

**ALBANIA's NATIONAL INTER-SECTORIAL
STRATEGY
ON SOCIAL INCLUSION, 2007–2013**

EVALUATION REPORT

ALBANIAN CENTER FOR ECONOMIC RESEARCH

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Acronyms

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
CPI	Consumer Price Index
CPU	Child Protection Unit
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DIPTA	Document of Inter-sector Policies on Third Age
DP	Disabled Person
RDE	Regional Directory of Education
EU	European Union
FG	Focus Group
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IDU	Injecting Drug User
INSTAT	Institute of Statistics
IPH	Institute of Public Health
LFS	Labour Force Survey
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender persons
LSMS	Living Standards Measurement Survey
MES	Ministry of Education and Science
METE	Ministry of Economy, Trade and Energy
MLSAEO	Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities
MoH	Ministry of Health
MoI	Ministry of Interior
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
MPWT	Ministry of Public Works and Transport
MTCYS	Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports
NAPCR	National Authority for the Protection of Child Rights
NES	National Employment Service
NPO	Non Profit Organisation
NSDI	National Strategy for Development and Integration
NSGE	National Strategy on Gender Equality

NSSI	National Strategy for Social Inclusion
PHI	Public Health Institute
SAPRC	State Agency for the Protection of the Rights of the Child
SDV	Strategy against Domestic Violence
SLI	State Labour Inspectorate
HII	Health Insurance Institute
SII	Social Insurance Institute
SSS	State Social Services

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This evaluation report is a result of action taken by Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities (MLSAEO) to inform the government of Albania on the validity of the existing National Strategy for Social Inclusion (NSSI) as a conceptual, planning and monitoring instrument. NSSI is intended to guide a concerted inter-sectorial effort for the social inclusion of vulnerable groups in Albanian society. The report was prepared by the Albanian Center for Economic Research and funded by UNICEF.

The evaluation report includes the following:

- a review of available documents related to implementation of sector policies and strategies comprising the NSSI, and the drawing of conclusions in relation to the patterns of social exclusion, their characteristics, trends, incidence and other relevant issues
- an analysis of the extent to which NSSI guides the national development policies and the models of allocating resources, in combination with measures to bring about social inclusion of the most excluded groups
- a list of recommendations to MLSAEO in relation to the policies and measures for reviewing, improving and designing new inclusion and social protection strategies
- a list of practical recommendations on how to improve management, monitoring and reporting on progress of the social inclusion strategy from an inter-sectorial perspective.

The main achievements of the Inter-sectorial Strategy on Social Inclusion include the following:

- increased attention and responsibility of central government towards the situation and the problems of groups in need and those at risk of social exclusion, as evidenced by:
 - improvements made to the legal framework
 - design of better policies and programmes
 - increased range of social services delivery
 - holding of awareness campaigns
 - greater participation of vulnerable groups in decision making and policy making.
- increased interest of CSOs and international organisations to implement programmes and projects to improve the quality of life for vulnerable groups
- establishment of structures and capacity building efforts at all levels of implementation of programmes and policies to support groups in need
- positive steps taken towards increasing the range of social services delivery for groups in need.

The evaluation focused on some of the main weak points of NSSI, including the following:

- failure to identify budgets to implement policies and programmes designed to improve the situation of groups in need, resulting in partial and unsustainable fulfilment of the foreseen measures
- poor regional and local policies, which fall short of addressing the specific needs of excluded groups, particularly in the rural and mountainous parts of the country
- the existence of incomplete statistical data at both the central and local level, hindering a deep and adequate understanding of the situation of groups in need, and resulting in incomplete measures and policies that fail to be inclusive and yield only a limited social impact.

In conclusion, in order to prevent social exclusion and to inform members of groups at risk of being excluded, as well as relevant service providers, it is essential to review the current social inclusion strategy. To ensure its sustainability and compliance with the strategic programmes of the Albanian government, the strategy review should undertake the following steps:

- a) Establish strong inter-institutional cooperation between central and local governments.
- b) Enhance the understanding of social service providers and users of the rights of the latter, and the responsibilities of the former, towards improving service delivery and strengthening transparency and accountability.
- c) Take action to design a communication strategy on the objectives of NSSI, its policies and indicators.
- d) Design a detailed action plan giving estimates and allocations of adequate funding levels and realistic timelines for programme implementation.

INTRODUCTION

The Inter-sectorial Strategy on Social Inclusion (2007–2013), herein also referred to as the National Strategy on Social Inclusion (NSSI), is a policy document under the National Strategy for Development and Integration (NSDI). NSDI sets the long-term objectives of the Albanian government to achieve economic growth and improve the living standards of the country's population. It underlines the importance of education, health care services and adequate infrastructure as national priorities to underpin poverty reduction and long-term sustainable growth.

NSSI is based entirely on existing national strategies, including those on Roma people, children and disabled individuals. As a component part of NSDI, NSSI focuses on the risks of poverty and social exclusion, which continue to exist despite the upturn in economic growth. As an inter-sector strategy, it is at the same time in full harmony with the specific policies of the sectorial and institutional arrangements aimed at supporting vulnerable individuals, families and groups at the community level in order to empower them to act for themselves, to become self sufficient and enjoy the same rights as other members of society.

Since the start of implementation of the Strategy in 2008, there has been only one Progress Report, in 2009, on the monitoring of measures contained in NSSI according to the indicators set by MLSAEO. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) supported the design and publishing of that report, which appeared in 2010, and which describes progress on legislation improvements, strengthening of policy making and implementation structures involved with vulnerable groups, and the status of concrete measures taken towards achieving the objectives under NSSI. In addition, the report identifies a number of problems, specifically the following: a) lack of data, in particular data serving to identify the most excluded groups and their specific problems, making it difficult to measure the degree of their social exclusion and deprivation; b) lack of allocations to implement NSSI; and c) lack of human resources, or adequate professional capacities, or both, in the existing public administration staff.

Evaluation objectives

The main objective of the present monitoring report on implementation of NSSI is to present the progress and dynamics of measures and policies taken towards the ultimate objective of advancing social inclusion of vulnerable populations in Albania.

Poverty issues have been for many years at the core of national development policies. Recently there has been increased attention on the development and empowerment of groups in need. The present report attempts to produce a systemic analysis of the harmonization of the legislation and policies at the national level with the standards and measures contained in NSSI.

This report is designed to provide government with feedback on progress made to improve the situation of groups in need from a rights-based approach vis-à-vis the objectives under the social inclusion strategy. This approach is one of the primary strategic objectives towards the measurement of progress under NSSI, based on performance evidence and indicators. A solid basis of evidence is essential for a meaningful and concrete assessment of results under social inclusion interventions. Moreover, indicators are an integral part of instruments to measure progress towards the long-term objectives.

The report pays attention to not just how government has performed as an active change agent to benefit the vulnerable groups from an inclusive point of view, but also to the role of civil society in

general, and the private sector and international community as partners in Albania's development processes. In addition, it pays considerable attention to how and in what manner this partnership can be improved to benefit groups in need.

Lastly, this progress report serves both the purpose of monitoring the performance of the main actors vis-à-vis their relevant responsibilities in implementation of NSSI, which will continue to be valid throughout 2013, and as a basis for a review of NSSI as the main inter-sector document under NSDI.

Target audience

The target audience of this evaluation exercise is MLSAEO, the main institution responsible for the design and monitoring of NSSI; the parties to the formulation and implementation of policies under NSSI, i.e. the line ministries (Justice, MoJ; Education and Science, MES; Health, MoH; Public Works and Transport, MPWT; Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports, MTCYS) as the central institutions and government agencies; the implementers of programmes at the central, regional and local level (regional councils, municipalities and communes) under the obligation to adhere to NSSI and its action plan and the providers of services for excluded groups. The present evaluation report aims to draw the attention of civil society organisations (CSOs) to involve excluded groups in the consultations with MLSAEO and other line ministries on policy design and decision-making processes, and of media operators as key partners in informing and building public awareness, in particular of the communities with a stake in the NSSI objectives.

Main sources of information

This report focuses on the implementation of NSSI and the degree to which the objectives for 2008–2011 have been achieved in relation to the relevant indicators. The baseline for this progress report is determined by 2009 data, whenever these data have been available. To assess the indicators under the strategy, the authors of this report have used statistical sources and information from various state institutions, consisting mainly of administrative data or survey findings gathered by INSTAT, such as the Labour Force Surveys, Living Standards Measurement Survey (LSMS) 2008, etc. With regard to indicators for which no statistical data are available, the authors used information and facts from secondary sources—reports and research studies published by Non Profit Organisations (NPOs) and international organisations.

CHAPTER I: OVERVIEW OF ALBANIA'S SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC SITUATION, 2008–2012

From the beginning of the new millennium up until the onset of the global economic crisis in 2008 the Albanian economy was characterised by constant expansion. The transforming and restructuring of the economy and the macroeconomic policies implemented over these years created opportunities for sustainable economic growth, at about six percent annually considered to be among the highest in the region. Such a high growth rate led naturally to consolidated macroeconomic stability. The GDP was increasing thanks to efficient utilization of capital and improvement in productivity, reflected in the transfer of the labour force from low-productivity to high-productivity sectors. At the same time, unemployment rates gradually fell, to 12.7 percent at the end of that period.

These positive developments and satisfactory stability of the financial sector played an important role in the performance of the different economic sectors. Meanwhile, business crediting increased at stable rates, though it has gradually declined more recently. Moreover, indicators that measure the country's financial stability have been kept under control, contributing thus to stable confidence among local and foreign investors. This growth in confidence and in the levels of efficiency, and to a certain extent also competitiveness, has contributed to substantial improvement in the position of the Albanian economy with regard to foreign markets.

Over this period, the interest of foreign investors in the Albanian economy increased considerably, reflected in the ample influxes of foreign capital, in the form of financial investment including foreign direct investment. The current account deficit was maintained at relatively low and manageable levels compared to other countries in the region. From 2007–2008 there was a deepening of the deficit, caused mainly by a strong investing trend, both by government and the private sector, alongside other temporary factors. Meanwhile, the growth of the deficit was covered partly by increases in the influx of capital. As a result, the general balance of payments experienced a yearly average surplus of about 2.6 percent of GDP, and the stock of currency reserves of the monetary authority was sufficient to finance about four months of imports of goods and services.

In comparison to many other countries, Albania's economy maintained a satisfactory performance over the period 2009–2011, despite the inevitable decline in growth rates at a time when the world economy is experiencing its greatest economic crisis since the 1930s, with some authors arguing that this recent crisis is even worse than the great depression.

Real growth of the Albanian economy from 2009–2012 is estimated at 2–3.5 percent, a remarkable value. Based on the main indicators, the budget for 2012 appears to be conservative, though at the same time optimistic, especially with regards to forecasts at the macro-fiscal level. It anticipates a 4.3 percent growth of the economy, and eight percent for revenues, equivalent to 25.6 percent of GDP, with an increase in expenditures of 28.5 percent of GDP. The 2012 budget aims at maintaining the same level of capital investments, salary and pension increase while continuing to fund major infrastructure works. However, international institutions—International Monetary Fund, World Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and European Investment Bank—have repeatedly pointed out that economic growth for 2012 might only reach 2–3 percent, casting doubt on the real opportunities for meeting expectations on income generation, and questioning the actual expenditure policy in relation to the approved budget, or the possibility of maintaining the budget deficit at a level of three percent of GDP in the case of unchanged fiscal policies. Besides, the unfavourable situation of countries in the Euro zone, in particular the recessions in Greece and Italy, Albania's two main trading partners, is not expected to improve in 2012, and is expected at the very least not to have a positive impact on Albania's economic and fiscal performance.

Although reported to be the largest in the last 20 years, the budget for 2012 is based only on economic growth rates around 4.3 percent, predicted by the government more than a year ago. Even though Albania has been able to maintain a positive growth rate during the global crisis, the levels have been lower than the forecasts or the multi-year trends of the decade from 1999–2008.

The report analyses education, health care, infrastructure and agriculture sectors in the perspective of the 2012 budget, considering the fact that these sectors are crucial for the sustainable social development of the country.

Based on the level of budgetary income and the level of deficit funding sources, total budgetary expenditures for 2012 are forecast at 396.9 billion ALL, or 28.5 percent of GDP. Based on forecasts for revenue collection, the budget deficit is estimated to remain at a level of three percent of GDP, a very positive level when compared with the gloomy situation of budget deficits in many European countries and elsewhere in the world at the moment. Achievement of such a figure would enable Albania to follow one of the main suggestions or requirements of its European partners on fiscal and budgetary discipline and would have Albania progress in the same line with the overall attempts of all countries of the Euro zone and elsewhere in the EU for stronger fiscal and budgetary controls, the establishment of ‘a golden budgetary rule’ and elimination of all policies and interventions that harm or deviate an approved cap on public debt, the budgetary deficit and the rate of inflation.

After careful analysis of the expenditure budget lines some clear tendencies stand out for 2012, among which mention can be made of the following:

- decline in staff expenditures, from 5.2 to 5.1 percent of GDP; despite the very small change, this tendency reflects the government’s policy towards a smaller administration
- the maintenance at the same level of expenditures over interest payments, at 3.6 percent, based on the interest rates of domestic and foreign borrowing, as well as the level of interest rates in the circumstances of a stable macroeconomic situation
- increased expenditures for the SII, from 85.1 billion ALL in the reviewed 2011 budget, to 89.8 billion ALL for 2012; this action reflects government’s policy for differentiated pension increases for city and village residents, with a view to equalizing pension benefits
- increased expenditures for the HII by an amount of 1.2 billion ALL, to 28.9 billion ALL from 27.7 billion ALL in the reviewed 2011 budget
- increased expenditures for economic aid payments and disability benefits, from 16.8 billion ALL in the reviewed 2011 budget to 17.2 billion ALL in 2012.

Maintenance of regular salary and pension increases, albeit at minimum levels, slightly above the simple inflation indexation rate, appears to be inbuilt in the government’s objectives for social intervention policies. Although for 2012, the increase was forecast at 3–5 percent, it is still less than in the preceding year, and appears to be more of a correct indexation of salaries and pensions with inflation rates, which for 2012 are foreseen in the range of 3–3.5 percent. This level of increase in pensions and salaries provides for constant maintenance of, even a small increase in, the income levels for some social and professional categories. This forecast should be assessed as the actualization of the budget’s social objectives and as a way to avoid purchase power decline, in particular for pensioners and employees with low income levels, or those who receive social assistance.

In the conditions of the current crisis and the search for ways to break from it, many countries, such as Greece, Italy, Spain, Portugal and Ireland, have chosen to temporarily stall salary and pension increases, or even to reduce them. However, in the case of Albania the policy of increasing pensions

and salaries should be encouraged, primarily for the large number of pensioners, or vulnerable and poor people, and secondly as a means to stimulate domestic demand, which in the last two years has been at lower than optimal levels.

Among all the expenditure item lines, capital expenditures are the most essential to guarantee economic growth and underwrite the social and economic development of the country. In the 2012 budget, capital expenditures are foreseen to be 69.7 billion ALL, five percent of GDP. Looking closely at the prioritization of investments, it appears that funding for past major projects is continued. In addition, investments that are considered strategic to the economic and social development of the country are being budgeted in accordance with the government's programme. Capital expenditure, funded from both local and foreign sources, will continue to focus on the priority sectors—infrastructure, education, health care, defence, agriculture and rural development.

CHAPTER 2: EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

2.1. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The methodological approach targets three main objectives:

1. review of the current evidence that is available on implementation of sector policies and strategies under NSSI and the drawing of conclusions on outlining a model of social inclusion, its characteristics, tendencies, incidence and other relevant issues in Albania
2. analysis of policies impacted by NSSI, and the extent to which it is applied in the national development policies, along with the models used to allocate resources associated with social inclusion of the most excluded groups
3. preparation of a policy note for government and the main actors that will provide a summary of the main issues and challenges in formulating a mid- or long-term strategy on social inclusion in full harmony with the EU's strategy on the issue.

The design of the evaluation methodology used in the present analysis is based on secondary sources, collection and clustering of indicators, and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data. Qualitative data were obtained through direct semi-structured interviews with all parties involved in the design, implementation and monitoring of NSSI, and focus-group discussions with marginalized groups.

The excluded groups analysed in the evaluation include the following:

- children at risk
- young people in need
- Roma community
- disabled people
- the elderly
- victims of domestic violence and gender-based violence.

The evaluation was conducted by a working group comprising independent experts from various backgrounds—economics, social sciences, human rights, gender-based rights, social policies—and evaluators with experience in analysing various social programmes with a focus on excluded groups. The working group operated under the methodological guidance and oversight of the Albanian Center for Economic Research.

2.2. EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

To enhance the validity of the findings, different sources were used to obtain the data analysed in the present report. They included secondary and qualitative sources of data.

a) Secondary sources

These included official data, as well as studies, surveys and annual and periodic reports of NPOs, international organisations and research entities in specific fields. Data and information were gathered from MLSAEO (the main institution responsible for drafting social policies and co-ordinating other state institutions charged with implementation of NSSI), INSTAT (main source of official statistics), line ministries and other governmental institutions such as IPH, HII, SII, NES. The working group considered monitoring reports on various sector strategies under NSSI, including the Sector Strategy for Social Protection 2007–2013, Sector Strategy on Employment 2007–2013, National Education Strategy 2004–2015, National Strategy on Pre-University Education, National

Strategy on Gender Equality and Domestic Violence 2007–2010, Health Strategy, National Strategy on Children, National Strategy for Disabled People, National Strategy on Roma, Inter-sector Document on the Elderly, and the sector strategies of Transport, Water Supply, Urban Planning, Justice System, among others.

b) Qualitative Data

Other essential data were collected from direct interview with parties involved in the design, implementation and monitoring of NSSI, both with the service providers and through focus group (FG) discussions with the beneficiaries of social programmes and service delivery. These groups consisted of members of all excluded groups listed above. Participants were selected to ensure representation of groups with different social, economic, cultural and professional status, as well as geographic representation of the country taking account the density of each target group at the level of municipality and commune (first-level LGU). For this purpose, a list of items to be discussed and instructions to guide discussions were designed in accordance with the specificities of each cluster of issues.

Each focus group comprised 6–8 participants. A representative sample of in-depth semi-structured interviews was implemented with central, regional and local government representatives, as follows: a) policy and decision makers at central government level, b) policy makers and coordinators of social programmes at the regional level (second-level LGU, i.e. regional councils), c) providers of social services at the regional level (regional directorates of health, education, employment, as well as the various inspectorates and agencies), d) providers of services at the local level (first-level LGUS, i.e. municipalities and communes). The sampling technique took account also of the urban–rural division in interviews held with representatives of administrative staff and focus groups in LGUs selected for their marginalized groups.

Qualitative analysis of focus-group discussions and in-depth interviews were used to establish a conceptual framework for assessing the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact of NSSI on the marginalized groups.

The working groups employed a number of instruments in order for the methodological approach to be as representational as possible at the national level. More than 150 interviews were collected and analysed to obtain quality data for the evaluation report. The following table shows the distribution of evaluation instruments according to the sample size and the groups addressed.

Evaluation instrument	Number	Stakeholders
semi-structured interviews	154	stakeholders at local, regional and central level charged by NSSI to be reflected in the design, coordination and monitoring of policies and the provision of services
a) with the main stakeholders	22	central government institutions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • line ministries • central institutions
b) with institutions at the regional level, one interview per region	12	regional council (in 12 regions of the country) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Strategic Planning and Development, or Department of Social Policy Coordination, or both

c) with subordinate institutions at the regional level	50	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Directorate of Public Health • Regional Educational Directorate, Education Office • Inspectorate of State Social Services • Labour Inspectorate • Social Securities • National Employment Service • Water Supply and Sewage Directorates
d) at the local level (communes and municipalities)	70	<p>employees of communes and municipalities selected for evaluation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • departments of Health, Education, Social policy, Housing, etc. at the municipality • Child Protection Units (CPUs) in the municipality • economic aid units in the communes
Focus Groups	30	<p>excluded groups interviewed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • children at risk • unemployed men and women • young people (homeless and jobless, with social problems) • women exposed to violence • lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) persons • Roma community • elderly • disabled people

The NSSI evaluation was undertaken in the first half of 2012 using the latest available statistical data and other relevant documents containing data on the latest social and economic developments in Albania. This report evaluates the entire 2008–2012 period.

2.3. STAKEHOLDERS

The present report utilized largely the collection and analysis of responses given in the semi-structured interviews with the main stakeholders, namely those who designed this policy document, implementers of programmes deriving from NSSI and decision makers in general. It should be noted that the report employs an approach that is not only multi-sectorial, but also inclusive of all interested parties in the process of implementation and monitoring of NSSI. It therefore represents a valid source of information and structure for reviewing the strategy in the future.

The main stakeholders included the political leaders, the managers and specialists of MLSAOE, managers and specialist in line ministries (MoJ, MES, MoH, MPWT, MTCYS), and managers in central institutions, governmental agencies and CSOs, the twelve regional councils of the country represented by leaders from the coordination and social policy departments, managers and specialists of sectors on social policy, health, education, housing, infrastructure, CPUs and specialists in economic aid in the communes and municipalities selected for evaluation.

2.4. LIMITATIONS

The monitoring of social inclusion indicators is a significant task. It requires the existence of substantial sources for collecting the data necessary to measure change and to establish milestones for reviewing the existing policies and setting appropriate objectives to improve the situation for groups in need. Of course, it is natural to encounter difficulties in finding relevant indicators to measure progress.

