



Annual Narrative Report

Year 2021

Implemented by YWCA of Albania

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INTRODUCTION

Invest in women, youth and children. Involve all women, youth and children. Drawn from the YWCA's strategic plan, this simple call echoes the key messages the YWCA of Albania has used to frame the efforts illustrated in this annual report. YWCA of Albania brings together and empowers women and young girls voluntarily to participate in matters of vital importance and to ensure justice, peace, health, human dignity and rights, freedom and environmental care.

The situation caused by Covid-19 global pandemic has presented new challenges for all of us. During this crisis we have learned the importance of rapid mobilization and stronger collaboration. Related also to our objectives, YWCA of Albania has supported the community, especially women that are part of vulnerable groups, like women with low incomes, women with health problems (especially women with breast cancer), women with special needs or survivors of domestic gender violence. Based in this framework we are more engaged to promote women's leadership and to provide specific services to support them, as an important strategy for further emergencies.

Mental health and psychological support were an important initiative of YWCA. During 2021 we announced the free online psychological counseling for family members of women diagnosed with breast cancer, for the first time in Albania, to reduce fear and anxiety caused by the virus and to improve their quality of life. Workshops with focus on mental health have helped the community to improve psychological wellbeing and to have a better understanding of self and others.

YWCA of Albania has been and continues to be a great home for all ages and categories of people without distinction. Meetings between members and volunteers of YWCA, professional trainings, job placement, awareness raising related to mental health, support of families with low incomes, breast cancer campaign, awareness raising for gender equality, women empowerment as a key factor to prevent violent extremism, presentation of positive techniques of discipline; the focus on education, distribution of packages with food and hygiene products for vulnerable groups, creation of anti-drugs coalitions and the psychological services offered for women with breast cancer have been the main activities YWCA has developed. This annual report illustrates the impact YWCA's investment and

involvement has had on women, children and youth. By building capacities and providing tools for good management, YWCA supported to effectively deliver services and programs to the community. The work of YWCA of Albania is based on specific values like integrity, tolerance, respect and inclusiveness. The achievements described in this reporting period would not have been possible without the dedicated support of board members, staff, volunteers, partners, and donors.

Donika Godaj

Executive Director

YWCA OF ALBANIA PROGRAMS

GOAL 1: CONTINUE TO INCREASE THE LEADERSHIP ROLE OF THE ALBANIAN WOMEN THROUGH INFORMATION, EDUCATIONAL AND TRAINING SERVICE PROGRAMS

Project 1.1: Empowering women to prevent violent extremism in the community

YWCA of Albania has always had a special focus on the *empowerment of girls and women*. For this reason, our continuous work has aimed to increase their educational skills, working ability, the awareness about their health and the important role they have on creating a strong community.

During 2021, YWCA in collaboration with the Public Affairs Section in the U.S. Embassy, developed the project “Empowering women to prevent violent extremism in the community”. The initiative intends to *increase the awareness of the community* about violent extremism and to empower women as a key factor to prevent and report the phenomenon. The selected areas were Kavaja and Kukës, based on the large number of unemployed women, as well as the statistical data provided by their municipality, which show various cases of violence. The heart of the project was a close collaboration and result-oriented partnership of YWCA of Albania with local governments, law and education institutions and other important actors of the civil society at national level such as Centre of Violent Extremism and other local NGOs in two different municipalities: Kukës, a northern district, and Kavajë, a central one in Albania.

The design of YWCA of Albania’s intervention on violent extremism prevention has been thought on the *three following pillars*: encouraging and developing informed dialogue with the communities in two areas, providing professional training for rural vulnerable women and informing them on the existing mechanisms on how to monitor and report violent extremism.

Due to the pandemic of Corona Virus 19, some of the events were altered from in-person to online meetings, and for those in-person ones YWCA has strictly followed all the guidelines set by World Health Organization on this matter.

