

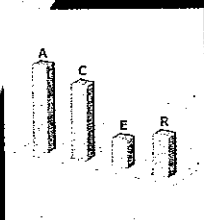


MINISTRY OF LABOUR, SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

SOCIAL INCLUSION STRATEGY 2007-2013

PROGRESS REPORT 2008-2009

MARCH 2010



ALBANIAN CENTER FOR ECONOMIC RESEARCH

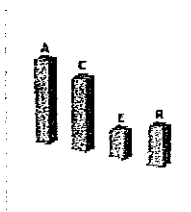
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PREFACE

The Inter Sectoral Strategy on Social Inclusion (ISSSI), is one of the most important public policy documents of the Albanian Government. Spanning over seven years (2007-2013), this document charts Albania's efforts towards achieving social inclusion as a major objective under its European integration agenda.

This strategy represents a remarkable step forward in the GoA's social policies. It marks an important move towards active social policies with emphasis on prevention and integration. Its focus is not just on fighting against social exclusion, but on efforts and investments to enhance inclusion.

Social inclusion is a major priority of the current government, which has made poverty reduction corollary to social inclusion. It combines economic growth policies with effective social policies designed to support groups in need and enhance opportunities for their participation in development processes.

The Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, the lead ministry for the implementation of this strategy, launches the First Monitoring Report on the Implementation of the Social Inclusion Strategy 2007-2013, which was adopted by Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 218, dated 02.03.2008 to provide comprehensive coverage for the target groups.

The report presents a detailed analysis of the implementation of objectives over a period of almost two years. It assesses the state of poverty and social exclusion, the progress of actions taken as well as the persistent risks, despite the satisfactory growth rate. In addition, in accordance with the principle of equal opportunities, this Monitoring Reports focuses on the dynamics involving individuals, families and groups in need from the time of the adoption of this strategy.

In these broad based and participatory processes, all subjects should be led by the common goal of achieving this strategy's mission:

Increased prosperity and sustainable development will pull people out of poverty. Social development will empower each one of us to participate actively in society. Every child will live a better life. All able-bodied people will have the opportunity to work and those who will not be able to work will be sufficiently provided for to live a dignified life. No one will be excluded or left behind.

I seize the opportunity to thank all public employees and civil society experts who contributed to the drafting of this report. In addition, I thank UNICEF for financially supporting the publishing of this Report.

Spiro KSERA



**Minister of Labor, Social Affairs
and Equal Opportunities**

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List of acronyms

LFS	Labor Force Survey
EU	European Union
CARDS	Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilization
UNFPA	United Nations Fund for Population
ISPPTA	Inter Sectoral Policy Paper on Third Age
IEPS	Institutions for Execution of Penal Sentences
INSTAT	Institute of Statistics
SLI	State Labor Inspectorate
PHI	Public Health Institute
SSI	Social Securities Institute
LGE	Law No. 9970, dated 24.07.2008 “On gender equality in society”
LADV	Law No. 9669, dated 18.12.2006 “On measures against domestic violence”
LSMS	Living Standards Measurements Survey
MoES	Ministry of Education and Science
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
MLSAEO	Ministry of Labor, Social Assistance and Equal Opportunities
MoH	Ministry of Health
LGU-s	Local Government Units
WHO	World Health Organization
NPO	Non Profit Organization
DP	Disabled Person
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
NES	National Employment Service
SSS	State Social Services
NSGEDV	National Strategy on Gender Equality and Domestic Violence
NSDI	National Strategy for Development and Integration
ISSSI	Inter Sectoral Strategy for Social Inclusion
UNIFEM	United Nations Fund for Women
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Introduction

□ Albania is going through a transition period from an authoritarian centralized system into a market oriented democracy. In addition, the country is changing from a mainly rural into an urban society. In these transition years, Albania has followed a clear Euro-Atlantic orientation. Albania signed an Association and Stabilization Agreement in June 2006 and became a NATO member in 2009. Albania also applied for EU candidate status in April 2009. These developments have provided a strong stimulus for development reforms and have raised the population's expectations for rapid progress and development. The National Strategy for Development and Integration 2007-2013, designed to promote democratization and rule of law alongside with the social and economic advancement of the country represent a solid base for the country's development in accordance with NATO and EU standards.

□ The continued support of international agencies and donors has assisted the country to attain its objectives with regard to institution building and implementation of policies and reforms conducive to economic growth. Important sources of resources for development have been remittances from Albanian emigrants abroad. The last census showed that of the 3.2 million Albanians, 1 million live in emigration. In the year 2007, remittances accounted for 12.3% of the GDP, or 951,7 million Euros¹, which marks a 6.6% decline in comparison with the previous year². Decline of remittances due to the global economic crises negatively affects the country, especially since remittances were used by many of the poor families to cover their daily needs. Public investments in 2008 accounted for 9.4% of GDP, while the Albanian economy recorded a real growth of 7-8%³. Although remittances declined and bank crediting slowed down, the country managed to maintain its growth. According to INSTAT, the first half of 2009 recorded an economic growth of 5.3%. International institutions estimated that the country achieved a 3% economic growth during the entire year 2009. With an average growth of about 6% a year, the GDP per capita has more than doubled during this period⁴.

□ At the end of 2008, unemployment fell to 13% from 13.5% in the previous year⁵. As indicated by the above mentioned figures, the real GDP growth of 7.1% annually over the period 1998-2008, alongside with an increase in salaries and pensions over 2005-2008, led to a further reduction of poverty. The part of the population with a consumption rate below 4,891,00 lek (2002 prices) has declined from 25, 4% in the year 2002 to 18, 5% in the year 2005 and to 12, and 4% in the year 2008.

¹ Bank of Albania, 2007

² Shqip newspaper, dated 12/09/2009 (author: Gjergj Erebara)

³ INSTAT, "Albania in figures - 2009", p. 13

⁴ 2009 Budget Report

⁵ 2009 Budget Report

□ This shows that about 200.000 out of 575.000 poor people in 2005 have come out of poverty. The extremely poor population, defined as individuals who have difficulties with covering basic nutritional needs, has declined to 5% in 2002, 3.5% in 2005 and 1.2% in the year 2008. In the urban areas, only 1.17% of the population is considered to be extremely poor. Consistent poverty reduction is even more tangible in the rural areas. This has been made possible due to significant reduction of poverty in the rural parts of the central and coastal regions. Although rural poverty has declined significantly there is, however, a concentration of the poor population in the rural parts of the mountainous regions of the country⁶.

□ Macroeconomic stability, private sector investment growth, improved access to social and public services (education, health and social protection), as well as enhanced infrastructural facilities have had a direct impact on poverty reduction.

□ In order to make governmental policies successful with regard to fighting social exclusion, common efforts should be made by all levels of government and large scale partnerships need to be established. Sectoral strategies provide for coordination mechanisms and monitoring structures designed to measure success towards to established goals, accountability and impact assessment. These strategies are detailed into action plans through broad-based participation by all actors: governmental structures, NGO-s, interest groups, international partners, etc. Examples of such actions plans are the Roma Action Plan, the Action Plan for Children, and the Disability Action Plan.

⁶ INSTAT, "Living standard measurement survey" 2008

Executive summary

This is the first monitoring report on the implementation of the Inter Sectoral Strategy for Social Inclusion 2007-2013, approved by Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 218, dated 3.02.2008. This strategy covers issues and social groups aside from long term structural issues facing Albania. The report reflects the progress on poverty reduction and social inclusion in the context of interventions and initiatives to address the risks accompanying economic growth. In accordance with the principle of equal opportunities, the report focuses on the problems of individuals, families and groups in need since the time when the strategy was approved.

The Social Inclusion Strategy is a component part of the National Strategy for Development and Integration. As an inter sectoral strategy, it is in accordance with the sectoral strategies, in particular with the policies and institutional arrangements described in these documents which target individuals, families and groups in need in order to empower them to generate sufficient income and enjoy equal rights in the society⁷. This strategy serves three main purposes:

- Presentation of governmental strategy directions in an integrated way and of the monitoring and assessment scheme of progress.
- Identification, through participatory processes, consultations and communications with interest groups and donors of the policies that need to be adjusted and improvement of coordination among governmental structures at all levels of governance.
- Formulation of an action plan for social inclusion which is one of the requirements for EU integration.

This report is a comparable presentation of the current situation of the groups in need. This is carried out through an analysis of the measurable statistics and indicators, the monitoring reports on all inter-sectoral strategies, information from secondary sources and studies by NGO-s and agencies specializing, or focusing, on social integration issues.

Recent improvements of the economy have enabled a considerable number of people to come out of poverty. It is of primary importance to make sure that the groups in need such as children, Roma, disabled individuals, old people, young people, and women are not excluded from progress and economic growth. However, exclusion it is not a consequence of poverty alone. There are societal groups which are faced with the risk of deprivation, or barriers, that do not allow them to participate fully in society. Therefore, in order for policies to be effective, they should reflect and address the needs of beneficiaries. Equality and equity are very important for the promotion of social and economic development.

Although in the last ten years, the political, social and economic developments in Albania have substantially increased awareness with regard to human rights, many Albanian children continue to be faced with a great risk of social exclusion and still huge efforts need to be done

⁷ This strategy originates from the social protection, employment, education, health, transport, water supply, urban planning and justice strategies, either under implementation or under formulation. This strategy should be considered in connection with the Inter-sectoral Strategies on Rural Development, Against Organized Crime, Terrorism and Trafficking; Gender Equality and Fight Against Domestic Violence; Youth, Information and Communication Technology, Decentralization, and other strategies.

to protect children from violence, exploitation, discrimination, abuse and negligence. In addition, disabled individuals, elderly people, women and girls, in particular those in the rural areas, represent the social groups at increased risk to be afflicted by poverty. They also suffer from lack of access to social benefits, social and health protection schemes, economic and legal aid and are vulnerable to domestic violence, trafficking, HIV/AIDS-it, drugs, alcohol, discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, age, etc.

3.1 Purpose of the report

The main purpose of the *Monitoring Report on the Social Inclusion Strategy* is to present the progress and dynamics of the development measures in the country towards the ultimate aim of achieving human development. For many years now, poverty issues have been at the focus of national development strategies. Recently, increased attention has been paid to the empowerment of groups in need. This report is an attempt to provide a systemic analysis of the consistency of legislation and policies and their practical implementation vis-à-vis the measures contained in the Social Inclusion Strategy.

This reports aims to serve as a tool to measure progress towards the attainment of the objective under the Social Inclusion Strategy as regards groups and individuals in need. This approach includes a primary strategic objective of measuring progress under the Social Inclusion Strategy, based on the impact produced by policy and the analysis of performance indicators. A solid evidence base is needed to develop meaningful and measurable outcomes of social inclusion. Indicators can form a framework for measuring progress towards achieving long-term objectives.

Attention in the report is devoted not only to how the government has performed as a factor of change in relation to benefitting vulnerable groups through comprehensive approaches and policies, but also to the role of civil society, the private sector and international agencies as development partners. It also pays attention to how this cooperation can be further strengthened and developed to the advantage of vulnerable groups.

Finally, this progress report is important not only for assessing the role of key actors and their respective responsibilities in the implementation of this strategy which is valid until 2013, but also for the review of the National Inter-Sectoral Strategy

on Social Inclusion, as the main Inter Sectoral Strategy underpinning the National Strategy for Development and Integration (NSDI).

3.2 Importance of the progress report

Analysis of social indicators can serve a variety of purposes depending on the vision, budget, community mobilization, accountability of the various agencies and public education. In view of the changes taking place over time, social indicators serve as key tools in the development, evaluation and monitoring of social policies. They can describe, in quantitative and qualitative terms, the level of social development achieved in a given society and the actual extent of social problems.

The reporting of progress indicators assists our ability to understand where and why there is a need for further progress towards social inclusion and how social inclusion is being achieved. It gives us information on the progress made and the problems faced at a certain period of time. Reporting represents the possibility for evaluation and discussion of the problems noted. It supports the processes of developing work plans in order to resolve difficulties and achieve the desired objectives at the proper time.

Progress reports serve as a tool to develop and improve social inclusion policies and assist in the review of future priorities, including government policies and accountability processes, the improvement of cooperation between the public and private sector at all levels.

3.3 Methodology

Indicators that were used to monitor progress towards poverty reduction and social exclusion are tested and adequate and are selected according to EU standards. However, extensive analysis and additional explanations are required, often through special assessment of certain components. The setting of certain indicators of social inclusion for relevant target groups, necessitate cooperation and coordination of social inclusion activities and related results (outputs) of the Government to ensure reporting against indicators that can be achieved provided all players move in the same strategic direction.

To be effective and to have legitimacy in the longer term, the development and observation of indicators should be a dynamic, cooperative and open process in order to inform and direct the actions of social inclusion. Furthermore,

indicators should have a reasonable degree of stability to enable the effective monitoring of progress over time. Indicators should be processed in such a way as to respond to the changing social and economic situation of the country and to the experience and views of the main stakeholders.

Ⓒ Sources of information and period covered by the data

The preparation of the Monitoring Report on the Inter Sectoral Strategy on Social Inclusion (ISSSI) is based on information obtained from primary sources, such as the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, as the institution responsible for social policy and co-ordination of all state institutions and agencies charged with responsibilities under the ISSI; INSTAT, as the main source of official statistics, line ministries and other state institutions, such as PHI, the Institute of Health Care Insurance, Institute of Social Insurance, State Inspectorate on Labor, National Employment Service, etc. Also, count has been taken of the monitoring reports of the strategies forming part of the ISSI, such as Sector Strategy on Social Protection 2007-2013, the Sector Strategy on Employment 2007-2013, the National Education Strategy 2004-2015, the National Pre-University Education Strategy, National Strategy on Gender Equality and Domestic Violence 2007-2010, National Health Strategy, the National Children's Strategy, National Disabilities Strategy, the National Roma Strategy, Inter Sectoral Policy Paper on Aging, Sector Strategy on Transport, Water Supply Strategy, Urban Planning Strategy, Justice Strategy, etc.

Secondary sources of information have been the studies, surveys, annual and periodic reports by NGOs or think tanks on areas with a lack of official data, as well as publications by international organizations.

This report takes count of the implementation of the ISSSI and the extent to which its objectives were attained in 2007 and 2008 until September 2009, compared against the list of relevant indicators. Data gathered through monitoring during 2007 serve as a reference point. They are compared with data for 2008 and, whenever available, also with those of September 2009. To compile the list of indicators accompanying this report, all sources of statistical information from various state institutions are primarily used. These indicators are compiled based on

data and observations gathered through INSTAT surveys, such as the Labor Force Survey, Living Standards Measurement Survey 2008, etc. In the case of indicators for which no official data were available, secondary sources were used, such as studies and surveys carried out by NGOs, international organizations, etc.

Ⓔ Problems/limitations of monitoring

The monitoring of social inclusion indicators is an important task. It requires efforts and adequate sources of data necessary to measure change and to set objectives in the existing policies towards improvement of the social and economic situation of vulnerable groups. This process is inevitably faced with hindrances and problems which slow down the progress towards a common ground of agreed indicators. Possible obstacles might relate to the structure, culture, manner of processing, human resource capacities. Among others are:

- Lack of an integrated database, due to absence of an integrated information system;
- Lack of disaggregated data gathered over regular reporting periods;
- Poor statistical capacities both at the central and local level;
- Absence of measurements in the case of certain indicators which are designed to be measured in the future;
- Lack of an agreed definition of social exclusion on national scale.

Ⓕ Definitions of social exclusion and inclusion

"Social exclusion" is a process where certain individuals are pushed at the margins of society and not allowed to participate fully in social developments due to being poor, incompetent, out of touch with life long learning opportunities, or due to discrimination. This situation cuts them off from job opportunities, income making activities, education and training possibilities, as well as social networks and community activities. They have little access to power and decision-making which makes them feel helpless and unable to take control of their lives.

"Social inclusion" is a process that ensures that those who are at risk of poverty and social exclusion benefit from opportunities and acquire the necessary resources to participate fully in the economic, social and cultural activities and to enjoy a standard of living and wellbeing

comparable to those of the society they live in. In this way, their participation in decision-making affecting their lives is ensured and their access to basic rights and freedoms is enhanced.

“Children at risk” are those children who face difficulties in their daily lives. The following difficulties prevent these children from access to formal and non-formal education and bar them from participation, empowerment and involvement in society:

- *Social difficulties*: children who are faced with discrimination (due to gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, disability, etc.), children with little or without social skills or social behavior; children with unclear backgrounds, (ex) convicts, (former) drug addicts, single parent children, children from divorced families, orphans, etc.
- *Economic difficulties*: children in poor living conditions and low income families, children in foster care, children of homeless families, children of families with financial problems, etc.
- *Disabilities*: Children with mental disabilities (intellectual, cognitive, learning), physical, sensory or other disabilities.
- *Health problems*: children with chronic health problems, physical or psychic conditions, children with mental health problems, etc.
- *Cultural difficulties*: children belonging to ethnic or national minorities (Roma, Balkan-Egyptian), children experiencing language problems and/or cultural and integration problems, etc.
- *Geographical difficulties*: children from remote rural areas, children living in peripheral areas, children living in high risk urban areas, children in areas without services (limited public transport, poor families, abandoned villages, etc.).

“Disabled person” defines an individual whose ability is limited due to physical, sensory, intellectual, psychological and/or mental impairment, genetic or acquired during one’s lifetime from accidents, temporary or permanent illness not related to employment or job conditions.

“Elderly person” means a person who has attained retirement age, according to applicable legislation.

“Domestic violence” means any act of violence, conducted among persons who currently are or used to be members of the same family.

“Unemployed job-seekers in difficulty” means: long-term unemployed, individuals receiving economic aid, individuals receiving unemployment benefit, individuals aged 18-25 entering the labor market for the first time, individuals over 45 years, who only have secondary education or equivalent; unemployed individuals with disabilities or unemployed Roma people.

“Poverty gap” (sometimes referred to as depth of poverty) shows how far below the poverty line are individuals and families. The poorer the individual, the greater is his/her contribution to overall poverty.

“Severity of poverty” takes into account not just the distance of the poor from the poverty line, but also the inequalities among the poor. Hence, the farther from the poverty line, the greater the weight in overall poverty rate.



CURRENT STATUS OF GOALS UNDER THE ISSSI



CURRENT STATUS OF GOALS UNDER THE ISSSI

1.1. Demographic data

In the 2-3 decades preceding the year 1990, the country's population increased at rapid rates (over 1945-1989, i.e., for 44 years, the population numbers increased by 184%, or almost trebled). Based on 2007 data, Albania has a population of 3,161,300.

Currently, birth rates have declined: in 2006 the number of births per 1000 people was 10.9 (compared to 16.7 in 2000). In 2007, the number of births fell to 10.5⁸. In particular, this period is characterized by a decline in the synthetic coefficient of fertility (average number of children per woman). The reasons for this decline are numerous. However, mention can be made of: high emigration rates of reproductive age population, increased average age of marriage for both males and females, use of family planning methods, etc.

