

Summary Report

**End of Project Evaluation:
“Youth Standing up for
Human Rights in Albania”**

**Submitted by:
Albanian Center for Economic Research (ACER)
August, 2021**

This report was drafted by the Albanian Center for Economic Research (ACER) contracted by World Vision Albania, in the framework of the Project **"Youth standing up for human rights in Albania"** funded by the European Union.

The findings, interpretations and conclusions expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the policies or views of World Vision Albania, or partner organizations in the implementation of the project.

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INTRODUCTION

The European Union identified human rights as one of the five priority areas for improvement, when it granted Albania candidate status, but even today the protection of human rights is still one of the areas for improvement so that the EU can open accession negotiations for Albania. The protection of human rights in Albania does not reach its full potential due to lack of resources; lack of technical capacity and lack of community participation. Of all age groups, adolescents and young people are most affected by human rights violations in Albania, because young people can fall prey to discrimination and abuse more quickly. Albania is one of the youngest countries in Europe with 25% of its population in the 15-29 age group, but the potential of young people to contribute to democratic development and the promotion of a culture of human rights is largely untapped. For this reason, WVA and its co-applicant SEEYN with financial support from the European Union have implemented the project "Youth standing up for human rights in Albania".

The project has been implemented using sub-grant as a way to reach as many young people as possible and to cover all target regions. Capacity building of young people and adolescents for human rights in Albania focused on practical learning rather than a series of theoretical trainings. To achieve this, young people have been encouraged to be active promoters in society in promoting human rights, democratic values and the rule of law in Albania. The project was extended to 20 municipalities: Tirana; Shkoder; Dibra; Lezhë; Rreshen; Kukës; Durrës; Kurbin; Kamez; Perrenjas; Gramsh; Puke; Fier; Berat; Lushnje; Vlore; Elbasan; Librazhd; Korce and Maliq. This project lasted for 39 months, and 18 sub-grants were implemented in the field of human rights protection.

The main beneficiaries of this project are classified into two categories: CSOs that have participated in the project through the sub-grant scheme and young people participating in the implemented activities. The project involved a total of 4,254 young people¹ and adolescents from all regions where they were implemented under grants, who were trained and gained in-depth knowledge in the field of human rights protection. Human rights organizations have been supported to take action promoted by young people, with an emphasis on peripheral regions. The project has increased their capacities in terms of project writing and preparation for applications, ways of reporting to donors, increasing human resource capacity in terms of project coordination and implementation, increasing cooperation with the community and local government bodies etc.

¹ Infographics, Youth Involvement in Human Rights, First Cycle, WVA & SEEYN (Accessed online) <https://www.wvi.org/publications/infographic/albania/youth-involvement-human-rights-albania>
Infographics, Youth Involvement in Human Rights, Second Cycle, WVA & SEEYN (Accessed online) <https://www.wvi.org/publications/infographic/albania/youth-involvement-human-rights-albania-0>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

World Vision Albania (WVA), in partnership with the Southeast European Youth Network (SEEYN) with financial support from the European Union, have developed the project "Youth in protection of human rights in Albania" during the period 2018-2021. The project has been implemented in 20 regions of Albania and is divided into two development cycles through the implementation of 18 sub-grants by human rights organizations in Albania.

ACER has been contracted by WVA to evaluate the project "Youth in Protection of Human Rights in Albania", in order to provide an overall independent evaluation of the project implementation based on OECD criteria, such as: 1) Eligibility; 2) Effectiveness; 3) Efficiency; 4) Impact and 5) Project Sustainability. Methodologically, the project evaluation was based on the review of documentation / reports provided by WVA and sub-grant implementing organizations, as well as on the quantitative and qualitative study conducted by ACER, 2021. Based on this evaluation approach, two instruments were created (one closed-ended instrument and another semi-structured interview instrument) and a guide for focus group discussions. The quantitative study was conducted with young people involved in 18 sub-grants and representatives of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with WVA staff who were most involved in the project, and key sub-grant coordinators from 18 CSOs. In order to obtain more in-depth information and confirmation of quantitative data, ACER conducted 4 focus group discussions. Some of the main findings are summarized below based on specific criteria:

The project has contributed to the improvement and increase of their capacities both from the managerial and organizational aspect, as well as in terms of technical knowledge in the field of human rights protection. On the other hand, the project increased the partnership and helped network the beneficiary organizations, as well as strengthened the relations of these organizations with the local community. The above reasons prove that the project is appropriate to the needs of CSOs at the local level.

