. They stop at 14/15. People are obliged to send children to school until this age. If they don't, the parents can be fined or put in prison. But the patriarchal society and lack of access means that children from rural areas stop at 15.

The region of Kükes has 10 schools. There are two in the city. The rest are in the rural regions. Some have a long travel to school – sometimes up to 2 hours – so we offer boarding too. Try to make it easier but some still don't continue.

### **Women living alone in Kükes**

It's very unusual for a woman to live alone in Kükes. There are women who live alone who work, who are widowed or divorced. There is stigma and prejudices against women who live alone. This stigma is what forces women to stay in unhappy marriages because of the sense of honour, or dishonour of leaving their family.

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## Meeting with the Kukes Police, 3 November 2017

### Number of DV cases reported in Kukes

Within the regional directorate, there is a section that deals with DV, especially that deals with the victim. To make sure they are protected. There is another section that deals with VoT, that comes under organised crime.

This year, we have identified 26 cases. From there, 11 have been issued with a PO. The others have been prosecuted as criminal proceedings. From there, 2 have been put on remand in prison. The others have been acquitted.

### Process for handling cases

Under the law, we have a set practice on how to deal with VDV.

When the victim first comes, and they are usually women, there is a medical check if needed. Then it is referred to the psychologist under the municipal social services, if necessary. We emphasise very much the first moment of contact, or first communication with the victims to create a warm environment to make them feel confident, safe and if there is a need for medical treatment, we send them to the hospital.

After the victim has come to us, we i/v them in the presence of the psychologist and ask them about the incident, the background etc. After that, we fill in a form for a Protection Order and lodge it in court.

Depending on the PO issued by the court, we either accompany the person to the Centre for VDV in Tirana, or to their accommodation and explain to the perpetrator his obligations under the law.

We have put in the public domain and tried to advertise phone numbers where people can contact the police and tell us about their claims. But we have to recognise that this region – the NE of ALB – is one of the poorest regions in ALB. And we have investigated and poverty is one of the reasons for DV. But the phenomenon has been decreasing. We have tried to work with the other institutions to address this, but it goes alongside the economic development of the country, and the other root causes.

### Challenges faced

As a Police Department, we have identified the lack of premises where the possible victim could be accommodated until the whole procedures take place. This is a problem we have faced and identified that is not getting fixed. There is a centre for VoT here, but we cannot house VDV there. We have also identified a need for a place for children who are VDV to go to. We have asked for it, but it is not happened yet. It would be good if this place could be near to the police station, but we don't have this yet.

Out of the 11 POs, two of these have continued to violate the victim. We have taken measures against these. We have put them in prison. In the other cases, these have been treated with constant supervision; going to the accommodation; speaking to the perpetrator; making sure he understands the red line.

The phenomenon is clear, and has been increasing lately in the NE compared to the other parts of country. But to understand this, you need to understand the reasons behind it. It is not just the economic reasons. It is the low standard of education, and the culture that creates. Another reason is inherited reasons. It is a very patriarchal society, very macho, and a closed mentality.

### **Victims obtaining copy of reports**

The person gets a copy of the report. It is the right of the victim to read and get informed of what was written in the report. They get this automatically. It is a legal obligation and procedure to give a copy to the victim.

### **Training of police on DV**

We have a training on how to treat the victims. We have had trainings clarifying the procedures to follow. And trainings on how to react and cooperate with other people involved in these cases.

### **Police training of others**

We have a collaboration with the regional education Dept. We have a plan. We identify and visit some of the schools and speak, not only with this – the community police – and the specialist who deals with DV here also goes and gives talks or training to the school. But this is not enough. More needs to be done with the community in general, as they are the ones who are the potential victims.

There is a need to go into the community to raise awareness, but there are so many other issues we try to tackle, like: drink, drugs, driving under the influence. But if we had to go and give talks about all these things, we would become an education institution, not a law enforcement agency. We would like to do more, even things like drafting leaflets, but only have so much capacity and resources. It is hard to go in depth into these issues. We just work on the surface.

### **DV specialist in Kükes**

I am newly appointed as Deputy Director only 6m ago. But understand that she has been here more than 5 years.

### **Turnover of police**

This is a big problem, all the change-over of staff. I want to emphasise that. We are seen as a re-education centre for the police. This is a big issue. We are left outside of the attention of the human resources. Some of the people who work here are, in a way, have not been working properly elsewhere and then they are brought here. I then have to try to re-educate them. And why should the community have to suffer from these sort of appointments? The policies of the human resources in the centre don't work because they define the needs, rather than respond to the needs of this station. Instead, they just bring here the people. I speak openly and undiplomatically about this, because we are fed up about this. Enough is enough!



## Process if a woman withdraws her complaint

This happens when a case goes to court. This is treated as the offence of beating. These cases are based on the word of the victim, so if the victim retreats, then the case is closed. In more serious or high risk cases, we would ask from the specialist of the community police to keep the case under close supervision and ask the specialist for DV cases here to have close contact with the victim and check how the situation has proceeded. The community police specialist would also meet the perpetrator and advise him about the situation. This is what we, as the police force, do. But if it would continue like this, the case will be lost as the other parts of the chain get lost, then we can't do much. There are other parts of the administration that don't do much. We are the only institution that comes more closer to the problem.

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## Meeting with Dr Rifat Demalija, Programme Manager of 'Centre for Youth Progress' NGO in Kukes and Civil Society Activist, 4 November 2017

### Background

Kukes Region, located in the north-north-east of Albania near the border with Kosovo, Montenegro and Macedonia, is confirmed as the poorest region in Albania with 22.5% of the population living under the minimum income threshold (<http://opinion.al/opinion-te-dhenat-zbuloni-qarkun-me-te-varfer-dhe-ate-me-te-pasur-ne-shqiperi/>). The high rate of migration and emigration has hit the region and youth mostly. A lack of opportunities tends to push young people to leave. The current population of Kukës Municipality is 60,500 inhabitants. 46% or 6,420 families benefit from Economic Social Aid (Kukës Municipality, Directory of Economic Social Aid, March 1st 2017). The lack of clear statistics for the Kukës Municipality and the Kukës region has been an ongoing issue.

Human trafficking of young women and girls, as well of boys under 18 years old, has been one of the most serious human rights facing Kukes region. This category of population, willing to leave the country because of the domestic violence and unemployment often is lured with false promises of jobs than forced into exploitative labour situations. Young people under 18 mostly are victims of trafficking to United Kingdom, believing that they will benefit for their age, while there are also women and girls escaping the violence and isolation which are lured with false promises for protection and integration.

Young women and men in Kukes region, face a number of crises; high rate of unemployment, a series of public officials convicted of crimes are still nominated for high level of official administration or elected at local and national level (Decriminalisation law), and a feeling of corruption in the public institutions generally, have affected mostly young people from Kukes region to live the country using illegal immigration channels. Surveys of those who do not vote indicate that the reasons are lack of time, lack of interest in the election and a sense that their vote would not matter.

In Kukes region there are many factors that obstacle the development of opportunities for women and young girls and their respective employment. Numerous obligations towards the family, raising of the children, lack of proper professional qualification, courses and little access against property and incapability in this way to obtain loans for private business initiatives, are only few of the various obstacles encountered by

women (Social – Economic situation of women in Kükes, YFI, 2012). Culture and tradition in this region is another big obstacle for the development of women which has lead towards isolation and not involved in the society. Being in this disadvantaged situation, unprotected, violated and not appreciated for its role, women have tried to find a way to escape from this culture. Most of those who have not accepted this situation have not been able to get organized or raise their voices in the region, but they have migrated or emigrated.

### **Scale of the problem of DV**

Despite there is no recent official data on the domestic violence level in the region, findings from different projects developed in the region by local NGO, show very high figures. The statistics that might be found within state offices and other institutions are not real and does not reflect the real situation which is hidden. Women and girls violated at home in most of the cases do not report to the court, because of the culture and traditions, therefore the official stats don't really show the full story of domestic violation.

With our NGO we have conducted a survey on 2012, 'Social – Economic situation of women in Kükes', and we have concluded that girls and women are very much affected by local tradition and culture, not reporting in the court the cases of violation. For 2016, the cases in the court may not be more than 15 cases reported in the court, while the cases where women and girls face domestic violence in the real life are tipped. The main reason of not reporting is related with the culture and tradition, which for women means that they don't want to break the rules of the local society, and the rest is related with the lack of trust towards the security institutions and tribunals.