Statistics show that mortality rates have been steady. In 2007, gross mortality rate was 4.6 down from 5.4 in 2006 (which remained unchanged from 2000). With respect to gender, men have a higher mortality rate compared to women, accounting for 56 per cent of the total death numbers. Albanian women live longer than men. Life expectancy in Albania, according to 2006 data was 77.2 years for females and 72.4 years for men.

Compared to the rest of Europe, Albania has a young population, with a relatively large percentage of individuals under 15 and a low percentage of individuals over 65 years.

According to INSTAT, the coming years will witness a reduction of the population under 15 and an increase of the population over 65 years. Accordingly, in 2021⁹ the population aged 65 and above will have the following concentration by region: In the North 7.6%; in Central Albania (Tirana and Durrës excluded): 10.8%; In the South 12.9%; and in Tirana and Durrës, about 12% of the total population.

According to the UN study, "World Population Ageing 2007", Albania's population aged 65 and above will represent 18.6% in 2025. The figure will increase to 26.5%¹⁰ in 2050.

According to the INSTAT 2001 census, the Albanian population was 3.07 million people. Including emigrants abroad, the population was 3.78 million. The difference between these two figures is the approximate number of immigrants, i.e., 710,000 people, of whom 390,000 males and 320,000 females. Because of the massive and irregular nature of Albanian emigration, there are no accurate

⁸ INSTAT, "Yearbook of Social Indicators 2007"

⁹ INSTAT, "Population Projections 2001-2021"

¹⁰ "World Population Ageing 2007"

official figures regarding the distribution of Albanian emigrants in the world. In late 1995, the number of Albanian citizens living abroad was estimated to around 350,000 people. Emigration flows became massive in 1997 as a result of the collapse of the pyramid schemes and of the political chaos that followed.

The greatest number of emigrants is aged between 20 and 40, which affects both the age structure of the population and the birth rate. As a result, the number of population up to 20 years has decreased due to low birth rate and the population aged 40 and above has increased due to emigration.

1.2. Improving income and reducing poverty

Democratic transformations of the last two decades in Albania have created conditions not only for the building of basic institutions of the market economy, but have also created the necessary conditions for increased attention to the disadvantaged groups of society. In this process, reducing poverty remains a key challenge for strengthening the overall stability of the country and, related to this, also for increasing social cohesion and generating sufficient resources to be used to the benefit of the groups in need.

A high GDP growth rate and an increase of salaries and pensions have contributed to the further reduction of poverty. The section of population, whose real per capita monthly consumption is under 4,891,00 lek (2002 prices), declined from 25.4% in 2002 to 18.5% in 2005, and down to 12, 4% in 2008. The extremely poor, defined as individuals who have difficulty in

meeting the basic food needs, have declined from 5% in 2002 to 3.5% in 2005 and 1.2% in 2008 (See Appendix 1, Table 1). In the urban areas, only 1.17% of the population can be considered as extremely poor (see Appendix 1, Table 2).

In addition, other indicators of poverty have continued to fall sharply. Two other alternative indicators, besides the poverty rate (percentage of poor), are the poverty gap and the severity of poverty. The main advantage of these two indicators is their sensitivity to inequality among the poor. Table 3 shows that the depth of poverty has fallen from 5.7% in 2002 to 4.0% in 2005 and 2.3% in 2008. The severity of poverty has fallen from 2% to 1.3% to 0.7% over the same respective years (See Appendix 1, Table 3).

According to LSMS, compared with 2005, the percentage of poor population decreased from 16.2% in 2005 to 13% in 2008. The gradual decline of poverty has been accompanied with a gradual narrowing of regional poverty. Poverty reduction among regions has been taking place alongside with faster rates of decline in rural poverty. The table below shows that rural poverty has fallen by about 47%, whereas urban poverty by 1.2%. In this way, while poverty rate in rural areas decreased from 24.2% in 2005 to 14.6% in 2008, poverty rate in urban areas fell from 11.2% to 10.1%. In addition, within the rural areas, poverty reduction is significantly higher in the central region compared to rural areas in the other regions. However, despite the significant reduction of rural poverty in general, the poor still remain concentrated in the rural areas of the mountainous regions. Other indicators of rural poverty have also been declining. The index of poverty gap (depth of poverty) in rural areas was 2.6% in 2008, versus 1,9% in urban areas. This represents a 51% decline from the 2005 level, whereas the decline in urban areas was 17%¹¹.

Table 1: Changes in poverty levels in urban and rural areas

	Poverty according to areas			Poverty changes	
	2002	2005	2008	% of change 2002-2005	% of change 2005-2008
Population in poverty	813.196	575.659	373.137	-29,21	-35,20

¹¹ Albania Poverty Trends 2002-2005-2008, April 2009

1.2.1. Increasing women's participation in the labor market

Employment remains one of the main and essential priorities towards the improvement of socio-economic status, poverty reduction and increased income for women and girls.

Despite institutional and legislative measures, and concrete programs undertaken by public institutions and private entities, to promote employment for and entrepreneurship by women, inequality in employment still remains significant. In 2007, employment level for women was 49.3% versus 63.6% for men. According to the Labor Force Survey 2008, employment level was higher for men (63%) than women (45.5%). This indicator is higher for males of all age groups.

Only 17% of private firms are managed by women and the figure is considered to be lower in rural areas (15%). As regards employment by sectors of the economy, the public and the private non-agricultural sectors are dominated by men. Employment rate for men in these sectors was respectively 55.3% and 71.7% for 2007 and 54.1% and 70.2% for 2008. According to LFS, the private agricultural sector employs women more than men 60.4% as opposed to 36.7%, in 2007, and 55.8% against 33.3% in 2008. However, the year 2008 saw an increase in women's employment levels. Thus, in the non-agricultural private sector, from 2007 to 2008, there was an increase from 28.3% to 29.8%, whereas in the public sector women employment increased from 44.7% to 45.9%.

The structure of employment by occupational group in the public sector shows that women are more numerous in professions such as: workers, specialists, technicians and assistant technicians. Males represent the majority in occupations such as legislators, senior officials, executives, machine operators, craftsmen, etc. Occupation categories such as lawmakers, senior officials and managers are dominated by men at 64.9%, whereas women have a higher percentage in specialist categories by 59.9%.

Increased participation of women in the labor market, reduction of gender inequality and economic empowerment of women is the primary target of the National Strategy and Action Plan for Gender Equality and Domestic Violence 2007-2010, adopted on 19.12.2007, of the Law no. 9970, dated 24.07.2008 "On gender

equality in society", and the Sector Strategy for Employment 2007-2013. The MLSAEO continues to implement traditional as well as two new programs to promote employment of women. The focus of these employment programs are special target groups such as victims of trafficking, disabled women, women living on social assistance schemes, Roma women over 35, and divorced women coping with social problems. In 2008, the Council of Ministers approved two new Decisions¹² designed to promote employment.

During 2008, 158 projects were approved which provided employment for 2,183 unemployed job-seekers (Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 632, 873, 47 and 48¹³). In accordance with Law no. 8872, dated 29.03.2002, "On Professional Training in the Republic of Albania", in 2008, of the 7752 beneficiaries who participated in the courses provided by the Regional Directorates for Public Professional Training 4409 were females; of the special target groups, 1396 unemployed job-seekers benefitted from reduced fees, of whom 586 were women. Under this program, 131 female employed job-seekers were trained free of charge, of whom 18 Roma, 82 orphans and five trafficked women. Upon completion of the course, 305 people received a job, of whom 284 women.

However, despite the measures taken, women unemployment rates remain higher than men's: 14.4% versus 12.2% in 2007. Long-term unemployment remains a characteristic feature of the labor market in Albania. According to the Agency for Professional Training, in 2007, 86% of the registered unemployed women were in the long term category versus 87.5% of the men.

¹² Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 47, dated 16 January 2008 "Program on promoting employment through training on the job", DCM No. 48, dated 16 January 2008 "Program on promoting employment of unemployed jobseekers in difficulties". According to this program, employers who contract on a one year basis unemployed jobseekers in difficulty may benefit: a) a one year refund of the social security payments payable by the employer on behalf of the employee; b) payment up to four months of the national minimum payment for every jobseeker in difficulty that they employ.

¹³ DCM No. 632, dated 18 September 2003 "On the employment of unemployed female jobseekers"; DCM No. 873, dated 27 December 2006: "On the measure of funding, criteria and procedures for the implementation of professional internships for unemployed jobseekers with higher education".

1.2.2. Formalization of the labor market

In order to reduce the informal economy, the Government has designed policies towards shrinking the amounts payable by employers in the way of social security contributions. Following adoption of Law no. 9705, dated 04.02.2007, "On the foregoing of interest rates for unpaid social security and health contributions", the number contributors increased. About 25,000 farmers entered the scheme for the first time by paying social security contributions for past years.

According to ISS data, in recent years, the number of contributors has increased. From 397,000 contributors in the social security scheme in 2007, in 2008 the number increased to 422 000. This is also reflected in the reduction of dependence rate from 0.71 in 2007, to 0.67 in 2008.

On 18.6.2009, DCM No. 700 was adopted¹⁴, under which the amount of social security contributions payable by employers decreased to 24.5% compared to 29.5% of the previous year. This measure contributed to an increase of the number of insured individuals.

The State Labor Inspectorate, based on the relevant Agreement with the Tax Office, during in-site inspections of the economic and business undertakings, takes count of the illegally employed workers, and delegates the responsibility of collection of social and health securities to Regional Tax Directorates.

Sectors	Inspected undertakings		Illegal employees (total)		Families	
	2008	2009	2008	2009	2008	2009
Construction	1.499	1.455	1.209	512	142	50
Trade, hotels, bars and restaurants	4.812	4.037	1.585	1.009	602	394
Finance, security services, business and communications	985	789	362	199	94	47
Other activities	1.014	925	566	243	210	87

Law Nr. 9920, dated 19.05.2008, "On Tax Procedures in the Republic of Albania", article 119: "**Non declaration of employees**" vests the tax inspectors with power to administer fines of 10 000-20 000 lek for every illegal employee, in addition to enforcing the payment of evaded contributions.

As regards the other aspects of social protection which relate to working hours and equal payment for equal labor, the labor inspectorate takes steps in accordance with provisions contained in Section 202 of the Labor Code commensurate with the severity of violation and proportions of the damage caused.

Law Nr. 7961, dated 07.12.1995, recently mended by Law no. 9125, dated 07/29/2003, in relation to Article 115, paragraph 1 "Remuneration quality between the sexes", provides that payment for women and men carrying out equal jobs should be equal. Paragraph 4 of this Article provides that discrimination is lifted when the employer compensates the discriminated employee for all the benefits enjoyed by homologue employees. Paragraph 5 of this article sanctions the right of the *Council of Ministers to provide otherwise with regard to the right of employees for equal pay*. The General Directorate of the State Labor Inspectorate, for the period in question, has received no complain and has administered no fines to businesses for violation of provisions concerning prohibition of discrimination. In connection with the reduction of informal employment, the role of the State Labor Inspectorate is

¹⁴ On some changes in the Decision No. 1114, dated 30.07.2008 of the Council of Ministers: "On some issues with regard to the implementation of Laws No; 7703, dated 11.05.1993: "On social securities in the Republic of Albania" with changes, No. 9136, dated 11.09.2003: "On the collection of mandatory social and health contributions in the Republic of Albania" with changes; and law No. 7870, dated 13.10.1994: "On health securities in the Republic of Albania", with changes.

strengthened from year to year and mechanisms are created to enhance work safety. During 2008, attention has been paid to the improvement of the existing legal framework and bringing it in line with the *acquis communautaire*, the strengthening of institutional mechanisms and the upgrading of human resource capacities.

As regards health safety measures at workplaces, in the context of measures under the SAA, the "Policy Paper for safety and health at work" was drafted in 2009 as part of the Employment Strategy.

To implement the new Law no. 9634, dated 30.10.2006, "On inspection of work and the State Labor Inspectorate", Decision of the Council of Ministers (DCM) No. 100, dated 02.03.2008 "On hazardous substances" has been approved.

Furthermore, DCM No. 1139, dated 07.16.2008 "On organization and functioning of the State Labor Inspectorate" has been enacted. It regulates the organization and functioning of the SLI, its regional and local branches, as well as its management and administration at the central level.

The project "On strengthening employment services and labor market and providing support to SLI and Regional Labor Offices in Albania" was launched in September 2008, with EU funding. It will cover technical assistance through foreign experts and the training of labor inspectors.

The law on safety and health in the workplace is to be approved soon. To enact the law, bylaws will be drafted in line with EU legislation, specifically the 19 directives under Article 16 of the Framework Directive (Health and Safety at Work). This will pave the way for the enforcement of provisions regarding preventive measures for health and safety at work.

Awareness of employers and employees about health and safety at work continues to be at low levels. The most problematic sectors, with high number accidents and occupational diseases, are construction, mining, mineral extracting and processing enterprises, etc. In terms of figures, the number of work accidents during the first quarter of 2009 is much lower than in the first quarter of 2008. In addition, the number of doctors in the enterprises has increased. During

2008, about 10 420 private economic undertakings, with 101 306 employees, were inspected. This figure includes an addition of 1 515 subjects in comparison with the year 2007¹⁵.

During 2008, in a total number of 126 accidents was recorded in all types of activities, with 156 injured employees. In 2007, 110 cases of accidents were recorded, with 118 employees injured, of whom 28 lost their lives.

The shrinking of the informal market should run parallel with a growth of the labor market. Employment and employment promotion policies through job creation have been among the top priorities. However, these policies are difficult to achieve, in particular in the conditions of profound economic reforms, mainly in industrial and manufacturing sectors. Job creation is a multi sectoral effort, encompassing macroeconomic policy, business enabling policies, educational and social strategies, etc.

According to data from the Labor Force Survey (LFS) 2008, the working age population (15-64 years) constitutes 84.5% of the entire population aged 15 and above. In accordance with EUROSTAT and ILO definition of employment, the country has about 1 123 thousand employees aged 15 and older or 1103 thousand employees aged 15-64 years. Employment rate at country level for the population of working age between 15-64 years is 53.8%. The level of employment is higher for men (63%) compared with women (45.5%). This indicator is higher for males of all age groups. In 2008, employees aged 15-64 with eight-year education constitute 49.4% of the working age population with eight year education, while the rate of employment for individuals with secondary education and higher education was respectively 55.6% and 75.1%.

The years 2008 - 2009 mark an improvement of the labor market indicators. The number of the registered unemployed declined, which contributes to the reduction of the unemployment rate. The official level of unemployment at the end of 2008 was 13%, versus 14.1% in 2005, which represents a decline of 1%. By comparison, the total number of the unemployed in 2005 was about 153 250 individuals. By end 2008, the number fell to about 141,700 people, i.e., a difference of about 12,000 persons.

Public sector salaries increased by an average of 17.1% in 2007¹⁶, significantly more than in 2006 (7.5%), but did not increase dramatically the pressure over inflationary domestic demand. In general, labor market performance has improved slightly, while the rigidity lingers. However, due to the informal economy, labor market data may not be totally reliable in reflecting the actual dynamics of the labor market.

Active employment policies as a means to reduce unemployment and social exclusion

MLSAEO, through the National Employment Service, designs and implements active and passive policies towards integration and reintegration of the unemployed in the labor market, with special focus on the long term unemployed. Active policies include employment services, programs promoting vocational training and employment.

Creating a modern and unique system of employment services across the country

Development of human resources in the whole system of National Employment Service is an ongoing process, towards improvement of operations to implement the objectives under the Sector Strategy on Employment and Vocational Training. From 2008 onwards, the structure of employment offices is being reviewed for the purpose of increasing the number and capacities of specialists dealing with employment services and VET. Currently, the number of specialists in the employment service is 214 versus the total 317 employees working in the labor offices. During 2008 and the first half of 2009, training programs were conducted for the staff of the National Employment Service of Albania¹⁷.

Also, steps are taken to improve information technology as an important factor towards quality control which will create the premises for a computerized labor market system comprising:

- registration of vacancies and job seekers;
- development of online services, which will be achieved through the establishment of a data bank on job vacancies and a data bank on job seekers in every Labor Office.

Such a system is currently being implemented in the General Directorate of NES's and the Regional Employment Directorates in Tirana and Korça, in the context of the Swedish funded program on effective services. It has created opportunities to provide employment services to job seekers and business alike.

There are also other cooperation projects with ILO and CARDS. During 2008, about 11,150 people were employed with the mediation of the Employment Offices, whereas in the first 8 months of 2009 about 8,000 job-seekers were able to find a job.

Development of active policies with a focus on young people, long-term unemployed and social groups with difficulties to enter the labor market

Over 2007 until September 2009, improvements were effected in the design and implementation of active policies focusing women, youth, long-term unemployed and groups with market entry difficulties. In January 2008, the Council of Ministers approved by Decision No. 48, dated 16/01/2008, "The program to promote the unemployment of job seekers with market entry difficulties."

A positive element of employment promotion in 2008 was implementation for the first time of programs dedicated to job creation in the production sector. These programs were formulated in accordance with criteria established by the State Assistance Commission at the Ministry of Economy, under the principles of EU directives, as expressed in decisions of the Council of Ministers No. 47 and No. 48, dated 16/01/2008. Thanks to these programs, 6,235 unemployed job-seekers found a job, of whom 2000 from the special needs groups, such as people living on economic aid, women over 35 years old, jobless people age 50 years and older, Roma people, orphans, long-term unemployed job-seekers, young people 16-25 years old, people with social problems, people who lost their jobs due to industry restructuring, etc. From January to July 2009, 112 projects were opened, to implement these programs. As a result, 1313 people were employed/trained, of whom 94% belonging to the special needs groups, totaling a budget of 142.7 million. During 2009, 347 unemployed job-seekers were able to get a job, through a 28 million lek program.

¹⁶ INSTAT, "Labor Market 2007", p. 27

¹⁷ NES, "Annual review of operations 2008"

From year to year there is an increase in the number of unemployed job seekers from special categories who apply for jobs with the Employment Offices. In 2008, of these applicants 40% were Roma, 23% disabled and 37% from other categories¹⁸. This is the result of the greater care that the government has shown in the recent years to involve such groups in the employment promotion programs. Among unemployed job seekers who have participated in employment promotion programs in 2008, 22% are from among beneficiaries of passive assistance schemes, 82% are women and 67% are from special groups (Roma, orphans, divorced, aged 50 and above, etc.).

Professional training courses for groups in need

Pursuant to Law no. 8872, dated 03.29.2002, "On Professional Training in the Republic of Albania", the courses offered by the Regional Directorates of Public Vocational Training during 2008 were attended by 4409 females. Reduced fee courses offered by these directorates were attended by 1396 unemployed job-seekers from specific groups, of whom 586 women. Free of charge courses benefited 131 unemployed job-seekers, of which 18 Roma, 82 orphaned young girls and five trafficked women.

Following completion of the course, 305 people were employed, of whom 284 women. Figures from 2008 show that about 43 per cent of the approximately 12,000 unemployed job seekers are women.

Promotion of private employment services

Private employment services are carried out by private employment agencies, which until June 2009, were licensed by the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities. Currently, there are seven private employment agencies in operation. In 2008, too, their activity remained limited to finding jobs for a certain number of people, mostly abroad.