Potential difficulties and obstacles concern structural, cultural and human resource capacity issues, including the following:

- lack of an integrated database due to the absence of an integrated information system
- lack of data reporting, particularly by disaggregated levels over specific time periods
- weaknesses in statistical services at both the central and local level; human resource capacities are particularly weak
- some indicators were foreseen to be measured in the future, meaning that such indicators were not currently available for inclusion in the monitoring of the Inter-sectorial Strategy on Social Inclusion
- the absence of a well defined and widely accepted definition of social exclusion at the national level.

CHAPTER 3: EVALUATION RESULTS AND FINDINGS

3.1. OVERALL EVALUATION OF THE STRATEGY

3.1.1. Relevance of NSSI

The National Strategy for Social Inclusion is a relatively new document. It is designed to create an architecture for decentralized social policies and expansion of community-based services in Albania through pooling resources from central government, local government and civil society. Despite its problems, NSSI has established a clear vision of the decentralization of social service delivery, special roles of social actors and the strengthening of the complementarity of service delivery.

The goals and objectives of NSSI have been very important in dealing with social exclusion in Albania. As a synthesis of several national strategies it is novel, focusing in particular on groups in need and the policies designed and implemented to support them. At the same time it serves to define measures to be taken in the future, following an assessment of failures, obstacles and difficulties according to respective indicators.

For vulnerable groups, this strategy is a very important preventive measure. Its goals and objectives determine the kinds of actions to be taken to protect groups at risk of social exclusion. However, it should be pointed out that there is room for improvements in the strategy. These improvements should aim at creating a model of social inclusion strategies that may orient the line ministries and relevant government institutions and keep them on the right track while designing and implementing future social inclusion programmes.

NSSI has created awareness among institutions and political actors on the importance of social inclusion in the effort to harmonize services for vulnerable groups. Better communication of the objectives and their adequate monitoring would add value to implementation of NSSI under the decentralization processes by the regional institutions and LGUs, with increased participation of local communities in the decision-making processes of public policies.

3.1.2. Efficacy of NSSI

The design of NSSI has contributed to a clearer definition of the main directions and inter-sectorial areas in need of intervention with increased cooperation of inter-institutional bodies. Besides, there has been increased and more active participation by CSOs in the process. As a result it has been possible to focus with more clarity on the NSSI indicators that have resulted in positive outputs, supporting the design of inclusive policies to benefit excluded groups. It has also provided input to the process of legislation review.

Nevertheless, during strategy implementation, the achievement of some of the objectives and measures has encountered difficulties, primarily because these objectives and relevant indicators have not been measurable. NSSI includes priority measures under relevant sector strategies that have not been costed and, therefore, remain without the budgets necessary to implement the measures. Such a situation has led to many programmes and policies being left incomplete with them failing to create the necessary impact.

In order for this strategy to be useful to all parties concerned, the monitoring of indicators gains priority importance. Of a similar importance is the strengthening of the unit charged with monitoring and reporting on progress under NSSI. In view of the huge workload to collect the voluminous data

for each indicator from the various line ministries, the need has become evident for a review of the structure of the Directorate for Monitoring the Inter-sectorial Strategy at MLSAEO, possibly with the addition of a staff member charged with processing data at the national level according to indicators and target groups.

In the decentralization context, the local actors hold the opinion that national objectives on social care are to a certain extent harmonized with the local needs created by social exclusion. They also consider that these objectives are relatively achievable. However, it would be more effective to coordinate LGUs' local and regional strategies to ensure better handling of the needs of these groups.

3.1.3. Effectiveness of NSSI

When evaluating the effectiveness of the management, coordination and delivery structures of policies and programmes under NSSI, it is necessary first to evaluate a remarkable difference that exists between central and local government authorities. Currently, LGUs have no impact on decision making, budget formulation and planning. They also have no input into the design of programmes directly feeding into NSSI, making them less involved than might otherwise be the case. The overall opinion is that NSSI, as a policy document, has been more effective at the national level than at the local level. Nevertheless, from 2007–2011 positive results have been noted with regard to the design of measures that are in harmony with the objectives under NSSI and in compliance with the sector policies.

It should be stressed that there is no consistency of action plans at the sector level involved with groups at risk of social exclusion. Frequently, at the local level there is a lack of awareness of inter-institutional coordination and synergy with regard to the actions to be taken on account of groups at risk of social exclusion. This situation has resulted in benefits not being distributed equitably among all those who are eligible.

In general, it is evident that there is a growing trend of funding from central government and international organisations for programmes targeting the needs of vulnerable communities and groups. However, there is still a strong need for increased financial resources, in particular from local government, in order to meet the increasing and more complex needs. Also it should be noted that gaps exist for an effective communication of NSSI among service providers and policy makers. Elimination of these gaps would effectively lead to a realistic assessment of the growing needs for systemic reforms.

The situation with regard to implementation of NSSI has shown that the experience gained so far is insufficient to cope with the overwhelming managerial difficulties. Problems with the management of services at the decentralized level emerge particularly because relevant management structures have not yet been installed in the regions, municipalities and communes. In particular, the committees on Needs Assessment and Social Service Planning at the regional level are not always established and running smoothly.

Some of the gaps that should be addressed under the revisited strategy include:

- a need to increase investments in human resources involved with social service delivery in the majority of municipalities. Improvements should be made both in numbers and expertise in particular as regards needs assessment, programming monitoring and budgeting for social services. To date, only the large municipalities have created structures responsible for dealing with the needs of vulnerable groups.
- a need to invest in basic infrastructure necessary for community services; rural areas are almost

uncovered by the present social services delivery network.

- insufficient financial resources at the central level and in local budgets to deliver adequate services based on the actual needs of vulnerable groups
- a need to increase inter-institutional cooperation to improve social inclusion. Lack of cooperation affects negatively inclusion of all target groups and the provision of an equal share of social service delivery between rural and urban parts of the country.

3.1.4. Impact of NSSI

NSSI is viewed as an orientation tool for efforts to draft sector specific inclusion policies. The document has had an impact on legislation improvement and in the design of institutional structures to benefit groups in need. However, lack of budget allocations and failure to design regional implementation plans have hampered the strategy from producing the results desired for its target groups. As regards individual beneficiaries, they have been able to benefit according to the excluded groups they belong to among the groups at risk of social exclusion, as explained below.

The strategy has paid special attention to children at risk of exclusion and to the progress of policies on the rights of children. Legislative measures to improve child protection were finalized through the adoption of the Law “On Protection of Children’s Rights”.¹ In March 2012, five by-laws were adopted and this completes the necessary legal framework for protection of children’s rights. In addition, MLSAEO has established a National Agency for Children’s Protection to monitor implementation of the law and government programmes on children. The establishment of units for child protection in the municipalities and communes and units for children’s rights at the regional level represent positive steps towards improving the situation of children’s rights and implementation of measures dealing with children at risk of social exclusion. Currently, children’s rights units have been established in eleven regions, while 28 CPUs have been installed at the commune and municipality level, including in 16 municipalities.²

Improvements have been made with regard to integrating gender issues into governmental policies at local and central levels. Substantial efforts have been made in the period under review in connection with completing and improving the legal framework on gender equality in accordance with important international documents, such as the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). However, actual implementation of the laws and by-laws is slow. At the local level, the majority of municipalities have appointed employees to deal with gender issues, but their role is still fragmented and separated from other sectors and is limited to awareness-raising activities at the local community level.

In relation to domestic violence improvements have been made towards achieving this objective. There is a growing tendency of women reporting domestic violence, though the number of reports compared with the real scale of the phenomenon is small and this is mostly evident in rural areas where a conservative mentality continues to be strong and restrictive.

Progress has been made in relation to establishment of relevant structures, in upgrading human resources involved directly or indirectly in the prevention of this phenomenon and in providing support to victims of domestic violence. However, increased efforts should be made to strengthen

¹ Law No. 10347 dated 4.11.2010

² Data from the National Authority for the Protection of Child Rights (NAPCR), MLSAEO, May 2012

these structures and to improve coverage across the country's territory with such units. It is important to improve the coordination and inter-sector cooperation at all levels. Moreover, special attention should be paid to making the necessary allocations for a normal and effective functioning of these units.

Disability payments have been nearly indexed every year to offset inflation, though increases in disability payments did follow increases in minimum salaries until 2009. Following that year, according to the legislation in force, indexation should take place based on prices of consumer goods, and indeed this is what has happened. However, this change needs to be reflected in the NSSI. Irrespective of constant improvements in the disability legislation, there are still gaps with the categorization of the types of disability and the criteria governing disability payments, causing discrimination against some disabled people. Meanwhile, residential services for disabled people have been transferred to local governments under the decentralization process, though this transfer has only been partial since the functioning of these services is partly maintained by the central budget.

Roma women and girls have been important targets of the employment and vocational training policies implemented by MLSAEO and also those of private entities. However, the impact of such policies has been very limited given the large number of such women and girls as potentially active members of the labour force. There is increased awareness of this group, as demonstrated in increased access to information and their registration in the labour offices for them to benefit from the policies. Nevertheless, there is still a great need to make information more widely accessible at the national level.

Progress has been made with regard to the educational levels of Roma children and this is reflected in MES data, which feature increased numbers of Roma children in the education system. It is worth mentioning that MES and civil society interventions focus on parents and family members, too. This approach has produced increased levels of awareness on the importance of educating children. Although there have been positive attempts to establish multi-disciplinary groups to treat the issues of the Roma population in several regions, it has to be said that these attempts have relied upon volunteers and suffer from a lack of financial resources.

Pensions for the elderly have increased year on year. However, the increase has never enabled pensioners to meet their basic living costs and to cope with the rising prices of consumer goods and health care requirements. Although certain categories of medications are reimbursed, the elderly's needs for health care incur increased costs for many specific and costly drugs, affecting the amount of money left for other needs. Despite policies aimed at providing relief to the elderly through provision of monetary compensation for the rising costs of electricity and bread, many other costs are high and unaffordable for pensioners.

In order to ensure that pensions paid to the elderly are above the national poverty line, it is essential first to set an official minimum living cost as an important measure to help identify families and individuals living in poverty.

3.1.5. Sustainability of NSSI

As an inter-sectorial strategy, NSSI is in full accordance with the individual sector strategies and in particular with the institutional structures and policies referred to in the strategy. In this context, the effect of NSSI may continue to exist in some way and be felt even after it expires. This can continue as long as the coordinated approach undertaken by the strategy to prevent social exclusion is

maintained. To achieve this it is important to fund the strategy's programmes and to monitor its indicators. In order for the effects of NSSI to be sustainable and furthered, it is necessary to consider a number of criteria, as follows:

- a) Inter-institutional cooperation should be strengthened as a means to encourage and orient NSSI towards increasing benefits for its target groups.
- b) A clear definition of the concept of excluded social groups must be developed by first defining the vulnerable groups.
- c) Clear measures and objectives must be designed as a way to enable full implementation of NSSI. Such measures and objectives contained in NSSI are very important to the planning and designing of activities to attain these objectives. The review of objectives and measures under NSSI should be oriented towards priorities that need to be clear and accompanied with timelines in order for them to be measurable and monitorable.
- d) A communication strategy must be designed that can arrive at a unified understanding of the relevant issues and measures, as well as the indicators and interventions. Although there has been readiness by central government to encourage inter-institutional cooperation under NSSI, there clearly remains room for improvement.

3.2. EVALUATING IMPACT OF NSSI ON EXCLUDED GROUPS

Social inclusion policies, particularly those for groups at risk of social exclusion, are a clear expression of solidarity and account for a considerable part of the budget of the Albanian state. Citizens expect to know what has been achieved with public money and to see that the best policies have been followed. Evaluation of the Inter-sectorial Strategy on Social Inclusion 2007–2013³ along the lines of excluded groups plays an important part in fulfilling such expectations. As listed above, the excluded groups analysed here include children at risk, young people in need, the Roma community, disabled people, the elderly, and victims of domestic violence and gender-based violence.

3.2.1. Children at Risk

Evaluation of the legislative and institutional framework

Review of policy documents and the legal framework on children at risk reveals that there is a commitment towards the protection of children's rights. At the political level, this is expressed in the legislative initiatives to improve and adopt relevant laws and by-laws and endorse related action plans. Specific examples include the following:

- Adaption of the Law "On Protection of Children's Rights"⁴ dated 2010 and the five by-laws that complete the legal framework on child protection dated 2012.⁵

³ Adopted by Decision of the Council of Ministers (DCM) No. 218 dated 3.02.2008

⁴ Law No. 10347 dated 4.11.2010

⁵ DCM No. 263 dated 12.04.2012 "On the determination of detailed rules for cooperation between non-profit organisations and institutional mechanisms in the implementation of national policies for the protection of children's rights"; No. 264 dated 12.04.2012 "On procedures of inspection and enforcement of sanctions by the State Agency for the Protection of the Rights of the Child"; No. 265 dated 12.04.2012 "On the establishment and operation of the mechanism coordinating actions among national authorities responsible to refer cases of children at risk, and the rules for its functioning"; No. 266 dated 12.04.2012 "On the coordination of mechanisms at the national and local level on issues of children's rights protection"; No. 267 dated 12.04.2012 "On the types, method of statistical data and information exchange required by the Agency and the responsible state structures, at the national and local level"

- Adoption of Joint Order No. 125 dated 23.08.2012 by MLSAEO, “On the Protection of children exposed to various forms of abuse,” which deals directly with the protection of street children.
- According to MLSAEO sources, work is nearing completion on a draft work plan and a manual for framework protocol and procedures for street children.
- Adoption of the legal framework and Strategy on Legal Assistance on Civil Matters, by Law No. 10039 dated 22.12.2008 “On Free Legal Aid.”⁶
- Institutionalization of free legal aid.
- Design of Action Plan for Children 2012–2015, which is aimed at strengthening institutional structures established to monitor and report on implementation of children’s rights and to promote the design of inclusive policies. This action plan provides for establishment of a mechanism at the local level to cooperate with the CPU and the labour inspectorate to identify the worst forms of child labour.
- Design, with UNICEF assistance, of Strategy on Juvenile Justice together with an action plan is a step forward towards establishing concrete, measurable and quality objectives and interventions for institutions involved with juvenile justice.

It is evident that NSSI⁷ pays special attention to the dynamics of child development, in particular to that of children at risk of social exclusion, and to the impact of policies designed to enforce the rights of children. NSSI objectives for children at risk of social exclusion are in full compliance with Sector Strategy on Children and National Action Plan 2012–2015.⁸ It is worth mentioning that children’s protection in these documents is not considered only as a preventative action with interventions being designed to offer services until a time when the child is no longer at risk.

The National Council on Legal Aid has received a request from NPOs regarding registration and custody for 20 children not registered with the civil registration offices, 75 percent of whom are from the Roma and Egyptian communities. Based on Law No. 10039 dated 22.12.2008 “On Legal Aid” as well as the by-laws under this law, a cooperation agreement is being negotiated. No problems have been identified in relation to this group.⁹

In relation to procedures for minor treatment, MoJ is designing a strategy for minors together with an action plan. Children benefit from the right to legal protection as expressed in three objectives, one of which focuses on provision of adequate protection for children up to 14 years of age in conflict with the law. Currently, this may pose a problem since the legislation in Albania does not address this issue. However, there are still high expectations as the deadline for this law is 2015. Also, work is going on to design a draft law on implementation of educational measures for children of this age. So far, only educational measures could be taken for children up to the age of 14 and this has been identified as a legal gap.

⁶ MoJ

⁷ This strategy originates from those on social protection, employment, education, health care, transport, water supply, urban planning and justice, all of which are either adopted or being formulated. This strategy should be considered in relation to the Intersectoral Strategies for Rural Development, against Organised Crime, Terrorism and Trafficking, Gender Equality and Domestic Violence, Youth, Information and Communication Technology, Decentralization, among others.

⁸ Realized by MLSAEO

⁹ Interview with one of the main stakeholders, MoJ

As regards the institutional framework for children at risk, structures have been established at the local and central level with clear roles on the monitoring and implementation of the Law “On Protection of Children’s Rights” and the assessment of the needs of children at risk of social exclusion. These structures are:

- The State Agency for the Protection of the Rights of the Child with a mission to monitor implementation of the Children’s Law and the government’s child programmes.
- Children’s Rights Units within the regional councils as well as Child protection Units within municipalities and communes. The setting up of these structures represents a very positive step in the protection of child rights and the implementation of measures to promote the rights of children at risk of social exclusion. Currently, eleven CRUs have been established in the country’s twelve regions, while 62 CPUs in the municipalities and communes are in the process of being created.¹⁰ However, the need remains to make sure that all 65 municipalities and 308 communes each have their own CPU. Even where they have been established, concrete measures should be taken to improve their capacities to implement policies that enhance the protection of children at risk.
- Pre-detention Sections for Minors and a fully operational Institute for the Execution of Penal Decisions in Kavaja, dedicated entirely to this category, have now been established. Employees in these units are trained specifically to deal with minors.¹¹ Improvement of service quality was at the core of attention of the General Prison Directorate in 2012. The European Commission’s progress report also emphasises the improvement of service delivery in the pre-detention and detention facilities, in particular of health care services.

Statistics on minor delinquencies show increased rates over the last decade. In 2010, 656 juveniles were sentenced, 594 of whom for committing crimes and 62 for penal contraventions.¹² In that year, it should be noted that 81 percent of minor offenders were convicted.

Evaluation of the implementation of policies for children at risk

In the context of evaluating the policies that exist to protect children at risk it was noted during the stakeholder consultation processes and evaluation exercises that there is a positive tendency in relation to the implementation of those policies, despite the financial difficulties most evident in the health care and education sectors.

The overall finding is that NSSI has produced a positive impact on the design of new policies and programmes and on increasing funding sources dedicated to reduction of social exclusion. To establish criteria for child custody and foster care, the Council of Ministers (CoM) passed a special decision on the conditions to be met by foster families. Another positive development in this regard was the process of de-institutionalization and the introduction of new typologies for child care and child fostering.

Zyber Hallulli Children’s Home in Tirana is being transformed into a centre for orphaned children placed in family homes in small apartments. This form of foster care has been piloted in Tirana and Shkodra with 70 families.

¹⁰ Data from NAPCR and MLSAEO, May 2012

¹¹ Data obtained from interviews with representatives of MoJ, May 2012

¹² Statistical Annual, Tirana 2010, published by MoJ

Under the programme Second Chance implemented by MES and MLSAEO school dropout is being dealt with. The objective is to improve enrolment of Roma children and to draft individualized plans for disabled children and those isolated due to blood feud. In order to attain the objectives for 2015 a draft law has been passed by Parliament on these issues.

In the health care sector, there has been tangible improvement as measured by the main indicators under NSSI, both at the primary and tertiary level. However, it must be stressed that the situation in the health care system remains problematic. The main health care services provided in the primary system are health examinations for children, monitoring of physical and mental growth indicators, and immunization and paediatric care. Health care centres provide services in accordance with the package adopted by Decree of the Minister of Health. These services for children are free of charge.

Among the problems of child health are those related to malnutrition (especially in rural areas), poor hygiene and sanitation issues (such as those related to poor safety of drinking water and in certain cases the total absence of drinking water supply systems), the tendency to avoid breastfeeding (in particular in urban areas), the low educational levels of parents,¹³ and lack of access to health care services in some rural remote areas due to poor road infrastructure. However, one positive factor is that, contrary to the situation in other sectors, the health sector maintains efficient data collection systems and the indicators are fully measurable, providing a strong basis towards normalization of the situation, the design of effective health care policies and measuring the progress.

In groups discussions held in Dibër, the participants focused on the poor condition of the main road to transport sick people in urgent need of medical health to the nearest specialised health care centre. Often, particularly in winter when roads are blocked by snow, the only possibility in cases of emergency remains the use of helicopter.

Albania has a National Action Plan on Immunization Since 2005, all vaccines have been purchased with government funds, and vaccine coverage has been for many years at the centre of policy for every region. All vaccines are administered by the primary health centres and are recorded in the national immunization register. Meanwhile, there have also been programmes to upgrade the capacities of health care personnel.

In the education sector, according to INSTAT surveys, pre-school education has shown sustainable enrolments over the last five years.¹⁴ However, the number of children enrolled remains low due to declining birth rates since 1990. Data contained in the Monitoring Report on the Implementation of the Law on Protection of Children's Rights show that in the school year 2011–2012, MES opened 200 preparatory classes for 5,000 five-year-old children who were attending educational institutions for the first time. Eighty-seven of the children enrolled in the first grade attended at least one preparatory year.¹⁵ Nevertheless, pre-school access in Albania is low compared with other OECD countries. Currently, Albania's children attend an average of 11.9 years of schooling (against 14 years for OECD countries).

¹³ MoH, 2010, The Situation of Health Care, Health Conditions and Directions for the Future, pages 16–18

¹⁴ Refers to INSTAT data (<http://www.instat.gov.al>), 2010

¹⁵ MLSAEO, State Agency for Protection of Children's Rights, 2012, Annual report on the monitoring of implementation of the Law "On Protection of Children's Rights," p. 18

Child labour is prohibited for children in compulsory education.¹⁶ However, street children, disabled children and children afflicted by blood vengeance face obstacles with regard to accessing education. Many of these children do not manage to attend school regularly. Another serious problem is the non-integration of disabled children in mainstream classes. A new law, “On Pre-university Education”, is adopted in 2012. Among other things, it will incorporate the principle of inclusive education for special needs children towards their gaining full access to education.