### **Work of the NGO**

Center for Youth Progress (CYP) is a local NGO in Kükes, working since 2001, working in the field of youth and women (We have changed the name of the NGO from Youth in Free Initiative which was initially registered on 2001 into 'Center for Youth Progress' on 2014). Our main activities/projects are related and focused on: Human Rights Education, decision making; participation; active citizenship; promotion of gender equality; prevention of discrimination, no hate speech and extremism; building capacities for young people and women, mobility of young people; volunteering locally and internationally; monitoring local governance services. We have been working with donors that are interested in women issues and young people mainly. CYP is a local NGO but we also work at national and international level based on the partnerships we have built. We are dependent on foreign donors since the local and central government does not support us with financial means.

### **How services function here**

To measure the performance of the local services, we have used the scorecard method. Findings from our monitoring reports show that only in the urban areas some services are provided properly, accordingly to the law. While in the rural areas, services are not delivered for the communities and vulnerable people. With the recent admin reform, having big local governance and the centralisation, it is becoming more difficult for the communities living in rural areas. When it comes to women, they are

highly excluded and not even asked when the local governance plan the new budget for the coming year. Without asking and identifying their need, how it can be possible to provide and deliver quality services from this group? In this situation when they don't raise their voices, this becomes more difficult. Women coming from rural areas are completely isolated and not represented in decision making, which leads to poor services for them, lack of education and living in poor health condition. There is no discussion for leisure activities for girls or women in rural areas, since they miss basic services.

### **Reporting cases**

There were 15 cases in the court last year. I am not informed of the numbers this year. There might be some cases. Now it is more than 3-4 years that women have gained some independence in being able to leave the country. They are not reporting the cases to the court and are emigrating instead. It is a way of hiding. The cultures here are strong and they don't want to become subject of gossip. We are a small community and we all know.

### **Women living alone**

Not very common for women to live alone. For many reasons:

1. Very dependant economically.
2. Culturally, it is not something we are used to.

Even girls who work, they still live within the (extended family). In Tirana, yes, because it's very different the culture comparing to Kukes.

### **Police assistance**

I am sure that if a woman reported a case, the police would try to intervene. We know of cases where they have, but they try to solve it before it goes to the court. I would like to say that police itself is also affected by the local culture here, so they try to isolate and solve it without making it public.

Since Kukes it's very specific in terms of patriarchal, I don't think that police don't protect the women, since they try and do their best to protect them, but the culture and tradition affects them more than law. Being a small community where almost everyone knows everyone, where police officers mostly are men, there are cases where men are not sent to court and the situation of domestic violence is solved in the favour of the men, justifying that the women and men should stay together to take care of the family and children. Seeing the role of the men in the family and society locally, somehow the men is protected and has a better status when it comes to court or police.

Non-reporting Domestic Violence to the police or to the court doesn't mean that we have a good situation for women. It's not at all a success if we don't have women living alone. More, this is a success of the culture and tradition, which does not allow women to take initiatives and raise their voices to protect themselves and it's a shame for the society that hides the real situation. I know personally a recent story where a couple is fighting almost every night, and his husband violates her wife, and she does not like to report the case, because she does not to be the one who goes to the court to report

her husband. This is the success of the culture and tradition. In similar cases, women and girls prefer better to emigrate, rather than report in the police or court the violence against them. I can also confirm that women or girls are not protected by their parents, since they don't play a role in reporting the violence. This is because of the culture as well, and in some cases their parents of violated women and girls, are violators for other cases, so how they can report the common behaviour?

### **Effect on children**

The domestic violence has an effect on the children. The teachers have expressed this in our activities. Children coming from families where domestic violence happens are not concentrating on their education and they are in many cases aggressive. They will also be bullied or socially excluded because we live in a small community where everyone knows everyone.

Young people involved in our activities have been explaining and bringing many cases of domestic violence, although we don't want to identify individual cases. We want to talk about the issues in general, since we deal with education and capacity building more than reporting and working with police or tribunals.

This year, being supported by Save the children, we have started monitoring the implementation of the Child Convention in the rural areas within Kükes Municipality and after 5 months, we will have a report on 5 components of the implementation of Child Convention. Six youth-led groups are established in small communities to monitor the implementation of Child Convention.

### **Changing in attitudes**

Although we are living in a small region where the tradition and culture are affecting the life of women and girls, and where there are not many actors working in trafficking or domestic violence, there are small changes. Young people are interested and involved in our capacity building activities, and they are playing a big role on changing attitudes, but still most of our young people empowered, are leaving the region, going to study in the Universities or emigrating abroad. Small youth groups are active in promoting gender equality and monitoring the implementation of Child Convention. We have been working with young people 17 – 30 years old, while recently we are involving younger children, 7 – 18 years old, since they will be living in Kükes for a longer time and their impact will be longer if we build capacities and get them involved in our project activities.

### **Recent activities**

Very recently, we signed a small agreement with GIZ for children in two schools – one in Kükes, one rural – for social inclusion through sport. It is aimed at returnees. We are first going to empower PE teachers to teach sport for social inclusion, not just for competition. Then we are aiming to create a social inclusion championship. Very small project aiming mainly at returnees, but hoping to extend it. Girls are involved in this, gender mainstreaming is a big part of this, we have more girls than boys, not by choice, but maybe the focus. It's not about competition, for example we have been promoting Frisbee and volleyball. It's about how to use sport for inclusion.

And we want to encourage this. It's a good start to push teachers and educators to show our daughters and others we can do more through sport activities.

- Monitoring the implementation of the Child Convention is the project which is directly related with the domestic violence and Child rights, supported by Save the Children. Workshop for teachers and young people for the main features of the Convention.

Another project we are involved recently for the coming 10 months, is "Empowering first-line practitioners: Prevention of violent extremism in rural High School Communities". For this project we are going to work with 7 schools in rural areas. This project is supported by USAID and ANTTARC.

- Empowering local youth groups to address and prevent extremism and radicalisation within high school communities, is also another small project supported by Helsinki Committee in Albania under EU Commission.

### **Longer-term planning for funding**

It is difficult. We do not get money from local or national Govt. we get money from internationals, we are 100% dependent on foreign funds. But it is not that we get favoured. We have to apply for the calls. We may apply for 20 and get 2 or 3. Luckily, we have some human resources and experience in writing proposals. And we have had some successes, so it helps. We work on the Erasmus + program. We work on language programs. We are used to living with little money. E.g. we have had a summer school for two years without funding. We have had volunteers and what little money, we try to buy things for the children. It's kind of a community centre. Only two people fully employed and we get volunteers, e.g. peace corps from the US and some French people now.

Right now we have 5 people from Kükes under EVS overseas. It's not money, but it's programs for the young people.

We have run summer camps with no funding using local volunteers. We have also had a Kükes talent Show in the centre.

### **Returnees from UK**

Children from 1<sup>st</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> grade is about 300 people, but we haven't identified where they are coming from. We are seeing if we can involve them in our activities. In one class at primary school, there are three children who returned from Germany. It's a difficult situation for them to integrate into the education system. And because they struggle with reading and writing, and some with language they feel a bit excluded.

### **Future reporting of cases**

Our projects in the future could be focused on empowering young people and addressing awareness campaign in reporting domestic violence and trafficking to police and other security institutions. Encouraging women and girls to raise their voice and report and change the culture needs time and long-term projects, involving different local institutions and key local multipliers.

## **Other challenges for returnees**

There are no specific programs for returnee young people to adapt to their needs. And no additional teachers in a class. For the lesson, they have to teach. But there is no-one dedicated to the person coming back. How can a returnee be equally treated to someone who is present all the time? No specific programme so lots of challenges.

For young people who are in the age for school, they have challenges of integration in the education system, integration with friends and the language barriers. For young adults, the challenges are related with employment, while for women and girls it is more complicated, because they are facing also cultural challenges, as they have to find a man to get married, which after emigration is very difficult.

## **Trafficking of women**

Of course, there are a few cases where women want to join their husband or fiancé, but there are many cases where they want to leave the country. But this is considered trafficking as well, because people are supporting them to leave.

Young women or girls emigrating are not considered trafficked, although this is not right. Women and girls emigrating are paying money for human trafficking groups to cross the border illegally.

## **Anti-trafficking work**

We haven't really done anything. But we are also dependant on the calls for international support for projects. So we can have a good idea, but depends what they advertise for. And if we had an identify a good idea and go to the MoI, they just say we have no money. But we do a lot of wider work on human rights we have been working with the Swedes on this.

## **Families' view of emigration**

We know of one particular example of a family with three children – two girls and one boy. And here, the son is very important for the family. But because of peer pressure, he made the family get the money to help him leave otherwise he would leave anyway. They tried to convince him not to leave. They were poor, and they borrowed money to give him to enable him to go. He got very aggressive in the family because he wanted to leave.