The Albanian Government has undertaken a reform in the field of licensing. In this context, it has adopted the Law no. 10081, dated 02.23.2009 "On licenses, authorizations and permits in the Republic of Albania." This law is aimed at improving the business climate by reducing administrative

barriers to the free initiative in carrying out economic, trade and professional activities, or use of public goods. At the same time, the law protects public interests involved in the exercise of such activities and the use of public goods.

1.2.3. Overcoming disadvantages in education and vocational training

The right to education is enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Albania. This document guarantees equality before the law and freedom from discrimination on the basis of race, gender, ethnicity and language¹⁹. In the field of education, priority is given to increasing children's access to all levels of education and relieving of procedures to facilitate participation in education. To achieve this aim, a series of legislative, administrative and structural reforms have been taken in the field of social services, health care, education, culture and enforcing the rights of the child.

In December 2008, Albania ratified the Optional Protocol of United Nations Convention on Children Involvement in Armed Conflicts. In April 2009, it ratified the Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. In addition, a working group has been established which is working on the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Disabled Persons. Albania has yet to ratify the European Charter on Regional Languages and Minorities.

The Social Inclusion Strategy makes a priority of ensuring access to preschool and compulsory education for all children by 2015. In this context, further measures are taken to increase enrollments in basic education, especially of rural children, girls in particular. This is also one of the conditions to be met under the UN Millennium Development Goals and the European Partnership Document.

The Sector Strategy for Pre-University Education Development 2004-2015 is the main strategic document guiding reforms by Albanian Government in the education sector²⁰. This strategy sets targets, indicators and timelines for each of the priority areas. A special strategy for the preschool

¹⁸ Idem

¹⁹ Code on Children's Rights, Articles 19-20.

²⁰ MoES, National Education Strategy 2004-2015

education system was developed by MoES, also known as the National Strategy for the Pre-University System 2004-2015²¹. This strategy aims at expanding the provision of preschool education as one of the means to enhance learning abilities for children of vulnerable groups, especially (but not exclusively) Roma and populations living in the northeastern part of the country. Early childhood development, with special interventions for vulnerable children, is key to improving school achievements²².

According to the EU Progress Report 2008, the education sector has witnessed some degree of progress. This refers to the fact that the budget for education in 2008 increased by 12% compared to the previous year and this tendency is planned to continue for the period 2009-2011²³. In 2009, the education budget was 39.220.838.000 lek, or 6% greater than in 2008. It should, however, be noted that education allocation in 2009 represents the same GDP percentage as that of 2008²⁴. MoES reports indicate that education budget in 2008 grew by 8% compared to 2007.

Budget item lines respond to priorities in a given year. About 22% - 23%²⁵ of children in pre university education receive their textbooks free of charge. For the first time in 2009, in addition to children with the status of orphan, paraplegic and tetraplegic, free textbooks will be provided also for students from families living on economic assistance / welfare administered by LGUs. Nine-year (basic education) textbook costs are covered by the State Budget in the form of "transfers to individuals".

According to the LSMS 2008, the percentage of education costs to the total real per capita consumption shows the biggest increase since 2005, compared with other budget lines. Education expenditures and their percentage to the total 2008 expenditures, increased respectively by about 57% and 53% since 2005 (Table 2 and Table 3). Per capita food consumption expenditure in real terms in 2008 (based on 2002 prices) increased from 9.105,00 lek in 2005 to 9.731,00 lek in 2008 (Table 3). However, in terms of percentages to the total per capita consumption, food consumption dropped by 2.2% over 2005-2008 (Table 2). The increase in education spending compared to real per capita consumption in 2008 and the decline of food expenditures shows that the quality of life and the standard of living in Albania have improved. In 2008, the trend is to increase investments in education.

Table 2: Percentage in relation to overall real consumption rate per capital

Consumption components	2002	2005	2008
Food	64,5	59,2	57,9
Non food consumption	19,4	24,8	22,8
Basic needs	12,6	12,6	15,2
Education	2,3	2,4	3,7
Long term equipment	1,2	0,9	0,5

²¹ This document was approved in 2006.

²² Inter sectoral Strategy on Social Inclusion 2007-2013, approved by DCM on 2.02.2008

²³ Albania Progress Report – 2008, EC

²⁴ Idem.

²⁵ Data reported by MoES.

Table 3: Summary of main indicators

Indicators	2002	2005	2008
	Mean	Mean	Mean
Overall consumption	7801	9105	9731
Food	4906	5159	5280
Non Food consumption	1655	2457	2519
Education	177	275	432
Basic needs	958	1087	1447
Long term equipment	105	128	56

Table 4: Allocations per level of education in relation to % of MoES budget and % of GDP in years

	Year 2002	% GDP 2002	Year 2008	% of GDP 2008
Basic Education Allocation	57,8%	1,99 %	55,3%	1,85%
Secondary Education Allocation	13,3%	0,46 %	12,0%	0,4%
Allocations for vocational and socio-cultural education	6,4%	0,22%	6,2%	0,21%

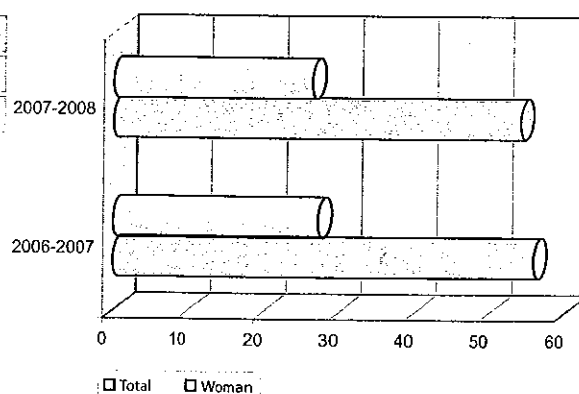
Source: MoES

Data show a decrease in the number of students who received their school leaving certificate upon completion of compulsory education in the academic year 2007-2008 as compared to 2006-2007, not only as regards the total number of students, but also in terms of gender in which respect data show less females than males.

Table5: Students who completed 9 year education and received their school leaving certificate

Academic year	Total	Females
2006-2007	55.785	27.242
2007-2008	54.034	26.429

Source: INSTAT



With regard to children of national minorities, current legislation provides for the creation of equal opportunities to learn their native language, their history and culture within the existing curricula and teaching plans. According to the MoES, although the number of students who receive scholarships in the pre-university system is 5000-5500, there is no accurate information on the number of scholarships awarded to Roma students, because Roma are not subject to specific bylaws.

In 2008, despite the decrease of rural poverty in all regions, school attendance in the poor rural areas remained almost in the same levels. Low participation of the poor in education is due not only to lack of proper infrastructure which hinders access to education, especially for children in rural areas, but also because of increased cost for many services related to education. The level of school enrollment is particularly low among excluded (marginalized) groups such as Roma children and children with disabilities, who represent the poorest groups in society.

Education

Roma minority

About 65% of Roma aged 7-20 years and 40% of Roma aged 20-40 years are illiterate. Literacy levels for Roma women and girls are lower than for men (58% compared to 66%). Besides poverty which is considered as the main barrier to education of the Roma minority, education of the Roma community is hindered by the difficulties to obtain identification documents, the low level of education of family members, difficulties with the Albanian language; non-attendance of pre-school and parental incapacity to help their children through schooling.

Education

Disabled children

There are approximately 366 students with disabilities who are integrated into normal classes. Education of children with disabilities suffers due to the lack of special programs addressing the child's disability, inadequate school infrastructure and lack of special classes for children of this category. To improve the situation, a set of cross-cutting measures and concrete action plans are needed to assess the situation and prevent the drop out phenomenon.

With regard to these categories, enrollment rates are low. Only 27% of 6 year children actually attend the first grade.

The low enrollment levels for the above categories contribute to keeping dropout levels high. In terms of gender, statistical sources show that the number of boys enrolled in compulsory education is higher than girls. On the other side, this phenomenon influences the gender situation, too. Statistics and studies show that boys drop out of school in lesser numbers than girls. MoES has not remained indifferent to the situation. In the context of many competing priorities, it would be more efficient to take steps towards a comprehensive reassessment, including a revisiting of the status of the teaching profession, entry and promotion rules in teaching, paradigms of teaching and curriculum reform, as well as of the potential effects of community involvement in the school²⁶.

Positive initiatives such as 'Second Chance' and 'Hidden dropout' has yielded concrete results

²⁶ Center "Children Today", (June 2008), Children in Albania

and point the way to success. The latter initiative which focuses on the drawbacks of teaching in classrooms is an example of the types of necessary interventions. Of course, both initiatives are a step forward compared to the practice of enforcing penalties for children who drop out of school, especially since the penalties were effectively unenforceable due to difficulties to collect fines²⁷.

Improving the structure of vocational training

Over January to December 2008, the public vocational training centers had registered 7752 people, of whom 7577 received their training certificates, with 1,857 being unemployed job-seekers. The figure increased in comparison with 2007, when certificates were given to 7028 people, of whom 1700 unemployed job-seekers.

- In 2008, were trained 4, 409 women or 58% of the total number, which shows an increase compared to 2007, when women constituted 53% of the total number, or 3400 persons.
- In 2008, following reported training, 541 people were employed, or about 29% of the trained job seekers.
- In 2007, 1468 people were trained on a reduced fee. In 2008, 1396 people were trained with the reduced fee, of whom 586 women.
- In 2007, 148 people were trained for free, of whom 72 Roma, 35 orphans, 10 trafficked women and 29 disabled people. In 2008, 131 people were trained for free, of whom 18 Roma, 82 orphans, 26 disabled and 5 trafficked women.

MLSAEO assisted by the Project "Support to VET reform - Phase II", funded by the EU under the CARDS Program, and in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Science completed the design of the Albanian Qualifications Framework.

MLSAEO in cooperation with the National Agency of Vocational Education and Training are working to institutionalize the methodology of designing VET curricula. Also, with the support of the project "Support for reform in vocational education and training", steps are being taken to decentralize management of the VET system towards the VET schools and centers.

²⁷ Idem

Development of VET Infrastructure (buildings, facilities and teaching materials)

There are 10 Regional Vocational Training Directorates which run their operations in the country's main cities. Two of them operate in Tirana and others in cities like Shkodra, Durres, Elbasan, Fier, Vlora, Korça and Gjirokastra. In addition, there is the Regional Directorate of the Mobile Vocational Training Centre, which offers vocational training in the towns of Puka, Tropoja, Kukes, Peshkopi and Burrel.

In the context of the quantitative and qualitative expansion of public vocational training centers nationwide, mention should be made of the investments to construct and rehabilitate such centers in a number of cities. Specifically, the bulk of the work has been completed in the public vocational training centers of Elbasan and Fier. Construction work has finished in the centers of Durres, Korça and Gjirokastra. Funding for construction and rehabilitation is mainly allocated from the state budget, but the center in Korça and partly in Elbasan received funding from the EU under the CARDS Program.

1.2.4. Modernization of social welfare

Economic Aid (EA) is a program that provides minimum guarantees in the form of "cash" payments to poor families without income or with insufficient income. The groups most vulnerable for slipping into poverty are families with numerous members, newly created families with young children, families where the head of the household is unemployed, families in rural areas and those living in the mountainous regions.

The amount of benefit. Pursuant to Law no. 9355, dated 10.03.2005 "On social assistance and services", economic assistance is provided in the form of a monthly installment in lek, or a monthly in-kind contribution to the categories mentioned above. The amount of full monthly economic aid, covered by the central budget, is determined based on structure of the family and is calculated as follows: 2.600,00 lek per month for the head of the family; for family members above working age, 2.600,00 lek per month; for any other family members in working age, 600.00 (six hundred) lek per month; and for each member

of the family under working age (up to 18 years), 700.00 (seven hundred) lek per month.

In December 2009, the economic assistance scheme provided payments to 96.797 households out of the total of 1.123.903 households nationwide, or about 455 thousand inhabitants on a national level. Distribution according to areas is: 39. 259 households in the urban areas and 57.538 in the rural areas.

In 2008, average monthly amount²⁸ of full economic assistance per household was 3.405,000 lek up from 2.418,00 lek in 2007. With regard to particle economic assistance in 2008, the average monthly payment was 2.518,000 up from 1.622,00 lek in 2007. In July 2008, for the first time ever, economic assistance was indexed by 10%, which is an additional measure contributing to further reduction of poverty.

Economic assistance funds in 2008 totaled 3,6 billion up from 2,6 billion, or 34% more than in 2007. For the year 2009, the government made an allocation of 4,7 billion lek for economic assistance payments.

Alternation of the EA scheme with community work and services is a good option for involving this category in market development. This initiative should be encourage and implemented in all regions of the country.

Payments for disabled persons and individuals disabled on the job, for 2008, were set at 9.2 billion lek.

During 2008, seven additional DCM-s were passed with regard to payments for disabled people. Since 1 July 2008, 57 thousand people with mental and physical disabilities (14 thousand blind, three-thousand paraplegic and tetraplegic, including their care-takers) receive 8.700,00 lek per month compared to 8.000,00 leks they used to receive(a 10% increase); three thousand paraplegics

²⁸ Families in need benefit from full or partial economic aid. Full economic aid goes to families or individuals, who do not make any income from economic activities, do not benefit from social assistance or social services programs or any other system of social protection; do not receive remittances from abroad and do not possess any capital whatsoever. Economic aid is partial when the beneficiary household makes insufficient income from the land, the poultry, the animals, the vines, gardening, pensions and other sources.

and tetraplegics receive 12.000,00 lek in their health and sanitation package up from 9.000,00 lek they used to receive previously (33% increase).

For 2007, the total number of beneficiaries receiving unemployment payments, based on DCM No. 223, dated 04.19.2006: "On payment of unemployment benefit" is 9572 people. With a fund of 866,000 thousand leks, the average monthly payment per individual is 7.600,00 lek per month. In 2008, the total number of beneficiaries declined to 8,447 people. Starting from 1.07.2008, the basic monthly unemployment benefit increased by 14.2%. The minimum salary base increased also by 14 per cent.

To promote job creation in 2007, the state budget made an allocation of 131.000 thousand leks, of which 124.125 thousand leks went for various employment projects and 119.014 thousand leks were transferred to private entities. During 2007, the 112 projects approved in 2006 (by Decisions No. 69 / 2, 73, 74 and 632) were extended and continued operations. In addition, by Decision No. 632, dated 09/18/2003, an extension to the contract was granted and budget was allocated for the second year of the Women's Program. The first 35 projects dedicated to professional practice by job seekers with higher education (awarded both in Albania and abroad) were launched in the same year.

In 2008, compared to 2007, funding for employment promotion programs increased to 212.346.000 leks, including the financial effects of changing the minimum salary base, and other changes effected by the legal basis of this program.

1.3. Facilitating access to basic services

1.3.1. Development of assistance services

Under the Law No. 9355, dated 10.03.2005 "On Social Assistance and Social Services", with amendments, individuals in need of social care services are placed in public residential institutions for free, provided their families are without any income. Public social services include social care services provided in residential institutions, day care facilities or at home. These services are financed by the central budget and by local government budgets. Private social services

include social care services provided in residential facilities, day care centers or at home by private operators.

In the context of decentralization, municipalities administer social services for all individuals with residence in the jurisdiction of the municipality. The situation of public social care institutions located in major urban centers, but providing coverage to the entire country, is as follows:

- In 2007, there were eight public service facilities in operation²⁹ of which five public residential centers and three day care facilities, which provided services for persons with disabilities. They tended to the needs of 325 persons, of whom 154 women. There were also 15 non-public residential centers which served 660 persons, of whom 377 women. In 2008, there was a higher number of facilities serving to people with disabilities. Specifically, there were 7 residential facilities and 4 day-care centers which serve 381 people, of whom 168 women. In addition, there were 14 non public both residential and day care facilities serving 1.210 people, of whom 709 females.
- In 2007, the elderly were served by 8 public facilities³⁰ of which 4 residential and 4 day care centers, serving 456 old people. In addition, there were 8 non public residential and day care facilities accommodating 285 people of whom 108 women. By comparison, in 2008, there are 12 public residential and day care centers, of which four residential and eight day care, serving 698 elderly of whom 163 females. There were also 10 non public facilities of which 3 residential and 7 day-care centers, which tend to the needs of 1,045 people, 565 women.
- In 2007, there were 16 public child care centers, of which 13 residential and 3 day-care facilities, serving 393 children; 41 non public facilities: 16 residential and 25 day care, attended by 2296 children.
- In 2008, there were 11 public centers, 9 residential and 2 day care, which

²⁹ MLSAEO, Statistics 2007 and 2008 (Regions: Tirana, Durrës, Korce, Elbasan, Shkoder, Vlore and Lezhe).

³⁰ Idem. In the regions of Tirane, Durrës, Vlore, Korce, Fier, Elbasan and Shkoder.

accommodated 400 children. Non public centers numbered 50, 16 residential and 34 day care, attended by 7. 661 children.

As regards reform steps to change the typology of services, alternative forms are being promoted in the residential child facilities, specifically: day care services, counseling for children and their families and community based services. Alternative forms of service provision are implemented in some child institutions, such as the Infant Home (0-3 years) in Shkoder which serves as Day Care and Counseling Center for mothers and children in the neighborhoods; the home-family type for institutionalized children and children benefitting from day care services; Children's Home 0-6 years in Durres which provides social services according to established standards, etc. These alternative models have served the modernization of services by offering alternative, home -like residential care for institutionalized children and children from families with socio-economic problems (with separated parents, single parent families, abandoned children, children from families with many children) in the communities of the Durres Region. This new typology of social services is being implemented successfully in public residential institutions for children. The Home of Children 3-6 years in Shkoder, in addition to providing services for institutionalized children, provides day care services for children, mostly Roma and Egyptian.

Another service aimed towards de-institutionalization of children is the provision of counseling for minor-age mothers. This service is provided in the two maternity homes in Tirana by social workers from the Children's Home in Tirana in cooperation with "Bethany Christian Services" in particular to young women who undergo abortion. Counseling is provided to unmarried mothers who have unwanted pregnancies, women who have been raped, those who have experienced incest, etc.

1.3.2. *Improving access to healthcare for children and poor people*

Health care services have passed a series of reforms and changes during the last almost two decades. However, despite improvements, the health status of the Albanian population remains

below that of other countries the region³¹.

The Constitution of the Republic of Albania stipulates that citizens have the right to equal access to healthcare provided by the state, and everyone is entitled to health insurance under the procedures established by law³². This document charges the government with the duty to guarantee equal access to health-care for citizens and to provide financial protection from health problems. This constitutional commitment is in line with the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) which calls for quality health care services for all children³³.

The strengthening the health sector in Albania, through the institution of a comprehensive legal framework and the implementation of all encompassing policies is one of the ways towards improving service quality and reducing poverty. Also, it enables the achievement of objectives that are consistent with the Millennium Development Goals, which Albania is committed to meet by 2015.

Albania has the lowest number of doctors and nurses per capita in Europe. Although the ratio of nurses to doctors in Albania is relatively high compared with other countries, this situation is due to very small number of doctors per capita, rather than the large number of nurses.