Reduction in school dropout is one of the main objectives of MES’s educational policy, which is to be attained through the National Plan on Zero Dropout, 2009–2013. Official data estimate the national dropout rate at 0.43 percent with the highest incidence among Roma children.¹⁷

School dropout is evident and more obvious in rural and suburban areas. The causes for this situation are poverty, frequent demographic shifts, etc.

The social services sector is characterized by diverse types of delivery, with a relatively wide coverage across the country, but with the concentration mainly in the cities. From the data reported in Table 1, it is clear that since the end of communism there has been a reduction in the number of residential services and an increase in private day care and community services in line with the goals of NSSI. In addition, the number of beneficiary children in non-public social care facilities is growing rapidly.

Table 1. Number of children in public and private residential and day care centres in Albania, 2012

Type of centre	Public		Non public	
	Residential	Day care	Residential	Day care
number of centres	9	3	15	27
number of children	266	70	329	1,539

Source: Annual Monitoring Report on Implementation of the Law on Children’s Rights

As part of the reforms undertaken in social services delivery, alternative services have been promoted in residential centres for children, namely day care services, counselling centres for children and their families, as well as community based services.¹⁸ The concept of the family home has been applied in twelve public and non-public centres.¹⁹

In the context of the implementation of the Strategy on Foster Care Families, 190–195 children that were previously institutional residents were placed in foster care families over the period 2010–2011. It is important to note that these children were divided equally between public and non public institutions. The number of children to be placed in foster families during 2012 was around 150, of whom 80 were supported by the UNICEF programme with the other children supported by the state budget.²⁰

In municipalities that have already established a CPU it was evident that the units had been effective in identifying, assessing and referring children in need, including in the foster care structures, even

¹⁶ Article 60 of Law No. 7952 dated 21.06.1995 “On Pre-university Education”

¹⁷ UNICEF and the Center for Economic and Social Research, 2011, Mapping Roma Children

¹⁸ MLSAEO, ACER, UNICEF, 2010, NSSI 2007–2013, Progress Report 2008–2009

¹⁹ MLSAEO, State Agency for Children’s Rights, 2012, Annual Monitoring Report on the implementation of law on the protection of children’s rights.

²⁰ *ibid.*

though the latter are relatively new. CPUs at the national level have referred on a total of 953 cases of children at risk, of whom 141 cases are considered to have been finalized.²¹

The respondents pointed out that when there is a professional employee dedicated specifically to these issues there are concrete results, not just token acts as is the case otherwise. One respondent pointed out that: *In order for the CPUs to be effective, children's services should be in place in order to refer cases for comprehensive treatment. In addition, there should also be monitoring authorities to oversee the work of these structures. A weak point is the absence of services for street children and the dysfunctional cooperation between central and local levels of responsibility.*

With regard to residential and day care centres, interviews with representatives from LGUs found that there are two centres in Berat, but that the municipality provides 100 percent funding for only one of them. There are several centres in Korçë, though the services there are not well planned. In Kukës there are day care centres for disabled children and children in need. However, the local government ought to take measures to provide for financial support in the future and to improve the capacities of staff employed in these centres. In Durrës there is one centre for autistic children and in Lezhë one for children in need, mainly those from the Roma and Egyptian communities. These centres mainly offer support for schooling, sports and recreational activities, as well as food and financial support to the families of these children.

The prevalent opinion of the respondents was that the LGUs should provide increased financial support for these services in order for them to be sustainable and to provide quality and professional services.

The model of the Child Labour Monitoring Unit is not applied at the regional level in Albania. Thus, the CPUs have an important role to play in identification of children working on the streets and in the coordination of aid in cooperation with governmental and non-governmental institutional mechanisms. Despite legal penalties, the phenomenon of child labour is widespread in Albania. Roma children remain vulnerable to street work and, therefore, are exposed to all forms of exploitation. Improvement in the economic, health, educational, cultural and other conditions for child upbringing and development, along with the registration of Roma children, are considered important measures to protect children from abuse and enhance their opportunities for development.

The phenomenon of violence against children is both widespread and hidden. This is related to the widespread mentality in Albania where the family applies force as a means to educate their children. NPOs involved with protecting children's rights are committed to increasing awareness of this phenomenon. The health authorities regularly record the instances of domestic violence reported from the districts. In 2011, 146 cases of such violence were reported, of which 84 involved children.²² The infrastructure and institutional capacities providing for the upbringing of violated children continue to remain poor.

3.2.2. Young People in Need

Assessment of the legislative and institutional framework

²¹ *ibid.*

²² MoH

A review of policy documents and the legislation framework on young people in need shows that commitment to the protection of this target group through legislative and institutional reforms is expressed clearly at the policy level, notably in the Albanian government's programme for 2009–2013.²³ At the legislative level it is expressed in the adopted laws and by-laws and enacted as indicated below:

- The legal framework and the strategy on legal aid in civil lawsuits are adopted by Law No. 10039 dated 22.12.2008 “On legal aid.”²⁴
- The objectives of NSSI have played an important role in the institutionalization of free legal aid for groups in need. This regulation is a pre-condition to provide real opportunities for people in need to realize their legally recognized rights.

Objectives under this strategy have been both important and necessary to guarantee a fair legal process, access to justice and observance of human and procedural rights during judgment in pre-detention, conversion of penal punishment into an opportunity for re-education, as well as increased transparency in court practices and upgrading of court standards for every individual.

- Adoption of Law No. 9952 dated 14.07.2008 “On HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control” and review of the National Strategy on HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control testify to the government's commitment, in particular that of MoH, to preventing and controlling HIV and Aids.
- A number of strategies and laws have been prepared that directly or indirectly assist excluded groups, such as the laws on HIV and Aids, Mental Health and Public Health, and the National Strategy on Physical Rehabilitation, as well as a draft of an integral law for implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Evaluation of implementation of policies on young people in need

During the process of assessment and consultation of implementation of policies for young people in need it was noted that there has been a positive trend in improving the economic situation and reducing the social exclusion of such people through the creation of opportunities for a better life, free from crime, drugs, alcoholism and other negative phenomena. Such opportunities are provided by municipal authorities through social centres established in the community. However, it is reported that the municipalities of Lezhë, Koplik, Korçë and Shijak have no such policy, programme or entity that deals with young people at risk, while that of Berat is focused mainly on public awareness-raising activities and events with high school students.

Durrës Municipality is implementing a project attempting to empower young people through community development, by offering vocational training for those with social problems. The training programmes are finalized with a business plan to help young people find a job. Fier Municipality has organised summer camps, cleaning campaigns and awareness-raising activities in cooperation with NPOs. Murialdo Social Centre, established by the Catholic Church, offers free 1–2 year vocational programmes on computers and office management. Vlorë Municipality runs a day care centre for young people, while Kukës Municipality runs a counselling office that serves to

²³ For a European Albania, the Programme of the Governing Majority and the European Integration Government 2009–2013, presented to the Parliament of Albania, Tirana, 16.09.2009

²⁴ Interview with Mrs T. Lubonja, MoJ, 16.05.2012

identify and involve young people in various activities and to coordinate actions with other institutions involved with vocational training and employment services.

Official data from the Institute of Public Health (IPH) show that, in 2011, 280 children were recorded as employed, 85 percent of whom were under the age of 18 years.²⁵

Albania continues to have a low prevalence of HIV and Aids. However, a rising trend is recorded in the number of new cases, and estimates suggest a large number of undiagnosed cases. Moreover, various surveys have shown that the country may soon face a rapid spread of infection if it does not take measures necessary to prevent an epidemic, particularly in groups at high risk.

It has been estimated that there are 10,000–30,000 drug users in Albania, 4,500–5,000 of whom are thought to be Injecting Drug Users (IDUs). For the majority, heroin is the drug of choice.²⁶ A special survey²⁷ was carried out to collect information on the damage to health caused by sustained drug use. It was found that more than 400 drug users were HIV positive, with 40 percent having contracted hepatitis B and three percent, hepatitis C. Seventy-five percent of all these patients were in the age group 21–30 years, and more than 95 percent were male. In terms of services²⁸ provided for drug users, a public centre specializing in drug use (Clinical Toxicological Service) exists but has only 2,029 beds to cover the whole country.

For many years now, there has been a hospital ward with beds to treat difficult cases of narcotic drugs use. Currently, the nine-year education curriculum features drugs use and promotes the struggle against narcotic use.

MoH is implementing a multi-year programme that consists of methadone use to treat drug-addicted persons. The treatment has been successful and helped relieve their suffering and that of their family members. There have even been cases of these people escaping addiction and returning to a normal life.

Based on the programmes enacted to implement NSSI, the coordinating structures at the national level have functioned well. They have made efforts to follow implementation of the services and programmes, while at the local level, although the strategy has been adopted, there is a lack of willingness on the part of local leaders.

Focus group discussions gathering young people 15–18 years of age found that children and youths in rural areas are subjected to forced labour and violence, and also encounter difficulties in accessing education and health services.

Specialists from MoH, in cooperation with MLSAEO, are in the process of drafting an action plan that will aim to protect the rights of sexual minorities by alleviating gender discrimination.

²⁵ WHO, Regional Office for Europe, website: <http://www.euro.who.int>

²⁶ National Drug Survey, 2010, IPH

²⁷ WHO, Regional Office for Europe, website: http://www.euro.who.int/aids/ctryinfo/overview/20061127_1, last accessed 20 June 2012

²⁸ NPO-provided services: Emanuel Centre, established in 2000, with a capacity of twelve beds, offers long-term residential treatment; Aksion Plus Association is active in the field of drugs use and harm reduction; it also offers services at three levels for drug users, including young people; Stop Aids Association is also involved in drugs use and harm reduction

²⁹ Country Report Overview, 2010

3.2.3. Roma Community

Evaluation of legislative and institutional framework

Adoption of Law No. 10129 dated 11.05.2008 “On Civil Registration”, among other things, generated improvement in procedures for registration of newborns by lifting certain legal barriers, such as the 45-day deadline from date of birth, requiring initiation of court proceedings to establish the fact of birth should the deadline expire. This was one of the main obstacles faced by the Roma community with regard to registration in the civil registration offices.

Albania joined the Roma Inclusion Decade in 2008. Subsequently, government adopted a National Action Plan 2010–2015, which focused on the main directions of education for employment, social protection, housing and infrastructure, health care, social infrastructure, equal opportunities and protection of the Roma’s cultural heritage.

The EU’s twelve recommendations for the Albanian government under the European Integration process tackle the various issues of the Roma population. They recommend government take concrete measures to support this population: *Concrete steps should be made towards strengthening human rights, particularly for women, children and the Roma, and to ensure the effective implementation of antidiscrimination policies.*

Under the present institutional framework, the institutions responsible for Albania’s Roma are MLSAEO and MES. The former has a special structure to deal with this community’s issues, the Technical Secretariat for Roma, which is charged with the duty to implement the National Roma Strategy.

Some regions have assigned local coordinators who, in addition to their normal duties, coordinate interventions with the Needs Assessment Committee at the regional level headed by the chair of the regional council.

In nearly all municipalities, Roma issues are tackled by a Sector, or Directorate, for Economic Aid and Social Assistance. However, they do not work according to a special plan or based on a specific programme. Only the Municipality of Korçë has created a structure in the Social Assistance Directorate to work with Roma NPOs. But thanks to this cooperation, social and cultural events have been organised for Roma people, a community centre has been established, 20 families have been put on a microcredit scheme and Roma children participate in summer camps.

Assessment of implementation of policies targeting the Roma community

The main obstacle to the undertaking of effective programmes and policies to support the Roma and Balkan Egyptian population is the fact that there is no accurate registration or accurate study with national coverage of the social and economic conditions of this population,³⁰ and moreover there is no government policy with regard to the Balkan Egyptian population.

Efforts have been made to promote registration of these populations under the UNDP-supported project Strengthening Vulnerable Communities in Albania: Supporting the Implementation of the

³⁰ For more accurate numbers on this population, see the results of the Census 2011 (INSTAT), published December 2012.

National Strategy on the Improvement of the Living Conditions of the Roma Community, implemented from March 2008–March 2010. As a result of this project a considerable number of Roma and Egyptian families have managed to register their children in the civil registration office, increasing their chances of accessing education, health care and other social services.

Higher employment rates for Roma women, girls and other members of this community are made possible thanks to improved access to information on employment policies, vocational training courses and the role of regional employment offices, all of which derive under the main goals of NSSI. In 2011, the number of unemployed job seekers from this community increased by ten percent compared to the year before. This figure shows improvement in levels of awareness about applying to the employment offices to benefit from the various services available. However, there is still a need to continue with the information and awareness-raising campaigns to benefit an even larger proportion of the population, for, it should be pointed out, their levels of employment remain far less than the numbers that are unemployed. The current situation is due to a number of reasons: lack of vocational qualifications, poor access to information, discrimination practices, habits, etc. A considerable part of the Roma population live on economic aid or work in black and unqualified labour, e.g. can collection, scrap collection, street cleaning.

Focus group meetings held with representatives of the Roma population revealed that the greatest part, particularly among the young, are unemployed, while a good part of the poorest families receive food packages and financial aid from foreign foundations and NPOs.

The levels of employment among Roma reported in the MLSAEO employment policies³¹ were, expressed as a percentage of the total number of unemployed job seekers, 0.5 percent in 2007, 0.3 percent in 2009 and 1.1 percent in 2010 and 2011.³²

Among special groups the Roma and Egyptians made up, as a percentage of the total number of unemployed job seekers, 2.4 percent in 2007 and 1.9 percent in 2008, though the level reached 4.8 percent in 2010 and 5.4 percent in 2011.³³ The Regional Directorates of the National Employment Service have regularly undertaken awareness-raising campaigns to alert the members of these communities to the existence of opportunities for employment and vocational training.

Special importance has been paid to vocational training in order to help this community acquire the capabilities to adapt to the labour market. The public Regional Vocational Training Centres provide free-of-charge courses for Roma and Egyptian people. These centres trained 72 Roma people in 2007, 18 in 2008, 144 in 2009, 62 in 2010 and 217 in 2011.³⁴

Vocational training and integration into the labour market has been the focus of several projects supported by various donors. Mention can be made of the project Empowering Vulnerable

³¹ The programme, based on DCM No. 48 dated 16.01.2008 “On the amount and criteria to benefit from the employment promotion programme for unemployed job-seeking women in economic difficulties”, aims to integrate into the labour market job-seekers in difficulty, typically those who are long-term unemployed, those in receipt of unemployment payment and economic aid, those who enter the labour market for the first time, the age group 18–25 years, people older than 45 years, Roma citizens and disabled people, who are the largest number of unemployed people registered with the employment offices.

³² *Statistics in Years*, National Employment Service (NES), <http://kerkojpune.gov.al/>

³³ *ibid.*

³⁴ *ibid.*

Communities (UNDP–UNV), among the objectives of which are vocational training and facilitation of employment for Roma people. The first phase of the project was implemented from 2008–2010, benefitting 85 unemployed Roma or Egyptian people (of whom 40 were women) who received vocational training, 25 of whom were employed part time with the rest self-employed and six Roma or Egyptians (2 from each region) who were assisted to benefit from the government’s employment programmes.³⁵ An agreement was signed to extend the duration of the project over the period 2010–2013.

Despite this effort, Roma employment figures remain very low compared to those in the rest of the population. The need remains to involve this population in employment policies and vocational sources, and requires primarily increased access of this population to the existing policies. Another problem noted for individuals receiving training in the vocational courses is their difficulty to subsequently find a job. In order to improve the situation, a better survey of the labour market may help the trainees to integrate quickly into the labour market.

Nevertheless, there are positive developments with regard to Roma children’s education. MES and several non-public actors have launched special policies for integration of Roma children into the education system. It should be noted that the levels of education, reading and writing skills among the Roma population are considerably lower than the national averages.

The opening of preparatory classes for pre-school children of age 5–6 years was undertaken across the country in 2008. In 2008–2009 alone, 450 children from the Roma community enrolled in these classes. In the same year, 100 preparatory classes were opened in accordance with the objectives of the Pre-university Education Strategy, and this process is going on. Priority has been paid to opening preparatory classes as close as possible to the Roma communities.³⁶

Instruction of MES No. 31 dated 04.08.2011 “On the academic year 2011–2012 in the Pre-University Education System,” Chapter IV, “Programmes and textbooks in pre-school and elementary education” reads: *Pursuant to the MES objective of ensuring at least one preparatory year for five-year-old children, including Roma and Egyptian children, as well as those from marginalized groups, new preparatory classes will be opened in the upcoming academic year 2011. With CBA and UNICEF support, MES will provide furniture, teaching materials and training for teachers of the preparatory classes.* In addition, the instruction highlights the continuation of the project Second Chance³⁷, and teacher training programmes for teachers working with this category of children. Emphasis is also placed on efforts to increase parental awareness of the importance of education for their children.

According to MES, 659 Roma children were enrolled in pre-school education in 2010. Of this total, 177 received their textbooks free of charge in 2010.³⁸ Under the project Second Chance, which is designed to return dropout children to school, that same year the number of classes established was 62 and the number of Roma children enrolled in the classes was 310. The proportion of Roma children among the total number was 60 percent.³⁹ Currently, 560 Roma children attend pre-school

³⁵ Presentation, Civil Society role in promoting social inclusion and equal treatment, 14–15 June 2010, UNDP

³⁶ Third Report submitted by Republic of Albania, Article 25, paragraph 1 of the Framework Convention of the Council of Europe on Protection of National Minorities, January 2011

³⁷ MES instruction No. 34 dated 08.12.2004

³⁸ Albania, Progress Report 2010—Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015

³⁹ *ibid.*

education, while 3,435 Roma children of compulsory education age attend the nine-year system.⁴⁰ In 2012, the nine-year school Naim Frashëri in Korçë piloted the provision of one meal for its students and the result was a substantial increase in attendance by Roma children.⁴¹

In Lezha, the Luciano Foundation works to provide support to Roma families. The foundation provides Roma families with food packages and with monthly payments of up to 3,000 ALL. This assistance was made conditional upon Roma children attending school. Children from very poor families that could not afford school expenses were received in the centre established by this foundation. Specialized teachers were hired to teach the children, who also received one meal per day.

To improve the school attendance of Roma children great efforts have been made to build awareness of their parents and families with regard to their rights and responsibilities in their children's education and development. In 2010, the number of teachers trained to build awareness of Roma parents was 132.⁴²

Approval of Law No. 10129 dated 11.05.2008 "On Civil Registration" brought improvement in birth registration procedures thus positively affecting school attendance rates by Roma children. However, despite the measures taken by educational institutions to integrate Roma children into the educational system and despite awareness building efforts with the Roma and Egyptian communities, still discrimination attitudes are frequent, as the case in Levan mentioned in the People's Advocate Report shows.⁴³

According to data from the Union of Albanian Roma Amaro Drom, there were 3,500 Roma residents in Levan (Fier District) in the school year 2008–2009. In this academic year about 100 Roma children enrolled at school. Due to social stigma, maltreatment and discrimination, in certain cases by teachers themselves, Roma children began to drop out. Very often, it is the children themselves who carry prejudice and discrimination—learned in their family backgrounds—spearheaded by their peers of a different ethnic and linguistic origin.

With regard to the inclusion of Roma in the higher levels of education—secondary school and university—MES and international organisations are running programmes to provide scholarships.

Since 2009, Albania has been participating in the scholarship programme run by Roma Educational Fund. Scholarships are offered to Roma and Egyptian students who attend university or post-university studies in the higher educational institutions in Albania. In 2009, ten partial scholarships were awarded to Roma students who finished secondary school.⁴⁴

Despite an increase in the number of Roma enrolments in university and post-university studies, thanks mostly to scholarships from various sources, the level of attendance, as a proportion of the total number of Roma young people, is very low.

⁴⁰ Annual Monitoring Report on Implementation of the Law, "On Protection of Children's Rights", MLSAEO, State Agency on Protection of Children's Rights, p. 19

⁴¹ *ibid.*, p. 20

⁴² Albania, Progress Report 2010—Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015

⁴³ Special Report No. 4, On protection and implementation of the rights of the Roma community in Albania, 2009, People's Advocate, p. 19

⁴⁴ Annual Report 2010, Open Society Foundation for Albania (Soros), p. 31

One of the main reasons for school dropout by Roma and Egyptian children is poverty and the low levels of household income. Therefore, it is very important to establish cooperation between educational institutions and LGUs, because policies to combat dropout should run parallel with support to pull these families out of poverty and enable them to integrate into the labour market and gain access to economic aid and unemployment benefit programmes.

Populations of Roma are concentrated into particular regions but not all regions have special programmes to increase their access to the health system. Communes and municipalities with large Roma concentrations employ doctors who deal with their special health issues. Meanwhile, Regional Public Health Directorates carry out awareness campaigns to educate Roma parents on the need to vaccinate their children.