There are other cases I'm sure who push their children to leave.

But not aware of people sending remittances back much any longer. This is a recent change. In the past they did, now it feels like they don't know or don't care. Maybe they don't work. But we know of many cases where people abroad in the UK are not sending money back.

UK is a special case compared to other EU countries. In other EU countries, parent can go and visit their children. Whereas, you need a visa for the UK and they don't get one.

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## Meeting with NGO Women's Counselling and Social Services Centre, 4 November 2017

### Background

The centre I work for is the centre for council for women. Set up as a project by OSCE in 2004. Since 2007, we are legally registered as an NGO. Our scope is to work with women, esp. victims of domestic violence (VDV) and Victims of Trafficking (VoT). We give them information, raise capacities, so that they can achieve their rights. Our target hasn't only been women and girls and young people. You cannot achieve success by only focussing on one side. We have always been working and pushing the institutions who are responsible to implement the human rights in general, and women's rights especially.

Part of our work is to be part of a larger network on NGOs in the country, focussing on issues of gender equality and rights of women. We started our work with campaigning and raising awareness of gender based violence (GBV) and domestic violence (DV).

At first, the perception of the community was very harsh and seen as helping women; but seen as helping "bad" women, as this is how they were viewed by society. At the beginning of 2004, there wasn't even one case reported for DV. So we started and continued our campaign against GBV and DV. By the end of 2004, there were already three cases reported.

The centre has been part of working groups on drafting the law on DV and the gender equality strategy.

Our focus is not only just about whether DV is being reported, but what is being done to reintegrate these women. The work has many shortcomings, in all of Albania but especially in Kukes. This creates a dilemma for the women. They tell us they know their rights; they know where to report it; but what will happen after that? The reported cases of GBV and DV has been steadily increasing and this was made possible not just because of awareness raising, but development of technology and the work the media has done. This applies to the urban areas. But the rural areas are very much left behind. There are rural areas in Kukes that are totally isolated, without even TV or telephone connections. Therefore, there a need to contact them to inform them so their awareness will be increased. I insist that the situation in rural areas, based on what I've seen and my own work, that cases of DV are linked to cases of trafficking. For example, girls under 18 are engaged to Albanian migrants aboard who they have never met. This doesn't mean that girls over 18 have a better choice. Girls over 18 do it too. These girls put themselves at risk by getting engaged with people they don't know and have never met. And there is a problem of young people emigrating. There are cases where families can't wait for their children to complete their mandatory schooling and they borrow money to send children abroad. Life is terrible here, esp. in the rural areas so they think they will be better if they send them abroad, but there is a high risk for them to be trafficked and violated.

Apart from this, there is another phenomenon lately, in which girls over 25 considered spinsters who go and get married in Kosovo, Serbia, Macedonia with people they have never met. We are aware of cases where the families have reported to the police that they haven't had communication with their daughter for over 6 months. In these kind of cases, we have heard and can assume, that these are used as working slaves or are trafficked. There was another case lately of a



person who married in Prizren who was expelled from her husband because she had given birth to a daughter not a son; he had already had 5 daughters from his first wife.

### **Awareness-raising**

We have used venues where girls and places where women and girls can come together, like dormitories, schools and health centres.

At first, they were very ashamed and lost. So we would start to talk about situations where we, as women (from the centre) felt violated. When we told our stories, they identified. They didn't have a concept that what they were being subjected to was violence. This is because of the mentality and how they are educated. It is always the fault with women. So we used media, leaflets, with teachers, tried to be available for the free hours they have in civic education to talk about rights. We were being called around Kukes "those women of the violence".

### **Reaching the more rural areas**

The centre has tried to work with the rural areas and tried to establish focal points in some of those local areas. Firstly, of course, when we started we didn't have a legal basis, so we asked for the administrative help (like health workers, teachers, social administrators), then we used the law which was enacted in 2006 to oblige them to.

In 2008 and 2009, with training by the OSCE, we have helped them to identify the VDV. However, there is a risk here: when a new Govt. comes in place, you have a change in staff, so you have to train them. We are always under pressure to know where there are training possibilities so that we can send people to attend.

### **Change in reporting of cases over time**

There has been a change in the reporting of DV cases over time, and they go to the police. But I should stress that when it gets to that point, it has got to the stage where she cannot take it anymore. We have had many discussions with women and other NGOs because she would be pressured by society and the family to withdraw the complaint. She is threatened that the children would be taken away. This is wrong: all the consequences of the violence are suffered by the victim, not the perpetrator. We have asked from the Prosecutor and the Police to continue with cases, even where cases where the women withdraw their case. The problems of DV do not only affect the women in that specific case, but the whole society. The police and the prosecutors should be encouraged to do better in this area. There have been big improvements, but there is a lot more to do.

### **POs issued**

There are POs issued and they look good on paper, but there are big problems in implementing them.

There is a situation where a woman lives in an apartment with her husband and husband's family. They are all poor, so are her own parents. Either she leaves, or

she is sent far away, to the centres for VDV – away from her children, and people who might be able to help her. And she remains the victim.

In Albanian family law, when a child is over 12, they are asked who they want to stay with and they very often choose their father.

The POs were a big step ahead and were really necessary. But now we are in a place where the infrastructure needs to be in place to implement them, but it's not. For example, the state is obliged to give the women victims food, education, accommodation, employment, but they don't.

### **Attitudes of men**

We must work on the attitudes of men, so we have included them in all of our activities that work on DV. We have included them in our networks, in our marches around the city about violence. Not only have we held marches in the city, but also in administrative units in the region. Men have been very active in these activities, because they are proud to say they are taking part because they have a mother, or a sister – this is something that affects them more than the wife.

### **Reintegration programs in Kukes**

We are part of the regional network to protect VDV. We are also part of the regional committee, headed by the Prefecture, on identifying VoT. We have accompanied the women when they go to report the cases with the police. Because the law requires that when the police interview a VDV, a psychologist or social worker needs to be present, the police call us. We have been there to help them psychologically. We have always been very active in calling for the NRM to function and we have always made clear to the state apparatus that they need to give free services to these women.

We have been very present with the violated women because we don't have a reintegration centre or shelter here in Kukes. So we want to tell the women about the infrastructure available in the country so they know what is available. These centres have always been very collaborative and have come to collect women to take them to Tirana. We have always been very careful to include the stakeholders in this. Our focus has always been to include the state authorities. We have approached them on many times to say we cannot do this without their authority. When we need to send a person to the centre in Vlore [the centre for VoT], we have asked the police to do so.

### **Funding**

This is what we can do because we are totally dependent on foreign donors' funds. We have been registered for ten years and received nothing from the state. We have been lucky to have had women who are very dedicated. We have also had a doctor we have collaborated with. We can't pay her, but still speak to her on violated cases. We have tried to adapt our needs of the NGO to the needs of the donors. For example, raising awareness about using women's suffrage and projects to assist economic empowerment of women.

If you don't make a successful bid and get donor funding for two years you are not considered a functioning NGO.

### **Police handling of DV cases in Kükes**

In the beginning, the police did not treat the victims well. There have been cases where the police would say things like "it was good that the husband beat you because you speak too much". Our presence during interviews are where we would go and denounce a case and NGO presence would help the situation. There have been cases where a woman would go 4 or 5 times and the police would say they are pestered by her. And when we tell them that it was their incompetence that drives that (they don't go to the police station for pleasure), they wouldn't be happy with this. but, apart from this, we have always been trying to focus on having close collaboration with the police.

The situation has improved. Now we have a psychologist working with the Directory of Police. We have women police officers, which has improved the situation – especially in terms of communication; it makes it easier. This is the situation for the city, but it's different for the rural areas. They don't even know who the community police officer is. They don't have chance to get in touch with them, let alone a professional police officer who can help them. If she is hours away, it's the practical opportunity to get here (to Kükes city).

[Police community officer is not a police officer, but is a person who is appointed by the police to report situations to them.]

### **Women living alone in Kükes**

It is very difficult for a woman living alone in Kükes. According to a UNDP report, it's the poorest region in Albania. Unemployment is officially at 36%, but in reality it is much higher. Half of the families are on social welfare, and this provides for 50EUR p/m for the whole family.

The lifestyle in Kükes is very different from the other regions. There are two reasons to live alone, including men: they are crazy or immoral. The social services is very poor; there is no employment; no accommodation. Even if a person has the economic means, it is very scary for a woman to live alone in Kükes. She wouldn't be subject to physical violence, but the psychological pressure is there.