With 3.7 nurses and 1.3 doctors per 1000 inhabitants, Albania is the fourth country in the region in terms of coverage with nurses, and occupies the last place in terms of doctor coverage. However, it is worth mentioning that Albania is in a good position in terms of coverage with physicians (general practitioners), which is a reflection of government efforts to improve access to primary health care. In some areas, particularly the Northeast, there is a shortage of specialized doctors such as pediatricians and obstetrician-gynecologists.

There is little control over corruption in the public health sector which offers its services free of charge. Low quality of services may force parents to provide home care for their children, which may bring negative consequences on

³¹ World Bank, (2006), Health Sector in Albania

³² Constitution of the Republic of Albania, 1998, Article 55

³³ CRC, Article 24

children's health. Medical specialists play an essential role in identifying and addressing various issues of importance to child health. However, medical staff consider themselves "superior" and tend to look down on the role of the social services, which results into lack of institutional coordination and failure to keep track of the cases, sometimes leading to discontinuity of treatment³⁴.

The widely reported corruption of medical personnel goes against the legal provisions concerning the value of individual's health and further excludes the poor from available services. "Under hand" payments (bribes) pose a major obstacle to health care reform and show that users of the system experience obstacles in enforcing their right to accountability and transparency.

The right of the child to health services is supported and guaranteed, directly or indirectly, by a set of laws and by-laws. Health indicators for children show an increase in the number of counseling facilities and the number of medical examinations in the rural areas. However, MoH data show that only 70% of villages are covered by ambulances. Reduction of free services has significantly impacted the health of children in poor families.

Table 6: Health indicators -- Child Counseling Facilities

	2005	2006	2007	2008
Child Counseling facilities	1,645	1,891	1,946	2,010
Towns	134	134	163	147
Villages	1,711	1,757	1,783	1,863
Visits in the counseling facilities (in thousand)	850	770	805	907
Visits in the villages (in thousand)	552	464	505	492

Source: INSTAT, (2009), Albania in figures 2009

Although the data show encouraging improvements in infant mortality in the last decade, when compared with other European countries, this indicator remains in high levels.

The significant reduction of infant mortality is related to increases in educational levels and socio-economic welfare. Various studies by INSTAT, UNICEF, UNFPA, WHO, and USAID, have shown that child mortality is closely linked with poverty. Data show that mortality in infants and children up to 5, living in well to do families, is about ¼ that of the national level.

Infant mortality is about 40% higher in rural areas compared to urban areas. Another factor most closely associated with infant and less than 5 mortality is education. In groups of mothers with lower levels of education (without elementary school), infant mortality is 2-3 times higher than in groups with higher levels of education. About 40% of infant deaths occur during the first month of life and one fourth take place during the first week, which suggest that greater priority should be given to improving care for women before birth and in the first weeks following delivery.

Table 7: Indicators of infant mortality and under 5 years old in percentage

Indicators	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Infant mortality per 100 000 live birth	16	17,5	17,3	15,5	15	14,7	13	12	11,1
Under 5 years mortality rate per 1000					17,5	16,7	14,7	13,4	12,4

Source: MoH

³⁴ QFS, "Children in Albania", June 2008

With regard to the division by sex, demographic statistics by INSTAT show that male mortality is a little higher compared to females. However, one of the main causes of death in children are contagious diseases. In adolescents and young people (mostly men), a primary cause of death lately are traumas and road accidents.

Immunization of children is one of the MoH priorities. Albania has a mandatory immunizations scheme against major childhood diseases preventable by vaccines, such as diphtheria, tetanus, pertusitis, TBC, polio, measles, rubella, mumps, hepatitis B, Hb, etc. Albania already has a National Action Plan for Immunization and the Albanian Government is a member of the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI) which was committed to ensuring specific vaccines for children over 2002-2005. Since 2004-2005, all vaccines are purchased with government funds. Currently, vaccines have been procured at a level of 100%, while vaccine coverage continues to be at levels above 95%.

Table 8: Coverage with vaccines

	Year 2006	First half 2009
Tuberculosis (BCG)	99,5%	98,0%
Viral Hepatitis B (dose III)	98,7%	98,0%
Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertusitis (dose III)	99,0%	97,8%
Poliomyelitis	99,0%	97,8%
Measles-Rubella-Mumps (dose I)	98,0%	97,0%

Source: MoH

Child health is closely linked to poverty, which brings as a consequence malnutrition of children, especially in the rural areas, those with poor sanitation services, lack of safe drinking water, even lack of infrastructure for drinking water, etc. Another factor is linked with the tendency not to breast feed, especially in the urban areas by parents with low levels of education. As an issue which is subject to special strategic documents and the responsibility of various government institutions, children's health should be harmonized with measures to reduce poverty.

Some studies show that children in Albania have problems of malnutrition, despite improvements in this regard. The phenomenon is almost equally encountered both in urban and rural areas. This is related to the internal migration from the rural areas and the overpopulation of the urban areas. Children in mountainous manifest a greater percentage of malnutrition (32%) than those living in lowlands. Large nutritional differences are seen between the country's southern and north parts, which is a reflection of the socio-economic situation.

The healthy development of the child is beyond physical survival and growth and involves his/her psychosocial development and mental health. In Albania, there are no studies about the incidence of disorders in early childhood development. However, several studies conducted by the Child Development Center and the specialists of the University Hospital Center in Tirana involving children aged 4, have shown that 6-11% were affected by development problems and speech delays. By WHO standards, this percentage is problematic. Mention should be made that early interventions, which should start exactly at this age, are highly productive and efficient.

1.3.3. *Housing the homeless*

Towards the end of the communist era, Albania was one of the countries with the lowest housing levels in Europe. In the past 20 years, Albania has made significant progress in improving the housing situation. The rural migrants settled in the suburbs where they built informally on unoccupied land. The result of the demographic movement was that housing quality and living space increased for all the social categories. However, data from recent observations indicate that recently the cost of housing has increased and housing for the poor is declining. Another major problem for families with low incomes

is the low supply of rent apartments, estimated at 5%, while most market economies have a supply of 30-50%.

Law no. 9232, dated 13.05.2004 "On social programs for the housing of residents in urban areas, with amendments, defines three basic instruments to provide access to housing for poor and vulnerable groups of society:

1. Rent subsidies for households in social apartments. Funding for rent subsidies, according to the law, can be derived from municipal revenue, the state budget or a combination thereof. Maximum level of rent is calculated as 4% of construction cost or market price. Rent subsidy can cover up to 50% of the rent calculated in this way. For families with a disabled person, subsidy may covers 75% of the rent. The amount of subsidy is calculated on a case-by-case basis. Rent payments should not be more than 25% of the net family income (the standard of affordability). If rent takes up more than 25% of the family income, it is eligible for subsidy. Rent contract are concluded for one year periods, renewable every year based on the verification of the socio-economic situation of the family. Subsidies are not subject to tax.
- 2 "The housing bonus" is a free benefit to families covering up to 50% of the average rent payments in the free market of rent apartments. The standard of affordability in this case is 30%.
- 3 The subsidizing of interest rates over a mortgage loan in the free market targets those households which can afford payment of a subsidized loan. Standard of affordability in this case is 35% (monthly payments / monthly household income). However, in the case of the project implemented jointly with the National Commercial Bank, this standard takes into account the bank criteria. In this particular project, the calculation of affordability standard follows the formula below:
$$AP = 8.000 \times N + PMT$$
in which
AP – is the level of income that the family should have; 8000 - is the fixed amount per capita required by the bank, (in Albanian lek); N - is the number of family members and PMT is the monthly subsidized credit installment.

The legislation sets no time-limits for rent subsidies. The subsidy of loan interests is calculated on a timeline during which the total amount of the subsidy equals the value of the property purchased in the market. At this point, the subsidy is terminated.

Social housing programs represent a newly launched initiative. The first social housing apartments are being built with a loan of 15 million Euros from the Development Bank of the Council of Europe and co-funded from the state and municipality budgets. The project will be piloted in the first eight municipalities. For 2010, the participating municipalities are being trained on how to calculate rent and subsidy for families with low incomes. The project of the "Housing Bonus" for the first time is being implemented in the Municipality of Tirana which uses its own revenue to benefit about 100 families. The project of credit facilitation started in 2009 with the National Commercial Bank and benefits about 250 families.

1.3.4. Legal Aid

To provide access to fair trial for every citizen and access to free legal aid for vulnerable groups, in 2008 the Justice Ministry, launched the drafting of a free legal aid law, which was adopted by the Albanian Assembly at the end of 2008. Law Nr. 10039, dated 12. 22. 2008, "On legal aid", was published in the Official Gazette No. 199, 2008, and entered into force in April 2009. Adoption of

this law increases opportunities for citizen's access to justice through the provision of free legal aid by the state for the purpose of protecting the rights and freedoms of the individual and his/her legal interests. Legal assistance is provided in the form of primary and secondary support. Primary legal assistance consists in providing information about the legal system in Albania, the normative acts in force, the rights and obligations of subjects under law, the manner of exercise of individual rights in judicial extra-judicial processes, and provision of assistance in drafting legal documents or other ways. Secondary legal aid consists in the provision of advisory services, representation or defense in civil and administrative litigation, criminal proceedings and summons before state administrative bodies.

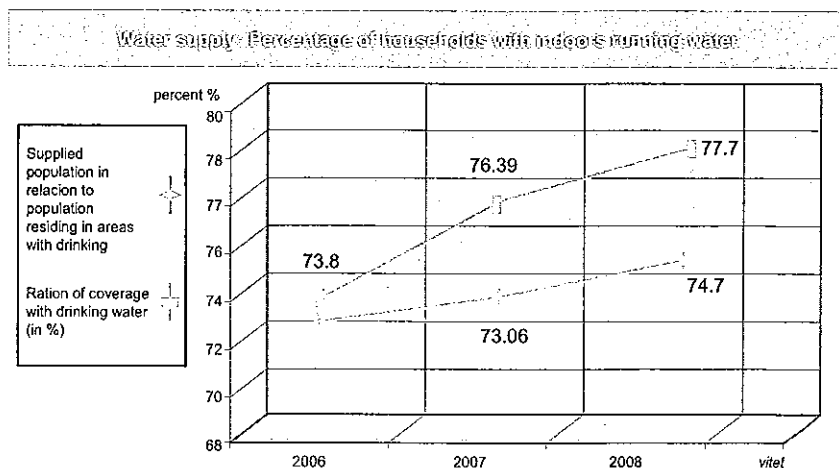
The categories which benefit from free legal aid are minors, individuals who seek attorney protection in criminal proceedings, but cannot afford one, and individuals who need legal assistance with civil or administrative cases which are too complex, both in substance and procedural steps, but cannot afford the cost.

In addition to Ministry of Justice and the National Chamber of Advocates, free legal aid will be administered through a State Committee for Legal Aid which will be established soon. This commission, in accordance with the law, consists of five members: one appointed by the Minister of Justice, one by the Minister of Finance, the third by the National Chamber of Advocates, the fourth by the High Council of Justice and the fifth by the nonprofit organizations operating in the field of legal aid. Institutions have nominated their Commission members and operations are expected to start soon. In accordance with Article 6, paragraph 6 of the law, upon proposal from the Commission, the Minister of Justice shall adopt the policy manual on the organization and functioning of the Commission.

With regard to domestic violence, legal protection is a necessity. It can be replaced neither by police nor by social workers. The Ministry of Justice should urgently take all necessary steps to provide *ex officio* lawyers, in order to guarantee free legal aid to victims of domestic violence. This requirement stems from the law "On measures against domestic violence". Monitoring shows that the female plaintiffs are represented by lawyers only in 37 cases³⁵. During January - April 2009, 370 legal counseling and 395 psychosocial counseling cases were recorded. Lawyers prepared 33 lawsuits of women and girls receiving legal and psychosocial aid free of charge.

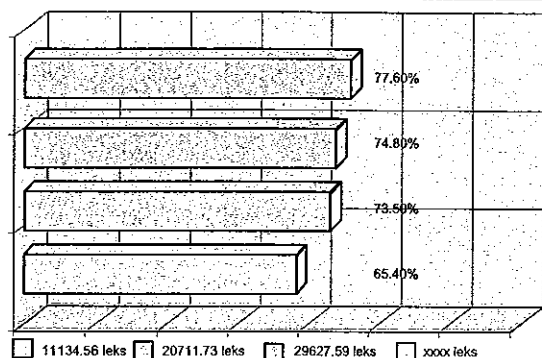
1.3.5./1.3.6/1.3.7 Improving Access to drinking water, sanitation, transport and communications

The situation in the sector of water supply and sewage pipes has improved as demonstrated by the relevant indicators. The number of households with indoors running water facilities has increased.



³⁵ Center for Legal and Civic Initiatives & Civil Rights Defender, Report on the Implementation of the Law "On measures against domestic violence".

Percentage of families with in-door running water according to income (quintiles)



In 2008, the population supplied with drinking water is 77,7% up from 76% in 2007, which sets drinking water coverage at 74,7%.

The increase is due to the newly made investments in water supply and sanitation sector, which have grown approximately 32% compared with 2007. In 2008, the total value of investments in the sector amounts to 7,5 billion leks, of which 3,5 billion from the state budget and 4 billion from foreign sources. State budget resources for designing projects to improve the situation in the problematic and tourist areas, has increased significantly as compared with 2007. Specifically, funding is allocated for a large number of projects in the regions of Has, Bajram Curri, Puke, Malesi e Madhe, Peqin, Sukth, and Vore. In addition, projects are designed to establish water supply and sewage facilities in Lac, Mamurras, Kenete-Durres and Koder Marlekaj-Lezhe. In 2008, compared to 2005, the population with access to water supply systems increased by 3,7% and by 0.5% increased the population with access to the sewerage network. As regards the improving of sewage services, the percentage of population covered by these services in 2008 was 45.2%. In the first half of 2009 the population benefitting from the coverage grew to 46.6%.

Improvement of road infrastructure has been a priority of policy and public investment in 2008. In 2008 alone, 168.8 km of new roads were built, of which 121,5 km with domestic funding and 47.5 km with foreign funding. During 2008, the state budget invested 60,71 billion leks, or almost double the investment made in road transport in 2007.

The increased number of subscribers to fixed telephone services shows an increase of the population who benefits from such services. In the recent years, the number has

been: 296,146 subscribers in 2007; 323,964 subscribers in 2008; and 343,591 subscribers for the first half of 2009. It can be seen that in two years there has been an increase of 16%.

1.4. Progress towards protection and inclusion of excluded groups

1.4.1. Children at risk

Albania is considered a country with a relatively young population. The number of individuals 0-19 years, residing in Albania in 2008, was 1.070.298 or 33,64% of the country's population. In 2007, this age group numbered 1.089.339 or 34.46% of the population. The rapid growth of GDP, increased salaries and pensions are accompanied by a further reduction of poverty. The extremely poor population, defined as the number of individuals who have difficulty in meeting their basic nutritional needs, decreased to 3.5% in 2005 from 5% in 2002 and to 1.2% in 2008. In the urban areas, only 1.17% of the population can be considered as extremely poor.

Despite the economic growth and progress toward reducing the number of poor children, still there are children living in forlorn communities in remote or peripheral areas. This category includes the Roma children, children without parental care, children with disabilities, trafficked children and children begging on the street. These children are mostly at risk of social exclusion.

In 2008, the budget for preventive services was 28% higher than in 2007. However, the Ministry of Health did not make special allocations to cover the needs and costs of child health. Services to mother and child have not been costed yet and there is no detailed recording of expenditures for every service.

Education levels and socio-economic welfare generate important differences in the mortality rate. Various studies by INSTAT, UNICEF, UNFPA, WHO, and USAID show that child mortality is closely linked with poverty. In particular, the incidence of infants and up to 5 children deaths living in well to do families is about ¼ of the national mortality rate. Studies focusing children indicate that inequity in the distribution of medical resources negatively

impacts the children's access to health care in the remote, rural and suburban areas. This is true in particular of access to emergency and dental healthcare, but also to routine and specialized medical services.

MoH statistics for 2008 indicate that infant mortality is 11.1% per 1000 live births, whereas maternal mortality is 20 per 100,000 live births. In rural areas, infant mortality is about 40% higher compared to urban areas. Another factor, closely related to infant and under 5 mortality is education of parents. In the case of mothers with lower education levels (without nine year schooling), infant mortality is 2-3 times higher than in groups of mothers with higher education levels.

Children's immunization of is one of the priorities of the MoH. Albania has a scheme of compulsory vaccination against major childhood diseases, preventable with vaccines: (Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussitis, TB, Polio, Measles, Rubella, Mumps, Hepatitis B, HB). Albania already has a National Action Plan on Immunization and the Albanian government is part of the Global Alliance on Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI) which involves the obligation to provide specific vaccines for children for the period 2002-2005. Since the years 2004-2005, all vaccines are purchased with governmental funds. Currently, vaccines have been procured on a 100% scale, while immunization coverage continues to be at the same level of above 95%.

Children's nutrition and healthy eating for the entire population, continues to remain an important area for awareness building and dissemination work. In April 2009, "Recommendations for healthy nutrition for the Albanian population" was compiled, which are address in detail children's age groups for which recommendations are made on priority basis in relation to the whole population.

According to data from the Labor Force Survey and in accordance with EUROSTAT and ILO definition of employment, in September-October 2008, Albania numbered around 1.123 thousand employees aged 15 and above or 1.103 thousand employees aged 15-64.

National employment rate for the population aged 15-64 is 53,8%. Employment rate is

higher for men compared with women: 63% to 45,5%. This indicator is higher for males in all age groups.

A great number of children in need are forced to work. The most frequent jobs they carry out include: selling on the streets, begging, car cleaning, etc. According to statistics, about 24 children are street children and at risk of labor exploitation.

Children of families living on economic aid only are most at risk of social exclusion. They have little access to basic services, such as housing, education, healthcare and social protection schemes. Protection and care for children in need, from the structural point of view, represents an array of services offered by public institutions, NGOs and private entities. Orphans, abandoned children and those from families with social problems, receive care and services in foster institutions.

Table 9: Allocations to public foster care institutions and child development centers

	thousand/lek			
Budget according to years	2005	2006	2007	2008
Public institutions for children	27.531	36.920	27.200	30.700
Child development centers	52.358	53.280	53.500	62.400

Source: State Social Service

According to the LSMS 2008, 12.4% of the Albanians considered poor, half being children. Only one in two children has access to preschool education. INSTAT data show that the net enrollment in pre-school education for 2008-2009 was 50.1%. Data also show that boys have higher enrollment rates than girls. However, recent data show a decline in the number of children enrolled in early childhood institutions, both public and private, in the rural areas (Table 10).

Table 10: Preschool enrollments according to geographical distribution and gender³⁶

Years	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009
Net Total	47,5%	49,5%	50,1%
Rural	47,9%	49,3%	49,0%
Urban	52,1%	50,7%	51,0%
Females	47,6%	47,8%	47,3%
Males	52,3%	52,2%	52,7%

Source: INSTAT

There is a significant increase in the percentage of children attending kindergartens. Fluctuations in the trend are due to the declining number of births, immigration and unemployment of women.

In 2009, MoES allocations to investments (rehabilitation, construction of new buildings, equipment) increased to 6 billion from 4 billion in 2008. During the 2008-2009 school year 116 kindergartens and schools completed their rehabilitation or construction work and an addition 63 is in the process. Nonetheless, street children, children with disabilities and vulnerable children have problems with their access to education. Many fail to progress to the next grade. There are about 12.000 children with disabilities who have not completed compulsory education.