Assessment based on semi-structured interviews and focus groups revealed the following:

- In the region of Fier, a large part of the Roma community has received medical cards. There is no special treatment for Roma citizens without medical insurance; they do, however, like all citizens, benefit from free medical services if they provide evidence from the regional employment office that they are unemployed.
- In Gjirokastrë, there is a centre that provides special health services for the Roma community. This centre also offers various awareness programmes and education campaigns.
- In Korçë, the local government authorities work with special groups who are instructed in procedures to receive medical insurance, to obtain medical cards for adults, children and pregnant women.
- In Vlorë, in two villages with Roma inhabitants, all children aged 0–14 years have been equipped with medical cards by the child care centres. The Regional Directorate of Public Health reports that this population is being increasingly drawn to the health centres. Surveys they have conducted show that, in 2010, these centres carried out 211 medical examinations, 10 births and 36 vaccinations for children of age 0–14 years. In addition, their data show that Roma live in unsatisfactory hygiene and sanitation conditions and, consequently, diseases affecting this community most frequently are those of the upper and lower respiratory tract, hepatitis A and B, and sexually transmitted diseases.
- The focus group organised with the Roma community in Korçë revealed that those who seek medical care in the primary health care centres frequently encounter discrimination, sometimes hidden through the various obstacles and delays created for them. The town only has one Roma physician. Roma people mainly work in the black labour market and often have difficulties paying for medical insurance. Consequently, they encounter difficulties and problems with health care provision.

The qualitative interviews designed to evaluate housing policies for Roma citizens show that the numbers of Egyptian and Roma families benefiting from the housing programme differ from region to region. The Roma focus group meeting in Korçë confirmed that they encounter great difficulty with accessing housing programmes. Their access to social apartments is very low, though some improvement has been noted lately.

- In Durrës Municipality, ten percent of beneficiaries in the social assistance programmes come from the Roma community.
- Only one Roma family was housed in a social apartment in Berat Municipality. However, after several months the family left on its own accord because it could not live in a community with other people.
- In Peshkopi only Egyptian families have benefited from social programmes.

- In Kukës Municipality, although eight families from the Egyptian community received the status of homeless family with a decision of the municipal council, these families were not able to obtain loans because they were unable to meet the financial criteria imposed by the bank (no proof of financial ability to repay the loan).
- In Lezha Municipality, 32 Roma families applied to the housing programme, but only eight of them benefited from soft-loan programmes.

3.3.4. *Disabled People*

Evaluation of the legislative and institutional framework

It should be noted that from 2007–2011 several improvements have been made to the existing legal framework on disability rights aimed at approximating Albanian legislation on disability rights with the EU legislation.

As mentioned above, in 2008, the Law “On Legal Aid” was approved. This law provides that legal aid should be given free of charge to certain categories of people, including the disabled. These legal services are provided in civil, penal and administrative proceedings.⁴⁵ However, this law is not yet implemented.

A positive step towards improving protection of disabled people from discrimination was the approval of Law No. 10221 dated 4.02.2010 “On Protection from Discrimination”.

The passing of new sub-legal acts to improve the situation of disabled people has been aimed at, among other things, increasing disability payments, payments for caretakers, improving social delivery for disabled people, increasing their participation in daily life, creating a favourable environment to support the inclusion of disabled people.⁴⁶ The drafting of an integral law on disability rights is still in process.

With regard to the institutional framework on implementation of the National Strategy on Disabled People a Technical Secretariat was established in MLSAEO by Decision of the Council of Ministers (DCM) No. 8 dated 7.1.2005. This mechanism reports on achievement of the NSSI’s main objectives for disabled people.

By DCM No. 196 dated 12.12.2005 a National Council on Disability issues was established, headed by MLSAEO. The council comprises seven ministers and five NGO representatives.

Evaluation of the implementation of policies on disabled people

⁴⁵ Law No. 139 dated 22.12.2008, Article 13/b defines them as those who: *are in need of legal aid in civil, or administrative cases, but cannot afford to pay for legal aid, or the issues are very complicated in terms of both content and procedure. In such cases, the person to benefit from free legal aid has the obligation to prove that he/she is a beneficiary of social protection programmes, or meets the criteria to benefit from them.*

⁴⁶ DCM No. 78 dated 7.02.2007 “On the amount, criteria and procedures to benefit a special hygiene and sanitation package for para and tetraplegic invalids”; DCM No. 1690 dated 17.12.2008 “On some changes and additions to DCM No. 618 dated 7.09.2006 “On setting the criteria, supporting documentation and amount of payment for disabled people”; DCM No. 328 dated 12.03.2009 “On some additions to DCM No. 618, date 7.09.2006, “On setting the criteria, supporting documentation and amount of payment for disabled people”; Instruction of MLSAEO No. 1934 dated 18.10.2007 “On the procedures of placing individuals in public and private residential institutions of social care”

With regard to the NSSI objective stating that basic disability payments will be indexed annually in accordance with the minimum salary progress has only been partial. Changes to the disability payments⁴⁷ are reported in Table 2, along with changes to the minimum pension.

Table 2. Changes to disability payment according to category, 2007–2011

Category	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
with congenital and acquired disability	8,000	8,700	8,700	9,000	9,300
para and tetraplegics	8,000 ⁴⁸	8,700 ⁴⁹	8,700	9,000 ⁵⁰	9,300 ⁵¹
caretakers of para and tetraplegics			9,200 ⁵²	9,500 ¹²	9,800 ¹³
blind people	8,000	8,700 ⁵³	9,800 ⁵⁴	10,200 ⁵⁵	10,600 ⁵⁶
caretakers of blind people	8,000	8,700	9,800	10,200	
minimum urban pension	8,650	9,515	10,276	10,690	11,117

Changes to disability payments according to the legislation in force were planned to be made between 2007 and 2009 in accordance with changes made to the minimum salary, and without exceeding the minimum urban pension. Table 3 reports the percentage changes to the different types of disability payment. From these data it is clear that increases to disability payments have varied widely, from zero to 18 percent. Meanwhile, the minimum pension increases have been falling, from ten to four percent (see data in Table 2).

Table 3. Disability payments between 2006 and 2011

Category	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
minimum official salary	14,000	14,000	17,000	18,000	19,000	20,000
increase in minimum salary (%)	18	0	21.4	5.9		
increase in disability payment	17.6	0	8.75	0	3.4	3.3
increase in payment for para and tetraplegics	17.6	0	8.75	0	3.4	3.3
increase in payment for blind people	17.6	0	8.75	12.6	4.1	3.9
increase in payment for caretakers of para and tetraplegics	17.6	0	8.75	5.7	3.3	3.2
CPI	2.5	3.1	2.2	3.7	3.4	4.2

⁴⁷ Disability payment is provided to the following categories: a) mental and physical disability not due to working conditions; b) blind people; c) para and tetraplegics; d) labour invalids.

⁴⁸ Instruction of MLSAEO No. 1959 dated 19.09.2006

⁴⁹ DCM No. 872 dated 18.06.2008

⁵⁰ Instruction of MLSAEO No. 2210 dated 25.11.2010

⁵¹ *ibid.*, No. 114 dated 04.08.2011,

⁵² DCM No. 1690 dated 17.12.2008 “On some changes and additions to DCM No. 618 dated 7.9.2006 on setting criteria, supporting documentation and amount of payment for disabled people”

⁵³ DCM No. 870 dated 18.06.2008

⁵⁴ DCM No. 626 dated 11.06.2009

⁵⁵ Instruction of MLSAEO No. 2209 dated 25.11.2010

⁵⁶ Instruction No. 115, dated 04.08.2011

Participants in the focus group with disabled people expressed the concern that the disability payment is not sufficient to provide for normal living conditions. The government provides free of charge only such medications as aspirin and analgin, which are of little benefit to disability conditions. Their health issues, although they belong in the same category (tetra and paraplegics), are different, consequently the medications are different in each case. They depend on their own resources to buy such specific medications.

Two laws⁵⁷ have been approved that change the status of para and tetraplegics and the blind. These changes affect compensation for transport, electricity and fixed telephone prices. Also, in 2011, changes were made to entitlements to benefit from the economic aid programme. However, based on Law No. 10339 dated 17.03.2011⁵⁸ heads of families who are disabled and receive disability payments are not entitled to benefit from the economic aid scheme.

During meetings at the local level, representatives of economic aid offices in the municipalities and, in particular, in the communes were of the opinion that this decision has worsened the economic situations of families headed by disabled people who used to benefit from the economic aid scheme.

With regard to social services, decentralization has involved not only the establishment of services at the community level, but also the strengthening of local capacities for funding and managing these services. Nonetheless, currently, the public residential and day care services that have passed to the LGUs are not funded entirely by these units: e.g. MLSAEO provides funding for the salaries of staff employed by these centres.

On the basis of the legal framework on the decentralization of social services, LGUs are entitled to take steps towards improving social services at the community level. However, due to their insufficient financial resources, they cannot cover community needs.

Alongside decentralization, de-institutionalization has also taken place, bringing about the establishment of additional community services and a transition from residential to family home centres.

Service quality for disabled people in the residential and community centres as well as in the NGO-provided services has been improving, in particular, following adoption by CoM of State Social Services (SSS) standards and the creation of a Monitoring Inspectorate responsible for inspecting these standards, basically through conducting two annual inspections at each residential, community and day care centre for disabled people. One inspection is announced in advance, while the other is carried out without prior notification.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Law No. 27/2012 “On some changes to Law No. 8626, dated 22.6.2000, ‘On the status of paraplegic and tetraplegic invalids’”, with changes; Law No. 26/2012 “On some changes to Law No. 8098, dated 28.3.1996, “On the status of the blind”

⁵⁸ Law No. 10399 dated 17.3.2011 “On some changes and additions to Law No. 9355, dated 10.3.2005, on social assistance and services, with changes to article 5/d”

⁵⁹ State Social Services (SSS) interview

Although, disability services have improved from year to year, the number of facilities remains limited in relation to the actual needs of disabled people. Services do not cover the entire territory of the country; in certain districts they are lacking and in rural areas there are no centres that offer services for disabled people. Only 1,591 individuals (1.3% of disabled people) are reported to benefit from social services available in residential services, family home centres and day care centres.⁶⁰ And such disability services are concentrated in the large towns, while their accommodation capacities are limited and they cannot cover the needs of this target group. Rural areas are in effect not covered by these services.

Focus groups with representatives in rural areas revealed that: *There are many disabled people in these areas, but there is a total absence of services to support them and provide some relief to their situation.*

Even where there are such centres, disabled people find it difficult to access them due to long distances, lack of transportation, and the physical difficulty that comes with being disabled.

In focus groups held with disabled people, it was pointed out that: *In Tirana there is a day care centre; but this is not sufficient because of the lack of transportation or other facilities that prevent us from attending this centre.*

Lack of specialized services for all categories of disabled people was emphasised by focus group participants, and was evident in the SSS survey carried out for identification of training needs for employees of centres and institutions that offer services for groups in need. Participants noted in particular the lack of services to treat serious problems with child behaviour and for autistic children. Occupational therapy and other services—orientation, counselling and vocational courses—are not available for these people.⁶¹ The lack of such services is due to the scarce financial resources, deficiencies in staff capacities, particularly of those involved directly with the beneficiaries, little access to information on best contemporary practices, etc.

In focus group meetings with disabled people, the concern was raised of LGUs disregarding the needs of disabled people. Such disregard is evident in the fact that disabled people are not invited to participate in the drafting of programmes and policies related to their needs. The participants asserted that: *Frequently, we are not invited to LGU meetings, because, if we participated, we would express our concerns, which are not the concerns of the authorities. This is why we feel excluded. We have even staged protests to have our lawful demands fulfilled.*

With regard to public transportation, it is noted that the elderly and the disabled can access public buses only in Tirana Municipality, where local authorities have taken steps to enter new buses equipped with the necessary aid for disabled people.

Public transportation is regarded by focus group participants as functional and the prices reasonable. It is considered to be accessible in both urban and rural areas, though the quality of the service is still

⁶⁰ Social Care for People with Mental Disability, Caritas, SASCS, 2011, p. 13

⁶¹ Platform of trainings, Strengthening Professional Capacities of Social Services, SSS supported by UNFTA

not fully satisfactory. In some cases, the condition of the buses, the stations and stops and access in them is inadequate.⁶²

*The absence of a bus terminals is an obstacle preventing full access to transportation in each rural and urban area. Meanwhile, the bus stops do not meet the conditions and criteria for quality service, particularly for the elderly and the disabled.*⁶³

3.2.5. Elderly people

Evaluation of the institutional and legislative framework

The problems faced by elderly people⁶⁴ in Albania have been an indivisible part of government policies in recent years.

In 2008, MLSAEO took the initiative to formulate for the first time a policy document dedicated entirely to elderly people together with a relevant action plan in accordance with the Madrid Action Plan. Even though this document was approved by a special DCM⁶⁵ it has yet to be implemented. In the Directorate of Social Policies at MLSAEO there is a specialist dealing with third age issues and the director serves as the national contact point on the elderly. At the State Social Services, there is a Sector of Monitoring Social Services, whose responsibilities cover the standards of implementation in day care and residential centres services for old people. Meanwhile, the drafting of an integral law on the elderly is under way.

Evaluation of implementation of policies for the elderly

In recent years in particular, government policies have concentrated on periodic review of old age pensions (urban and rural). The number of pensioners in 2009 was 543,053, with the number increasing by five and a half thousand over the next two years, to 548,675 by 2011. One NSSI objective states that: ‘By the year 2009, pensions will double and there will be no pension less than the national poverty line’. However, it is not clear to which baseline the increase refers to, adding to the difficulties in monitoring the implementation.

With regard to pensions in the period from 2007–2011, there has been constant increase.⁶⁶ The average urban pension in 2007 was 10,143 ALL, and by 2011 it had reached 12,654 ALL. Meanwhile, the average rural pension in 2007 was 4,626 ALL, rising to 7,859 ALL by 2011.⁶⁷ Nevertheless, as shown in Figure 1, the relative change in the level of pensions has fallen in comparison to that of the CPI.

Figure 1. Annual changes (%) to CPI and to pensions, 2007–2011

⁶² From FG with elderly people in Fier

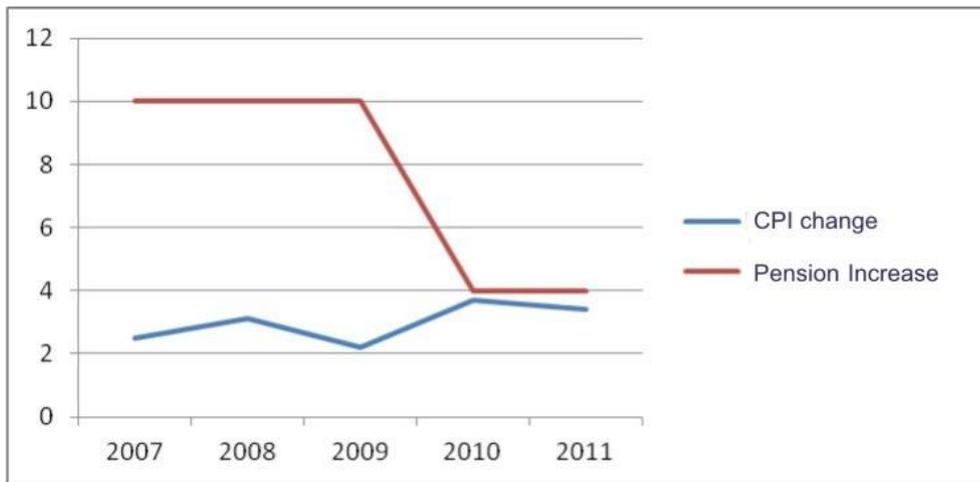
⁶³ Interview with MPWT

⁶⁴ The term elderly person is based upon the definition contained in Law No. 9355 dated 10.03.2005 Article 4, paragraph 16: *a person who has attained the age of drawing a pension in accordance with the relevant registration in force.*

⁶⁵ DCM No. 763 dated 11.6.2009 “On some additions to DCM No. 80, dated 28.1.2008, on approval of the Sector Strategy on Social Protection and its Action Plan,” with changes

⁶⁶ DCMs: No. 448 dated 13.7.2007 “Pension Increase”; No. 501 dated 16.8.2007, “On some changes to DCM No. 448, dated 13.7.2007, “On pensions increase”; No. 856, dated 18.6.2008 “On pension increase”; No. 415 dated 27.4.2009 “On pension increase”; No. 474 dated 30.6.2010 “On pension increase”

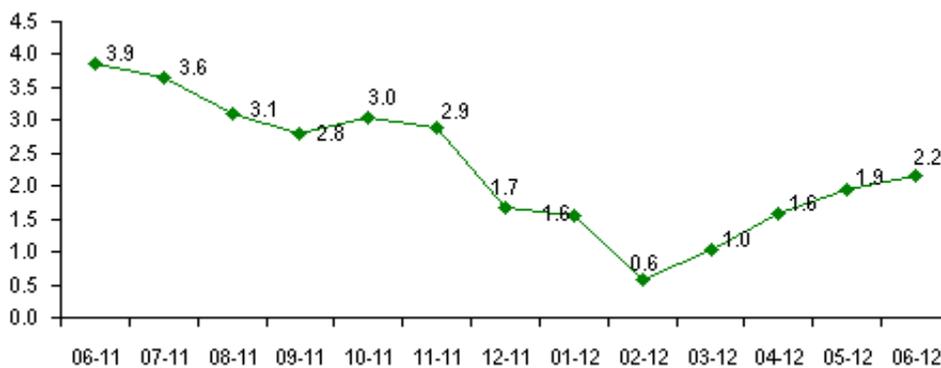
⁶⁷ <http://www.issh.gov.al>, Statistical Summary 2011



Monthly income in urban areas, together with compensation for electricity and bread, was 11,492 ALL in 2007 and 14,166 ALL in 2011. In rural areas, the respective figures were 5,361 ALL and 7,748 ALL.⁶⁸ The minimum pension in urban areas increased from 8,650 ALL in 2007 to 10,276 in 2009, and to 11,117 in 2012. Meanwhile, from 4,520 in 2007, the minimum rural pension reached 6,344 in 2009 and 7,468 in 2012. From 2007–2009 there was a ten percent increase in pensions, but after 2010 the level increased by only four percent. The increase maintained the level above CPI,⁶⁹ but only just, bringing no real improvement to the pensioners’ financial means.

The level of the pensions remains very low, and the elderly face difficulties in coping with basic needs, such as covering the price of the food basket. Figure 2 shows the change in CPI from June 2011–June 2012.

Figure 2. Annual changes (%) to the Consumer Price Index, 2011–2012



Source: INSTAT

In FGs with the elderly, all expressed their concern that: *Pensions are very low and it is difficult to ensure the minimum living conditions. With our pension we have to cover our electricity and water bills and then purchase medications, though these are to some extent reimbursed by government. What remain is used to purchase food.* Some of the participants said that their pension was the only

⁶⁸ *ibid.*

⁶⁹ Data on the change of CPI over 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010 are taken from Statistical Report 2012, Bank of Albania, p. 44, http://www.bankofalbania/web/Raporti_Statistikor_Janar_12_6389_1.php

income for their families as their other family members were unemployed.

Some elderly are ineligible for a pension because they have been involved in informal labour. Much of the population in rural areas is considered to be self-employed, and such workers usually do not pay a social insurance contribution, which means they will be without a pension and health care services in old age. Moreover, there are no statistics or data on these people.

The situation is even worse for women, Roma, the disabled and other groups. A women's average pension is lower than a man's, clear evidence of gender inequality in the labour market. It is overwhelmingly women who are employed in informal and unskilled labour. They are paid less than men and eventually receive a smaller pension. The situation is a reflection of the unequal division of responsibilities in the family.

Services for the elderly at the national level are of two kinds: residential (public and private) and community-based provided mainly by LGUs together with local NPOs. From year to year, there has been an increase in the number of social services provided for old age people. In 2007, there were eight public centres and the same number of non-public centres. Presently there are eleven public centres, of which six are residential and five day care.⁷⁰ These fall under LGU administration in accordance with the policy of decentralization of social care institutions. There are eight non-public residential centres⁷¹ and 19 community service centres.⁷² From 2007–2011, there was a slight increase in the number of residential and day care centres, both public and non-public. However, the increase was larger in the public sector with regard to residential centres, while the non-public sector established a larger number of day care centres.

Home delivery services for old people are new and are being piloted by NGOs in Shkodër, Pogradec, Korçë. In Gramsh and Dibër such services are offered by the Albanian Red Cross. Across the country, there are 27 service centres for old people, both residential and community-based. In addition, the municipalities have established seven community centres. All centres are making efforts to implement unified service standards, and the same goes for all centres at the national level.⁷³

Services for the elderly vary by region, and were evaluated from answers given in semi-structured interviews. Some of the major findings are as follows:

- Berat Municipality does not have special policies for the elderly. However, the authorities are seeking cooperation with NGOs to establish community centres for third age people.
- Durrës Municipality has one community centre for old people that provides psycho-social and health services, as well as meals and various social activities.
- Fier Municipality has a residential centre for the elderly. The municipality covered investment costs and is planning to build a new larger centre according to contemporary standards for third age people. A community centre has also been established jointly with the Association of Billiard Players.
- Korçë Municipality funds an NGO as a service provider, and a joint pool of resources has been created to manage five community centres for third age people.

⁷⁰ Training platform, Strengthening Professional Capacities of the Social Services, SSS

⁷¹ *ibid.*

⁷² <http://www.mpcs.gov.al>, Map of Social Services

⁷³ SSS interviews

- In Kukës a day care centre for third age people has been established and is supported entirely by the municipality.
- Lezhë Municipality, in partnership with the local branch of the Albanian Red Cross, has opened a day care centre for third age. The municipality has provided funding for the physical infrastructure, 10,000 ALL monthly and the costs of water and electricity and the maintenance of the facility. It also pays for social activities outside the centre.
- In Vlorë there is one day care centre for elderly people.
- The municipalities of Berat, Koplik and Shijak do not have any centre for the elderly.