### **Root causes of the violence**

Violence causes violence. All the people are violated. Men are also violated here in another way. They feel they are limited and don't have opportunities to support their families. They don't have accommodation; employment and feel pressure because they can't provide a better life for their family. They channel that frustration towards their wife. There is even a tradition to be shown as rigid; hold power as men. There is also a saying that a man is someone who has to discipline his wife.

## **Changes in attitudes**

There is an example of a husband taking the washing in from the garden when it was raining – but a female neighbour made a derogatory comment about it.

We also recently engaged some elderly men and asked them to go and do the shopping to show the community that it is not for the woman to have to do everything. Young men are seen helping with the children.

The situation is improving; more people are taking a more equal role. Also in other areas, and in reverse, now men are doing what were traditional female jobs – like cleaning. Men are now sometimes also nurses, teachers.

## **Assisting women through the judicial system**

We have always accompanied women in court, we have also compiled psychological reports. Even where the court has engaged others, we have always been present during the public trials and have always been part as interested parties.

There is only one woman lawyer here in Kukes. She has helped us pro-bono on these types of cases.

In terms of outcomes, there have been imprisonment of men, but not enough on the scale that it can serve as an example to other men. The cases about POs have generally been reviewed by women judges and they have been very considerate. Things have been difficult at the beginning [2006] because it was new law and didn't have experience. But they have been very supportive.

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## **Meeting at the Ministry of Health (Head of Mental Health and Addictology Department), 6 November 2017**

### **Capacity and reform of mental health provisions**

Albania's reform of mental health is trying to change the situation to a more community-based approach. We want to be as close to the public as possible, to make it accessible.

In 2000 there were only 4 psychiatric hospitals.

2 large psychiatric hospitals – 180 beds (in Vlore), St Patrick's; the other 310 (in Elbasan). Around three-quarters of the people in the one in Vlore are there with chronic illnesses and have been there many years. Maybe now that the MoSY and MoH are together, we may be able to tackle these capacity issues better.

The other 2 are parts of bigger hospitals, and have psych wards (Shkoder = 35 beds; Tirana = 90 beds, of which 10 are for children/adolescents). Near the Uni clinic of Tirana.

In order to downsize the numbers of beds, we also have community support clinic. We have 24/7 residence care, with specialised mental health care. This is aimed at people who have been in hospital for 20/30 years and they are small services with a maximum of 10 beds structured as homes.

## **Difference between community support and hospital treatment**

The community support are structured more as homes. This is a challenge because people have been in hospital. The aim is to rehabilitate and support the transition from hospitalisation to home. We have succeeded in some cases.

The other services are community mental health service. These are ambulatory – day services. There are 9 of these in Albania. They offer multi-disciplinary services. Psychologist, psychiatrists, psychiatric nurse, social workers and occupational therapists. 9 teams, three of which have a dedicated team that deals with children/adolescents one in Shkoder, two in Tirana.

1.5 psychiatrists per 100 000 of the population. Challenge of the brain drain.

## **Reaching those who live in remote areas**

Usually the people who live in remote areas are referred to these specialist teams by their GP.

## **Time limits on treatment**

It depends on the diagnoses, but it goes no longer than 21 days. In Tirana, the stay is lower.

Now when we discharge the people, they are referred to a community health centre.

## **Paying for treatment**

Primary health care is offered for free if you have insurance or not. If a person follows the referral system, they can access the secondary health services for free. For mentally ill people, we have positively discriminated in favour of them so they get access and treated for the associated social issues.

## **Work with shelters (DV/VoT)**

For DV, this is outside of my remit.

For VoT, I am member of the Responsible Authority. It is coordinated by the vice Minister of the MOI. There is a NRM, which is at political level. Then there is a Responsible Authority that deals with particular cases, not just general provisions.

We do have a problem in shelters with VoT/PVoT who have mental health issues. We are now discussing with the Mol whether it's possible to have supported accommodation for those who are resident in the institutions – the state-run or NGO-run ones. We are in the process of gathering data for this, and hope this will address the issues.

### **Work with perpetrators (addictology)**

We have not worked with perpetrators of violence specifically; there are not specific provisions for this particularly. But we offer support for the general population on addiction, which might cover alcoholism and toxicology. (There is a toxicology clinic in Tirana.)

We have great support from an NGO called “Action Plus”, which helps addiction treatment with methadone. This NGO has very specific information. They have specific units across Albania.

People can be referred or self-referred to these.

Treatment for this is also free.

### **Follow up treatment and monitoring**

We do not have capacity for residential support. Most of them do not have relatives; or they do, but they don't want to accept them back and the situation is difficult.

There is no time-limit on how long we monitor the person for. It just depends on the person; the diagnosis.

More psycho-social support is offered to people who have come out of the shelter. And we offer more support for this. There is no time limit on how long we support a person in the community, it depends on the diagnosis.

### **Linking in when an NRM referral comes from elsewhere**

When social services or the police make a referral, we have specific provision in the state health insurance rules that covers a victim.

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## **Meeting with the Albanian Ombudsman, 6 November 2017**

The FFM Team met with:

- The Acting Director of the Section for Children
- The Director of the National Mechanism for the Prevention of Torture
- Commissioner of the National Mechanism for the Prevention of Torture
- Commissioner at the Special Section of the National Mechanism for the Prevention of Torture
- The Chief of the International Cooperation Unit

### **NPM**

Works on inspecting the places where people deprived of freedom are held. Police, shelters, hospitals, prisons, border places (for those returning, transiting, seeking asylum).

We have recently inspected the Centre for Victims of Domestic Violence (VDV). One person (Anila) has been doing that regularly.

Five centres:

1. Karec – illegal foreigners in Albania who have not claimed asylum. They stay until they can be returned. we have a good overview of this place.
2. Asylum centre near to Tirana. Monitored many times, and had a good overview
3. Centre for VDV close to Tirana. (Monitored initially by the administrative section)
4. Center in Linza, Tirana. For victims of trafficking and potential victims
5. Centre in Vlore. For victims of trafficking and potential victims - inspected for the first time last week

### **Updates planned to 2012 report and current work re: VAW**

No updates planned to the 2012 report. In 2016, we have provided an alternative report (re: CEDAW) it was about the violence trends. We have this report in English if interested. Was the first time an alternative report was presented. The ombudsman was supported by UN Women, for which we believe will work well for future collaboration.

The priority of the Ombudsman is to consider the claims that are presented to us. In the last few years, the office has considered and presented lots of reports and presented them to the Parliament. Women and categories in need – which includes women – are an important part of the reports and how they have been implemented and they will continue to be in the future.

Sometimes it happens that, through the treatment of one case, we have others too. We can conclude positively.

### **Numbers/scale of DV and VoT cases**

The figures that the Ombudsman has does not show an increase in the numbers. But the information by, say, the media show an increase. But our statistics don't show this.

### **Common cases raised**

The economic situation. Most of the main ones that come here are economic ones.

One of the recommendations of the Ombudsman is that there is not a legally recognised living standard as a benchmark. Based on our knowledge, it has become understood it is more a political will.

Most of the claims are by economic reasons. The women don't define themselves as suffering because of being a woman but as the head of a large family with husband outside of Albania, or as single mothers.

Another factor is that women complain about access to justice. They do not have the means to pay for a lawyer. Usually, lawyers that are appointed by the state are not that loyal in following the case. It's a state commission, that provides legal advice to these cases. This has not been very effective, because of a lack of funding.



Last year, a recommendation of the Ombudsman to the MoJ was to extend the categories who can access legal aid. The new categories include VDV; victims of discrimination. A draft law has been presented to parliament. As for the budget, we are not sure.

### **Cases of reported torture issues**

Most of the cases are reported during inspections. We visit prisons, police station, etc. we monitor the places, and we go room-to-room and talk to the people who are treated in these institutions. We rarely treat them one-by-one; we look at the more common issues. E.g. if there is a topic about access to medical treatment, we look at that and make recommendations. Sometimes it is for the institution we are visiting. But where we spot more general trends, we report more generally and send such recommendations to the responsible authority.

There is another section – a special section – that deals with claims through phone or other means of communication (e.g. a family member of a prisoner; a prisoner calls from prison). MPM is more about preventing torture and inhuman treatment; the other section is more reactive. We collaborate. We do joint investigations on cases for which we have been receiving complaints of excessive use of force and work as a team.

We can tell you about plenty of complaints of reported torture. Until August, we had about 140 complaints and some claims of violence that we reported to us. Some were proved right; some were not. One particular case we were reported on was a case of a foreigner who is being deprived unlawfully of freedom by being held in the centre.