- The evaluation team considers **efficient the cooperation of process management and implementation of activities by WVA and SEEYN** based on the evidence presented in the documents but also on the fact that the project was fully and timely implemented.
- According to the evaluation, **the cooperation of the project partners with the CSOs was effective** by creating bridges of communication between them, through which the fulfillment of the project results was achieved.
- Also, the selection of sub-grant winners was done through a **transparent selection procedure** taking into account the focus of the project and its impact on the municipalities where these grants will be implemented.
- In the framework of meeting the project objectives with the relevant indicators, **the effectiveness of the project is assessed as completely satisfactory**. The

- objectives have been achieved to the extent of 100% and some of the relevant indicators have exceeded the number planned in the project logfram.
- Overall, the indicators related to youth involvement in activities with an impact on human rights protection **have been satisfactorily met compared to the initial goal**, proving that the project is effective in increasing youth involvement (without gender or ability) for human rights in Albania.
 - In the assessment conducted by WVA and SEEYN cycle 1 and cycle 2 there is a **greater commitment of girls and boys** in human rights issues. Half of the representatives of the sub-grant organizations involved in the ACER evaluation report that the project has a long-term impact on the involvement and engagement of young people in the protection of human rights in Albania.
 - The self-assessment report of CSOs is evaluated as having a **significant impact**, in order to help **identify problems and weaknesses as a need to be strengthened by the project** or by initiatives undertaken in the future.
 - In semi-structured interviews, they report that the project has had a **significant impact on the creation of relevant networks in the protection of human rights** in Albania. As a result, the CSO networking indicator in the protection of human rights is assessed as satisfactory by the project evaluators.
 - The project has fostered **collaboration between organizations** and established networks that are fundamental in **fostering success stories** beyond time and scope.
 - Rritja e njohurive dhe kapaciteteve në mënyrë afatgjatë për të rinjtë dhe organizatat dhe krijimi i rrjeteve dhe partneriteteve ofron garanci që **efektet pozitive të projektit do të ndikojnë edhe përtej jetëgjatësisë së tij**.
 - Increasing knowledge and capacity in the long run for young people and organizations and creating networks and partnerships provides guarantees that the **positive effects of the project will have an impact beyond its longevity**.

This assessment reports the compliance of the project with the regulatory framework and focus of WVA, respect for gender equality and non-discrimination of beneficiaries, quality cooperation between partners and implementing grants are some of the key points to have a long-term impact on the community. Other lessons learned from project evaluation and recommendations for the future are found specifically in the following chapters.

I. MAIN FINDINGS

This chapter provides the main evaluation findings and is divided into a number of sections, each of which answers a set of evaluation questions broadly organized according to the DAC evaluation criteria.

I.1 Relevance

The project has had a wide reach in 20 municipalities in Albania, with a special emphasis on peripheral municipalities where human rights violations are more vulnerable and opportunities for youth engagement are lower. In these predominantly impoverished communities with high unemployment and emigration rates, the project has been a major impetus for young people to recognize their rights and be motivated to contribute even more to the betterment of the community they belong to. **This project is assessed as compatible with the current regulatory framework, community needs and our goal of Euro-Atlantic integration.**

For the purposes of assessing the suitability of the project for the needs of young people, questionnaires and focus groups were conducted with young people involved in the project. Through these interviews it was identified that young people in the regions where the project was implemented did not have opportunities and ways for their meaningful involvement in community life, while the interest and willingness to contribute in relation to human rights issues was high. **Therefore, the project met the need to strengthen the skills of young people for their engagement and strengthen existing youth structures.**

I.2 Efficiency

The project was implemented by a consortium of WVA and SEEYN, where WVA as key partner had taken responsibility for sub-grant management, donor compliance, and youth-focused programming to achieve the results of this project. Meanwhile SEEYN in the role of co-partner was primarily responsible for capacity building of organizations and technical support during the implementation of sub-grants². Cooperation with local CSOs focusing on the protection of human rights through the sub-grant scheme can be considered as a key action, giving even more value to this project.