Evidently, there exist in Albania only a limited number of centres for the elderly and much of the country is not covered by this type of service.

Representatives of Roma and pensioners in one particular meeting told the interviewers that: *In our town there is a day care centre for the elderly, but we cannot visit it because of the long distances involved and because there is no transport facility.*

By Order No. 95 of the Minister of Health dated 16.02.2009 a package of primary health care services was approved. The package had special focus on prevention care and education of patients and families to monitor mobility and physical activity, sight and hearing abilities and mental and reasoning capabilities, and the provision of counselling to the elderly with regard to engaging in activities stimulating their thinking and mental faculties. The design of the package was carried out by MoH with support of UNFPA. The authorities and UNFPA also worked together on designing protocols for services for the elderly. A number of protocols were designed and made available to family doctors in order to improve the treatment of elderly patients.

Although old age people benefit from reimbursement of medications, the scheme does not entirely address their needs. Consequently part of the money they receive as a pension goes to purchasing the necessary medications.

During discussions with old age people in FG meetings on evaluation of the NSSI, it was revealed that one of their concerns concerned drug reimbursement, which covers drugs only at a low price. As a result, the scheme does not help them meet their needs for medications that are vital to their health. These are costly and are not reimbursed. Moreover, the quality of reimbursable drugs leaves a lot to be desired. The participants also underlined the numerous informal referrals to private doctors and to private drug stores.

3.2.6. Victims of Gender-Based Violence

3.2.6.1. Domestic Violence

Assessment of the institutional and legislative framework

An important step in the fight against domestic violence is the preparation of by-laws under Law No. 9669 dated 18.12.2006 “On Measures against Domestic Violence.” The by-laws prepare the ground for establishing relevant institutions and defining procedures to be followed by police, health care

personnel and authorities receiving violence reports.⁷⁴ The law against domestic violence charges MLSAEO to oversee its implementation. Other relevant authorities with responsibilities under this law are LGUs, MoI, MoH and MoJ.

Another important step is the approval of the National Strategy on Gender Equality and against Domestic Violence 2007–2010 by DCM No. 913 dated 19.12.2007. This strategy was reviewed in 2011⁷⁵ and placed emphasis on preventing domestic violence and establishing a Sector against Domestic Violence in the Directorate for Equal Opportunities at MLSAEO as the responsible structure for implementation and coordination of the strategy. Meanwhile, a Sector against Domestic Violence and Protection of Minors has been established in the General Police Directorate, the Directorate of Serious Crimes and at every Regional Police Directorate.

In addition, through DCM No. 723 dated 20.10.2011, the government of Albania approved, in principal, the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. This Convention has been open for ratification since 11 May 2011, and has been signed by some 17 countries.

In 2012, Parliament approved amendments to the Penal Code,⁷⁶ aimed at, among other things, strengthening punishment for individuals exercising domestic violence, in particular against children and women.

Following approval of Law No. 9669, completion of the by-law framework and establishment of relevant structures for prevention of domestic violence and supporting victims of violence, corroborated by awareness and education campaigns, it is noted that there has been an increase in the number of reported cases. However, reported cases represent only a fraction of the real number.

With regard to institutions, it can be said that year on year the amount of inter-institutional cooperation has increased at both the central and the local level. This emphasises the importance of the effort made to prevent domestic violence and to protect the victims. At the initiative of MLSAEO an agreement was signed on 14.11.2008 among five institutions: MoH, MoI, MoJ, MES and MLSAEO. This agreement was designed to improve coordination, strengthen prevention and reduce domestic violence and provide protection for victims of violence through provision of health care services, legal aid and social service delivery.

Inter-institutional cooperation has been extended at the local level, too, through involving local structures in the fight against domestic violence. The establishment of a mechanism for coordination of referral for cases of domestic violence⁷⁷ serves the same goal. The mechanism comprises a steering committee, multidisciplinary teams and a local coordinator for referral of such cases. By

⁷⁴ MoH Orders: No. 13 dated 23.01.2008 “On equipping individuals afflicted by domestic violence with relevant medical evidence”; No. 14 dated 23.01.2008 “Identifying cases of domestic violence and recording them in the register and in the individual card of the victims of domestic violence”; No. 15 dated 34.01.2008 “On medical treatment in the public health institutions of people exposed to domestic violence”

MoI Orders: No. 379 dated 3.03.2008; No. 981 dated 31.10.2008; No. 251/1 dated 22.06.2009 “Statistics on domestic violence”; No. 344 dated 5.10.2010 “Statistics on domestic violence”

⁷⁵ DCM No. 573 dated 16.06.2011

⁷⁶ Law No. 23/2012 “On some additions and changes to Law No. 7895, dated 27.1.1995, ‘Penal Code of the Republic of Albania’”, with changes

⁷⁷ DCM No. 334 dated 17.2.2011 “On the mechanism of coordinating work on the referral of cases of domestic violence and the manner of functioning of this mechanism”

2009, this mechanism had been piloted in five regions. It has since been extended to additional regions.⁷⁸ By June 2012, the mechanism had been established in 19 districts.

Evaluation of implementation of policies to support victims of domestic violence

Progress has been made in the prevention of domestic violence and the protection of victims of violence. This progress has led to achievement of the main objective under NSSI, which reads: *By the year 2009 the level of reporting of domestic violence will increase in direct relationship with the number of cases.* However, it should be said that this objective is rather generic and not easily measurable. According to data provided by MLSAEO there were, in 2008, 822 reported cases, in year 2009, 1,217, and in 2010, 1,998 cases.⁷⁹ In 2008, there were 377 requests for protection orders issued by the courts, in 2009 the number reached 841, in 2010, 1,234, and in 2011, there were 2,181 such cases. However, the number of requests for protection orders in 2011 reached 1,345.⁸⁰

The increase in the number of reported cases of domestic violence is related to the measures that have been taken. It is the direct result of the improvement and strengthening of the legal framework, establishment of structures for prevention of such violence, strengthening of human resources, and the organisation of numerous awareness campaigns on the prevention of domestic violence that have been held across the country. Nevertheless, a lot remains to be done to consolidate cooperation at all levels of governance and increase the responsibility of LGUs to establish and strengthen mechanisms for prevention of domestic violence and support the victims. In the first half of 2009, reports from rural areas accounted for 24.8 percent of the total number of reports, while in 2010, the number accounted for 27.7 percent.⁸¹ This worsening situation is a direct reflection of the absence in rural areas of mechanisms for prevention of domestic violence and of support to the victims of such violence.

The interviews held with representatives of decision makers from central-level institutions reveal that: *With regard to the establishment of a mechanism and the coordination of work on referral of cases of domestic violence, more efforts should be done to improve the coordination and the responsibility of LGUs. The situation is not perfect because not all LGUs are aware of the need to establish these structures.*

In the interviews, representatives of the social services offices at the municipalities with referral mechanisms, when asked about the effectiveness of the system of coordinated reaction against domestic violence, responded that they had “no idea”, even though DMC No. 334 states that the regional and municipal social service delivery offices should participate in the steering committee and the multidisciplinary teams. Better cooperation should be established among local institutions and awareness campaigns should be held to inform all local actors of the existence of the mechanism whether or not they are directly involved in its structures.

Based on Law No. 9669, LGUs should supply and maintain 24-hour help lines for victims of domestic violence. However, such lines exist only in three municipalities—Durrës, Elbasan and Tirana—due to lack of financial resources, or professionally trained staff, or both.

⁷⁸ Project, Making it Real: Implementing the Law against Domestic Violence in Albania, implemented by Network against Gender based Violence and Trafficking

⁷⁹ Data are taken from General Directorate of State Police

⁸⁰ Monitoring report on the National Strategy on Gender Equality and Domestic Violence, 2009, 2010 and 2011, General Directorate of Equal Opportunities, MLSAEO

⁸¹ Data supplied by General Directorate of State Police

Alongside improvements to the legal framework and the establishment of relevant structures in accordance with the law on domestic violence, particular attention has been paid to the establishment and strengthening of human resource capacities. In this connection a number of training sessions have been held with health care personnel, police charged to deal with domestic violence, prosecutors, judges, contact points in the offices for gender equality at MLSAEO, social workers and social administrators.

In 2008, 720 employees from social service delivery offices, the police and contact points on gender equality at the prefecture level were trained under the UNDP project Domestic Violence—not only a Family Problem, and 560 health-care employees were trained in cooperation with MoH, with UNFPA support.⁸² In 2009, training was provided for 163 judges and prosecutors, 14 forensic doctors, 300 managers and social workers at the regional SSS offices.⁸³ In 2010, a guide for health employees—A Practical Approach to Gender-Based Violence—was drafted by MoH, UNFPA and the National Centre for Social Studies. This manual, together with the training programme, was certified by the National Centre for Continued Education. In the same year, across the country, 1,800 health workers were trained in recognising and preventing gender-based and domestic violence, while training was provided to 100 police officers at enforcement level.⁸⁴ Training continued in 2011, too, with 1,050 health workers from across the country being trained.⁸⁵

Over the period covered by this report, positive efforts were undertaken to establish social services for victims of domestic violence. Such services include psychological support, free legal aid, social service delivery, mediation for employment, placement in shelters. Services for victims of violence are offered by public and non-public institutions, but NPOs have been the ones bearing the brunt of service provision.

With regard to shelters for victims of violence, by 2011 three non-public shelters had been created,⁸⁶ supported by donor funds. NPOs have carried out considerable work in supporting victims of violence, but continuation of their activity depends on the size of the funds available.

Pursuant to the law on domestic violence, the first National Centre for Victims of Domestic Violence was established, with UNDP support in cooperation with SSS. In addition, a package of standards to be implemented by the centre was approved.⁸⁷ Until recently, this centre had received and treated 40 women who had suffered cases of domestic violence.

To improve the quality of service delivery by public and non-public institutions, CoM approved Decision No. 505 dated 13.07.2011 “On approval of standards of social service delivery for victims of domestic violence in public and non-public residential centres.” The standards aim to improve living conditions for victims of domestic violence and their families.

With regard to the current reception facilities for victims of domestic violence and centres providing

⁸² Monitoring Report on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence 2008, General Directorate of Equal Opportunities, MLSAEO

⁸³ *ibid.*, 2009

⁸⁴ *ibid.*, 2010

⁸⁵ *ibid.*, 2011

⁸⁶ Annual Report, SSS 2011

⁸⁷ DCM No. 505 dated 13.07.2011 “On approval of standards on social care services for victims of domestic violence in the public and non-public residential centres”

other services—counselling, employment opportunities, legal aid, etc.—the number and, in particular, the coverage is very limited and cannot address the wide range of needs. Where such facilities do not exist the needy are left in deprivation. Nevertheless, in some areas, psychological and counselling services are offered by many NGOs licensed by MLSAEO.

Victims of trafficking in Albania receive social care services from five public and non-public agencies working together based on a Cooperation Agreement dated 18.07.2005 “On the creation of the national mechanism for identifying, referring and assisting victims of trafficking”.

In 2010, the National Admission Centre for Victims of Trafficking received 74 victims, of whom eleven were victims of violence, 20 were illegal emigrants, six were cases carried over from the previous year and 37 were new cases. That year, fourteen cases were referred for re-integration into their families. Of these, eleven cases were treated by NPOs and three were considered capable of independent life.⁸⁸ The following year, the centre provided assistance to 56 cases (with 16 cases carried over from previous years).

In the National Centre for Admission of Victims of Trafficking, women and girls who have not found the courage to report the perpetrators are provided with legal, medical and residential services for a period of 15 days, during which they are made aware of the risks they may face if they decide to keep quiet.⁸⁹

According to the Law on Domestic Violence, every municipality should establish free help lines for victims of violence. However, only three of the country’s 65 LGUs have done so. Meanwhile, women and girls suffering gender-based and domestic violence have been at the focus of professional training and employment policies. These women are entitled to vocational training programmes free of charge. The number of such women and girls benefiting from these policies has been increasing year on year. Nevertheless, their numbers are still few and they still encounter difficulties integrating into the labour market.

To support victims of domestic violence, Law No. 10399 dated 17.03.2011 was approved. “On social aid and services” (with changes) serves to regulate the right to economic aid. According to this law, the right to economic aid covers the male head of the family, women who have been violated and where a protection order has been passed on their behalf, and spouses who have filed divorce papers and where there has not yet been a final court decision.

Prior to 2010, government institutions did not offer free legal aid for victims of domestic violence. Instead, NPOs with the necessary legal capacities provided such assistance. The Centre for Legal and Civic initiatives monitored implementation of Law No. 9669 from 2008–2009 and noted: *a limited role of appointed attorneys as required by implementation of the law*. The centre found a considerable number of cases in which the victim was not represented by an attorney before the court.⁹⁰ The monitoring revealed that plaintiff was represented by an attorney in 37 cases.⁹¹ From January–April 2009 there were 370 cases of legal counselling and 395 cases of psycho-social

⁸⁸ SSS, 2010, Annual Report Analysing the implementation of employment programmes, p. 19

⁸⁹ Interviews with Employees of the National Centre on Admission of Victims of Trafficking

⁹⁰ Report on implementation of the Law “On measures against domestic violence,” Centre for Legal And Civic Initiatives, 2009, p. 25

⁹¹ *idem*

counselling. The centre filed 33 lawsuits for women and girls, who also received free psycho-social support and free legal aid.⁹²

The National Centre for Admission of Victims of Trafficking employs a lawyer to offer free legal assistance to women residing in the centre. In addition, a legal studio offers pro bono services for women and girls once a week.⁹³

Approval of Law No. 10329 dated 30.09.2010 “On some additions and changes to Law No. 9669, dated 18.12.2006 ‘On measures against domestic violence’ with changes,” paved the way to the provision, among other things, of free legal aid for victims of domestic violence. According to the relevant changes, MoJ, in cooperation with the National Chamber of Lawyers, will provide the courts with lists of lawyers assigned to provide free legal aid. An additional way to benefit victims of domestic violence is to discharge the plaintiff from all court taxes and tariffs and bailiff expenses, to be charged to the perpetrator of the domestic violence. Up until now, there are no data on provision of free legal aid based on recent changes to the law.

All respondents confirmed that during the selection process for families in need to become beneficiaries of social housing, attention was paid to battered women, women who headed families and trafficked women. However, no-one could provide specific data in this regard. The respondents claimed that the reason for not all qualifying categories benefiting from housing policies was the fact that many failed to meet bank requirements. They propose that the municipalities implement other social programmes to make housing facilities available for families with insufficient income. The unemployed women and girls interviewed in Gjirokastër (FG) claimed that there are problems with housing, mainly in urban areas, and that the public does not have complete information on the housing programmes. With regard to crediting, citizens benefiting from economic aid in Dibër (FG) confirmed that the difficulty lies in the fact that they are unemployed, making them unable to pay off a credit. Unsurprisingly, banks refuse to provide loans to individuals without fixed income. Even though 24 social apartments have been built in Peshkopi Municipality, the authorities are still in the process of identifying families with the most urgent need of housing.

A number of awareness raising campaigns have been undertaken by public and non-public entities to build understanding among the public of domestic violence. These campaigns have involved various categories and age groups from the population. The campaigns have been coordinated and synchronized to involve all stakeholders and to ensure good coverage of the country’s territory. Meanwhile, each year, MLSAEO has been organising national conferences on the measures taken to prevent domestic violence and to support the victims.

3.2.6.2. Women and Gender Equality

Evaluation of the legislative and institutional framework

Law No. 9970 “On gender equality in society” can be considered an important step towards strengthening legislation on equality between the genders. The law has a number of positive aspects, including the following:

- introduction of new definitions⁹⁴

⁹² NSSI Progress Report 2008–2009

⁹³ Interviews with employees of the National Anti-trafficking Centre

- creation of new policy making, enforcement and protection structures
- establishment of special measures in public policy and decision making, such as the quota of 30 percent participation by women
- introduction of new measures in the education system and in the area of employment
- acknowledgment of the existence of unpaid labour of women, and enforcement of the obligation to collect gender-based statistics.

To implement the Law on Gender Equality, a national council was established with the participation of the deputy minister involved with implementation of the national strategy on gender equality and domestic violence and three representatives from NPOs. In addition, efforts have been made to establish a network of gender employees at the ministerial and municipal levels. By 2011, two gender employees had been appointed at the ministry level and 15 at the municipality level. To enforce collection of gender-based statistics, the Minister of MLSAEO issued a special instruction.⁹⁵

To improve the status of women in Albania and to achieve gender equality, MLSAEO established a Directorate of Equal Opportunity Policies. The mission of this directorate is to implement the National Strategy on Gender Equality (NSGE) and the Strategy against Domestic Violence (SDV).⁹⁶ MLSAEO is the main institution responsible for coordinating the other line ministries with responsibilities in implementation of the strategy, including MES, MoI, MoJ, METE, MTCYS, as well as LGUs.

Evaluation of implementation of policies for women and gender equality

NSSI makes the increase of women's access to the labour market and social services provided to support them one of its important priorities for women and girls as a group in need. However, the strategy does not contain specific measurable results in connection with this target group. Nonetheless, positive steps under the period evaluated by this report have been achieved with regard to the measures and programmes that have been implemented, even though the concrete results are at very low levels.

To promote employment of women and girls, MLSAEO is implementing a special programme towards this end. To achieve maximum results from the programme, a number of DCMs have been approved⁹⁷ and a number of vocational training courses provided for women and girls to be able to meet the demands of the labour market. These employment policies have focused mainly on members of special groups, e.g. victims of trafficking, disabled women and girls, Roma women, women above 35 years of age, parent girls and divorced women with social problems. Women from such groups receive professional training at lower tariffs or free of charge.

⁹⁴ The Law "On Gender Equality" introduced new definitions, including prohibition of discrimination due to gender, in accordance with the definitions of discrimination by CEDAW, gender integration, prohibition of harassment due to gender, gender equality, equal gender representation, special temporary measures, representation for women in institutions as non-discriminatory

⁹⁵ Instruction No. 1220 dated 27.5.2010

⁹⁶ Adopted by DMC No. 913 dated 19.12.2007 for the period 2007–2010 and DCM No. 573 dated 16.06.2011 for the period 2011–2015.

⁹⁷ DCMs: No. 632 dated 18.09.2003 "On programmes for promoting the employment of unemployed female job seekers," with changes; No. 47 dated 16.01.2008 "On the programme of employment promotion through provision of on-the-job training"; No. 48 dated 16.01.2008 "On the amount and criteria of benefiting from the programme of promoting unemployed job seekers in difficulty"; No. 873 dated 27.12.2006 "On the amount of funds, criteria and procedures on the implementation of professional programmes and internships for unemployed job seekers with higher education"

Table 4 reports employment figures for specific groups. From the data it is clear that participation in the programme is as yet insignificant and much remains to be done in this area. For example, the level of women's employment is very low compared to the total number of unemployed women and girls. The data demonstrate low representation rates of women in the labour market, with high unemployment levels among girls and women.

Unemployment in 2007 was 12.7 percent and has increased year on year, reaching 13.5 percent in 2008, and 15.9 percent in 2009.⁹⁸ With regard to employment levels, in 2007 that for women was 49.3 percent compared to 63.6 percent among men. In 2008, the figures were 45 percent and 63 percent,⁹⁹ and in 2009, 51.8 compared to 73.3 percent, respectively.

Table 4. Participation of women in the labour market

Category	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
total number of unemployed job seekers	142,871	141,700	144,766	142,761	143,002
unemployed women job seekers	70,009	70,243	73,602	72,900	73,754
unemployed women who head families	56,478	55,624	55,413	56,350	54,361
employed total	10,261	12,611	11,907	12,317	12,748
employed women as % of total employed	41.0	43.0	45.0	51.5	48.3

Source: MLSAEO Statistics in Years

The level of payment also differs markedly between men and women: in 2008, the difference was 19 percent.¹⁰⁰ Meanwhile, women had a higher participation in part-time employment than did men: in 2007, the proportion of women employed part-time was 39.3 percent, compared to 18.2 percent for men; in 2008, the figures were 32.9 percent and 13.8 percent, respectively.¹⁰¹

According to LSMS 2008, the proportion of women living in absolute poverty (12.9%) was higher than that of men (11.9%), while the proportion of poor women living in extreme poverty (56%) is much higher than the figure for men (44%). However, estimates reveal that among poor families, those headed by women are less poor (6%) than those headed by men (8.9%).¹⁰²

In addition, representation of women in politics and managerial positions is much lower than the levels for men: 7.14 percent in government,¹⁰³ 16.4 percent in parliament, 28.6 percent in the courts and prosecution offices,¹⁰⁴ 25 percent in senior position in the public administration,¹⁰⁵ 6.6 percent of mayors and 20.1 percent on LGU councils.

Employment opportunities for women appear to be limited. They are mostly employed in commercial activities—retail trade, semi-finished production, light industry—while men benefit

⁹⁸ National Report on Women Position and Gender Balance in Albania, UN Women, MLSAEO

⁹⁹ Albania's Answers to EC Questionnaire, p. 2200

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *idem*

¹⁰² National Report on Women's position and Gender equality in Albania, UN Women, MLSAEO 2011

¹⁰³ <http://www.km.gov.al/>

¹⁰⁴ General Directorate of Equal Opportunities, MLSAEO

¹⁰⁵ High level refers to directors and above.

from greater opportunities, their main advantage being in the construction sector. As in the employment sectors, vocational training courses for women and girls need to be reformed to adapt to the changing demands of the labour market.