A UNDP study on social vulnerability of Roma shows that 55% of this community, aged 15 and younger, are illiterate, compared with 2% of the non-Roma community. Despite anti-poverty measures, a high level of poverty persists among Roma in comparison with the mainstream population and many Roma people live in extreme poverty. Roma families live in shanty or in abandoned buildings. The data of the report show that 28% of Roma households have indoors running water, compared with 28% of the non-Roma population. There are few official data on Roma health, but Roma life expectancy is estimated to be 10 years less than the rest of the population. These data show that poverty for Roma is multi faceted, extreme and chronic and threatens their life security³⁷.

Protection of minors and youth in conflict with the law

³⁶ INSTAT statistical data

³⁷ United National Development Fund, "Report on Partnership for Development", 2008

Our criminal law sets the age for penal responsibility for crime commission at 14 years old, and for penal contraventions at 16 years old (Article 12 of the Criminal Code). Penal responsibility is proportionate to age, for the minor's maturity and their ability to control their action and face the consequences is taken into account.

Compared with previous years, statistical data on juvenile criminality in 2008 show an increase of the phenomenon.

Table 11: Juvenile criminality³⁸

Sentenced minors	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
For crimes	259	313	258	238	198	356
For penal contraventions	49	7	31	30	13	51
Total	308	320	289	268	211	407

Source: Statistical Yearbook, Tirana 2009, Publication of the Ministry of Justice

An analysis of data reported in Table 12 shows an increase in the number of juvenile criminality, both in terms of crime and in terms of penal contraventions. The number of young people convicted in 2008 was 407, of whom 356 for crimes and 51 for penal contraventions. Compared with 2007, there is an increase of the number of juvenile crimes by 196 cases. However, in relation to the total number of juvenile detainees, the rate has declined from 93.8% in 2007 to 87.4% in 2008. On the other hand, the number of young people convicted for penal contraventions has increased. Thus, of the 211 minors in 2007, 13 were convicted for penal contraventions (6.1%), whereas in 2008 penal contraventions rose to 51 cases or 12.5%.

Again, referring to the Statistical Yearbook 2008, data show that of 407 convicted juveniles, 68 were illiterate.

However, there are positive initiatives related to education, including vocational education of minors in conflict with the law. A Memorandum of Cooperation was signed on 05.12.2008 between MoJ and the MoES to enable the schooling of detainees and pre-detainees based

³⁸ From the Statistical Annuary, Tiranë 2009, Publication of the Ministry of Justice.

on MoES approved programs. Also, in July 2009, a Memorandum of Cooperation was concluded between the MoJ and the MLSAEO to provide vocational education and training for the detainees and pre-detainees towards their preparation for re-integration into society. Under these memorandums, at the end of the academic year 2008-2009, 94 detainees and 77 detained minors in the prisons of Fushe-Kruje and Vlore received their vocational training certificates.

In connection with juvenile justice, mention can be made of:

Some changes in the Law no. 9888, dated 03.10.2008, "On the rights and treatment of prison inmates"³⁹.

Pursuant to Law no. 8328, dated 16.04.1998, "On the rights and treatment of prison inmates", with amendments and in accordance with the General Regulation of Prisons, the prison authorities should ensure differentiated treatment for vulnerable categories. In this context, in 2008 and the first half of 2009, all pre -detainees up to 18 years were held in separate minors' sections.

Special sections for minors have been established in seven prison facilities ("Jordan Misja" Vaqarr, Durres, Lezhe, Korçe, Vlore and Tepelene).

In early 2009, the prison of Kavajë was turned into a special institution for juveniles, with high standard conditions, for a maximum of 40 minors.

Detainees of 19-24 years, sharing the same cell with adult prisoners and their % to the total number of juveniles serving time in the country's prisons

According to international standards, the penitentiary system refers as "young people" to individuals in the age group of 18-21 years. For this reason, the system maintains separate statistics relative to this age group. Currently, the total number of young people is 205 and they are accommodated in 14 facilities. In 8 prison facilities, a total of 111 pre-detainees and detainees aged 18-21 years (54.1%), serves time

together with adult detainees due to overcrowding of the prisons.

Law Nr. 10024, dated 27.11.2008 "On some amendments and additions to Law no. 8331, dated 04.21.1998 "On the execution of criminal sentences" establishes the probation service, which will oversee the execution of alternative punishments and will primarily benefit minors.

Increased access of poor and disabled children in education.

According to the LSMS 2008, 12.4% of Albanians are considered poor, with 50 per cent being children. Only one in two children has access to preschool education. INSTAT data show that net preschool enrollment for 2008-2009 is 50,1%. Data also show gender differences with boys having higher enrollments rates than girls. However, the overall preschool enrollment rate in early childhood institutions has declined in the rural areas, both in public and private facilities.

Table 12: Enrollment rates in preschool education according to gender and geographic distribution

Years	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009
Net Total	47,5%	49,5%	50,1%
Rural	47,9%	49,3%	49,0%
Urban	52,1%	50,7%	51,0%
Females	47,6%	47,8%	47,3%
Males	52,3%	52,2%	52,7%

Source: MoES

To complete the framework of policies and initiatives for education development, the National Strategy on Pre-University Education 2009-2013(NSPUE)⁴⁰ was recently adopted. The strategy document points out that enrollment in pre-university education appear to have declined in absolute figures due to birth rate decline. However, the rate of participation in higher levels of education has increased due to favorable policies enacted by the government. The implementation of policies which maintain and improve access to education, with priority on basic education, are key to Albania's economic growth and poverty reduction efforts.

³⁹ Article 59 "Rewarding leaves" states that detained minors are entitled to 45 days of rewarding leave annually, whereas adult detainees may be given up to 20 days.

⁴⁰ Adopted in July 2009.

Access to pre university education level appears low by comparison with OECD countries. Currently, Albanians have averagely 11.9 years of schooling (compared to 14 years of OECD countries). This is due to low enrollment rates in secondary education⁴¹.

Table 13: Statistical data on education (2007-2013), compared with regional and EU countries

Indicator	Albania	Europe	Serbia	BYROM	Georgia	Slovenia
Mean of schooling years	11,9	17,4	13,0	12,0	15,0	16,2
Net enrollment rates						
Preschool	50%	75%	45%	29%	45%	75%
Basic compulsory education	92%	95%	96%	93%	90%	93%
Secondary education	57%	85%	82%	80%	84%	91%
Secondary vocational education	19%	62,7%	70%	65%	70%	

Source: MoES (2009), NSPUE 2009-2013

In the context of improving access to preschool education, in particular in the rural areas where attendance is lowest, in the recent years efforts have been made to improve infrastructure and apply contemporary practices as implemented in some of the pilot kindergarten facilities.

Enrollment rate is particularly among excluded groups, such as Roma children, children without parental care, children with disabilities, children from remote rural areas, etc. Due to poverty, these categories are at risk of school drop out. Consequently, children from groups in need, mainly the Roma minority, are largely affected by this phenomenon.

Estimates show that currently in Albania, there are approximately 5,000 Roma children aged 3-16 years⁴². Enrolment rate per legal school age is low. Only 27% of children aged 6 are currently attending the first grade. One in about two Roma children of school age (6-16 years) has dropped out of school. 54% of Roma children at compulsory schooling age (6-16 years) have not completed any grade in school. 43% of Roma children in the age group of 15-16 years are illiterate.

Apart from poverty, which is the main obstacle to the education of the Roma minority, other difficulties relate to acquisition of identification documents, low levels of education of other household members, difficulties with the Albanian language, non attendance of preschool education, as well as parents' inability to help⁴³. The phenomenon is worse with regard to Roma girls.

MoES review of the implementation of the NSPUE 2009-2013 show that Roma girls after age 11 drop out of school at significantly higher rates than Roma boys. At the age of 12, attendance rate of Roma girls is 23% less than Roma boys.

There are about 366 students with disabilities who are integrated into normal classes. Education of children with disabilities is affected by lack of specific programs by type of child disability, lack of adequate infrastructure facilities and lack of special classes for disabled children. To address this situation, coordinated interventions are needed between MoES, MLSAEO, the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Interior, and concrete action plans need to be enacted to assess the situation and effect the implementation of interventions preventing the dropout phenomenon.

⁴¹ MoES, (July 2009), National Strategy on Pre-University Education 2009-2013.

⁴² MoES (2009), NSPUE 2009-2013

⁴³ Center for Human Studies, (2007), "The situation of education of Roma children in Albania"

Street children, children with disabilities and vulnerable children face problems with their education. Many of them do not complete the academic year. There are approximately 12.000 disabled children without compulsory education. Only about 9.5% of these children receive education in foster care institutions. Others live with their families in very poor conditions. Measures taken by MoES to support children in need cover only few students and are probably not adequately supportive.

Table 14: Measures by MoES to support children at risk

Special Instructions and Ordinances against illiteracy.
Establishment of working groups to assess the situation and propose measures to combat illiteracy.
Education of children who have dropped out of school due to blood vengeance – instructions on the education of children who have dropped out of school due to blood vengeance.
Free of charge textbooks for orphan, paraplegic and paraplegic children. Children from families who benefit from economic aid pay only 10% of the cover price.
Represented by the project (Special Ordinance)

Other problematic categories are those of children from low income families, girls in the rural areas with obsolete mentalities and other social problems. The issues faced by these categories contribute to the increase of dropout. According to statistics, it appears that of the total number of children who enroll in compulsory education, girls drop out at higher rates. MoES has designed and implemented policies and projects directed at resolving the dropout phenomenon.

Efforts by government and institutions to better understand and address barriers that prevent vulnerable children from using and benefitting fully from educational policies should be reviewed. However, sustained concern, improved collaboration and a cohesive approach by intergovernmental agencies are important elements of the ongoing efforts to increase participation of these children in education.

1.4.2. Roma and Balkan Egyptians

It is acknowledged that social indicators for the Roma population are below the national average. There are no accurate data on the number of Roma population in Albania. This is due to a number of reasons, among which lack of registration is key. Since children are not registered at the time of birth, future problems become effectively insurmountable, due to the financial costs incurred.

State institutions charged with law enforcement and nonprofit organizations providing free legal aid to citizens, note that in many cases, Roma children are not registered within the legal time limits (45 days from the day birth). Beyond this timeline, births should be recognized through a court procedure which entails the payment of a fine of 2.000,00 lek. As a result, these families, in addition to the not so small fine, should pay for the services of a lawyer, which, in the best of cases, cost about 30,000.00 leks. These practices are an obstacle to children's registration. This has caused the number of unregistered children, especially from the poorest groups, to increase over years. The same non registration phenomenon occurs in the event of death.

In addition to lack of registration at the time of birth, there are also problems with the registration of Roma children abandoned by their mothers. These children, who grow up with their biological father's family, cannot be legally recognized as such, in the absence of the act of marriage.

Data show that in September 2009 a total of 1.875 Roma children were enrolled in the nine year education and 150 children had dropped out⁴⁴.

⁴⁴ Regional Educational Directorate.

One in about two Roma children of school age (6-16 years) has dropped out of school. 54% of Roma children in compulsory schooling age (6-16 years) have not completed any grade school. 43% of Roma children in the age group of 15-16 years are illiterate. The phenomenon is worse among Roma girls. The number of Roma girls who attend school after the age of 11 is significantly lower than that of Roma boys. The number of Roma girls who attend school until the age of 12 is 23% less than the boys.

In addition, Roma represent a target group for the employment promotion policies. They receive free vocational training and are given priority in employment programs. Roma attended free professional courses at a rate of 0.86% in 2007 and 0.81% in 2008⁴⁵.

Improvement of the socio-economic situation and the living standard of the Roma population is the focus of the Government's Program. Albania has designed and approved a National Strategy for Roma. The MLSAEO encompasses the Technical Secretariat for Roma, previously part of the State Social Service.

Albania adopted the Declaration on the "Roma Decade" by DCM No. 437, dated 08/04/2008. Currently, Albania is a member of the Decade for Roma Inclusion 2005-2015.

International organizations and NGOs involved with Roma, have made an important contribution in the implementation of the National Roma Strategy.

1.4.3 Disabled People

Data on disabled people show that the number of these individuals under the various state supported schemes has increased from year to year.

Table 15: Data on Disability

Year	Disabled Total	Of whom			Invalids (number)
		Blind	Para-tetraplegic	Mental-Physical disabled	
2007	55.754	10.407	2.046	43.301	40.120
2008	57.333	10.868	3.662	42.803	47.118
2009	59.919	11.129	4.560	44.230	51.483

Source: Administrative data from the State Social Service

Persons with disabilities are among the most vulnerable groups. It is equally important to provide these individuals with financial support from the state and to ensure their integration into all aspects of life. From year to year, there is growing interest and attention for these people. Along with the approval of the National Strategy and Action Plan for Disabled People on 7.01.2005, the National Council on Disability Issues was established by Decision no. 196, dated 12/12/2005. This Council is headed by the State Minister and is composed of seven ministers and five NGO representatives. The task of the council is to incorporate disability issues in policy making and to provide recommendations to lawmakers regarding disabilities.

The Technical Secretariat on Disability Issues was established at the MLSAEO by Decision no. 03/23/2006. The task of the secretariat is to monitor the implementation of the National Strategy on Disabled Persons.

During 2007 and 2008, secondary legislation was drafted and adopted or improvements of the existing ones were effected, aimed at increasing cash payments for people with disabilities, for the caretakers

⁴⁵ Data from the Roma Technical Secretariat at the MLSAEO.

of the disabled paraplegics and tetraplegics, and inclusion of persons from this category in the social schemes. Some of the relevant pieces of legislations are given below:

- o DCM No. 78, dated 7.02.2007, "On the amount, criteria and procedures for eligibility under a special hygiene and care package for paraplegics and tetraplegics";
- o DCM No. 1690, dated 12.17.2008 "On some amendments and additions to Decision Nr.618, dated 7.09.2006 of the Council of Ministers 'On the determination of criteria, documentation and amount of payment for persons with disabilities'";
- o DCM No. 328, dated 12.03.2009 "On some additions to the Decision no. 618, dated 7.09.2006, the Council of Ministers "On the determination of criteria, documentation and amount of payment for persons with disabilities", as amended;
- o Instruction no. 1934, dated 18/10/2007 of the MLSAEO "On the procedures for placement in public and private foster care institutions".

It is envisaged that at the end of 2009 the Government will sign the UN Convention on "The Rights of Persons with Disabilities" and ratify it within 2010. As part of the efforts to align the Albanian legislation with the international laws and towards the implementation of the Strategy on Disabled People, the country is planning to prepare a comprehensive law for on all categories of disability. In accordance with DCM No. 1104, dated 30.07.2008, the relevant authorities have prepared a draft document on foster and custody services which is currently sent to interest groups for their feedback and input⁴⁶.

Services for people with disabilities are offered by both public and non public institutions. From year to year, there is an increase and a further spreading of these services. In 2007, there were eight public residential and day care centers which accommodated 325 persons, of whom 154 females. In addition, there are 15 non- public residential and day care centers serving 660 persons, of whom 377 women. In 2008, there were 11 public centers housing 381 people and

14 non-public centers with an accommodation capacity of 1.210 people, of whom 709 women.

From the geographical point of view, these institutions are located in Tirana, Shkodra, Lezha, Berat, Korça, Vlora and Durrësi.

The entire residential service for disabled people until the year 2002 was constructed according to the two classical forms: the residential service institutions and development centers on the one side, and the governmental program of economic support to these persons, providing disability payments and, in certain cases, even care taking payments, on the other side. The recent process of de- institutionalization intends to move beneficiaries of residential services into alternative services such as family-type homes, semi-independent living, and social apartments. For example, in Shkodra, six family-type homes have been established, with adequate workshops and other facilities for reintegration activities, housing 54 children. This model is funded by NGO budget resources.

To improve the quality of life for persons with disabilities, specialized educators are trained by the Unit of Specialized Pedagogy at the University of Vlora. Professionals trained in this unit are employed in the facilities serving disabled people, which is a step forward towards the improvement of the quality of these services. A case in point is the Center "LIRA" in Berat.

Currently, service standards for disabled persons, both in public and private facilities offering residential and day care services, are being developed and implemented. Licensing and inspection procedures are put in place to ensure the quality of service for these categories.

Overall state budget allocation for disability and care taking payments in 2008 was 7.328.764.00 lek, which is distributed as disability payment to 57.333 individuals and as caretaker payment to 13.247 persons. By comparison, in 2007, the allocation was 6.318.217,00 lek and was given out as disability benefit to 55.754 people and as care taker payment to 12.842 persons. Disability allocation for 2009 amounts to 10.200.000,00 lek.

A 10% indexation of disability benefits was effected in 2008 for 57,000 people. An additional allocation of 300 million lek is earmarked for

⁴⁶ SOROS, "Annual Monitoring Report on Albania's Progress towards Stabilisation and Association."

this category, specifically to increase by 33 % their hygiene and sanitation package, i.e., from 9.000,00 to 12.000,00 lek monthly⁴⁷.

With regard to employment, disabled people belong to special groups which occupy a special place in employment policies and public funded professional training. They are given priority in employment promotion programs and the advantage of free professional training in public vocational training centers. During 2007, 29 people with disabilities were trained free of charge; in 2008 26 people received free vocational training in the public vocational training centers.

With regard to promoting employment of people with disabilities, mention can be made of the UNICEF funded initiative which is implemented by the Don Bosco Social Centre in Tirana. YAPS (Youth Albania Parcel Service), is a social business project dedicated to training and employment of disabled youth.

In addition, inclusion of persons with disabilities in the social life, in particular in the labor market, is closely linked with the existence of suitable infrastructure, both externally and internally, which is hardly available in Albania. However, the public vocational training centers are being re-constructed to create special conditions for these people. The two centers currently undergoing reconstruction are Fier and Elbasan. Reconstruction will further extend to other centers. The Ministry of Public Works, Transport and Communications, under the Strategy for People with Disabilities, is implementing the Project "Removing obstacles from the life of disabled persons". As part of the project guidelines and regulations are being drafted towards the gradual removal of existing architectural, urban planning and transport obstacles and the prevention of new barriers.

1.4.4. Supporting the vulnerable and low income elderly

Among the groups and social strata in need, the elderly⁴⁸ currently constitute the largest and likely to grow group. The main challenges in respect of this group remains the improved

access to public services, increased participation in democratic processes at national and local level, stronger voice of this in improving laws and bylaws affecting their living standard and quality of life, the creation of legal and institutional mechanisms enabling the exchange of international best practices, implementation of the relevant legislation and honoring international commitments of the Albanian state in relation to this age group⁴⁹.

Various studies show that in Albania, in the last two decades, the increase of the elderly number is associated with a number of serious problems related both to the system transformations in the health and public sector, in general, and to the transformation of the role of family and demographic changes, in particular. The Albanian population is characterized by a rapid growth, which is not the case in other European countries. However, the demographic perspective is a source of concern: a small population of about 3.2 million is bound to grow old rapidly. The situation becomes even more disturbing due the reduction of working-age population as a result of immigration and the increasing number of old age people⁵⁰.