The evaluation team considers **effective the cooperation of process management and implementation of activities** by WVA and SEEYN based on the evidence presented in the documents but also on the fact that the project **was fully and timely implemented.**

I.3 Effectivity

In the framework of meeting the project objectives with the relevant indicators, the effectiveness of the project is assessed as completely satisfactory. The objectives have been achieved to the extent of 100% and some of the relevant indicators have exceeded the number planned in the project logframe. Some of the indicators achieved more than the planned measure in logframe are

² Project proposal, Partnership, World Vision Albania & SEEYN(2016), page 5

the development of awareness initiatives, advocacy activities and the provision of community services.

Overall, the indicators related to the involvement of young people in activities with an impact on the protection of human rights have been met satisfactorily compared to the initial goal (WVA, Narrative Report, 2020; Subgrant Reports Cycles 1 and 2), proving that **the project is effective in increasing the involvement of young people** (regardless of gender or ability) for human rights in Albania.

Capacities associated with capacity building are assessed as effectively satisfactory. This result is due to the fulfillment of relevant indicators in the activities developed for capacity building (4 Workshops in total and 1 guidebook for human rights organizations in Albania). An important indicator is the data collected by representatives of CSOs included in two cycles that report full effectiveness achieved within the project "Youth Standing up for Human Rights in Albania".

1.4 Impact

The engagement of young people in raising their voice for human rights is the main objective of the 18 sub-grants developed within the project "Youth Standing up for Human Rights". The assessment conducted by WVA and SEEYN cycle 1 and cycle 2 shows a greater commitment of girls and boys to human rights issues.

Half of the representatives of the sub-grant organizations involved in the ACER evaluation report that the project has a long-term impact on the involvement and engagement of young people in the protection of human rights in Albania. As a result, this indicator **satisfactorily reports the impact of the project.**

Most of the representatives of the organizations (60% of them; n = 12), in semi-structured interviews, report that the project has had a significant impact on the creation of relevant networks in the protection of human rights in Albania. As a result, **the CSO networking indicator in the protection of human rights is assessed as satisfied** by the project evaluators.

Evaluation data conducted by ACER show that 60% of representatives of organizations report that the number of young people involved in organizations for the protection of human rights has increased. Therefore, the project "Youth standing up for human rights in Albania" has had a **long-term impact on youth participation** in CSOs.

1.5 Sustainability

Sustainability of impacts on young people: Youth throughout the development of activities have created **groups or networks of youth that will continue beyond the life of the project.** These young people say that they will continue their activism and social engagement.

Specifically, 60.3% of young people participating in sub-grants report a higher sense of effectiveness in making Albania more democratic and inclusive of human rights.

Sustainability of impacts on organizations: Representatives of organizations claim that the project has contributed to the improvement and increase of their capacities both in terms of management and organization, as well as in terms of technical knowledge in the field of human rights protection. On the other hand, **the project increased the partnership with local government bodies, helped network beneficiary organizations,** and strengthened the relationship of these organizations with the local community. Awareness and capacity building has led organizations to be actively involved in developing and strengthening ties with the community.

Risks: The sustainability of the results of this project is affected by several challenges and risks that are mainly related to the socio-economic context and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. **The lack of cooperation from the local government** and the local community in the regions where the project has been implemented, as well as the departure of young people from Albania and their non-involvement in long-term policies related to various social issues are considered the main risks to its sustainability.

2. LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATION

2.1 Lessons learned

This section presents the lessons learned, which highlighted the new knowledge that came as a result of the implementation of activities, interaction between actors, results produced, and impact on project beneficiaries. The lessons are also based on WVA reports as well as on primary data collection and interviews conducted with youth and CSOs conducted during this evaluation process.

❖ ***Compliance with WVA regulatory framework and focus***

The alignment of the project with the regulatory framework on human rights in Albania and the WVA focus on young people is positively related to meeting the specific objectives of the project.

❖ ***Cooperation between partners and human rights organizations***

The partnership and cooperation of the two implementing organizations with the human rights organizations in Albania, during the planning of the sub-grants until its completion, influences the successful fulfillment of the planned objectives. Efficient management in the process of implementation of activities and monitoring by WVA and SEEYN was a key factor in the full feasibility of the project.

❖ ***Respect for gender equality***

Providing equal opportunities and benefits to young people regardless of gender or ability increases the effectiveness of the project in promoting human rights.