With regard to youths (age group 16–25 years), employed people with nine-year education comprise the highest percentage, with the number of female workers in this category being larger than the number of men. This situation has been continuing for many years, and is an indicator that women are mostly employed in unqualified jobs, and consequently in less well-paid jobs. Such women are mostly employed in works and enterprises such as shoe making, bag making, dress making, light industries, etc. The work load in such enterprises depends on supply of materials and orders placed by foreign companies and often brings about periods of long working hours followed by periods of no work at all. Such a situation reflects in the instability of salaries, and is in violation of the Labour Code and ILO conventions on the duration of the working day.

With regard to the employment of women and girls in rural areas, most are considered to be self-employed. However, there no comprehensive study has been undertaken in connection with their contribution to the household economy, agricultural livestock breeding, services, etc. In addition, there are no studies or surveys on the socio-economic situation of women and girls in rural areas, their access to services, their opportunities to establish their own businesses, their status in relation to other family members as regard property rights, etc. The few related surveys available are those carried out by NGOs in particular areas, and these they fail to give a full picture of the situation and the problems facing this group. Although there is a Strategy for Rural Development and a Strategy for Gender Equality and Domestic Violence, neither mentions any specific policy to support rural women and girls in order to empower them economically or to improve their entrepreneurial capacities.

With regard to vocational and professional training, in 2009 such training was provided to 705 unemployed female jobseekers, of whom 464 benefited from reduced tariffs, while 38 trafficked women benefited from the training free of charge. Of the whole group, 161 females were employed following completion of the training programme.¹⁰⁶ In 2010, 1111 unemployed female jobseekers benefited from vocational training courses, of whom 644 benefited from a lower tariff and 165 received free of charge training. Following completion of the course, 249 females were able to find a job.¹⁰⁷ Implementation of programmes on employment promotion in 2011 enabled 757 unemployed female jobseekers from the special groups to find a job, i.e. 65 percent of the total number of unemployed female jobseekers.

To support groups in need, in particular girls and women, including those who head families, MLSAEO has signed an agreement with a German company on implementation of the programme Yunus Social Business. The joint agreement has enabled implementation of the project Social business movement in Albania, beginning in 2012. The goal of the project is to promote social business in the country through focusing on the provision of micro-credits for the most poor and groups most at risk who are excluded from other sources of credit. This project will provide employment and self-employment opportunities to poor people by enabling them to break out of

¹⁰⁶ Monitoring Report on the National Strategy on Equal Opportunities/Domestic Violence, 2009, General Directorate on Equal Opportunities/MLSAEO

¹⁰⁷ *ibid.*, 2010

poverty. Priority under this project will be given to women who head families, to households with numerous children and the poorest of the poor.¹⁰⁸

When analysing the participation of girls and women in the labour market, two very important aspects cannot be neglected, informal labour and unpaid labour as outlined below.

a) *Informal labour*

A considerable number of women and girls are involved in informal labour, though figures indicate a greater participation by men than women. One area with one of the greatest levels of informality is home-keeping services, which is entirely informal. These services include babysitting, cleaning, taking care of the elderly and disabled and home keeping in general. According to MLSAEO, in 2009, this sector employed 234 persons,¹⁰⁹ about 0.1 percent of the total number of people involved in private activities. However, it is highly likely that the actual number of home workers is many times greater than this figure. Generally, there is a lack of data concerning the informality of employment of women and girls.

b) *Unpaid labour*

Employment opportunities for girls and women are often conditional upon the situation of families, wherein women are more than the other members of the family involved with housework, housekeeping and caring for children, the elderly and other family members. The burden of house work as an expression of gender inequality in the division of family responsibilities may be one of the reasons for women not participating in the labour market.

Unemployed women in one FG pointed out that: *There is the possibility for women to be employed in private businesses such as Filanto (clothing, shoemaking), which are concentrated in the area of Shijak, but one main reason for their non-participation is the long distances and transportation costs. Since income from such activities is small women prefer to remain at home and care for children and other family members. There are also other obstacles that keep women from participating in the labour market—lack of nurseries and kindergartens for their children.*

To support women and girls in need in participating in the country's economic and social life, to help reduce their work time and the weight of unpaid labour, emphasis is placed on expansion of the network of public and social services that support them. The limited number of public nurseries, given that women may have to return to work and leave behind a twelve-month-old baby, the insufficient capacities of kindergartens to accommodate the needs of the population, the lack of public services for school children—lack of canteens and of space to hold children in school for long hours to help working parents—difficulties with public transportation, and the lack of easy and fast transportation, are just some of the reasons for women's non-participation in the labour market.

Representation of women in decision making is seen to be an important factor in the design of policies for women and girls, in general, and gender-sensitive policies, in particular. This is particularly important at the local level (municipalities and communes). The local elections of 2011 saw an increase in women's representation in LGU councils, which have an important role in the design of work plans and budgets. However, the voice of women and their lobbying activities to

¹⁰⁸ <http://www.mpcs.gov.al/zedhenesi/6-njoftime-per-shtyp/736-fillon-implementimi-i-projektit-levizja-gjithperfshirese-biznesit-social-ne-shqiperi>

¹⁰⁹ Individuals whose social contributions are paid by job takers according to DCM No. 1114 dated 30.07.2008

demand policies that benefit women and girls are still weak. This is all the more evident in communes, where women's participation is very low.

3.3. NSSI IMPACT ON CENTRAL, REGIONAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT POLICIES

Evaluation of NSSI revealed that all LGUs, offices at the regional, municipal and commune level, lacked comprehensive information on the strategy and its objectives, though they were better informed of the sector strategies under NSSI.¹¹⁰ It is evident that local-level entities have not been instructed on how to coordinate NSSI measures with a multi-sectorial approach. The lack of local plans deriving from the priorities under NSSI weakens its impact and that of the coordination role of regional councils with central and local governments.

For this reason there is a weak sense of cooperation among institutions, including with regard to exchange of information and statistics on service delivery (both urban and rural), as well as on territorial control. When assessing the effectiveness of managerial, coordinating and distribution powers at the central level vis-à-vis the local level with regard to implementation of services and programmes to achieve objectives under NSSI it is evident that there is a stark deficiency among local structures, which are almost totally out of function in these areas.

Based on the opinions of municipal representatives, cooperation between these structures has not been efficient, due to a prevalent mentality that central level structures fund social programmes and, therefore, are responsible for their monitoring. The Committee on Needs Assessment and Social Service Planning is expected to take on a more active role to implement its tasks and responsibilities under the law and the NSSI.

Decentralization reforms have created confusion over the role and powers of each and every institution. Therefore, the greatest number of respondents recommended institutionalization of NSSI. Central-level institutions are more familiar with the strategy as a result of their obligation to report annually or biannually on the strategy's targets. Central-level authorities have made no suggestions on review of measures under NSSI, though a considerable number recommend inclusion in it of the more critical issues faced by groups in need. However, the recommendations always remain general and do not propose specific and measurable actions.

Currently, there are a number of strategies that include groups in need that focus on certain and specific fields. NSSI is an overall strategy and in many ways concise and brief. It would be useful to disseminate the content and measures to the local level and to interest groups, including people at risk of social exclusion in order for them to be given the opportunity to voice directly their most critical problems.

Implementation of NSSI has shown that the experiences gained are insufficient and the difficulties in the field of management are great. Problems exist with the local management structures for decentralized services since these services have not yet been made operational at the level of region, municipality and commune.

¹¹⁰ Semi-structured interview: *Over the last two years implementation of the strategy on the Roma Inclusion Decade, in relation to which a Regional Action Plan has been designed under supervision by the Technical Group on Roma issues, a structure has been established specifically at the level of regional council.*

There is no regional strategy based on NSSI that includes all marginalized groups, though LGUs have implemented policies to support such groups. The prevalent opinion is that a regional strategy would enable better inter-institutional cooperation at the local level, leading to better understanding of the situation and a more rational use of local human and material resources.

From the interviews carried out with relevant stakeholders, it has been noted that the Regional Health Directorates regard themselves as capable of cooperating with other institutions. Indeed, to date, it has been noted that the cooperation has been efficient. Cooperation with the housing sector at MPWT has been useful, especially with regard to relevant projects that have been implemented. However, management of housing problems is viewed as very complicated, while the housing programmes require a greater commitment and support of central government. With regard to inter-institutional cooperation among relevant structures of regional and central governments on implementation of the NSSI objectives concerning potable water supply, it can be said that these objectives have been attained at satisfactory levels. This cooperation will continue until the programme is successfully finalized.

In the field of social care and services, cooperation with NPOs is considered to be very positive, because all sides have the desire to cooperate. However, the available human and financial resources for the cooperation are insufficient. The role of NPOs is generally considered effective when it comes to service provision, but then the services are not sustainable due to lack of financial resources, while LGUs also lack access to sufficient funds.

3.4 MONITORING AND REPORTING ON PROGRESS WITH NSSI IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of NSSI as an inter-sectorial strategy is a responsibility of MLSAEO. The main duty is to coordinate the central and local entities charged with implementation of the measures. NSSI is a synthesis of several sector strategies focused on special groups in need and programmes and policies (on infrastructure, health, access to water, electricity, communications, public transport, etc.) with a direct or indirect impact on the social well-being and the living standards of the population, in particular of groups in need.

From 2008–2009, coordination of actions under NSSI was vested in the Sector of Monitoring and Evaluating Strategies and Statistics at the General Policy Directorate. The Sector employed three specialists and a head of the sector. In 2010, restructuring of MLSAEO placed responsibility with the Strategy Monitoring Directorate. The following year, MLSAEO was restructured once again and a Directorate for Inter-sector Strategy Monitoring was established. This Directorate includes two sectors, each charged with monitoring one of the two national strategies, namely those on the Roma and the disabled. Coordination of actions under NSSI is vested in one person who is also head of the directorate.

To monitor progress under NSSI, contact points have been appointed in every line ministry (MES, MoJ, MoH, MLSAEO and the Ministry of Transport and Territorial Adjustment) to report periodically on implementation of the main measures under the strategy. Also, INSTAT has an important duty in this process with collection, processing and reporting on relevant official statistics, in particular poverty indicators. With regard to the information system, data are collected regularly at the sector level but are not easily referenced for measuring progress in relation to groups at risk. No official document has been designed to guide monitoring of progress under the strategy, including data collection and institutional responsibility to provide such data, not to mention the need for software—a database—for MLSAEO to enter and process the data. Attention should also be paid to the need to review indicators, conduct a baseline study in relation to the groups targeted by the

strategy and define clear objectives to be achieved over specific periods. If such actions are taken they will lend added value to the document in terms of measuring progress, estimating costs and, consequently, determining the next priorities. The scheme described below proposes a process of data collection by relevant institutions in relation to monitoring, evaluation and reporting under the NSSI.¹¹¹

In terms of institutional capacities, in view of the workload and the voluminous data to be processed for each target group, the structure of the Directorate for Monitoring Inter-sector Strategies in MLSAEO should be revisited with regard to the coordination, monitoring and reporting on implementation of NSSI. The purpose is to explore the possibility to add one staff for data processing at the national level in accordance with the indicators for each target group covered by NSSI.

The evaluation found that data have been collected periodically by the responsible sector in MLSAEO. In 2009, with UNDP support and the participation of specialists from ministries, a list of indicators was drafted as an important instrument for monitoring NSSI implementation and assessing achievements under its main areas. In March 2010, a Progress Report 2008–2009 was prepared, the first ever on NSSI implementation. Progress evaluation was based on information from primary and secondary sources, NPO studies and monitoring reports on sector strategies comprising the NSSI, as well as official statistical data.

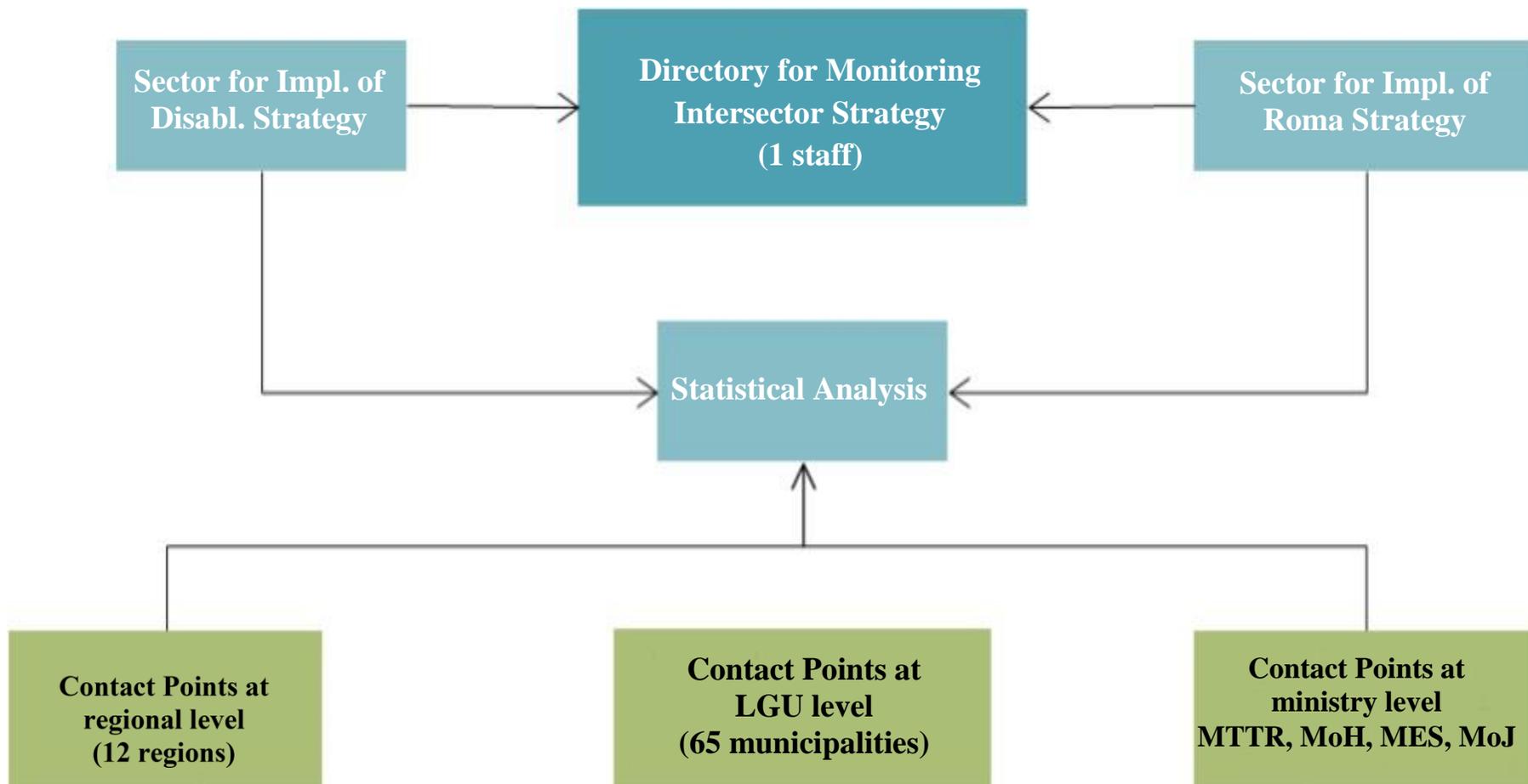
From 2009–2011, yearly evaluation reports were prepared and submitted to the Department for Strategy Coordination, which routinely collects such reports on inter-sector and sector strategies adopted by government as part of preparation work for reporting on NSDI implementation. As with design of the Progress Report 2008–2009, preparation of annual monitoring reports for the department encountered difficulties in obtaining statistics and indicators, a significant proportion of which were either unavailable or immeasurable to indicate the extent of goals achieved under the strategy. In particular, there is a lack of data on poverty, which should be provided by INSTAT based on LSMS. The latest such survey was carried out in 2008 and, consequently, the monitoring and analysis is based upon out-of-date information.

There are gaps even in relation to statistical data of ministries and other institutions at the central and local levels. According to NSSI, seven institutions have a responsibility to provide data on service beneficiaries under the respective strategies. These data should be checked and processed by the Directorate for Inter-sector Strategy Monitoring. As mentioned above, this directorate has only one staff member to collect the information. Existing data do not break down the numbers of vulnerable group beneficiaries from NSSI, and there is a lack of data, mainly for people with disabilities, Roma population, Balkan Egyptian community, people in informal and part-time employment, unemployed women and girls, and young people at risk. There are no information or surveys on the elderly and gaps exist in the data reported by LGUs on vulnerable groups and the actions taken to improve their situation, to overcome poverty or to integrate them into the social and economic life of the community.

¹¹¹ Internal Regulation of MLSAEO: <http://www.mpcs.gov.al/images/stories/ministria/mpcsshb/rregullore-brendshme-2010-update-21-7.pdf>

Meanwhile, frequent staff turnovers in the public administration have had a negative impact on the periodic reports of ministries, for such turnovers affect the focal points and staff members charged with reporting on NSSI implementation, leading to delayed or incomplete reports, communication difficulties between the coordination structure in MLSAEO and the line ministries, communication problems between focal points in the line ministries and the sectors or departments within them. Reports prepared by the responsible sector in MLSAEO on NSSI implementation have not been disseminated among the responsible institutions at the central and local levels. In particular, LGUs are little aware of the implementation status of measures under this strategy.

Finally, reports on implementation of NSSI largely provide information on achievements at the national level rather than at local and regional levels, which would otherwise enable local and regional authorities to craft programmes based on the specific needs of each region and LGU and each target group of beneficiaries.



CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1. CONCLUSIONS

As an inter-sectorial strategy NSSI ought to be in complete harmony with Albania's sector strategies, in particular with the institutional policies and structures described in those strategies, which aim to assist vulnerable individuals, families and community groups in order to empower them to act independently for them to make a living and enjoy the same rights as other members of society. In order to prevent social exclusion and to inform groups at risk, as well as the service providers, it is essential to take action based on a coordinated approach with the aim of ensuring that groups at risk are supported in all respects, including rehabilitation into the family and the community.

Although, in general, NSSI implementation is linked well to the individual strategies, there are some shortcomings. General conclusions on the evaluation of the impact of NSSI undertaken in the present report include the following:

- a) Insufficient inter-institutional cooperation among the central and local levels of government has weakened the inter-sector approach and the orientation of NSSI towards the beneficiaries. Nevertheless, the strategy is assessed as having created added value with regard to orienting and setting agendas for addressing poverty and social exclusion, and in targeting the various groups under the several existing programmes.
- b) NSSI has provided a clear definition of excluded social groups and clarified the situation of vulnerable groups. However, the most recent socio-economic developments require the inclusion of several groups at risk of social exclusion that were not apparent at the time of NSSI design. Mention can be made of children outside of social care, as well as the LGBT community, particularly the young among them.
- c) The goal of NSSI on building awareness on the right to social inclusion among users of services and service providers has not been effective since it has not led to an improvement in, or accountability for, these services. With a universal approach, the target of reaching the poor at risk of social exclusion is essential and indispensable, despite the scarcity of financial resources.
- d) The clear framework of NSSI measures and objectives has guided activities and planning. Similarly, the National Action Plan under NSSI to address critical issues and establish monitoring and reporting mechanisms is clear evidence of the commitment to achieve objectives. However, many of the measures and annual priorities have not been budgeted, creating gaps in the implementation of programmes, collection of indicators and their periodical monitoring.

This evaluation report groups the specific conclusions on the impact of NSSI into three main pillars—adequacy and concurrence of NSSI with the strategic orientations of the government's programmes, NSSI and the institutions, and NSSI and the current standing of target groups—as follows:

1) Adequacy and concurrence of NSSI with the strategic orientations of the government's programmes

- From 2008–2012, NSSI had a positive impact on improving the existing legislation with regard to groups in need and the drafting of new laws in accordance with EU directives. However, the implementation process was slow and has therefore not yielded the desired results. For instance, government provision of free legal aid to groups in need is not yet effective, and NGOs with expertise in this field continue to fill the void. Law No. 10039 dated

22.12.2008 “On legal aid” was published in official journal 199 in 2008, but the law took effect only in April 2009. This law provides citizens in need with free legal assistance to protect their rights and basic freedoms, as well as their lawful interests.