We also inspect the prison for women – we only have one of these in Albania – and the complaints of the minors penitentiary. There are four; one is dedicated (In Kavana, between Tirana and Durrës) and three others with sections for minors. The dedicated minors' prison has space for 40 but is overcrowded most of the time. There are many cases of reports from here, mostly related to the infrastructure and lack of appropriate treatment. As for the prison for women, the Ombudsman inspected lately. ['We can send the recommendations but the UK Home Office will have to arrange a translation from Albanian']. It is an old prison. But it is in Tirana, but has the ability to cooperate with other institutions and with NGOs.

### **Sanctions**

We work on an annual programme of planned visits. Details of this year's are on the webpage. This year, we had 5 cases of torture brought to us. Which were brought to our attention by the media and lawyers, and were concerning ill treatment by the police, and brought a case. 3 of the cases were found during our inspection in the prison in Fier (one for instructing the Ombudsman doing his work; the other for use of force against a detainee). On top of this, there were 80 inspections. Our ultimate aim is to refer cases for prosecution. We also issue recommendations to the administration to the DG of police or DG of prisons for administrative actions. Our recommendations to administration have generally been respected. These have never been rejected. The Prosecutors Office have investigated but we have never

got to a court. We would like more, but sometimes the condemnation can act as a preventative measure.

We are currently going through a vetting of the legal system in Albania. It has already been proved that the Prosecutor's office and judges that they have a big problem. That can also affect how they respond to our cases.

One of the things we can do is to fix our problems through our recommendations. We send these to the institutions and the area with responsibility for these, which could include a minister or the prime minister.

We also have seven regional offices and these work not only on prevention and detection, but also on identifying issues. This might include DV and VoT. At institutional level, there have been many developments on this. In each institution, we have someone who deals with DV and children and family issues. We have had cases of violence in the family. PO and EPO were introduced. Safe houses were introduced – not everywhere but in some places – so that women have a place to go. There is also police in the community. And this helps detect cases because they are closer to the community. These are referred to the office of children and families in the local administration. They also keep in touch with the judiciary.

The National Centre for the Treatment of Victims of Trafficking in Tirana, which we inspected recently, can host 80 people; but now only 9 live there now. So there is capacity for supporting other regions that don't have a safe house – e.g. northern regions – or returnees.

In every municipality, there is now a unit for child protection, but they need a lot of support on training, capacity and funding. That person may not be able to identify cases of exploitation of children, or not attending mandatory school etc.

A major case we looked at internationally is the case of unaccompanied minors. Now there are lots of actions to identify and tackle this. The Border Police are looking at flight detail and asking for details about the traveling child. Same about returning flights. There is a will to tackle this issue. However, not a great job is done outside of Albania to check the children who are travelling.

The Ombudsman participate in the return flights, particularly from Lille. We also have a lot of returnees from Italy. They have strong child protection laws, but it meant that children (U 17) go there and get protection no questions asked – they get schooling etc. but it hasn't stopped authorities from asking questions on departure or from asking questions of the parents who return without them. Although the border at airports is reasonably well covered, land borders are not done so well.

### **Inspection of the Centre for VDV**

In the report based on the inspection in February 2017, three women were beneficiaries for the bonuses for rent. Other women were on the waiting list for this too. An NGO, for three years, had been supporting their rent. Five women were in the process of a getting a job. As per the report of the Ombudsman, this was very positive. [No statistics available]

On 27 October, we did an inspection which was an update of the February inspection. It was the first time the Centre for the Treatment of Victims of Violence was inspected by the NPM (Nat. Prevent. Mech). The conditions and infrastructure

were optimal, and the care and attention of staff perfect. The resources are stretched, because they do a lot of things: accompanying people to court, taking children to school.

There were 12 staff working there which is on yearly contract, which is renewable.

Legal advice and a psychologist was not available at that time; it was being provided from the Centre of VoT.

The mechanics of each centre – how many staff etc. – are decided by the Prime Minister's Office. They underestimated the legal support and psychologist need here. The PM's Office said it is provided by the other shelter, but we pointed out that they have their own needs at that centre.

The NGOs also provide support. But NGOs provide support only with funding. So we cannot rely entirely on these. Our concern is about making this sustainable.

The centre for DV has capacity for 32 people.

The centre for VoT has capacity for 18 persons.

### **Support provisions**

The Centre for Legal and Civic Initiatives provided legal support.

Women in the shelters receive training in cooking, sewing and foreign language to help with re-integration.

### **Work done on police handling of DV cases**

We haven't prepared a report, but we have detail on how they deal with these cases.

As per Albanian legislation on DV prevention, the police are obliged to take the person to make a report and take the person to court to get a PO. The legislation provides that a person can go to court directly, the police usually assist them in getting the PO.

As per the law, the police are obliged to help and are the first institution – they gather evidence, medical report, investigate. Then it passes to the Prosecutors Office. The courts see this as a priority, and they are treated very quickly. Usually, the emergency PO is given before the full process is before the court. Then the PO is decided and, if issued, usually lasts for a year.

Usually, the PO provides for not living in the same house or to stay a distance away. But the problem is that in most cases they are required to live together. The economics are such they have to live together. This is the main difficulty – and there is not social housing.

We are at a stage where we maybe should not be creating more shelters for victims, and focus more on the perpetrator maybe the perpetrator should be the one to move.

An important institutional development has been the inclusion of the victim in the court procedure. Before, the person may have been convicted, but the victim was not included. Now we have victimology.

## **Reporting issues to the police**

It was to be the case that the person couldn't report it to the police, but that isn't true anymore. If a case is reported, it will be investigated. No claim is left unfollowed. In the past, there have been cases where the police have been prosecuted or charged administratively for not doing anything, so they don't want that anymore.

In the police, there are special structures that deal with DV issues. There is an increase in the number of cases reported. It shows a diversification of situations – sometimes it is parent-child; parent-grandparent. In some cases, victims have been killed. This includes the case of the Shkoder judge killed in Tirana. She had a PO.

Under-reporting is a big issue, it is considered a shame to report your husband or family member. This is the case even among women who are well educated and in good jobs.

Some of the claims are withdrawn by the victims, but from what is being discussed in the media (not necessarily from our own investigations), cases are being raised for different reasons.

It's not that the police's job is finished once the person is in court. They go to the Prosecutor's Office to seek criminal charges. As per Albanian legislation, if there is a breach of the PO, it is a criminal offence and can be subject to imprisonment. There are many cases of men that are imprisoned for breaching a PO and/or DV (but we don't have statistics - MOJ). But there are many that we meet when we inspect prisons.

With regard to divorce, sometimes it is a problem of mentality, despite a PO existing, most women don't go for divorce because of social, family or economic reasons. However, divorce numbers have been increasing.

## **Women living alone**

It is difficult, especially for the rural areas. There are single mothers doing well. But these are unusual. Mostly, others need support from families or from social support. There are cases of children being left in orphanages – social orphans – until a woman can stand strong and take care of the child again.

We are rapidly advancing to Western living of life. There is big cultural change in Tirana. It's not just single mothers, but single women living alone; working; paying rent.

There is also an important issue that is prevented during divorce, in that they not supported by the other parent. This creates difficulties, even where a court order is issued.

Children of 12 are given a psychological evaluation and asked which parent they would prefer to live with, however it is the psychiatrist's and court's decision which prevails.

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## Meeting with the Director of Social Services, Municipality of Tirana, 6 November 2017

### Scale of the issue/prevalence of DV

Municipality of Tirana has a referral mechanism, (also known as the Coordinated Community Response Mechanism). Members of this DV Referral Mechanism in Tirana are:

1. Local DV Coordinator in the Municipality
2. Police Department
3. District Court
4. Prosecutor Office
5. Bailiff Office
6. Forensic Institute
7. Regional Directory of Public Health
8. Mother Teresa Hospital
9. Directory of Social Services
10. Regional Education Directory
11. Employment Office
12. Shelter for Women and Girls
13. Community Development Centre "Today for the Future"

Some organisations refer cases; some more help the victims. We not only refer cases of women, but also those with children. We have 24 administrative units, and in each we have someone who has a responsibility for children. We have others that deal, e.g., with DV; one that deals with LGBTI issues; one for Romani and Egyptian communities. We also refer these cases to the Child Protection Unit.

In DV cases, they go to the police and then to the prosecutor. First they get an EPO; then we get the case.

We give them lots of information about how to identify victims of violence.

We have a free phone number (24-hour Free local green line for DV survivors) to refer cases of victims of DV in Tirana. We also have a national number (which women in Tirana can also use). They then refer the cases to us. We also have an NGO who refer cases about women. We also refer to them. This is usually in the 24-48 hours it takes for an EPO to be issued by the court. Then we have the ongoing process.