In 2002, the retirement age was raised to 65 for men and 60 for women. Consequently, since 2002, the number of employed persons aged 55-65 has increased. Unemployment among this age group is often long-term unemployment and ends with their ultimate withdrawal from the labor market. This refers to the difficulties that they encounter to find a new job, when they loose the previous job.

The greatest number of employed and self-employed old people is in the private agricultural sector, due to emigration and internal migration. This has led to a high concentration of elderly people in rural areas, where they are forced to work to provide income and to supplement the very low pensions received from the state. This is most apparent in the southeastern area of the country and in some other mountainous areas.

The private non-agricultural sector employs a significant number of elderly people due to their experience which is often considered an advantage. If they are pushed out of the labor market, this is because they often costly

⁴⁷ MLSAEO

⁴⁸ For a definition of the term "elderly" read below.

⁴⁹ MLSAEO "The Inter Sectoral Strategic Document and Action Plan on Ageing (2007-2013).

⁵⁰ Elsa Fornero, Pier Marco Ferraresi, A Study of Albania: "Pension Reform and Development of Pension Systems: an Assessment of the World Bank Assistance" 2007, World Bank, Washington D.C.

(expensive) and lack flexibility to adapt to the new technological and organizational changes. However, old people are also involved in the informal market, because employers do not pay social security fees for this category. Participation of persons aged about 60 in the informal market is low, but the rate increases immediately for those over 60 years.

Raising retirement age for women and men, respectively 60 and 65 years (up from 55 and 60 in 2002) will temporarily slow the trend of the increasing number of retirees for the period 2012-2014 and will maintain the balance between contributors and beneficiaries, by extending the base of contributors.

In 2009, pensioners in Albania account for 13% of the total population, and 68% of the population over 60. The population benefitting from the Social Security Scheme is 17%. The trend of the pension scheme is not optimistic. Dependency ratio in 2007 was 0.61%; replacement ratios are 43,85% in the urban areas and 23,47% in the rural areas⁵¹.

In 2008, the minimum urban pension was 9.515,00 lek and minimum rural pension was 6.200,00 lek, representing an improvement to 2007 minimum pensions: 8.650,00 lek and 4.520,00 lek. However, the elderly income remains low in comparison with the necessary expenses. Both the urban and rural pensions include additional compensations for energy, prices, inflation, etc. Food consumption expenditure per capita, in real terms, in 2008 (2002 prices) increased from 9.105,00 in 2005 lek to 9.731,00 in 2008.

The nominal deficit of the pension system in the last five years (taking into account the percentage of contributions collected for the pension scheme alone), shows an average of 0.8% of the GDP⁵².

Based on the study conducted in 2008 by MLSAEO: "Current problems of the third age", 83.1% of respondents said that their income was insufficient. Of these respondents 88.3% lived in the rural areas and 76.4% in the urban areas. This

coincides with findings from other studies, which had noted that poverty in the rural areas is higher than in the urban areas.

With respect to social services offered to this age, although they are increasing from year to year, they remain insufficient to meet the demands of this age. In 2008, there were 12 public residential and day care centers for senior citizens which were attended by 698 people and 10 non public residential and day care centers, accommodating 1,045 persons. By comparison, in 2007, the numbers were 8 public and 8 non public facilities.

In 2009, the package of health services for third age was approved. This package includes preventive care and education of patients and family to monitor motor and physical activity, sight and hearing senses, mental capacity and counseling with regard to mentally stimulating activities.

In addition, included in the package is the periodic monitoring of nutrition, counseling on healthy eating, measures to prevent ischemic heart and brain diseases, exercising and intake of calcium and vitamin D to prevent osteoporosis as well as monitoring and periodic counseling of the elderly and their families with regard to violence, and/or abuse with the elderly.

DCM No.763, dated 11.06.2009 was passed to adopt the Inter Sectoral Policy Paper on Third Age, which is designed to improve the socio-economic status of old people based on the country's current conditions, as well as on documents, recommendations and international instruments. The authority responsible for implementation of this document is the MLSAEO.

1.4.5. Support for young people in need

Drugs

It is estimated that there are 10.000 to 30.000 drug users in Albania (3.000-4.000 are considered to use injecting drugs or IDU). For the greater part of the IDU, the drug of choice is heroin.

A survey⁵³ conducted in three cities (Tirana,

⁵¹ EC Directorate/General Directorate on Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, "Social Inclusion and Social Protection in Albania" (Executive Summary).

⁵² Idem.

⁵³ WHO, Regional Office for Europe, website: http://www.euro.who.int/aids/ctryinfo/overview/20061127_1

Shkodra and Vlora), provided an update on the health consequences of drug use, based on drug users tests. Data showed that more than 400 drug users were HIV positive, while about 40% had Hepatitis B and 3% Hepatitis C. Also, the survey showed that more than two thirds of drug users shared needles and syringes.

Drug users are of young age. According to data collected by the Centre "Action Plus", based on the customers who visit the center, it is noted that the starting age is 13-14 years old and most of them have a history of 8-10 years of several drug use. Initially, they used light drugs and then passed to heavy drugs such as heroin, the injectable type⁵⁴.

In 2007, the Toxicology Clinical Service registered 108 new patients for treatment, out of 856 requests received. 96.4% of patients had come of their own will; 3.6% were referred by other agencies such as health care, police and prisons. They come from all areas of Albania. However, there is predominance (70%) of Tirana, along with the central and central-west part of the country.

25.9% of the patients admitted for treatment displayed age extremes from younger than 15 years (1.4%) to older than 40 years (0.7%). 75% of the total number of patients are 21-30 years of age. Of the admitted patients, 95.3% were males and 4.7% were females.

Regarding the type of drugs used by patients undergoing treatment, opiates (mainly heroin) are the most commonly used: cannabis 5.6%, cocaine 2.2%, benzodiazepines 0.2%. 20.6% of the patients had used more than one kind of drug. There are no accurate data regarding the number of drug induced deaths. Over 2005-2008, the Toxicology Clinical Service reported four deaths.

In connection with services provided to drug users, there is a public specialized center, the Toxicology Clinical Service, with 15 beds, covering the entire country.

With regard to services offered by NGOs, mention can be made:

- "Emanuel" Center, founded in 2000, with 12 beds for long-term residential treatment.
- Association "Action Plus" is involved in the field of harm reduction. It offers a three-level service for drug users and young people.
- Association "Stop Aids", with concentration in the field of drugs and harm reduction.

HIV / AIDS

Based on the number of persons diagnosed and reported, Albania remains a low prevalence country of HIV infection. However, there is a tendency for the number to grow and estimates suggest that there is a large number of undiagnosed cases. On the other hand, the various estimates indicate that our country could face a rapid increase in the number of cases, if appropriate measures are not taken to prevent the epidemic, in particular, among high risk population groups.

From the first HIV case reported in 1992, by the end of 2006, 211 HIV cases were reported⁵⁵. 72 of the cases involved AIDS, including 35 people who died. In 2006, 32 HIV cases were reported, 15 AIDS cases and 7 deaths among the AIDS cases. Of the 32 people with HIV, 21 were males. The main route of HIV / AIDS transmission is through sexual intercourse (about 90% of reported cases) and the age group most affected is 30-39 years old. Most of the reported cases had contracted the virus abroad.

The number of individuals affected by HIV, over 1993-2007, was only 255. Until November 2008, the total number of cases with HIV / AIDS was 291⁵⁶. In 2008 alone, 35 new cases of HIV / AIDS were discovered⁵⁷. Men continue to make up the largest number of cases with 69% (202 cases). However, there is an increase of HIV positive women with 31% (89 cases). Among the new cases diagnosed in 2008, 15 are women.

One of the groups most affected by HIV / AIDS are young people and this is due to a number of factors, such as lack of access to information,

⁵⁴ Action Plus, "The Drug Phenomenon", 2009

⁵⁵ WHO, Regional Office for Europe, web-site: http://www.euro.who.int/aids/ctryinfo/overview/20061127_1

⁵⁶ Administrative data from the Public Health Institute

⁵⁷ Idem

lack of adequate sexual education, immigration, reluctance to use contraceptives - related to the widespread inequality between males and females, increased intravenous drug use, etc. Increased numbers of young people of critical age (16-24 years) who drop out of school, young people who migrate and changes in the sexual norms are factors which add to those mentioned above and enhance juvenile vulnerability to HIV / AIDS in Albania. According to epidemiological data on the HIV reported cases, about 70% of people with HIV infection are up to 34 years.

Since 1997, the National Program on HIV / AIDS / STI has become operational at the Institute of Public Health, with the objective to coordinate the national response to HIV / AIDS.

Adoption of the Law Nr. 9952, dated 14.07.2008 "On prevention and control of HIV / AIDS" and the review of "National Strategy for Prevention and Control of HIV / AIDS Spread", indicate the seriousness of purpose of Government, and MoH to prevent and control HIV / AIDS.

From 2007, with the financial support of the Global Fund, Centers on Counseling and Voluntary Testing were established in a number of districts (Tirana, Durrës, Vlorë, Fier, Korce, Lezha, Shkodra, Gjirokastra, Berat and Elbasan). Supply of this service has led to increasing numbers of people who undergo voluntary testing. Of 250 persons tested voluntarily in 2005, this number increased to 2.184 or nearly 10 folds in 2008.

The National Strategy for Prevention and Control of HIV / AIDS Spread in Albania 2004-2010, was born as a result of the incidence of several factors such as: increased number of diagnosed cases, change of behavior patterns among the population, as such tendency to have sex at a younger age, to use drugs, etc.

The situation of young people out of social care

In comparison with other countries, including those in the region, Albania has a small number of young people who drop out of social care (62.4 per 100 thousand people in the age group of 0-17 years). Notwithstanding the small number, this category experiences the greatest difficulties. They suffer multiple discrimination and disadvantages. Many of them have low education levels and remain unemployed for a long period of time. Most are homeless and at risk of being

involved in criminal activities or fall victim to the perpetrators and traffickers, while a considerable percentage manifests emotional, behavioral problems and mental health problems. These are due to the consequences of lack or inappropriate services from the responsible structures.⁵⁸

Social services for young people without parental care are part of poverty reduction and social care program. The legislation enabling the implementation of the programs mentioned above was designed in accordance with the international acts ratified by the Albanian Government and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Although there is a legal and institutional framework to ensure the welfare and child protection, it still needs improvements in terms of strengthened focus on young people without parental care, especially those who drop out of foster care, and the challenges that they face at the phase of life from 14-18, but also during and after the age of 18.

Experience in residential foster care plays a key role in the lives and futures of these young people who drop out or leave the service. Poor support services for young people (14-18 years old and after 18 years) once they leave the institution, produce negative effects in their lives in all planes, such as education, employment, housing, etc. This not only reinforces disadvantages and multiple exclusions, but is also a violation of many basic rights. Lack of accurate data on their numbers, their whereabouts and ways in which they try to cope with their problems and needs, shows that they are not yet a priority in policy formulation.

Young people leaving foster care face multiple disadvantages in starting an independent life, compared with their peers living with their family. Evidence based on their experiences shows that the quality of care and support they receive while in foster care and when they leave there, is an important factor in their future achievements. Young people raised in public foster care, have a poor performance record following departure with the institutions: they experience long-term poverty, social isolation, poor health, in many cases they become regular users of banned substances, remain homeless and unemployed for long terms, have low levels of education, and are at high risk for becoming

⁵⁸ "SOS Children's Villages", "Young people without parental care – practices, legislation and rights", (October 2009)

involved in unlawful activities and becoming abused by perpetrators and traffickers.

In 2007, there were 11 requests from public residential institutions to transfer young people to other facilities run by NGOs, including those who can not attend secondary education. Data show that 197 young people over the age of 18 are currently living in secondary school dormitories, 900 have left the dormitories, 3,356 (18-25 years old) receive economic aid and 217 (above 25 years) are unemployed. Young people who leave foster care embark on independent life without proper education, without work and without shelter. Therefore, they are at high risk for becoming involved in criminal activities or falling victim to traffickers and other delinquencies. Many continue to run their lives in poverty and social exclusion. Removal from care is defined at age 14 years or until age 17 if the young person has not yet finished nine year school. Legislation states that individualized plans should be designed for every young person under 30 years old, to determine opportunities for education, scholarship awards and housing alternatives. Employment offices should deal with education conditions, scholarship awards, placement in dormitories, health care and free public transport for young people who have been recognized as orphans.

Young people without parental care, above 18, receive economic aid (25 Euro per month) after completing secondary or higher education, up until they find a job. Non Profit Organizations offer greater support for these young people, through scholarships, reunion with their biological family, etc. Associations of young people aged 15-19, are entitled to benefit from support programs until they attain 24 years. Those who do not attend school, support is available through training and professional courses.

There is a great number of actors at central and local government level which are involved with this category of people. However, cooperation and coordination among these various structures remain problematic as regards implementation of responsibilities and information sharing. In addition, allocation of financial resources for youth services is inadequate. Consequently, it does not bring essential results and improvements in their independent life. There are, however, positive experiences from structures involved with young people after they leave residential

services. These experiences are mainly derived from NGOs, such as *Tag Center* in Tirana, the *House of Hope* and a *Different Vision* in Elbasan, *Maddonnina della Grappa* in Shkodra, *SOS Children Villages*, etc. These are valuable models which add value to the types of services that promote inclusion, independence and respect for the rights of young people in foster care. It should be noted that these models encounter difficulties despite the nobleness of their mission and their dedication to meet the needs of young people without parental care.

Some recommendations regarding the development of services for young people who leave foster care are: establishment of services during and after the departure of young people from institutions, development of tracking programs following departure, extension of stay time in foster care until the end of secondary education; establishment of day care centers to offer services for youth who depart with foster care (15-18 years), and strengthening active employment policies for this category aged 18 and above.

In terms of improving the operation of public actors, it is recommended: drafting of new legislation to regulate post foster care services and to clearly define the responsibilities of various actors, institutional capacity building to monitor living standards of young people with foster care background once they transit in semi-independent or full independent, addressing their needs under the National Strategy for Children, institutionalization of positive models implemented by NGOs, creation of clubs / centers with the participation by young people with and without parental care, in order to increase social coexistence and reduce social stigma against the latter; strengthen advocacy for increased allocations to cover the needs of children and young people.

As regards other service operators for young people, relevant recommendations relate to the opening of youth community facilities, strengthening of relationships among organizations, governmental actors and donors; replication of the Youth Communities model, training of staff in residential institutions to implement quality standards, regulating young people's departure from foster care, advocating against social stigma towards children and young people without parental care, etc.

1.4.6. *Support for women in need*

Women and girls represent one of the main groups at risk and with social problems. One of the main reasons for lack of attention to their situation is the high unemployment rate in the country, which forces a large portion of women to seek employment in the private/informal sector. Women unemployment rate remains higher than men's. In 2007, women unemployment rate was 12.2% versus 14.4% among men and, in 2008 it was 13.5% versus 12.5%. The Albanian labor market continues to be characterized by long-term unemployment. In 2007, long-term unemployed belongs mostly to women with 65.1% with only a slight decline in 2008, 64.9%. However, the figure remains at high levels.

In the recent years, there is an increase of the number of households headed by women. This is due mainly to widowed, divorced and women with husbands in emigration. Women heads receive financial support or family pension only if the husband was employed. Women as single parents is a new phenomenon in Albania due to men's emigrating abroad. Women heads cope with formidable challenges, unemployment and lack of support with child rearing. Balancing the role of head of household and child rearing alone is a difficult task. Therefore, the government should install adequate social protection schemes.

According to a study by the Center for Advanced Studies: "Care taking as unpaid labor – the invisible weight carried by women", the interviewed women responded that: out of 240 minutes in the morning, 134 minutes are spent cleaning the home; in the timeline of 11:00-15:00, the greatest part of the time is spent cooking lunch; over 15:00-19:00, they spent their time watching TV or resting as well as serving lunch to family members: whereas in the time interval of 19:00-21:00, the greatest part of the time is spent caring for the children, cooking dinner and doing various housework.

Because of the unequal divisions of family responsibilities, women are overburdened with unpaid housework which has to do with home care and cleaning, children's care, child education and school progress, care for other members of the family. This leads to little free time for women and girls and affects directly their employment opportunities, while leaving few options for

political and professional career. This position opens the way for informal employment, job discrimination, domestic violence, etc. Family responsibilities force women and girls to accept part time jobs and jobs that do not involve commuting, long hours and advanced professional knowledge. Consequently, these groups of vulnerable women receive low wages, do not have secure employment, and do not benefit from the social security and health schemes.

With regard to residential and day care social centers for women in need, in 2007 there was only one public center housing 19 females. The year 2008 offers the same view, albeit with enhanced services for women from non-public residential and day care centers. In 2007, there were 15 non public facilities, whereas in 2008 the number of centers rose to 21 and the number of beneficiaries to 3603.

To achieve effective social policy and support for women and girls in need, it is important to increase women's representation in the political life and the country's leadership. It is also important to enhance understanding of and implement gender budgeting at all levels of government, in particular at the local level. The more women in politics and leadership, the more gender-sensitive programs will be drafted and implemented. Budget formulations with equal participation of men and women, both at the central and local level, will play a key role in implementing programs and project of which men and women will benefit equally.

Increased Social care for women is one of the objectives of the National Strategy for Gender Equality and Fight against Domestic Violence, adopted on 19/12/2007. Under this strategy, local government officials were trained on gender issues and the drafting and implementation of programs for women and girls in need. These trainings were carried out jointly by the State Social Service and UNFPA,

In the context of Labor Code review, gender improvements will be effected in accordance with EU directives. These gender sensitive interventions were developed with UNIFEM support, which provided for technical assistance and foreign expertise.

1.4.7. Domestic violence

Domestic violence as a phenomenon is present in the Albanian society, despite changes in mentality. Referring to data derived from the "National population-based survey - Domestic Violence in Albania 2008", of the 2.590 women surveyed, 50,6% reported that they never experienced emotional abuse in their marital relationship or other intimate relationships 39,1% said they experienced psychological abuse, 31,2% experienced physical violence and 12,7% have experienced sexual violence. At least 56% of women had experienced some form of domestic violence measured by the survey.

The adoption of Law no. 9690 "On measures against domestic violence", the drafting and enforcement of secondary laws to make this law effective, the adoption and implementation of National Strategy on gender Equality and Fight Against Domestic Violence, and the establishment of newly conceived structures at the central and local level to prevent domestic violence, have led to gradual improvements accompanied by an increasingly growing number of women who report violence. Nonetheless, the number of those who experience violence every day without daring to report it continues to be much larger.

With regard to building awareness and educating children and young people in all educational institutions, the Institute of Curricula and Training has established working groups to design new curricula and assess/improve the existing ones. Schools are instructed to address the problems of violence against children under the various extracurricular classes in basic education.

At the level of Regional Educational Directorates and Educational Offices, as well as at school level, in accordance with the MoES Regulation No. 8373, dated 11/26/2006, the annual and monthly plans include activities and events addressing the problems of violence at home, the school and at community level.

At higher education level, the social subjects include domestic violence as a very important topic.