- It is clear that NSSI has only limited budgets to implement programmes and services to the benefit of groups in need. Limited budgets represent a risk factor to achievement of foreseen objectives. A similar problem is noted for the programmes of local government.
- It is noted that discrepancies sometimes exist with the priorities that have been established. For example, programmes and policies to help women and girls in rural areas are limited in number and those that have been implemented do not benefit this social group even though they face poverty, domestic violence, lack of social services, and double exploitation through engaging in farm work and unpaid labour. This group comprises half of the agricultural labour force, and the greatest part cannot pay social insurance contributions, exposing them to the risk of no access to health and social services and most importantly to an old age pension. Women and girls in rural areas comprise only six percent of land owners.¹¹² Meanwhile, there are only fragmented and uncoordinated efforts to improve the situation for women with regard to employment and property titles. This situation has hampered positive developments in macroeconomic activity.
- The Roma population continues to have limited access to employment and information policies, including demands of the labour market and professional training requirements. Although awareness campaigns have been undertaken at the regional level, their impact remains limited.
- There are positive initiatives with regard to the institutional and legal framework, particularly as regards children at risk. However, limited budgets are an obstacle to the implementation of the strategy.
- Even though the Policy Document on the Elderly 2009–2013 was approved in 2009 and accompanied by a concrete action plan it has yet to be implemented. Also, an integral draft law on the elderly has been designed, but yet it has still to be submitted to Parliament for approval. In the meantime there are no specific policies on the elderly at the local level, and LGUs do not implement special policies or programmes to support such people. In addition, at the local level no survey has been carried out on the needs of this particular group of people and no data exist that could provide a real picture of their situation. With the justification that they have insufficient resources, LGUs are incapable of providing minimal financial support to NGOs that provide services for these people.
- Budgets are also limited with regard to the fight against domestic violence. One survey¹¹³ involving ten municipalities found that the proportion of their budgets dedicated to prevention of domestic violence were as follows: Shkodër, 0.015 percent; Pogradec, 0.055 percent; Vlorë, 0.058 percent; Berat, 0.023 percent; Rrëshen, 0.012 percent; Lezhë, Manëz, Kombinat Unit No. 6, Elbasan and Pukë, 0 percent.¹¹⁴
- Limited budgets have also been allocated to implementation of the National Strategy on Gender Equality and Domestic Violence and the Law on Gender Equality. From 2007–2010, many measures foreseen in the action plan were implemented with support of the One UN¹¹⁵ programme on gender equality and of other international organisations including OSCE and Austrian Cooperation. In 2011, government allocated 13,264,000 ALL¹¹⁶ to the equal

¹¹² National Report on Women’s Position and Gender Equality in Albania, 2011, MLSAEO, p. 84

¹¹³ Project II of UN Trust Fund in Albania

¹¹⁴ <http://www.stopdhunes.com/archives/115>

¹¹⁵ One UN programme is supported by all UN organisations: UNIFEM, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, etc.

¹¹⁶ <http://www.mpcs.gov.al/programmeet-dhe-realizimi> Monitoring 2011, MLSAEO

opportunities programme, which covered gender equality, prevention of domestic violence, and support for disabled people, children and Roma. In 2010, government allocated 17,613,000 ALL¹¹⁷ for this programme and even less, 12,040,000 ALL, in 2012.¹¹⁸

2) NSSI and the institutions

- The process of decentralization and deinstitutionalization continues at a slow pace. Difficulties have emerged with completing the transfer of services under the administration of LGUs. Meanwhile, LGU budgets are limited and cannot afford to maintain the existing services let alone open new services for all categories of groups in need. Other difficulties relate to a lack of capacities, experience and adequately trained staff to manage these services.
- Decentralization efforts have weakened the link between policy makers and service providers, thus reducing the flow of information on the growing needs for systemic reforms.
- Statistics are missing across all institutions and at all levels, creating a major obstacle to forming a realistic picture of the situation for groups in need. Consequently, it is difficult to design and launch necessary programmes, to monitor their implementation and to assess their impact on the beneficiaries. The role of INSTAT, as the main institution for gathering, processing and publishing official data, including on poverty and groups in need, is vague.
- There is a need to improve the capacities of local staff, in particular social administrators who are in direct contact with groups in need.
- At the local level, there is a lack of structures and human capacities to treat the problems of the needy and to implement concrete programmes to support them. Even in LGUs that have established such structures, there are problems with sector and institutional coordination. A major issue is the limited budgets, which do not allow for implementation of specific programmes. There is an outstanding need to establish and strengthen relevant structures and human capacities in preventing domestic violence such as in the state police, judiciary, prosecution offices, education, health and social services delivery. Capacity building is a particularly urgent issue in the case of newly established structures at the local level.
- Strengthening of the labour inspectorate and establishment of additional structures to prevent child labour and exploitation are issues of primary importance.
- The relevant institutions have undertaken awareness raising campaigns with the Roma to inform them of the current policies on employment, professional training and education opportunities. Nevertheless, increased efforts should be made to reach out more extensively to these people.
- The institutional mechanisms on disability rights need to be strengthened, in particular the Inter-ministerial Council on Disabilities, the responsible body for streamlining disability issues in the government's policies. At the local level, there is a lack of structures to deal specifically with disability problems, though local governments have established social service directorates or social service sectors, depending on the size of the LGU. There is a lack of human resource capacities specializing in disability issues, e.g. on serious behavioural problems of children and young people at risk, sexuality of young people with mental disabilities, autistic children, etc. There is also a lack of professional capacity with regard to provision of occupational therapy, career orientation and para-professional services.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ *ibid.*, 2010

¹¹⁸ *ibid.*, 2009

¹¹⁹ Training platform, Strengthening the Professional Capacities of Social Service Providers, SSS supported by UNFPA

- There are problems with the institutional mechanisms for the elderly, whose issues at MLSAEO are covered by only one specialist, in the Social Policy Directorate.
- There is lack of cooperation and coordination at the local level between the operations of structures established to combat domestic violence and support its victims. There have also been problems with the operation of the mechanism for coordinating efforts in referral of domestic violence victims at the local level. These problems relate to a lack of coordination among institutions, limited budgets of LGUs for domestic violence prevention and provision of specific services to victims of violence. Other issues include lack of responsibility of LGUs.
- Line ministries and LGUs are taking a long time to appoint employees for gender issues. Although, the obligation to appoint such employees derives from implementation of the Law on gender equality adopted in July 2008, currently only two gender employees have been established in the line ministries and only 19 in the local governments.
- There is a tangible need for enhancing the knowledge and capacities of employees for gender equality at the local level, in particular those charged with responsibility to mainstream the perspective into the local policies and programmes.

3) NSSI and the current standing of target groups

Children

- It has become urgent to review the economic aid programme with a view to improving protection for children, in particular those in a critical situation.
- Government has failed to create all the conditions necessary for provision of proper medical treatment for disabled children. No special legislation exists to regulate services for special needs children, such as those with disabilities and with mental disorders.
- The social protection system is incapable of identifying children in need nor of providing the necessary social and psychological assistance. Moreover, it is incapable of providing socio-economic support to children at risk and their families.
- Poverty, social exclusion and limited opportunities for families to have an income force children into work. Child labour is particularly widespread among Roma children.
- The limited employment opportunities in Albania and the few opportunities for legal emigration have forced children and families to make dangerous decisions concerning their children.
- The government budget does not include a specific item line dedicated to children's needs for health care services.
- At the institutional level, it should be pointed that eleven regional level CRUs have been established in the country's twelve regions, while progress towards establishing CPUs in its LGUs has been slow. Acceleration of work to establish and run such units will play an important role in provision of support to reintegrate special needs children in urban and rural areas. Currently, efforts are being made to cover the entire territory, but there is always the issue of the amount of financial and human resources for provision of effective services.

Young people

- Albania does not have an adequate legal system to provide for the needs of young people placed in, or who leave, social custody, in particular those who leave too early.
- The rapid increase in HIV and other infections dictates the need to take adequate measures to prevent epidemics, in particular among groups at high risk.
- Programmes have been offered to rehabilitate young people who use drugs. However, such interventions are minimal and limited with regard to territorial coverage.

- Support services following exit from social care programmes are poor and fail to cover the needs of young people, especially for employment and housing.
- Young people who have a history of institutional care suffer from social stigma and discrimination.

Roma

- There are only limited structures at the local level to deal with problems experienced by the Roma, and only Korçë Municipality has established adequate structures to deal with their needs. In some regions local coordinators have been appointed to gather committees to assess the needs assessment at the regional level. These committees have established technical groups to deal with Roma children and comprise representatives of local institutions including local governments.
- Schools have made great efforts to reduce dropout among Roma children. One direction has been to involve the parents and other family members in activities to raise awareness of the importance of schooling and of taking them off the street to prevent them becoming exploited and trafficked. Nevertheless, this work should be enlarged and extended to other locations with Roma populations.
- There are no accurate statistics on the Roma population, particularly by gender and age group, and no database exists for gathering such data. Programmes and projects have been implemented and by-laws drafted to encourage members of this population to register but no national census has been undertaken.¹²⁰
- Unemployment and informal employment among the Roma population are at high levels. But nevertheless no adequate figures on the levels exist. Those that exist are on Roma job-seekers who register with the regional employment offices.

Disabled people

- Despite improvements in the legislative framework on disabled people, some legal gaps remain in relation to treating disabled people according to level of disability. Currently, certain categories continue to be discriminated against, such as people with limited mental ability and those with hearing problems. An accurate categorization of disability should be based on clear criteria to guide payment policies for such people.
- Social day care and residential facilities for disabled people are limited in number and much of the country's territory is not covered by such services. Only 1,591 people (1.3%) with disabilities are reported to receive social services, which come in the form of residential services, family home and day-care facilities.¹²¹
- Although disability payments have increased year on year, it is still evident that disabled people cannot cover their expenditures with the limited payment they receive.

Elderly

- Pensions have been increasing year on year but are still insufficient to cover the expenditures incurred by old people. Government accords increases every year, but such increases are insignificant given the level of inflation fluctuations and the rising prices of consumer goods. Most difficult is the situation around pensioners whose payments are the only income in households in which the other members are unemployed.

¹²⁰ From interview with representatives of Technical Roma Secretariat at MLSAEO it is confirmed that more accurate data at the national level on Roma population are expected from the 2011 Census.

¹²¹ Social Care for People with Mental Disabilities, Caritas, State Agency for Support of Civil Society, 2011, p. 13

- No dedicated study has been carried out into the situation for old people who do not benefit from the pension scheme. This category is most at risk from social exclusion.
- Efforts have been made to establish social services for the elderly, but the number remains limited in comparison with the needs of this target group and the territorial coverage. This situation is due to a lack of budgets to establish new services or even to expand the existing ones. Another issue is a lack of capacities at the local level to absorb donor and international funds to support relevant policies. In certain cases there is also indifference and a lack of interest on the part of LGUs.

Women and domestic violence victims

- Tangible improvements have been made to the legal framework and positive action has been taken to establish relevant structures, both at the central and local level, to combat domestic violence and provide support to victims of violence.
- Statistics on cases of domestic violence are gathered only from reports made to the police and prosecution authorities by women who have been battered, or those that approach health care centres to receive treatment. These data do not provide an accurate enough picture of the nature of this phenomenon in Albanian society.
- Progress has also been made in this area through the establishment of prevention and support structures to provide relief for battered females. However, such structures remain limited and, especially, do not provide employment services and do not ensure housing facilities for women and girls who leave the shelters.
- There is still a prevalent mentality that prevents women and girls from reporting cases of domestic violence in the rural and remote areas of the country.

Women and gender equality

- Women elected to Parliament or the local units carry out limited lobbying to support women and girls in need.
- The Albanian family continues to be characterized by inequalities in the division of household responsibilities, indicating the need for awareness-raising campaigns to be carried out across the country.
- The pace of implementation of the law on gender equality is slow, especially with regard to the gender neutral quota, which enables increased participation of women in policy- and decision-making structures.
- Unemployment among women and girls continues to be high, despite the numerous programmes that target increased employment, including through provision of vocational courses. The number of beneficiaries in these programmes is insignificant in relation to the actual number of unemployed females.

4.2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations made in the present report are based on the results of the evaluation undertaken to measure the impact of NSSI and its compatibility with government policies, implementing institutions and capacities to monitor and report on its implementation.

4.2.1. Policy level recommendations—Harmonization of NSSI with the government’s programme

During the process to draft a new strategy on social exclusion 2013–2020, the following recommendations that emerge from the results of the evaluation exercise should be considered:

1. institutionalization and formalization of the process of national policy formulation, by taking account of regional and local-level expectations using a top-down approach, i.e. normative acts to structure relationships between central and local government
2. formalization of standards for formulating strategic documents, including vision, objectives and, in particular, measurable indicators under NSSI. With regard to poverty indicators it is recommended that a minimum living standard be estimated. Such an indicator is not mentioned in any of the reports or institutional reforms. Establishment of a minimum living standard would make the other indicators measurable and easy to estimate financially
3. design of a document on strategy monitoring and evaluation with clearly defined roles and responsibilities in relation to the reporting of data under NSSI indicators
4. unification of reporting formats
5. formulation of support policies in conformity with national standards and EU recommendations
6. learning from best practices of other countries in the region with regard to enhancing employment opportunities for vulnerable groups
7. design of a new NSSI based upon a broad-based consultation process with various stakeholders, particularly NGOs that have on-the-ground experience with vulnerable groups
8. clear indicators in order to be able to collect and analyse statistics
9. specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timely (SMART) objectives
10. opportunity explored to design a national level programme for entering data on vulnerable groups.

To ensure compatibility of the new strategy on social exclusion with the government's strategic programme, it is recommended to take account of the following evaluation conclusions:

1. It is necessary to establish responsibilities for the various structures at the local and central level involved in the process of implementing, monitoring and reporting on progress with NSSI; steps should also be taken to establish a specific structure to conduct the evaluation.
2. Strategies of community development and social inclusion at the regional and local level should be developed based on the specific needs of vulnerable groups in order to increase their access to the required services.
3. The legal framework should be completed in order to allow LGUs to enter into contractual agreements with social service providers and to fund these services from the LGUs own budgets (on the basis of special programmes).
4. To provide incentives for paying social insurance it is recommended that the government and its relevant responsible structures seek adequate means to increase public awareness in relation to voluntary payments. If individuals do not pay for their services, they will remain outside of the pension and health care schemes, probably leading to increased poverty levels across the country.
5. The economic aid programme should be harmonized with the provision of essential social services for every family member in trying to support them and enabling them to exit from the scheme.
6. Planning of economic aid should not only depend on the total number of families and the population size, but also should include additional indicators that reflect some of the core characteristics of the households, number of family members, the family demography, health status, education, family background, the efforts the family have made for social integration and conditions to provide for a normal childhood.
7. Women's economic empowerment in the context of rural development policies requires reformulation of microcredit or soft-loan policies.
8. Employment policies for females need to redefine priorities and enhance opportunities for women.

9. Specific programmes should be designed to promote women's employment, in particular that of Roma women, women older than 35 years, divorced women with social problems and disabled women. Such programmes would operate through: a) subsidies to employers, b) on-the-job training, and c) reduction of fees for participation in vocational training programmes.
10. Education reforms and strategies should be geared to the objectives under NSSI. These strategies should incorporate a cost estimate component.
11. With reference to evaluation of the education reform project, the findings show that not only was the objective not attained in due time, but also the perspective for the future is unclear. A review of the objectives and respective timelines is highly recommended.
12. Vocational training objectives and on-the-job training should respond to gender needs, and should be based upon real studies and statistics on the status of women in the labour market, including formal and non-formal employment.
13. Reduction in course tariffs for specific groups excluded from the labour market may enhance enrolment rates by unemployed people. Such groups include disabled people, young people in need, victims of trafficking, former convicts and Roma and Egyptian women.
14. Steps should be taken to upgrade the professional capacities of the LGUs' programming and monitoring structures and improve social service delivery.
15. It has become imperative to upgrade the capacities of social administrators in particular of those in direct contact with groups in need.
16. Completion of the process of decentralization of social services delivery will orient the services towards a beneficiary centred approach.
17. It is necessary to design special housing programmes to suit the needs of disadvantaged groups. These programmes should factor in cultural diversity and try to avoid social differences gradually.
18. MoJ, in cooperation with institutions under its subordination, should take steps to ensure implementation of the law on free legal aid.
19. MoJ should take the necessary steps to include in the system *ex officio* lawyers, in order to make possible the provision of free legal aid for victims of domestic violence. Free legal aid should be ensured for all categories of individuals foreseen in the law.
20. Integration programmes should be implemented for the entire spectrum of groups in need.

To increase the impact of the revised strategy on the social inclusion of groups in need, it is recommended to take account of the following results from this evaluation project by giving consideration to the following:

Children

1. Mainstream the elimination of child labour in national and inter-sectorial policies and programmes.
2. Implement the national action plan to combat trafficking in children.
3. Design policies for prevention, protection, assisted voluntary return, repatriation and reintegration of trafficked children.
4. Establish multi-sectorial mechanisms to identify victims of trafficking, particularly children.
5. Strengthen enforcement of the law on breastfeeding in private enterprises and institutions, and require the creation of appropriate environments for breastfeeding mothers in the workplace and in public places, such as shopping centres.
6. Strengthen multidisciplinary mechanisms for identification, referral and reporting on cases of child abuse.

Young people

1. Improve legislation on young people who exit institutional care facilities, and to pass a specific law on the issue, defining a role for decision makers in providing support to these young children with regard to housing and employment, and economic and social assistance.
2. Establish institutional capacities to chase and monitor young people; ensure the participation of young people in the updating the National Children's Strategy; establish centres to increase social cohesion and reduce stigma; provide adequate services; improve services in accordance with the models created by NGOs.
3. Undertake advocacy and fundraising campaigns to fund relevant services.

Disabled people

1. Take the initiative to further improve disability legislation to eliminate discrimination, to increase opportunities for support, rehabilitation and integration, based on EU directives in the context of approximation of the Albanian legislation with the EU law and major international instruments such as the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
2. Create an accurate national database for people with disabilities, as this will help in the design of effective policies and identification of problematic areas where intervention is needed with specific programmes and policies.
3. Undertake research to identify the needs and problems of people with disabilities at the local level and draft policies in response to those needs.

Elderly

1. Review the goals for the elderly set forth in NSSI 2007–2013 by setting measurable goals to determine accurately the progress made in terms of their support, and improve their quality of life.
2. Strengthen the institutional mechanisms for the elderly, creating a more complete and more effective structure in implementation of the policy document, which, until now, has barely started to be implemented.
3. Improve the legal framework in accordance with EC directives and international documents on the elderly.
4. Review and reformulate government policies on the elderly, at both central and local levels, based on research and real and accurate analyses of the situation of older persons, through inclusive processes and application of measurable indicators.
5. Raise awareness of local decision makers to design policies and programmes to support the elderly.
6. Expand the network of social services for the elderly across the country, especially in areas where such services are lacking.
7. Increase the pace of decentralization and de-institutionalization of residential services for the elderly.
8. Establish an official minimum level of standard of living to serve as an important basis for identifying families and individuals in poverty and creating a real picture of the socio-economic situation of senior citizens and other vulnerable groups.
9. Increase pensions on the basis of accurate studies on inflation and CPI so that any pension increase is a genuine increase in the incomes of old people and not just a measure to help them cope with increasing prices.
10. Review the medicine reimbursement policy based on a thorough study of the Health Insurance Institute and MoH on the most acute needs the elderly have for medical treatment, compared with their real opportunities to afford such treatment.

Victims of domestic violence

1. Undertake appropriate legal and administrative changes on the collection, analysis and dissemination of statistics to make them gender sensitive and accessible to users.
2. Effect the changes necessary to improve certain provisions in the law on gender equality and the electoral code for practical implementation of the 30 percent quota in the legislature and executive.
3. Create a unique national database on domestic violence to help understand more precisely the situation and design appropriate policies to prevent such violence.
4. Conduct a national survey on the situation of women and girls in rural areas, to identify statistical deficiencies and the lack of information on their socio-economic and political situation.
5. Develop soft business credit policies to promote women's entrepreneurship.

4.2.2 Institutional level recommendations

To institutionalize NSSI and to clarify roles and responsibilities for its implementation, coordination and monitoring at all levels of government (central, regional and local), the following recommendation emerging from the results of the evaluation exercise should be taken into account:

At central government:

1. Accelerate the process of decentralization and de-institutionalization in all municipalities and communes in the country. This process should not only remain at the administrative level of the delegation of powers to local governments, but also focus on the content of policies and services in order to increase the efficiency and impact of social services.
2. Improve inter-institutional cooperation in the coordination of work and activities of LGUs with central efforts to create a social fund with complementary financial resources.
3. Provide not only cash payments for families, groups and individuals in need, but also opportunities for quality social services in order to reduce their socio-economic condition.
4. Increase the number and typology of community services for all categories, from children to seniors, expand the services and create alternative sources of funding.
5. Create facilities for vulnerable groups, especially women heads of households, survivors of violence and trafficking, and the Roma to obtain the paperwork necessary for them to access the services.
6. Provide assistance to families on how to acquire and complete the necessary paperwork to benefit from provision of specific services.
7. Demand that LGUs apply clear and realistic criteria for provision of social housing for the most vulnerable groups.

At local government:

1. Improve the system of procedures concerning provision of documentation; delays are observed in the delivery of economic aid typically as a result of too much bureaucracy and from sending citizens aimlessly from place to place.
2. Modernize and computerize the system of awarding and monitoring economic aid in order to speed up communication between institutions.
3. Assess accurately the needs and report on them to central structures.
4. Set up new centres for children in need in all regions, especially family home models that offer optimum conditions for a child's all-round development and their best interests.
5. Improve the quality of residential services through implementation of standards of social services, greater financial support and continuous professional training for staff employed at the centres.

6. Provide detailed information for job descriptions for the newly created positions.
7. Establish a network of rehabilitation services for mutual assistance and cooperation among social centres.
8. Improve the level of cooperation among local government structures to exchange information and data on vulnerable groups.
9. Improve the system of statistical data collection and analysis as a basis for drafting policies and their on-going assessment.