We help women to pay for the rent in a house. We pay for 100% of the rent and do this for a year, through the Lease Bonus Programme. If the case is the same after a year, we carry on paying it. But we try to empower the women to become independent, but cases are dynamic, therefore it depends. We refer children to a kindergarten or school and our social services.

When the women come to us, we try to encourage them to report the perpetrator, but it is up to them. We don't force the issue. They have to make the decision for themselves and we will provide the support services anyway. They must think about the detail and they are the ones who have to go through it. For us we determine if the life of the woman is at risk, if we think she is in danger, we will refer the case to the police.

We have also referred cases involving male victims. Not many, about 20, but we have a separate free counselling line for men and boys.

As women are seeing services available, the number is increasing. We also know we have a lot of cases that don't come to us. They don't make the decision to go to court or go to the police. And we can't identify victims of DV if they are not reported. There is a definite increase, especially in the last two years when we offered the support for rent – this helps the woman know she has a place to go. Before, a court would issue a decision but the woman had nowhere to go. The rent helps that, and also gives a chance for somewhere for the children to go. It helps when a woman has a PO; but they don't have to have one. We make a social evaluation, and if they need it, we provide the same.

### **Numbers of social housing**

We don't have a minimum level of rent. We have a scoring formula to work out how much help they need. In the last year, we have been paying the rent monthly for about 400 families. The vulnerable categories include e.g. Roma/Egyptian community; or victims of DV.

The number of DV cases needs checking, but estimated to be about 30. We have had some successes.

- ▶ There is a rising trend in the cases of DV which are reported and then managed in Tirana
- ▶ 580 "demands for issuing protection orders" between Jan & Sept 2017 (474 demands between Jan & Sept 2016)
- ▶ 76 cases of DV have been managed by the CCR in 2017 (43 cases in 2016)
- ▶ 68 survivors of DV have benefited from economic aid in October 2017 (59 in October 2016)

18 survivors of DV have benefited from Lease Bonus Programme in 2017 (8 beneficiaries in 2016)

We don't necessarily have to provide the person with a property. They can find a property, and we just support with the money. We don't want to stipulate where they have to live, but we help as much as we can.

### **Relationship with the shelters**

We have an agreement with the shelters, because they are also part of the NRM. We work well, and we refer cases to each other. If we find a victim, we refer it to them; or they refer people to us to get the help. Sometimes women think this will involve filling in lots of forms and they have to do this without help, but this is not



true. Often, when they go to an NGO, they help with this too and helps them realise this isn't true.

### **Foster care provision**

We are just developing this. We have a lot of cases of 'kinship', where the child goes to another family member. We have just had the first case of a four-year-old who the family couldn't take care of who has just gone to a foster parent, and we have four other cases in the court now.

We don't provide the funding for this, it comes from the state budget and goes to the family to help them look after the children.

### **Monitoring**

We monitor all the cases we manage. Whether that is social housing, or child benefit. If we don't do this monitoring, the cases come back to us and we have to almost start from the beginning.

When it comes to the children, we monitor every 3-6 months; for other cases, we monitor every 6-12 months. In Tirana, we monitor for two years. But we are going to move to monitoring for as long people need us or for as long as they are using our services.

### **Involvement in identifying VoT**

We are involved in identifying VoT. Our main focus is on identifying and preventing it. We work with an NGO called "Different and Equal" and have a good relationship with them. We help them with children, finding a job, finding housing. But when it comes to helping women, it is the same process as for VDV.

We have a dedicated person here who works with D&E on preventing trafficking. E.g. they go to the schools to talk about these kinds of issues. But we are slightly limited in resources so can't do a lot with going to the police.

### **Other support**

We offer support to the daily centres to provide lunch for them and their children. For the women who don't want to go to one of these centres, because they don't want to be identified in this way, we provide a food package that they can use to help make their own food in their home. No-one will die from hunger in Tirana, that is for sure.

We recognise that this is something of the minimum of what they need; but our job is more to help them help themselves.

### **Effectiveness of Protection Orders**

A few days ago, we had a meeting at the Ministry of Health and Social Protection to talk about the changes to the law. It is much easier for us to help a case when they have a PO.



In general, the POs do work, but you need the proper social services to make that happen. And this is not just in Tirana. If you can't provide the services, it does not matter what the order of the court is. But if you can't find a job; house; social services, it doesn't matter. Tirana has a lot of services and a lot of NGOs and international agencies to help. In our opinion, this is more difficult in the regions outside of Tirana who don't have these resources.

We encourage women to go and make a denunciation, but you need to support them through that process. It is a difficult decision to make.

### **Supporting women through the justice system**

The administrative units are responsible for this and so this is done at more at local level. There are 24 now in Tirana Municipality. There used to be 11.

In these 13 new places, these are mostly villages, and they don't view DV as a serious enough issue. This is a big challenge and one of the biggest we face.

### **Women living alone in Tirana**

Women can live alone in Tirana. There was one case where a woman lived alone with her children where the husband found her and killed her. But she no longer had a Protection Order.

Other women can. And where women have suffered DV and can move away from her home if they live far away, they can come here.

In some cases, there is a stigma attached to it. But it is mostly these new communities. In Tirana, this isn't the case. Women can do it. More and more women, as the media report it more and as social media increases, know that they can do it.

### **Men detecting women**

Men generally view women as property, so there is the case that will try and seek them out. But it is not easy. And the police know they need to be on the look out for this. But it is difficult for a man to accept that it is over and they need to move on.

### **Divorce**

Divorce is becoming more and more common. There are more and more cases coming from the court. It tends to be more of the younger couples than the older ones. We can send data, but the numbers are going up. These aren't just about violence though.

### **Women moving to Tirana**

We see lots of people moving here. We see about 67 people a day who come here, looking for a job etc. to see if they can make it. They come from all over the country.

## **Community policing**

We are trying to reduce the pressure of going to the police. For the moment, the person is just someone appointed by the police in local areas to mix with the police and administration units. But their roles are not clearly defined at present; the MoI is writing a law that should clarify this.

## **Emigration**

People try to choose what is best for them, so Tirana is the “plan B” for those who want something better than the city they live.

We are doing what we can, and we are getting better. What is done in social support and social services this 2 years is impressive.

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## **Meeting with the Commissioner for Protection against Discrimination, 6 November 2017**

The FFM Team met with the Commissioner.

### **Current areas of work and focus**

The institution is new. It was established in 2010. The total staff is 23 people. Our main focus of activities is anti-discrimination policies, or anti-discrimination treatment of citizens. Lately, the Commission has issued an open list of topics for discrimination which formed the basis for the recreation of this institution. The focus are public or private institutions. We also have decision making competencies. Part of the work is decision making on the cases of discrimination and the consequences of these. In cases of non-enforcement of the decision, it can be followed with a financial penalty. And in cases where discrimination is done by private institutions, it can result in removal of their licence. Besides the cases that are started singularly or by a group, we can also start cases on our own initiative if there is reliable information that such breaches are happening.

The main source for providing reliable evidence is usually information from public media or NGOs. There is also an important connection between CPD and district courts. First time is usually the appeal of the decision taken by the CPD. Another case is where district courts are obliged to inform the CPD about cases of discrimination. Another would be where they ask for the expertise of the CPD in cases before the court. As per Albanian legislation, the person who is subject to discrimination may request the support of the CPD before the court. The main field of activities of the of the CPD is employment, education, health issues, goods and services. This is the field of operation of the CPD, but the cases are usually the Roma community. The new trend is claims of discrimination of work, for health issues or political views. Also, lately, cases involving non-integration of children with disabilities.

We also are responsible for overseeing implementation of legislation, doing surveys etc. and campaigns. Another important group we focus on is the LGBTIQ community.

The CPD is not part of the national referral mechanism for DV, but we had one case involving discrimination from a person in the shelter who was referred from the social

services, and one case who was a VoT. The CPD was part of the sensitisation campaign along with an NGO (Different and Equal). Part of this campaign was the training of students and local employees on discrimination issues. The CPD has close ties with several NGOs who work on anti-trafficking and DV issues. But, in our view, the CPD should be placed inside the Referral Mechanism. When it comes to the claimant there appears to be discrimination by gender. When it comes to the decision making, it is usually more women. It is not always about gender.

### **The DV case**

This happened at the beginning, when the shelter opened (about 2012). There were three women. The CPD was against the shelter/in favour of the women and their children. Part of this decision was to get changes to the regulations and protocols of the shelter.