Building human capacity to address domestic violence

With regard to teacher training, a vertical training system is institutionalized. Official letter Nr. 22, dated 08.18.2009, authorizes the use of funds to train teaching staff in pre-university education. The vertical training system provides opportunities for all teachers and education workers to receive training, including on topics related to violence.

The Ministry of Health, in collaboration with the UNFPA, in collaboration with the National Centre for Social Studies (NCSS), is preparing to begin the training of 1.800 health workers (general practitioners and specialist nurses) on issues related to domestic violence.

The School of Magistrates, in cooperation with UNDP, under the program "Domestic violence" trained 84 judges and prosecutors, and under the "Gender" program provided training to 79 judges and prosecutors.

In 2008, the Department of Police Training at the General Directorate of State Police has carried out a series of training on "The role of police in circumstances of domestic violence", in which 690 police officers were trained. Training of police officers will continue in 2009, too.

The General Bailiff's Directorate, in cooperation with and the financial support of the OSCE Presence in Albania, conducted training sessions on Law No. 9669, dated 12.18.2006 "On measures against domestic violence". This training focused on the bailiff's duty to enforce protection orders immediately in accordance with Article 23/6 of the Law, and take appropriate action.

Forensic medicine on its part, has trained a total of 14 forensic experts under the domestic violence program.

All police departments at district level have received supplies of the Manual developed jointly by the Criminal Investigation Department and the Department of Order and Public Security "On standard procedures to be implemented by State Police members in relation to taking measures to prevent violence and protect and care for victims of the violence". The State Police specialists and officers have been received instructions on understanding and implementing these procedures.

In the context of dissemination of information on the rights of victims of domestic violence and the procedural guarantees they are entitled to in the justice system, leaflets are prepared with knowledge on these rights and are located in areas easily accessible by the public.

Regarding legal defense for victims of domestic violence the Ministry of Interior, General Police Directorate and Department for Crime Investigation collect information on the situation and the measures taken to prevent and reduce domestic violence. Thus, the data reported by State Police in 2008 showed 822 cases of domestic violence of which 77 cases under 18 years old and that 377 requests for protection orders were compiled and submitted to the courts. The Ministry of Justice has reported 456 cases of domestic violence, which were adjudicated by the Court. Of these, for 162 cases Protection Orders were released. The Ministry of Health reports 96 cases in which afflicted patients visited and received proper medical care at facilities of the Primary Health Service.

It should be noted that from year to year there is an increase in the number of reports. Thus, in the first 9 months of 2009, State Police coped with a total of 915 cases of domestic violence, of which 640 cases ended with requests "For the release of immediate Protection Order" Or "For the release of Protection Order".

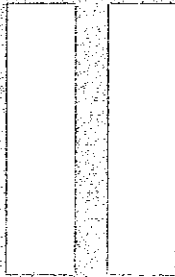
Local police structures have taken measure to execute the orders and in almost all cases, victims were granted the necessary protection.

During January to April of 2009, 370 legal counseling and 395 psychosocial counseling took place. The Court of the Judicial District of has released eight Immediate Protection Orders/Protection Order. In addition, 33 case files have been prepared for women and girls receiving free legal aid and psychosocial support.

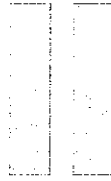
Social services in support of victims of violence

Social support for victims of domestic violence has been carried out mainly by NGOs, through projects supported by international organizations.

Under a UNDP funded project, the MLSAEO has offered the premises to establish shelters for victims of domestic violence. This is the first time the government grants support for this type of service, which will be followed by other initiatives, towards meeting the EC standard of one shelter for 7.500 people. It is important to note that this shelter will serve as a model to be replicated by local government units across the country.



COMMENTS/GENERAL CRITICAL ISSUES,
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



COMMENTS/GENERAL CRITICAL ISSUES, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1. General assessment of progress towards achievement of objectives under the national strategy on social inclusion

The monitoring of NSSI implementation over 2007 until June 2009 shows that there is increased involvement by all institutions at central and local government towards its implementation and efforts are being made to achieve the goals under this strategy. This is visible in the table of indicators, which show improvements from year to year. However, improvements are not uniform and stable in all directions.

Commitment is evident in several ways.

Improvement of the existing legal framework through the drafting and adoption of new laws, and amendments to the existing ones, in accordance with EU directives, under the Stabilization and Association Agreement, aiming at improving the living conditions and levels of income for groups in need. Over the year 2007 until September 2009, strategies and related medium-term action plans have been approved; new laws have been developed and secondary legislation has been passed to ensure the implementation of these laws, such as the one to reduce the informal labor market; to protect the rights of children in need; to increase women participation in the labor market by creating opportunities for vocational training and benefiting from employment promoting programs; to improve income for disabled people, elderly, families in need, victims of violence and trafficking and other vulnerable categories; to reduce poverty levels; to improve the quality of health care and the infrastructure of health and education facilities; to improve access to drinking water; to enhance housing opportunities for vulnerable groups, etc.

The law drafting and amending initiatives were carried out through broad based participatory processes, based on international documents and in accordance with obligations deriving from EU directives and recommendations.

Despite the good job in improving the existing legislation in support of vulnerable groups, deficiencies are noted in implementing these laws in practice. This is due to various reasons such as lack of monitoring mechanisms; the non application of appropriate sanctions; poor access to information; lack of inter-institutional coordination; lack of human capacities, etc.

Strengthening the policy making and implementation structures involved with support for vulnerable groups and strengthening human resource capacities, in particular at the local level.

Under the NSSI and other strategies on which it is based, appropriate structures have been established to develop policies and/or implement and monitor their materialization in real life, while the existing ones have been upgraded and strengthened. Special importance has been given to setting up such structures at the local level and to strengthening cooperation and coordination between institutions

at all levels of government. Relevant training programs have been designed and implemented to strengthen human capacity, but more should be done in this direction. In addition, more efforts and resources should be invested to improve logistics, to increase the speed of communication, exchange of information, increase interaction with the best contemporary experience, etc.

Implementation of concrete measures towards achieving objectives under the NSSI

To increase the employment of women, the main focus has been to develop programs to promote employment for unemployed female job-seekers, as well as professional training courses to increase their professional skills to better meet the contemporary requirements of the labor market. Allocations for employment promotion and professional training programs have increased, but this is not sufficient and should be viewed in tandem with other factors hindering women employment. Efforts have been made to establish new courses to respond to labor market requirements, but various interest groups have low access to relevant information. Efficient means of information and awareness-building should be used, in particular, to ensure participation and involvement in the above programs of specific groups such as raped women, women who are heads of households, Roma and trafficked women. On-line information has improved and increased, but its efficacy must be viewed in context of the concrete conditions of our country, which are characterized by low access to new information technologies and by unequal distribution of these services. It should be mentioned, however, that there are places, in rural and suburban areas, in which there is no room for the word computerization. In rural areas, too, despite the fact that the population is considered as self-employed, there is a need for programs to promote women's entrepreneurship, though encouraging them to start up and run family businesses or economic activities that are complementary with the agricultural sector, such as tourism, food processing, handicrafts, beekeeping, etc.

One of the factors influencing the low participation of women in the labor market is the limited number of social service facilities and the unequal division of household responsibilities. Under these circumstances, policymakers may consider the enforcement of appropriate working hours for women.

With regard to informality, from year to year contributors of social security from the private sector have been increasing. During the years 2007 and 2008, there have been fluctuations in the number of social security contributors from the public sectors due to reduction in the workforce and the privatization of several state owned companies. There is also a tangible increase in the number of persons who have entered the voluntary insurance scheme. The periodic reduction of amounts payable for social security contributions and the adoption of such measures as the lowering of interest rates for delayed social and health security contributions have brought about an increase in the number of contributors, leading to the shrinking of the informal economy.

To understand better the situation in the informal market, in 2007 INSTAT launched the Survey of the Labor Force, which is conducted yearly. However, the implementation of this survey and the processing of results have been delayed.

Efforts have been made to strengthen the Labor Inspectorate, in order to enhance the implementation of the labor legislation in all economic activities through strict controls exercised by the inspection service structures. It is also necessary to build partnerships among the responsible institutions, such as the Social Insurance Institute and the Tax Department, in order to avoid black labor.

Data analysis shows an increase from year to year of attention paid to education and vocational training, both by the public and private operators, in particular as regards vulnerable groups.

One of the future challenges remains the increase of enrollments in vocational secondary education. This type of education, which is offered to older students, should be linked with real employment prospects and at the same time should allow interested students to continue further up to more academic programs. This will positively influence the integration and socio-economic empowerment of excluded groups. Also, currently, the system of training and certification in vocational education is not sufficiently

oriented to new EU developments and standards. Enrollment in vocational education remains low. Vocational education should address the need for new professions in accordance with the new trends of market development. Vulnerable groups are in need of greater understanding and awareness of the opportunities available in terms of vocational education and training and employment. Therefore, a more efficient dissemination of information, in order to bring about higher enrollment and attendance rates should be designed and effected.

Despite efforts in recent years to match economic aid with the poverty distribution map, it still remains high in the northeastern rural parts of the country. Central budget transfers to local government units have been increasing, but still the amounts received in economic aid fail to cover the basic needs of individuals and families in terms of absolute poverty line (two dollars a day per person). At the same time, abuse with the scheme continues, which means that economic aid does not always contribute to poverty reduction, i.e., the main objective of this scheme.

The economic aid scheme has not been sufficiently alternated with labor and community services

Over the years, a lot has been done to improve legislation on social care services, both with regard to increasing the variety of these services and improving quality standards. However, the implementation of legislation remains a problem.

The process of decentralization of social care services is going on, but it is necessary to make sure that this process is accompanied by training and capacity building for NGO and LGU-s staff, to ensure a more efficient delivery of these services for all groups in need. In addition, there is still the need to further strengthen the cooperation of LGU-s with NGOs, businesses and media in response to the local needs of vulnerable groups.

A deep analysis of the health status of the population is considered difficult because of issues of reliability of statistical data. There is lack of information about some key health indicators. Desegregation of information by rural and urban population, age groups or gender, is not possible for most health indicators.

Despite progress made in terms of constructing a package of primary health care services for the population (this package was completed in February 2009 and is currently part of the contract with health centers), the absence of quality standards for primary health care and ambulatory services and the shortage of medical equipment, negatively affects response to the needs on a case by cases basis. There is an outstanding need not only improve the quality of health services, but also to increase medical coverage for rural, in particular, the mountainous areas.

Despite the various interventions made by the MoH in cooperation with various donors and local and foreign NGOs, as regards population's education on mother, child care, and adolescent care, knowledge and understanding at family and community levels remains at low levels, especially as regards the special needs of these vulnerable groups.

With regard to housing, data from recent observations show an increase of costs and a decline in the provision of housing for the poor. Another major problem for families with low income in Albania is the very low supply of apartment homes for rent on the market, at an estimated 5% compared to 30-50% in most of the market economies. In this area there is progress in the development and improvement of legislation, but implementation is poor due to lack of enforcement mechanisms.

In respect of legal aid, a step forward is represented by the adoption of Law no. 10039, dated 12.22.2008, "On legal aid" and the measures to establish the State Committee on Legal Aid, which warrant the rights of citizens, in particular children in conflict with the law. In this context, the state acknowledges the obligation to provide every suspect or accused child the kind of treatment that allows for a sense of dignity and integrity of the individual. In addition, the state has the obligation to provide free legal services and notify the child's relatives at the time of his/her arrest. Under Article 28 of CRC, the state has the responsibility to ensure the right of the child to education and to provide for the timely investigation and adjudication of children in pre-detention.

Free legal aid happens often to be both unprofessional and abusive. Lawyers choose the shortest path, that of not communicating

with the accused, but negotiating with the judge or prosecutor to the detriment of the child. For the effective application of free legal aid for the target groups and individuals identified by law, it is necessary to ensure the establishment and strengthening of monitoring mechanisms and to increase the role of the media and civil society.

Regarding infant mortality, despite the notable decline, it should be pointed out that about 40% of deaths occur during the first month of life and 25% during the first week. Therefore, greater priority should be given to improving care for women, before and after birth, as well as care for the infant in the first weeks and months of life.

The number of public and non-public residential and day care services for children, in particular disabled children, has increased, but the needs are much greater than the capacity provided by these centers, not to mention the total absence of such centers in certain areas. This points to the need to extend these services across the country, as well as to strengthen cooperation of LGU-s with NGOs and donors. Another aspect that needs increased attention is the improvement of capacities employed by these centers to provide treatment to children by age groups, especially as regards children's psychological and their special needs.

For children and youth in conflict with the law, since 2008, all minor detainees up to 18 years of age were held in the separate sections for children, established in 7 pre-detention facilities. In addition, pre-detained and detained children are provided with educational programs and vocational training courses.

In accordance with instruction No. 1934, dated 10/19/2007, procedures for obtaining legal custody of foster children are carried out sluggishly due to court delays, staff negligence and objective difficulties to contact the families of children placed in institutions.

As regards the Roma and Balkan-Egyptian population there is a stark lack of official information and statistical data. No comprehensive national study has been undertaken to gather detailed knowledge of their social, economic, legal and political situation. Efforts are being made to involve them in vocational training courses, in order to empower them to

respond to the requirements of the job market, but the beneficiaries' number is too low in relation to the needs of the population. This population is characterized by a low level of education, which constitutes an obstacle to their integration into the job market of today. Consequently, they represent the main contingent for employment in unskilled labor. This entails necessity for specific programs aimed at preparing them for employment and education. Emphasis should be placed on the education of Roma children, reduction of the dropout rate and the eradication of illiteracy. Poverty, unemployment and low educational levels of the Roma and Balkan Egyptian population increase their vulnerability to trafficking.

It seems that the difficulties in the social and economic life of the Roma population, among other things, are due to lack of civil registration, which hinders their access to the various services aimed at fighting poverty.

With respect to services provided to persons with disabilities, there is progress from year to year and an increase in the interest of state actors, as well as NGOs involved with this category. However, these services are only offered to a limited scale in comparison with the actual needs of the disabled people. Their territorial coverage is also limited. The running centers should improve the quality of service and the professional qualifications of the staff in order to ensure the implementation of the established standards.

Vocational training courses are also attended by people with disabilities. They benefit from the free of charge policy targeting groups in need. However, the number of people in this category who have benefited from employment promotion programs has not been recorded.

As of currently, Albania has no specially dedicated center for the professional training of persons with disabilities. Nor are there specially designed courses to be offered to them.

Law no. 7995, dated 20.09.1995 "Promoting employment" (as amended by Law No. 8444, dated 21.01.1999, Law No. 8862, dated 7.03.2002, and Law No. 9570, dated 3.07.2006) Article 15, defines the obligation of employers to hire disabled people. This article specifically states:

Employers who employ more than 24 people, are under the obligation to hire one disabled person for every 25 employees in its staff. Article 16 establishes incentives to encourage employment of disabled persons. In reality, Articles 15 and 16 of this Law have not been implemented. In addition, there is no information as to what steps the bodies charged with its implementation have been taking.

To ensure integration of disabled people in daily life and their participation in the labor market, it is necessary to remove gradually the existing architectural barriers, the obstacles in urban transport and to prevent the emergence of new obstacles. This requires rigorous implementation by the competent authorities of the Law on Urban Planning and its incorporation by LGU-s into the design and implementation of residential regulatory plans to, but also by private undertakings and companies.

Services for elderly people are mainly of the type of day care services, family type homes, clubs, entertainment and leisure time centers. Support for the elderly with community services is focused on: a) community based facilities, b) implementation of standards on residential and day care services. The range of social services for third age people is increasing, in particular those offered by private entities or NGO-s. However, such services still remain limited to the wide range of needs posed by this age group.

In terms of improving the quality of health care services for third age people, a positive step ahead is the adoption in 2009 of the package of health services for this age.

Adoption of the Inter-Sectoral Policy Paper on Third Age is an important achievement. However, this document has not yet started to be implemented. This is due to the lack of relevant structures and inadequate human capacity to implement the Action Plan's 2008-2011 under this policy document.

The current legal system does not sufficiently cover the needs of young people in foster care or those who depart from foster care institutions, in particular when they depart too early.

Children without parental care are not a priority in the current social protection system. In addition to lack of coordination between/among relevant structures, budget allocations are insufficient for

this group. Current legislation does not address the issues of the so-called "social orphans"; as a consequence they are not subject to the social services and assistance schemes.

Teenagers, who leave residential institutions, face even bigger difficulties in terms of housing, education, unemployment and potential involvement in risk behaviors. In addition, they have a greater tendency to indulge in drug, tobacco and alcohol use.

Young people in foster care suffer from social stigma and discrimination and apparently are without society support. There is a lack of information and public awareness regarding issues faced by these young people. The indifference of the community and the low level of trust by adults may lead young people to fall victim to violence and abuse. Children of Roma ethnicity, in particular, suffer limitations and exclusions.

Important steps towards gender integration are marked by the approval of National Strategy on Gender Equality and Fight Against Domestic Violence in December 2007; approval of the Law on Gender Equality in July 2008 and secondary legislation to allow its implementation; the establishment of the National Council for Gender Equality as a consultative body; and the strengthening of institutional mechanisms providing protection and support for women.

To integrate gender issues in public policy, and in particular at the local level, work has been launched to establish a network of gender employees in the line ministries, municipalities and communes. However, progress is slow due to lack of political will, insufficient financial resources and low awareness levels of decision makers on gender issues. Awareness campaigns are organized and trainings, publications, workshops, national conferences, seminars, etc. are being continuously held, but again the extent of public awareness and understanding on gender equality issues remains low.

Domestic violence is starting not to be a taboo which individuals were ashamed and afraid to disclose. Today there is a growing awareness across the society, in particular of women and girls, who, in most cases, are the victims of this violence which manifests itself in the various forms.

Important legislative, institutional and executive steps have been taken towards the large scale prevention of this phenomenon in the Albanian society, such as the establishment at the MLSAEO in 2008 of the sector on Measures Against Domestic Violence; the adoption of bylaws to give effect to Law No. 9690 "On measures Against Domestic Violence"; the approval of the National Strategy on Gender Equality and Fight Against Domestic Violence; the establishment of structures to prevent and protect the victims of domestic violence in the police, health, the judiciary and other institutions. In addition, training programs have been developed with the representatives of institutions responsible for implementing the Law against Domestic Violence.

Despite an increase in the number of reports filed and Defense Warranties released, there is still a lack of inter-institutional coordination in the fight against domestic violence and protection of its victims. There is no database on domestic violence at the national level, which would help in understanding the real situation, in establishing a more efficient cooperation between/among actors charged with this task, such as police, health institutions, the judiciary, social services, educational institutions, media etc. Statistical data are reported separately by each sector, such as police, health and judiciary, and may often overlap with one another.

Under the National Strategy on Gender Equality and Fight against Domestic Violence, the Local Government Units should have activated the 24-hour hotline for violence reports. Services in support of victims of violence are in limited numbers and are provided only by NGOs thanks to the grants that they receive. The establishment of the National Shelter for victims of domestic violence by the government with UNDP support is not over yet. In accordance with Law No. 9669, dated 12.18.2006 "On measures Against Domestic Violence", these shelters should be established in each region. Considerable efforts have been made to raise public awareness towards preventing this phenomenon both by state structures and NGOs. However, awareness campaigns should be continuous, coordinated and not concentrated in certain periods of time, and should involve and address all social groups.