At the level of subordinated regional institutions:

1. To facilitate formalization of the labour market it is recommended to draft protocols for cooperation between national and regional labour offices, local government authorities and secondary education institutions in order to achieve a better dissemination of job vacancy announcements and information on vocational courses.
2. It is recommended that the Labour Inspectorate undertakes more frequent inspections of employers who do not declare a number of employees and who violate children's rights.
3. Professionalism of employment services should be increased in order to provide quality and efficient services in relation to particular groups, with introduction of performance monitoring systems.
4. It is recommended that the number of inspections is increased to determine more accurately the kinds of economic activity undertaken in a community as this would create conditions for better planning by public entities involved in vocational training.
5. Centres providing vocational training courses should periodically review their programmes to respond to the demands of the labour market and the needs of specific target groups.
6. The economic aid programme should change from provision of cash only to a combination of cash, services and supplemental food packages.
7. Assessing the performance and measuring the impact of the economic aid scheme should include installation of a comprehensive system of indicators designed to measure the impact of interventions benefiting the target groups. This would make the scheme transparent and direct it to those who need it the most.
8. Poor families in rural areas would benefit from provision of food packages more than from cash alone, because with the small amount of cash they receive they cannot put food on the table. This would be particularly helpful for households in mountainous areas and would encourage families to send children to school.
9. The system of service providers, local government and social administrators should increase transparency in the distribution of economic aid and monitor the payments and the actual status of each household. They should help families bring together the paperwork necessary for inclusion in the scheme.
10. Capacity building for employees in the social welfare and social administrator offices in LGUs should be provided to expand their knowledge of the legislation on social services delivery in order to set up a genuine network of social workers.

4.2.3. Finance-related recommendations

To increase the extent to which NSSI is implemented, government should budget for the action plan. Since NSSI is an inter-sector strategy, the lack of provision of a budget is due to the lack of budgets for the sector strategies and actions plans under the NSSI. It is therefore recommended that:

1. the strategy objectives be broken down into action plans with measurable service indicators and cost estimates

2. the strategy objectives be translated into local plans together with an estimation of costs to be incurred
3. strategic plans at all levels of government be linked to their mid-term budget framework
4. government specifically allocate funding for child health care, separate from other item lines in the MoH budget
5. special budgets be allocated for implementation of the Strategy for Improving the Living Conditions of the Roma Minority and the Employment Sector Strategy
6. budgets be allocated at central and local levels for implementation of the National Strategy for People with Disabilities, NSSI and other measures that focus on people with disabilities
7. budgets be allocated for implementation of the Gender Equality Law and the National Strategy on Gender Equality and Domestic Violence, particularly at the local level
8. necessary budgets be allocated for implementation of policies and programmes on gender equality at both central and local levels
9. better coordination be achieved with donors for fund raising and support with implementation of policies on gender equality
10. co-funding be provided for new community services and integrated multidisciplinary centres for vulnerable groups
11. funding be increased for social housing programmes for better coverage of the needs of the population.

4.2.4. Recommendations on NSSI implementation, monitoring and reporting

1. Review the list of indicators necessary for monitoring implementation of NSSI; review indicators to measure the impact on beneficiaries; establish baseline indicators for the various target groups under this strategy and determine realistic objectives to be met over realistic timelines.
2. Strengthen the coordination structure within MLSAEO for implementation of NSSI; reconsider restructuring the Directorate for Inter-sector Strategy Monitoring charged with monitoring of and reporting on strategy implementation; consider making one staff addition to deal with the processing of national data on beneficiary target groups under NSSI.
3. Improve information management through development of a formal document on the modalities of implementation of this strategy, including information and data flow, division of responsibilities and lines of accountability.
4. Explore the possibilities for creation of a database in MLSAEO; ensure data entry systems and unify formats for collection of data on vulnerable groups at the national level, namely on the elderly, victims of domestic violence, abused children; such a system should allow for data disaggregation by male–female, rural–urban and other lines.
5. Strengthen inter-institutional cooperation and coordination and increase accountability of decision makers vis-à-vis: a) implementation of NSSI goals; b) the obligation to report periodically on its implementation by assigning appropriate structures and specialists in each ministry and agency to monitor implementation of NSSI.
6. Hold training and information sessions at the local level to familiarize local staff with NSSI goals.
7. Disseminate annual NSSI monitoring reports to stakeholders, civil society, media and the public.
8. Enhance the role of INSTAT in the provision and publication of data necessary to assess the impact of this strategy on vulnerable groups.

APPENDIX A. INFORMATION ON STRATEGY TARGETS

A.1. Children

Policy task	Achievement	Weakness	Recommendation
<p>Develop an integrated policy and institutional structure to provide early intervention for children at risk, for their development and protection from all types of abuse, violence and exploitation.</p>	<p>In general, a significant part of the measures and goals under NSSI have been attained. However, infrastructure for children's services leaves much to be desired.</p>	<p>Child protection services are insufficient for identifying and providing appropriate psycho-social and socio-economic support to children at risk and their families.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In order to achieve the measures and goals under NSSI for children at risk, increased attention should be placed on the beneficiaries. - Specific professional programmes should be developed for people with disabilities, Roma, and other groups at risk of social exclusion.
		<p>Poverty, social exclusion and limited opportunities of families to earn a decent income give rise to child labour.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide not only cash payments for families, groups and individuals in need, but also opportunities for quality social services in order to reduce poverty. - Increase the capacity of the labour inspectorate to monitor the phenomenon. - Mainstream the elimination of child labour in all national policies and programmes. - Strengthen collaboration between institutions and social partners to reduce child labour.
		<p>Limited employment opportunities within the country and few opportunities for legal emigration force families to put children along wrong paths.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implement National Action Plan to Combat Child Trafficking. - Design policies fostering prevention, protection, assisted voluntary return, repatriation and reintegration of trafficked children. - Establish multi-sector mechanisms to identify victims of trafficking, particularly children. - Return to school trafficked and at-risk

			<p>children who have not completed compulsory education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide alternative vocational training for young people of working age.
<p>Positive legal and institutional initiatives have been taken towards protection of children at risk.</p>		Roma children remain at risk of social exclusion; they continue to face difficulties with access to services.	
		With regard to disabled children, government has not fulfilled all of the requirements for their special treatment in accordance with their health and disability needs.	Expand the network of specialized teams for multidisciplinary treatment of children with developmental problems in the 12 regions of the country.
		Limited budgets continue to prevent implementation of legal initiatives.	Align coordination and referral services for children at risk of social exclusion.
		There is not a separate budget line dedicated to health services for children.	Establish a specific budget line for child health, separate from the line item of the governmental budget for health.
		There is a lack of regulations and provisions for healthy nutrition in nurseries, kindergartens and schools, and of food safety for children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strengthen the breastfeeding law in enterprises and private institutions (for now, this law is applied by few private employers) - Create suitable environments for breastfeeding mothers in workplaces and public facilities—shopping and entertainment centres, etc.
		There is no specific legislation for services for children with special needs and those with mental disabilities and disorders.	
		There is a lack of legislation to protect children from drugs.	
		Generally, there are no statistics on children at risk.	Establish a specific budget line for child health, separate from the line item of the governmental budget for health.

A.2. Young people in need

Policy task	Achievement	Weakness	Recommendation
<p><i>Relieve the burden of economic hardship and social exclusion for young people and create opportunities for them to make a healthier life, away from crime, drugs, alcohol and other negative phenomena in society.</i></p>		<p>No adequate legal system exists that meets the needs of young people in foster care or those who leave the care system, particularly those who exit too early.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Decentralize social services so that they are oriented towards the beneficiaries. - Improve legislation for the post care period in young people's lives. - Adopt a legal act for young people who exit the system to define the roles of stakeholders to support young people, in particular with housing and employment. - Provide social welfare for young people. - Build institutional capacities to track and monitor young people after they leave foster care. - Provide adequate and sufficient services. - Improve services in accordance with the models offered by NPOs. - Undertake advocacy initiatives, including fundraising to expand services.
	<p>Programmes have been implemented for rehabilitation of young people who are drug users, but such programmes remain at a minimum level.</p>	<p>The public institutional care system exhibits a number of problems with regard to services delivered for young children.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create follow-up services for children in foster care. - Keep children in foster care until the end of secondary school. - Establish day care centres that provide services for young people (14–18 years) and implement employment policies for young people who leave foster care.
		<p>Support services for children once they leave the care system are poor and fail to cover their needs, especially for employment and housing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide vocational training options for young people of working age. - Provide vocational training alternatives, employment or assistance to families of these children.
		<p>Young people with a history of institutional care suffer from stigma and discrimination.</p>	<p>Involve a group of young people in the National Children's Strategy and in establishment of centres for strengthening social cohesion and</p>

			reducing stigma.
		Faced with a rapidly growing number of cases of HIV, the need arises to take measures to prevent epidemics, in particular among population groups at high risk.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase information and awareness on HIV and Aids. - Establish medical and rehabilitation centres for drug users and provide incentives for private entities and NGOs to establish such centres.
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establish new services for young people. - Provide information and advice. - Establish participatory community services and wage advocacy to promote social inclusion, coalition building and partnerships to support young people. - Train staff and implement quality standards in residential facilities.

A.3. Roma community

Institution	Objective	Specific objective	Policy recommendation	Indicator
MoI, INSTAT, MLSAEO	1. Increase employment rates among Roma population to reduce poverty levels among its members.	1.1. Determine numbers of able-bodied Roma and those of working age.	1.1.1. Register Roma population to facilitate provision of accurate data on active work force, number of children, age group, gender, etc.	- % of Roma population active in work force as proportion of total active work force at national level - % of working population, by gender - % of working population as proportion of total Roma population
MLSAEO, LGU, NPOs		1.2. Increase Roma access to employment policies and vocational training courses.	1.2.1. Conduct study on causes of unemployment and informality that affects Roma; study labour market and employment opportunities based on specific requirements and conditions.	
MLSAEO, NES, Regional Directorates of NES			1.2.2. Draft specific policies for employment of Roma population taking into account their specifics: level of education, population concentration in specific areas, and capacity to use job creation opportunities in these areas.	- % of Roma population employed vs active work force in Roma population - % total trained Roma persons vs trained persons - % employed persons who have attended vocational training courses vs total trained persons
NES, RDE			1.2.3. Increase Roma population's access to Regional Employment Offices and current employment policies.	Number of persons informed
MLSAEO, SSI, Regional Offices of SSI		1.3. Minimize informal employment of Roma population.	1.3.1. Undertake wage awareness campaigns to increase access to information on social security scheme and consequences of informal labour.	Number of persons informed

			1.3.2. Strengthen Health Institute and intensify checks to reduce informal employment of Roma population.	
	2. Increase education levels of Roma children to help reduce social exclusion.	2.1. Increase enrolment of Roma children in education system.	2.1.1. Continue programmes undertaken by MES and NGOs to increase Roma children's enrolments in school.	Number of Roma children attending school as % of their total number, by gender and by region
			2.1.2. Coordinate activity of educational authorities with health authorities and relevant structures of social service delivery at LGU level to enable inclusion of poor Roma families in social services system in order to reduce dropout rates of children from these families.	- Number of poor Roma families involved in social protection system - Number of children in these families integrated in educational system
		2.2. Recognise, implement and promote rights of Roma children with educational institutions.	2.2.1. Hold campaigns and meetings with children and teachers on rights of Roma population to diminish discrimination cases.	Number of persons informed
	3. Establish structures in support of Roma population in all regions, and increase cooperation with Roma NGOs involved in these areas.			

A.4. Disabled people

Institution	Objective	Specific objective	Policy recommendation	Indicator
MLSAEO, SSS, DRSSS, LGU	Disability payment should be indexed annually based on CPI increase.	Create better picture of situation for disabled, their basic and specific needs in order to expand services they most need, particularly in rural areas.	Carry out study at national level.	
MLSAEO, SSS		Develop accurate categorization of disabilities and determine basic criteria on which disability payment should be made.	Adopt integral law on people with disabilities and pass by-laws to implement it.	
MLSAEO, SSS, LGU		Register disabled people by disability category, gender, age group, region, etc.	Create accurate national database on people with disabilities.	Number of people with disabilities, by category, gender, age group, region
MLSAEO, SSS, MoH			Train professionals involved in disability evaluation.	Number of persons trained
	Expand services for people with disabilities and ensure provision of specialized services for specific categories.	Integrate specialized services for people with disabilities in existing centres.	Train personnel who work directly with beneficiaries.	Number of persons trained
LGU		Improve existing services and open up new services for people with disabilities in accordance with community needs.	Allocate LGU budgets to support existing services and open new services.	- % of budget allocated to services for people with disabilities in relation to total budget - Number of newly established services per year and region - Number of beneficiaries of these services in relation to total number of people with

				disabilities in the regions
LGU, MLSAEO, SSS		Enhance relevant structures in LGUs, in particular small municipalities and communes with very small budgets, to attract donor funding or donor supported projects.	Train and upgrade human resource capacity dealing with social issues at LGU level in fundraising and in fund management.	Projects awarded by donors and relevant budgets

A.5. Elderly

Policy Task	Achievement	Weakness	Recommendation
Relieve economic hardship and social deprivation for the elderly and create opportunities for them to live a decent life, to live longer and be healthy in their old age.	Standards are defined for elderly care in accordance with international standards.	Loopholes exist in legal framework to support older persons and guarantee their rights.	Improve legal framework in accordance with EC Directives and international documents on the elderly.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Measures taken to increase low pensions, particularly rural ones, with objective of doubling the amount in 2009 and narrowing difference between pensions in towns and in villages. - Pension system is currently being revised to ensure its sustainability. 	Difficulty exists in affording living costs with pension resources, particularly for old people who are not eligible for retirement pension and live on economic aid.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase pensions on basis of accurate studies of level of inflation and CPI so that income growth opportunities are provided for elderly and not only the means to cope with increasing prices. - Calculate official minimum living cost to serve as important basis for accurately identifying families and individuals in poverty; the living minimum will provide an answer to and a real picture of the socio-economic situation of elderly persons and other vulnerable groups.
			Review medicine re-imburement policy on basis of in-depth study undertaken by the HII and MoH on needs of old people for medical treatment, compared with their real possibilities to cope financially.
		Ineffectiveness exists in implementation of policy document on old people and lack of necessary budgets to	Strengthen institutional mechanism on the elderly, creating a more complete and more effective structure for document on elderly, which has so far barely been

		implement this document, which is detailed in an action plan.	implemented.
		Weak structures and insufficient human capacity exist to implement policies for older persons at central level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Review and reformulate government policies on the elderly both at central and local level, based on research and real and accurate analysis of the situation of old persons, through broad based processes. -Increase awareness of decision makers at the local level on the need to design policies and programmes to support elderly people.
		There are limited numbers of day care and residential facilities to serve and support senior citizens.	Expand social services throughout the country, especially in areas where they are lacking, and increase pace of implementation of decentralization and de-institutionalization process.
		There is a lack of statistics and data on the situation of the elderly.	Review goals set in NSSI 2007–2013 with regard to senior citizens and set measurable goals to determine progress made in terms of their support and improvement of quality of life.

A.6. Women and domestic violence

Institution	Objective	Specific objective	Policy Recommendation	Indicator
LGU	Prevention of domestic violence and support victims of violence	Increase in reporting (urban/rural) of cases of domestic violence	Establish and operate telephone lines at LGUs and regions.	Number of reports, by year, by urban or rural area
MLSAEO, LGU, NPOs		Undertake awareness campaigns at community level on domestic violence, with priority on rural and remote areas with low report rates.		
MLSAEO, LGU, NPOs		Increase access of women and girls to existing structures on prevention of domestic violence and provision of services to victims of violence.		
LGU			Allocate funds at LGU level to support existing services and to establish new services.	
			Introduce new services specializing in treatment for children affected by violence.	- Number of services offered by public and non-public providers - Number of beneficiaries
		Creation of database at national level	Record number of cases of domestic violence at LGU and district level.	Violence incidence rates by district, family status, age group, region, etc.
MLSAEO, SAPRCNPOs			Approve agreement of cooperation on data exchange between governmental institutions and NGOs licensed	

			by MLSAEO for purpose of domestic violence prevention.	
MLSAEO		Strengthen national and local level structures engaged in prevention of domestic violence and support victims of violence.	Train employees working in established structures for prevention of domestic violence (police, health care staff, teachers, judges, prosecutors, social workers, social administrators, etc.).	Number of persons trained
LGU			Allocate funds at LGU level for establishment and operation of reaction mechanisms and coordination of action for cases of domestic violence.	Ratio of budget allocated for prevention of domestic violence to that of LGU budget

A.7. Women and gender equality

Policy task	Achievement	Weakness	Recommendation
Provide equal income for women and men through a combination of targeted and well-focused measures, such as increased stability, participation in decision making and access to justice.		Practical implementation of legal framework on gender equality is a slow process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Undertake appropriate changes for improvement of certain provisions of law on gender equality and electoral code to implement in practice 30% quota in political, executive and legislative powers to ensure higher representation of women and girls - Undertake relevant changes in legal and administrative aspects on collection, analysis and dissemination of statistics that are gender sensitive and accessible to users
			Strengthen monitoring structures for implementation of gender equality legislation and government policies in this regard
		Limited budgets are allocated for implementation of National Strategy on Gender Equality and Domestic Violence and Law on Gender Equality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Plan and allocate budgets necessary for implementation of policies and programmes on gender equality at both central and local level - Improve donor fund raising coordination to support and implement these policies
		There is a lack of gender statistics and difficulties with setting gender sensitive indicators.	Contract a national study on situation of women and girls in rural areas, for which there is an established deficiency in statistics and lack of information on their social, economic and political situation
		Unemployment rates among women and girls continue to be high.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Undertake business enabling and crediting policies to promote women entrepreneurship - Improve social services and public facilities benefitting women and girls - Take action to ensure women's unpaid labour becomes salaried as with any other form of labour, to take measures to increase women's participation in the labour market and public life

		Few programmes and policies exist for women and girls in rural areas.	
		Inequalities in responsibility division remain prevalent in the Albanian family.	Strengthen and increase the role of state structures, civil society and media to increase awareness and information for the population, starting with pre-school children, on gender stereotypes in order to change concepts and practices related to family roles and responsibilities
		Elected women do not strongly voice concerns and needs of women and girls in need.	Establish networks of elected and activist women to enhance their influence on the decision makers and Albanian politics in general
		Number of social services supporting women is low.	Increase inter-institutional cooperation and coordination, including with civil society and media for implementing gender-sensitive programmes and increasing the impact of these programmes

APPENDIX B: Terminology of the Cross-Sectorial Social Inclusion Strategy

Social exclusion is a process whereby certain individuals are isolated from society and unable to participate fully in social relations because of poverty or lack of basic competencies and lifelong learning opportunities, or as a result of discrimination. This distances them from work, access to income, education and training opportunities, as well as social community networks and activities. They have little access to power and decision-making bodies and thus often feel powerless and unable to take control over their daily lives.

Social inclusion is a process that ensures that those at risk of poverty and social exclusion gain the opportunities and resources necessary to participate fully in the economic, social and cultural life and to enjoy a standard of living and welfare considered normal in the society in which they live. In this way it is made sure that they participate more fully in the decision making that affects their lives and the extent to which they have access to their basic rights.

Children at risk are identified by the difficulties they face in life. The following difficulties prevent children from having access to benefit from formal and non-formal education, hindering their participation and preventing them from being active citizens, empowering themselves and being mainstreamed in the broader society:

Difficulties *in* *education*

Some children encounter difficulties in obtaining knowledge, they do not attend pre-school, drop out of school, grow into adults with low-level or no educational qualifications, have difficulty adapting to the education system, perform poorly at school due to cultural and linguistic differences.

Social *difficulties*

Some children face discrimination on grounds of gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, disability, etc., have poor social skills, or anti-social behaviour, live in an unfavourable situation—(former) prisoners, (former) drug users—have one parent or are from divorced families, orphans.

Economic *difficulties*

Some children have low living standards, live in low income families, are raised in foster care, belong to homeless families, or families with financial problems.

Disabilities

Some children have mental (intellectual, cognitive and learning disability), physical, sensory or other disabilities.

Health *problems*

Some children have chronic health problems, illness or serious mental conditions or disorders.

Cultural *difficulties*

Some children belonging to national or ethnic minorities (Roma, Balkan Egyptians), have language, cultural and integration problems.

Geographical

difficulties

Some children live in remote rural areas, poor suburban areas, in problematic urban areas, in areas lacking services—limited public transport, poverty ridden areas, abandoned villages.

Disabled person is an individual whose ability is limited as a result of physical, sensory, intellectual, psychological or mental, congenital or acquired damage due to accident or temporary or permanent illnesses not due to employment-related reasons.

Elderly means a person who has reached retirement age according to the legislation in power.

Domestic violence is any act of violence committed against persons who are or have been in a domestic relationship.

Unemployed jobseekers in difficulty include the following persons: long-term unemployed, those who receive economic aid or unemployment benefit, those entering for the first time the labour market, 18–25 years of age, those older than 45 years who do not have an education standard higher than secondary education or its equivalent, are unemployed with disabilities or members of the Roma community.

Poverty gap (sometimes referred to as the depth of poverty) shows how far families are from the poverty line. In the poverty gap, the greater the individual's poverty, the greater it weighs in the total poverty level.

Severity of poverty takes into account not only the distance of the poor from the poverty line but also the inequality among the poor. The larger the distance, the greater the weight contributing to the severity of poverty.