Usually, due to the position the CPD has in relation to DV cases, and the victims go to other institutions, the monitoring of these cases is very difficult for the CPD. But due to the sensitivities the issue has, especially since 2015, we have arranged training with the police about discrimination issues. We have also arranged training with schools, other education facilities – anyone who has a direct contact with this issue.

Lately, the CPD has opened three more offices – as a project – to create the possibility of being closer to the victims.

### **Reasons why women don't bring more complaints to CPD**

Basically, the system is set up to function elsewhere. The discrimination may not always be on gender grounds; it may be others. They complain about employment, relations, race. There are other institutions they are directed to.

### **Complaints about treatment at court/in the justice system**

Currently, we don't get cases of complaints about court largely because the person can appeal the decision of the first court upwards, and because the CPD doesn't have the authority over the higher court.

The main problem when it comes to the court's treatment of a case is that it is not treated as discrimination; it is treated strictly as DV. So because of this, the CPD is not permitted to enter.

### **Actions taken on gender-based discrimination in education and employment**

Most of the cases, when it is considered discrimination, is where it comes to being dismissed from employment for their beliefs etc.

In one specific case, a woman was fired for her child's disabilities. The CPD ruled that discrimination had taken place. Usually, the facts from the CPD are taken into consideration. In this case, the court ruled for exactly for the same decision/remedy as the CPD, which was to return the person to their work. In other cases, they make a slightly lesser decision e.g. to pay a severance pay.

In another case, at first sight, when it was treated for a discrimination on political grounds (because of the views of the person's husband). But on further investigation, it also contained some gender-based discrimination too.

### **Investigative methods**

After the claim has been lodged we make further requests for information from the claimant. Albanian legislation has provided a step-by-step process for investigations.

Once there is a response from one of the parties, an inspector is brought in to evaluate the evidence. This can be using documents or by an inspection. We send a notice ahead explaining the purpose. The law also provides for hearings, where people can be brought before the CPD. Usually this is investigated if there are grey areas that need clarifying. The law on anti-discrimination also allows for the parties to make a mutually-agreeable conclusion. Then the responsible investigator drafts the decision. It goes through the hierarchy in the institution, but gets decided by the CPD itself (herself). Where the decision finds discrimination, the CPD orders measures to repair the discrimination. These contain time limits to implement the decision. Where they do not, the CPD can order financial penalties against the offending party. On the other hand, the CPD's decision is not final. They can appeal it to the district court.

There are about 200 cases per year investigated.

### **LGBTI issues**

Usually, the wrong information about the community submitted or hate speech.

### **Roma community issues**

Complaints about housing, social services, education (including registration of pupils and segregation in school). Also cases where they build houses without the correct papers and they are forcibly evicted.

### **Online form**

We have an online form, but most of the cases are made in person (at the office), by mail and email.

### **Women living alone**

The CPD gets complaints for the whole territory (Albania). But it is difficult to give a concrete answer on this. The most competent institution to get data about that would be INSTAT (National Commission for Statistics).

When it comes to complaints, the CPD has tried to develop a working method based on the communities. For example, for the Roma community, the economic situation is very difficult. Due to this, the possibility for them to make claims via the internet or e-mail is very low. Every year, we organise an open day with the community and we

go to the places where the community lives. This methodology is also helpful for spreading of information, campaigns – general awareness raising.

The CPD is working hard with local NGOs to create a network, as they may have a better opportunity to identify the cases where discrimination may be taking place. In some cases before the CPD, we have cases of multi-faceted issues. E.g. they are a Romani woman who is head of the family where someone has a disability.

## **Funding**

The CPD has two sources of information: state budget and donations. The trend from year-to-year shows a small increase, but it's not consistent.

We were also cooperating on projects with e.g. UN Women, UNDP, UNICEF, CoE.

We are a state institution and therefore not treated as an NGO.

## **Training of police**

We have trained 500 officers at national level. We focus on some particular groups – women, LGBTI, race – that have more contact with the police. It is not regular training though. It was a particular project we did in conjunction with the Albania police in 2015. We have also trained teachers, social workers etc. on anti-discrimination measures.

## **“Minority” groups perceptions of police professionalism**

If the victim has come to the CPD, they are generally not happy with the other party. But this is not always common. Of course, it depends on the category of the group. The LGBTI community has brought only three cases against the police; but in other cases, they have joint projects with the police. The main LGBTI complaints we deal with are against Parliament/Parliamentarians regarding hate speech.

## **Attacks against LGBTI people**

Normally, the cases of violence against LGBTI is not normally brought to the CPD. They go to the police. Regarding hate crimes on sexual orientation or race grounds, there are no figures available on this.

But the police are building a database regarding hate crime.

## **Discrimination against divorced women**

CPD does not have any complaints brought by divorced women. The discrimination might be socially-based, but not against divorced women or single mothers.

The cases brought on political grounds usually takes place when there is a change of government.

## Cases involving children

We usually see cases involving education and integration of Roma children.

Albanian legislation provides that a case from a minor should be brought by their parent or by a curator. From a human point of view, the CPD will try to find a way to investigate if a child did apply. We are not overly rigid.

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## Meeting with NGOs, 6 November 2017

### Centre for Legal Civic Initiatives

### The Albanian Red Cross National Coordinator of Social Welfare Programme and Restoring Links

ARSIS,

Caritas, Albania,

### Particular projects/work

**CLCI:** CLCI mission is to support, aid and provide legal education to the citizens, giving priority to women and girls, so as to increase their access to public institutions, and in particular in the justice system, through:

- Offering free legal services for the victims of domestic violence and of other violent acts and for the people in need.
- Legal education, with the aim of recognizing and exerting the human rights and freedoms, as provided for by the Constitution, international acts and laws.
- Advocacy and lobbying for democratization of the justice system and building of its effectiveness, by studying, monitoring and generalizing the best experience and practice in the justice field.

Undertaking and support of initiatives for improving the legislation and for lobbying for draft-laws and state policies in the field of protection of the human rights, focusing on gender equality, fight against domestic violence, fight against corruption and trafficking of human beings, aiming their full compliance with the best advanced international standards and the European Union acquis.

**CLCI:** The most important component of CLCI work is providing free legal services for gender based violence victims, but as well we work on other projects on property rights when we have provided free legal services for property rights but as well we have trained lawyers, public notary, employees of office of registration of immovable properties etc. We are training magistrate school students (judges, prosecutor) for ethics. Through free legal aid we also monitor the work of court and administrative institutions, when it comes to implement laws and their approach on victims' rights.

**CLCI:** We face a lot of problems when it comes to increase the access of DV in the court and protect them. The police prepare the law suits for court but does not inform DV for what they have written down on the law suits, protections measures, the rights of the victims on the civil process, they do not refer to services etc. Since we monitor the court sessions, court decisions on DV cases we prepare monitoring reports when we identify the problems and suggest recommendations to institutions



with the aim to make changes and improve DV position on civil cases but as well on administrative institutions. In some cases, our recommendations for changes are taken into consideration on some cases there are not.

**CARITAS:** the victim compensation is a good example of something that lots of CSOs are lobbying for. Even though the law is in place to provide for it, nothing has been happening in practice. It should come from the state budget, esp. from confiscated funds from criminals. But they are not doing it.

There are 12 Regional Anti Trafficking Committees in Albania (RACT), coordinating on counter trafficking actions headed by the Prefect. They receive information on cases of Victims of trafficking by the technical round table. All the local institutions such as Education Directorate, Border and Migration Police, Local Police, Health Directorate, Social Services etc. are part of the RACT. Caritas Albania under a JTIP funded project supported 6 of these to work better, but that leaves the other 6 and most of the initiatives are project based, and there is a risk of lacking sustainability. The most important institutions such as the ministries are here in Tirana, and they don't really know what is going on elsewhere. For example, the Has region is one of the poorest and lots of them go the UK.

The new penal code is amended. Before, VoT was dealt with by the Serious Crimes Court here in Tirana. Now it is moving to the regions. They don't know properly what a VoT is. If it was here in Tirana, they have dealt with cases, they have the experience, they have the training etc. if it moves, we have to begin all over again. Plus, in the regions there is still a misunderstanding of who is a VoT and who is a prostitute, and mentality is still an issue. People know each other in the regions and it would be very difficult for the VoT to report a criminal.

**CLCI:** Part of the changes under Justice reform was The Albanian Procedural Code. The new PC provides a new status of the victim on criminal processes, she/he has more rights and can be parties on the court sessions but as well can ask for both damages material and moral.

**CARITAS:** The issue is that the court has to identify a VoT.

**ALBANIAN RED CROSS (ARC):** most of our beneficiaries are former VoT. During our projects that aim the empowerment of Albanian women; we are trying to integrate them in project circle and into the labour market as the final aim of the project. Among the beneficiaries of the project are also former VoT or women who are returned from abroad.