The media, too, should play a greater role in terms of awareness and information for all

stakeholders and on all issues related to domestic violence and support for victims.

2.2. Critical issues

During the monitoring of the NSSI several critical issues were identified. Given the extent of their influence on the achievement of the goals under the NSSI and the future of its implementation, these issues deserve special consideration:

Lack of statistical data. Availability of statistical data is a basic condition to develop adequate and successful policies, and a necessary condition for the monitoring process. Although this strategy is accompanied by a list of monitoring indicators, it is difficult to determine them, which affects the carrying out of an accurate assessment of the situation regarding the implementation of the objectives under the NSSI and their outcomes in favor of the vulnerable groups. Statistical problems vary from the total lack of one or several statistical categories, poor statistics, delayed reporting of data which are often contradictory, lack of infrastructure for data publication and periodic reporting by the relevant institutions. The problem of statistics is a problem identified in the NSSI and is responsible for the defects in the monitoring of the implementation of other strategies that have served as a source for the drafting of the NSSI.

Drawbacks in the inter-institutional coordination and cooperation with other partners such as NGOs, international organizations and the media. The design and implementation of a strategy to achieve the established objectives should be a participatory, transparent and open process. The monitoring of the NSSI has increased the commitment of responsible institutions to attain the objectives of their area. However, shortcomings are noted in the inter-institutional coordination. Although efforts have been made to establish coordination mechanisms such as inter-institutional working groups, consultative councils, institution of joint cooperation agreements, etc, still there is negligence, lingering, lack of information exchange in the process of implementing the NSSI. In addition, governmental institutions and agencies should pay closer attention to the important role of civil society and interest groups in the social inclusion efforts.

Lack of resources. NSSI stems from other strategies. However, almost every strategy is under funded in terms of allocations that should be made to enable the implementation of Action Plans and the achievement of goals. Budget allocation is an instrument which facilitates the measurability of objectives and results.

Shortage of human resources and unsatisfactory professional qualifications. The implementation of the NSSI requires adequately trained staff who understand the policies, the ways and means to implement them, who are aware of the problems faced by vulnerable groups in the areas of their competence. To hire adequately trained staff, rigorous recruitment policies should be followed, increased investments should be made to build human capacity directly involved in the implementation of policies supporting vulnerable groups and measures should be taken to ensure sustainability of the system, free from political changes. This issue is more tangible at the level of municipalities and communes, where social inclusion policies are implemented and where public expectations are vested.

of increasing employment mediation, to become an important player in real employment, in particular as regards women.

- Regional and Local Employment Offices should appoint and train counselors to provide counseling for unemployed job-seekers, women at risk, separated, trafficked, Roma, disabled women, etc.
- Provide fiscal incentives for business women and make available low-interest loans for those who wish to start up a small business.
- Develop programs to increase participation of rural women in the running and management of various manufacturing activities, agricultural and farming activities complementary to the agricultural sector, such as tourism, food processing, beekeeping, handicrafts, medicinal plants etc. Organize media campaigns to change gender stereotypes that prevail within the family especially as regards division of household responsibilities.

2.3. Recommendations

2.3.1. Improving income and reducing poverty

2.3.1.1. Increasing women's participation in the labor market

- Broaden the scope of vocational/professional training courses, by introducing new programs to better respond to labor market demands.
- MLSAEO and the National Employment Service should increase the range and allocations for employment promotion programs for women, in general, particularly for women in need. Special programs for disabled, Roma, and other categories of vulnerable women should be developed.
- Increase the number of mobile centers to improve access in professional training of women in remote rural areas.
- Employment offices across the country should enhance and improve cooperation with private entities, for the purpose

2.3.1.2. Formalization of the labor market

- Strengthen control mechanisms in the implementation of labor legislation to minimize informal work, and to provide special and non discriminatory protection to groups in need.
- Continuously improve fiscal policy in order to incentivize formal employment.
- Implement projects and employment programs, primarily through on the job training.
- Improve and increase the number of labor market surveys, in order to increase information to understand the informal labor market.
- Develop policies to encourage voluntary contributions, especially for self-employed persons in the agricultural sector.
- Launch a study on flexible working hours for women, as a way for their inclusion in the formal labor market.

2.3.1.3. Overcoming disadvantages in education and vocational training

- Develop specific encouraging policies to increase school enrollments and prevent drop out of children from vulnerable groups.
- Develop educational policies to address problems related to economic inequities and social differences in the different areas and regions, such as provision of free transportation and accommodation scholarships for children in schools far from their homes (often in rural and poor areas) and special incentives for teachers working in remote and difficult areas.
- Open new schools of secondary vocational education, with focus on agribusiness, especially in the remote rural areas.
- MLSAEO and Vocational Training Centers throughout the country should improve and find alternative ways to disseminate information.
- Design specific vocational programs for disabled people, Roma, disadvantaged, etc

2.3.1.4. Modernization of social welfare

- A deep reformation of the economic aid scheme would channel resources to the poorest groups of the society and those most in need in order to reduce poverty to a larger scale and in a relatively short time. This reform should take into account: the family structure as per age of its members (priority should be given to member under working age, compared with those of working age) and geographic distribution of poor families.
- A reform of institutional structures would bring about the reduction of abuses with the economic aid scheme.
- Cooperation between welfare and employment offices should be increased in order to facilitate the employment of members from poor families.

2.3.2. *Facilitating access to basic services*

2.3.2.1. Development of care services

- Continuously improve the quality of service delivery.
- Based on the decentralization of services, local governments should pay attention to and take measures to increase the capacity of social care centers and to establish alternative services.
- Regional Committees on Needs Assessment, as provided by law, must be made effective, since in many cases they do not function regularly.
- Local governments should increase cooperation with civil society; NGOs providing services to vulnerable groups should be supported and encouraged in their efforts.

2.3.2.2. Improved access of children and poor people in healthcare services

- There is no specific legislation on services to children with special needs and mental disorders and disabilities.
- There is no separate budget line for children's healthcare services.
- There are no regulations and standards for healthy nutrition and food security in nurseries, kindergartens, schools,
- There is a lack of legislation to protect children from drugs.
- As concerns disabled children, the state has not created all the necessary conditions for the special treatment these children need.

Improving legislation on the health of the child:

- Expand the network of specialized multidisciplinary services for the treatment of children with development problems in the 12 districts of the country.
- Provide conditions for disabled children to benefit freely from physiotherapy, in special gyms or provide vouchers to receive this service in private facilities.

- Provide in all 12 districts of the country support programs for children and adolescents affected by disabilities and mental retardation.
- Strengthen the law “On breastfeeding” and ensure its enforcement in private enterprises and institutions (currently, this law is little implemented by the private employers); creation of appropriate facilities for breastfeeding in the workplace and public space such as shopping centers, etc.
- Establish relationships and referral systems between health and social services to support parents at risk with opportunities to offer their children health care, prevent abuse, etc.
- Create joint structures involved with children at the local, municipality, commune, and regional level to monitor health services for children and take steps to solve problems jointly.
- Allocate a separate budget line for children’s health in the overall health budget.

2.3.2.3. Housing the homeless

- Central and local government should explore optional alternatives towards providing housing for homeless people through subsidies, soft loans or bonus schemes for home building in ways similar to economic aid.

2.3.2.4. Legal Help

- Establishment and strengthening of monitoring mechanisms on the implementation of existing legislation regarding legal assistance to be provided to vulnerable groups.

2.3.3. Progress towards the protection and inclusion of excluded groups

2.3.3.1. Children at risk: children and young people in conflict with the law

- Separation of minors from adults in detention facilities.
- Rehabilitation of minors in conflict with the law.
- Reconstruction of the problematic buildings and allocation of a special fund to purchase equipment for the detention facilities and maintain them in case damage.
- The General Directorate of Prisons (GDP), together with the Detention Prison Departments of Vlora and Durrës, should work with the respective LGU-s to solve the problem of continuous water supply in the prisons.
- Renewal of equipment for personal use, such as mattresses, sheets, pillow, beds, etc.
- Improved hygiene and sanitary conditions, and disinfection of detention facilities.
- Improve the conditions of ventilation facilities for persons deprived of liberty; airing of the detainees should take place in the open rather than in makeshift rooms.
- Increased implementation of alternative punishment by the courts in order to reduce overcrowding of prisons.
- Implement alternative security measures when the defendants do not pose any social threat.
- Accelerate court procedures in order to prevent unnecessary lingering and increase the efficiency of the judicial system.
- Implementation of alternative punishment and alternative security measures for minors, in order to ensure their fast rehabilitation and integration. Investigative and judicial processes should take place in the shortest time possible, in order for the minor to remain in custody as briefly as possible.

2.3.3.2 / 2.3.3.3. Roma and Balkan-Egyptians

- Based on the Decade of Roma Inclusion and the National Action Plan policies should be enacted to facilitate the civil registration of the Roma people.

- Increased cooperation between central and local governments in the identification of the Roma population in each region, which would help in developing all encompassing policies.
- Institute special programs for the education and vocational training of the Roma people, creating favorable conditions for their adaptation to the requirements of the labor market.
- Conduct studies on the situation of Roma and Balkan Egyptian population in Albania.
- Design specific programs to solve the pressing issue of housing the Roma and Balkan Egyptian population.
- Create a statistical database on the Roma population.
- Promote the establishment of NGOs representing the Roma population, in order to support and empower this social group and as effective positive pressure factor towards protecting and respecting the rights of the Roma population.
- Increase access to information on public policies and programs in support of the Roma population, in particular on employment promotion programs, vocational training and other specific educational programs against illiteracy, etc.

2.3.3.4 Persons with Disabilities

- Provide full statistics for all categories of disabled persons, also from the gender perspective, in order to design effective policies and programs in support of disabled persons, towards their integration in social life, and improvement of the quality of life, since significant drawbacks are noted in this regard.
- Increase responsibilities and accountability of institutions in charge of monitoring the implementation of existing standards and legislation for disabled persons, focusing in particular on: a) control of standards in social service delivery, both by public and non public entities, across the country, b) enforcement of legislation to promote employment of disabled people along with their vocational training; c) enforcement of standards in city planning, transport and other public spheres, towards creating a convenient and disability friendly environment.
- Develop special programs to promote employment of people with disabilities; undertake integration programs for disabled children.
- Increased human resources at the LGU-s, in particular health personnel and educational staff charged with the implementation and observance of the rights of persons with disabilities.
- Increased access to information on state policies, public and non public available services, disability payments, hygiene packs, job openings, vocational training courses for people with disabilities especially in view of too little access which is still lower in rural and suburban areas. It would be very useful to undertake awareness campaigns covering the entire territory of the country.
- Increased cooperation with the media to increase sensitivity about problems faced by disabled persons. They also serve as an effective tool for catching the attention of the government to respect the rights of this category and to intensify efforts towards integration in society, politics, the labor market, etc.
- Increased cooperation and inter-institutional coordination at central and local government level, including with civil society, interest groups, international organizations etc.

2.3.3.5. Supporting the low income and vulnerable elderly

- Establishment of appropriate structures to implement the Policy Paper on Elderly People, 2008-2011, and improvement of existing legislation focused on the elderly.
- Lack of statistics about the situation of elderly persons points to the necessity of establishing a separate database per urban/rural location, gender (female / male), etc. according to prefectures. In addition, a nationwide in-depth study should be undertaken to inform policy makers on the social, economic and health situation as well as the participation of older persons in decision-making processes.

- Provide extensive coverage of the whole country with community day care centers, and home delivery services for elderly people live to relieve their situation.
- Increased cooperation between/among LGUs and NGOs to design and implement programs to improve the welfare and standard of living of elderly people.

2.3.3.6. Support for young people in need

- Increase information, education and communication on HIV / AIDS. Despite information increases from year to year, addressed in particular to young people, about HIV / AIDS preventive measures, or the introduction of sexual education in schools and teacher training on sex education, numerous studies show that the degree of information continues to remain low.
- Increased access for the wide public, young people in particular, to HIV testing facilities; improving infrastructure and training of health staff outside of Tirana.
- Increased media involvement, further improvement of sexual education in schools and educational institutions and intensive awareness campaigns will help towards a more effective monitoring system of HIV/AIDS and will play a role in further improvement of the legal framework and creation of an information and management system.
- Establishment of medical and rehabilitation centers for drug users; provide incentives for the establishment of private facilities in these fields.
- Improving legislation concerning departure of young people from foster care; adoption of legal norms establishing the role of governmental authorities in providing support to young people in terms of housing and employment, economic security and social assistance for; strengthening institutional capacity for tracking and monitoring young people when they embark on independent life; making young people part of the National Children's Strategy; and establishing social cohesion centers and fighting social stigma; provide sufficient and adequate services; improve service quality in line with the models offered by various organizations; launching advocacy initiatives also to raise funds and increase services.
- Establish post-care services. Extend accommodation of young people in foster care until completion of secondary education. Establishment of day care centers to provide services for young people (14-18 years), and enact specific employment policies for young people who leave foster care.
- Launch new services for young people. Provide information and advice. Community based participation and advocacy campaigns/awareness to support social inclusion. Building coalitions of organizations to support the category of young people in need. Staff training and implementation of quality standards in residential care institutions.

2.3.3.7 Support for women in need

- Strengthening of the existing national mechanism, through increases number of employees and additional allocations at all levels; strengthen cooperation between existing mechanisms at national and local level to advance the rights of women and achieve gender equality. Towards ensuring gender integration, the following steps should be taken: institutionalization of the network of contact points at national and local level, upgrading of capacities in relation to gender issues and provision of these contact points with the necessary logistics to create a functional and efficient network, including respective ministries, relevant policies and programs.
- Development of special programs to promote employment for women with disabilities.
- Increased access of women and girls to information on labor market opportunities, employment programs, vocational education and existing legislation to protect their economic rights.
- Development and implementation of comprehensive educational programs to combat stereotypes associated with traditional gender division in the family, work, politics and society. Upgrade the levels of cooperation with the media to promote cultural change regarding

family roles and responsibilities of men and women.

- Organize training courses on gender budgeting for representatives of public institutions directly related to budget planning.

2.3.3.8 Domestic violence

- Strengthen the structures tasked with implementing the fight against domestic violence at local level; increase coordination between/among these structures; upgrade human capacity through provision of training on various issues related to domestic violence and preventive measures; improve access to psychosocial, legal and health support for victims of domestic violence.
- Creation of a coordination center for the collection, analysis and reporting of statistical data among all subject obligated to report about domestic violence.
- Accelerate the process of establishing and operating 24 hour hot lines to collect reports on domestic violence at the level of LGUs. Improve coordination between LGUs and the MLSAEO as the responsible authority for the fight against domestic violence.
- Increase awareness of the public at large on domestic violence, in particular of young people in secondary schools.
- Increase the number of public shelters for victims of domestic violence or provide financial support to shelters run by NGOs, making sure in the first place that the established standards are met.
- Monitor the implementation of the fight against domestic violence. This monitoring should be periodical and available for the public at the website of the General Department of Equal Opportunities (under the MLSAEO).

Table 16: Trend of absolute poverty according to social groups: 2002, 2005 and 2008

Social Groups		2002			2005			2008		
		Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total
Coastal	Percent	5,9	1,8	3,6	1,8	2,5	2,2	1,9	1	1,4
	Gap	1,2	0,3	0,7	0,2	0,4	0,3	0,4	0,1	0,2
	Severity	0,3	0,1	0,2	0	0,1	0,1	0,1	0	0,1
Central	Percent	3,4	5,1	4,6	3,5	6	5,2	1,2	0,8	0,9
	Gap	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,8	0,9	0,9	0,3	0,1	0,2
	Severity	0,2	0,1	0,1	0,3	0,2	0,2	0,1	0	0
Mountainous	Percent	7,8	11,6	10,8	2,6	3,4	3,2	2,9	3,9	3,7
	Gap	1,6	2,1	2	0,3	0,4	0,4	0,6	0,5	0,5
	Severity	0,5	0,5	0,5	0	0,1	0,1	0,2	0,1	0,1
Tirana	Percent	2,3		2,3	1		1	0,2	0	0,2
	Gap	0,6		0,6	0,1		0,1	0	0	0
	Severity	0,2		0,2	0		0	0	0	0
Total	Percent	4,1	5,2	4,7	2,2	4,5	3,5	1,1	1,2	1,2
	Gap	0,8	0,7	0,8	0,4	0,7	0,5	0,2	0,2	0,20,0
	severity	0,2	0,2	0,2	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,0	

Source: LSMS 2008, INSTAT

Table A2: Trend of extreme poverty according to urban and rural areas 2002, 2005 and 2008

Areas		2002		2005		2008	
		Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
Tirana	Percent	2,3		1		0,2	
	Gap	0,6		0,1		0	
	Severity	0,2		0		0	
Other Urban Areas	Percent	4,8		2,7		1,6	
	Gap	0,9		0,5		0,4	
	Severity	0,2		0,1		0,1	
Rural	Percent	5,2		4,5		1,2	
	Gap	0,7		0,7		0,2	
	Severity	0,2		0,1		0	
Total	Percent	4,7		3,5		1,2	
	Gap	0,8		0,5		0,2	
	Severity	0,2		0,1		0,0	

Source: LSMS 2008 INSTAT

Table 17: Trend of Absolute Poverty According to Regions: 2002 - 2005 - 2008

Regions	Poverty Indicators	2002			2005			2008		
		Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total
Coastal	Percentage	20,2	20,9	20,6	11,6	19,7	16,2	10,7	15,0	13,0
	Gap	5,4	3,6	4,4	2,0	4,1	3,2	2,7	2,5	0,2
	Severity	2,1	1,0	1,5	0,6	1,3	1,0	1,0	0,6	0,7
Central	Percentage	19,3	28,5	25,6	12,5	25,9	21,2	10,3	10,9	10,7
	Gap	3,8	6,5	5,7	3,0	6,0	5,0	1,9	1,9	1,9
	Severity	1,2	2,1	1,8	1,2	2,1	1,8	0,6	0,4	0,5
Mountainous	Percentage	24,7	49,5	44,5	17,1	27,7	25,6	14,7	29,8	26,6
	Gap	6,5	12,3	11,1	3,6	5,5	5,1	3,2	6,2	5,6
	Severity	2,6	4,4	4,1	1,1	1,7	1,5	1,2	1,8	1,7
Tirana	Percent	17,8		17,8	8,1		8,1	8,7		8,7
	Gap	3,8		3,8	1,6		1,6	1,2		1,2
	Severity	1,3		1,3	0,5		0,5	0,2		0,2
Total	Percent	19,5	29,6	25,4	11,2	24,2	18,5	10,1	14,6	12,4
	Gap	4,5	6,6	5,7	2,3	5,3	4,0	1,9	2,6	2,3
	Severity	1,6	2,1	1,9	0,8	1,8	1,3	0,6	0,7	0,7

Source: LSMS 2008 INSTAT

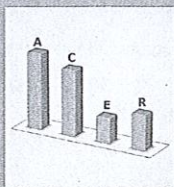
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