❖ ***The extension of the project in the peripheral municipalities of Albania brought benefits to these communities***

Organizations operating in rural areas need ongoing training to increase their capacity in order to gain sustainable knowledge and improve their activity in the future. Increasing cooperation with each other and creating networks or coalitions increases the effects of community interventions.

❖ ***Involve young people and increase their capacity to be part of future human rights solutions***

Working with young people, especially in rural areas with low engagement opportunities, is one of the key elements that ensures long-term effects of the intervention and at the same time greater dissemination of knowledge and information. Young people are "eager" to bring about positive change in the community, they need constant encouragement and support.

❖ ***Transparent selection procedure for sub-grant implementing organizations***

During the selection process of the winning organizations, the focus of the project, areas of implementation, advocacy, awareness-raising, community service and appropriate legal documentation were taken into account. The development of workshops focusing on awareness-raising, advocacy and community service activities increases the capacity of CSOs to develop projects involving young people and the protection of human rights.

❖ ***Use of infographics to provide summarized information***

The use of infographics has been a very good way to convey concise and structured information and to increase the visibility of the project.

2.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations are derived from the evidence and detailed analysis above and are divided into two sections, for project implementing partners as well as for local organizations that have implemented projects under the sub-grant scheme.

A. Recommendation for WVA and SEEYN project implementing partners

- ✓ At the beginning of the implementation of a project idea, a deeper review and analysis of the selection of **project implementation areas** is recommended, to focus on regions where there have been no other similar interventions. It is recommended to extend to a more limited number of regions and intensify activities in the selected regions to ensure greater impact and sustainability of the project.
- ✓ During the evaluation of the project we found that the staff of a significant part of the organizations had changed after the completion of the project. A part of the project coordinators have been contracted until the end of the project and consequently the increase of the capacities of the organizations is not long-term. It is therefore recommended that in the event of future project replication the implementing partners use in the contract clauses that **the staff involved in the project should not be temporary in order to increase the human resource capacity of the organizations to be long-term.**
- ✓ During the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with the organizations that have implemented projects under the sub-grant scheme, it was found that the organizations had encountered difficulties in the process of narrative and financial reporting of the project according to donor requests, **therefore it is recommended increase the capacity of reporting organizations and, if possible, facilitate reporting procedures** and avoid bureaucracies by implementing organizations.

B. Recommendations for CSOs implementing sub-grants

- ✓ In case of project replication on the involvement of young people in the protection of human rights in Albania, an assessment of the needs of young people is recommended at the beginning of the project implementation. This assessment of the needs of young people and will create the opportunity to identify the most important issues, so that possible interventions are as effective as possible.
- ✓ Based on the success of the sub-grant scheme, CSOs should continue to increase the **involvement of youth and promote them** in the protection of human rights even after the completion of the project. It is recommended to maintain contacts and cooperation with these young people and their involvement in other initiatives. It is also recommended to increase the cooperation with the schools which are also community centers, and the young people involved in the project to have the opportunity to share the acquired knowledge with other students.

- ✓ **Wider cooperation** of local government with civil society organizations in undertaking awareness-raising, advocacy and community service activities is recommended. Collaborations help create more sustainable networks on human rights protection.
- ✓ The project confirmed the valid impact of the trainings and workshops, but it is recommended that in the future in case of replication, **these trainings be accredited** in order to increase the number of participants and the impact of the project. It is also recommended to use alternative and innovative ways of sharing information, to increase the number of beneficiaries and to use effectively any means of communication.
- ✓ **Success stories of beneficiaries** are recommended to be followed after the completion of the project, in order to be encouraged in future activities and to serve as a good incentive model for the community.

C. Recommendations for donors

- ✓ The project has ensured the involvement of a significant number of young people, mainly in rural areas, and has changed the worldview of youth on their rights and the ways in which they should claim these rights. Youth in these regions have shown a high interest and willingness to be involved in the community, **so it is recommended to continue supporting and funding projects that focus on young people.**
- ✓ Local sub-grant implementing organizations during in-depth interviews and focus group discussions have recommended **the extension of projects in time**, to ensure long-term impact on the youth involved and the regions where the project has been implemented.
- ✓ In the regions where the project was implemented, visible results are seen in increasing the awareness and capacities of the young people involved, therefore **it is recommended to replicate this project in the future in other regions as well.**