We also run a project to reconnect families. This isn't just even people who are returned, it is all people. We cooperate with IOM on this. If they are interested, we also support them on our reintegration program. We also do this with VDV (support access to labour market).

We support them in the shelters with things like blankets, toys and clothes for the children, food – things like this; logistical things.

ARC offers Restoring Family Links service to the separated families as result of events such as international and non-international armed conflict, natural disasters, or mass refugee movements and other situations requiring humanitarian intervention. Some of our beneficiaries have been VoT.



We cooperate with IOM for the Albanian citizens who are returned in Albania. We provide for them food package and non-food items such as blankets, hygienic kits or clothes. When is possible we invite the returnees to be part of our programs.

Upon to their request, we have supported as well shelters of victims of domestic violence with items like blankets, toys and clothes for the children, food.

**ARISIS** we run 72-hour shelters for children, or parents with their children. We had a few of these based on a decision by the former minister.

We work in police stations, and the problem is the origin of the children who have been trafficked. We have referred many cases like this to Municipality Officers, and in many cases they were not really provided the proper reintegration into society. We also had problems with the families accepting the children back. They don't see the real problem.

In one example, we helped a 14/15yr girl who was at risk of trafficking in Durres from three people. She accepted support from these people because the family were poor. We also support returnees from other countries. We don't have sustainable support for them, depending on our projects. We don't have sustainable support (finance) from the state. We have vocal support, but not enough financial support.

### **Police responses to DV and VoT**

**CARITAS:** The police are not the best, but they know how the NRM works. They know how to refer. They know they have to refer to social services. They interview of VoT is supposed to happen in specific areas however they are done in the police department where there might be other officers present. They respect the procedures – i.e. the social worker is there, the psychologist is there – but the interview takes place in an open space where everyone could hear. This means other people can know. Caritas Albania has renovated some friendly interview rooms for victims of trafficking in the premises of the Police Departments such as in Vlore, Lezhe and provided also one room with beds in Kukes, Muriqan and Durres.

The police know the Standard Operating Procedures well. The ones not working on this don't really know. Or they know the very basics – they know they must refer it, but that's it. They don't think about some of the practical indicators for e.g. people crossing into Kosovo all the time; or children not going to school in school very often. If the education system (the school psychologist) reports these kinds of things – the indicators – to the social services, we would get better at this. e.g. there was a case in Durres where a girl in school started wearing make-up, wearing jewellery all of a sudden. This was an indicator.

Zero work is being done amongst Albanian Border Police to identify PVoT of other nationalities travelling through Albania. It's strange. Maybe they don't want the additional work, or if the person doesn't want asylum, that's it. If people are returned in numbers, how can we do this?

We get lots of requests for information by different organisations or even people to support the returned Albanians from abroad to integrate in the society as there are no integration programs for the Albanian returned families.

**CLCI:** When a DV victim makes a complaint, the police don't provide information about the process or what is available (protection measures) to them to protect them. They don't provide a copy of the law-suit to the victim. The police are obliged to give a copy of the law-suit to the victim by law. Usually they do not explain the services provided for victims, or does not refer to NGO that provide free legal services. The police do not response to court when, it asks for information or about evidence.

**ALBANIAN RED CROSS (ARC):** The police are more sensitive to VDV. They find our number and call us. ARC cited one particular example where a female officer called them and asked for advice on where to send the person and what additional support was available.

**CARITAS:** The shelters have capacity. We received a call from the Director of a shelter in Tirana asking to support a VDV who didn't want to stay there. We've not visited the centre so we don't know why they don't want to stay. The NGO-run shelters for VoT are 24/7 but they need continuous financial support. There is a question about why the NGO run shelters ask Caritas to pay for rent of the VoT after they get out of the shelters, during their integration process. Why should this happen when the state should plan for their integration programs and provide accommodation in the state run shelters.

It's not about just training, more information sharing. And not just sharing manuals; about actually talking through what they mean. When we talk about the SOPs on identifying VoT, the ones who use it all the time know it but the other people responsible for identification or service provision don't know how the system or the mechanisms should function.

### **Police turnover**

**ARSIS:** police turnover is an issue. But it is not just a police issue. People are moved regularly all over.

Also, the representatives from Ministry of Health departments don't really participate in round tables and things like this.

**CARITAS:** Health sectors in the region also have a responsibility to report cases but often they just close ranks and don't. They don't take actions. They are the most important ministry now and can't carry on like this.

**ARSIS:** outside of Tirana, DV is considered a right. We had a particular case a few weeks ago where we referred a case of minors to the court and it was the first time the judge had experienced a case like this.

### **Collaboration to support to victims**

**CLCI:** within the NGOs, we collaborate well with each other. For example, we collaborate with ARSIS. Or, if we need a psychologist in a particular case, we will ask around for one.

Some of the police also ask us to make representations when the case is in court, but it is not all. And it depends on building the relationships. The same with the Tirana District Court. They will refer cases that we are interested in. But support from the state is not great.

We do make suggestions and talk to the State about the law. They listen, and take some suggestions, but the main recommendations that we make to the state are not taken into consideration.

**CARITAS:** There is no physical protection program for a VoT in cases of trial. So one example would be that if a VoT wants to make a denunciation of a trafficker, the state won't provide her security for her or the family so in most of the cases being scared they wouldn't report the crime or denunciate the trafficker.

Diocesan Caritas operating in the north do also have centres for VoT in northern Albania and the social services refer cases to us. The VoT stay with the nuns until their case is sorted out.

Caritas Albania has provided training on protection of victims of trafficking for law enforcement and civil servants. A training module is developed with the collaboration of the National Coordinator against Trafficking which is used as a school curricula in the Police Academy. So it means that the new police officers will start learning about anti trafficking, prevention, identification and referral from their school years so when they graduate they will have back ground knowledge on the subject.

**ARIS:** we provide food packages to street children who are returnees. Also medical support. We use this as part of the multi-sector roundtables to get the start and then look to the state to make the long-term support. But, not every institution is as collaborative with each other, and we help build that at times. It falls upon the NGOs to bring all these institutions together. They don't understand their responsibilities.

### **Societal view of women living alone**

**CARITAS:** In the regions, it is very difficult. It is different in Tirana.

It is tough financially in Tirana. Normally, a one-bed apartment costs a minimum of £100 per month.

Asking for a divorce in Northern Albania, you would face prejudice from the society. Had one example of a neighbour, who was from Kukes, who suffered 22 years of DV. She asked for a divorce and her son, who is in the UK, said he didn't want to speak to her anymore because of this.

**ALBANIAN RED CROSS (ARC):** A victim of DV who is old cannot live alone really. But if you are younger, you can. It's getting easier. The new generation.

**CARITAS:** DV is normal in our society. Only the ones who are sensitised will come forward and report. First, we should make people aware that's a crime, then we can start to try and stop it.

### **Funding**

**CARITAS:** There is a national agency to support civil society. This was established under the law, which is now in force. But it is hard to get the money out of it.

**CLCI:** the law on providing free legal services can. But it is only primary legal services. The law will start being implemented in June 2018.

**ARIS:** on the contrary, instead of supporting the NGOs, the Govt. is establishing child units within the municipalities – so what will be the roles of NGOs in the future.

**ALL:** talked about how it was, in some ways, positive. The state was recognised they need to provide a service and they are working with NGOs to do it. However, they are maybe missing the point that they should be the provider.

**CLCI:** State institutions are not effective. When it comes to legal aid, they are not really providing enough legal aid or lawyers. We provide support for 15 victims of DV per day. We have the structures and good laws, but it's the implementation.

**CARITAS:** If they provide the budget for establishing the CPUs, that's great.

**CLCI:** NGOs, esp. those who work in Tirana, are specialised. And our capacities are increasing. But these state institutions are starting from the beginning.

**CARITAS:** In Caritas, we are struggling because all of the calls are for capacity building. These are not really related to the calls for the people. We need more support to directly support the victims.

### **Work with perpetrators**

**CLCI:** when I represent cases of DV in court we ask, as a measure, for the perpetrator to undergo a rehabilitation programme. We have some NGOs who run rehabilitation programmes – one in Tirana and one in Shkoder.

**ALBANIAN RED CROSS (ARC):** Only work with victims, as principle.

**CARITAS:** but the main cases are children who are exploited by their parents for labour reasons. So we work with the families and try to empower them so they do not have to put their children to begging. But we don't work with traffickers/smugglers. You have to work on educating the families.

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