The main goal was to empower rural women and assist them play a role in society and in preventing violent extremism, therefore, YWCA of Albania has approached this initiative through the following eight phases:

Phase One: Presenting the project; identifying and finalizing the key stakeholders; determining the geographical project areas; and selecting the local project coordination team

Phase Two: Focus Groups on the Violent Extremism issue and Analysis of data gathered

Phase Three: Informing Sessions through monthly mobilization meetings _ Reaching the Community at Large

Phase Four: Training the project team on Violent Extremism related issues

Phase Five: Social and economic empowerment of women through vocational training courses

Phase Six: Producing informing materials

Phase Seven: Community Dialogues on violent extremism and reporting mechanisms

The initiatives were considered very successful and useful. The project goal to raise awareness and info on VE has been successfully reached in the rural areas of Synej and Golem in Kavajë municipality and Bicaj and Bardhoc in Kukës municipality. The project approach and its methodology including awareness activities, reaching the community at large, community dialogues, the informing booklet and video as well as social media campaigns have been proven successful as well as great tools of discussing and sharing ideas on the VE phenomenon.

Links with photos from the activities

<https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=1615306475320489&set=pcb.1615308741986929>

<https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=1609732859211184&set=pcb.1609734985877638>

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Project 1.2: “Girls' Clubs as a promoter of leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic”

YWCA of Albania has implemented “Girls' Clubs as a promoter of leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic” project during June – October. The main goal of the project was to promote the leadership of girls, part of various socio-economic groups, *by creating the Girls' Clubs*, in order to address a number of sensitive issues influenced by the Covid-19 situation, such as mental health, reproductive health, self-image, gender-based violence, gender-based stereotypes, the impact of lockdown, etc. Through this initiative we intended to give a voice and a safe space to young girls in order to increase their resilience and to respond effectively to the situation caused by Covid-19, through the use of a comprehensive approach.

The project was applied in 3 cities in Albania, specifically in the suburban and rural areas of Berat, Shkodër and Durrës. Through the previous projects implemented by YWCA of Albania we have identified a lot of needs for further interventions, with a special focus on girls' empowerment. In the selected areas, there is strong support of gender stereotypes and restrictive social norms, which limit women's ability to access different services. Different data has shown that the girls living in these cities have become more vulnerable and exposed to all forms of violence and exploitation, due to schools' closure, as a consequence of Covid-19. Also, the areas are characterized by the presence of *marginalized communities* and there is an urgent need to support young girls to be active participants in the society.

Regarding to the beneficiaries, the main target group were young girls and women in high schools and out-of-school. Girls part of families with low-incomes, part of minorities, girls part of families with divorced parents or with one parent and girls living with parents with mental health problems were classified as risk groups and are more vulnerable to the consequences of the pandemic. For this reason, the main focus of the project was to address their needs as well as to empower them.

Results achieved:

- About 250 girls trained directly by YWCA of Albania
- About 1000 girls participating on the peer to peer trainings lead by the co-leaders

- 10 trainings developed on leadership, self-image, social media, gender-based violence, mental health, gender stereotypes, impact of COVID-19 and resilience
- 4 social media accounts opened, serving to share information and create a safe space for young girls
- 1 brochure drafted to raise awareness on the importance of leadership
- 1 video designed to document the positive practices learnt from the project
- About 30 success stories written by girls participating on the project
- About 250 girls participating on the “Love yourself without filters” campaign
- About 150 peer to peer training sessions developed to increase leadership skills and to improve mental health
- Awareness raised on gender-based violence through paintings, essays and personal experiences shared

GOAL 2: CONTINUE TO PROVIDE INFORMATION, EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR WOMEN AND YOUNG GIRLS, TO EMPOWER THEM CULTURALLY AND SOCIALLY

Project 2.1: Expand and improve the library services program

The Library Project is related to the main goals of YWCA for the emancipation of women and girls *by promoting the passion of reading*, as a form of training to empower them culturally and socially, but also to bring positive changes in their lives. Due to the difficult economic situation in Albania people read less, so our work intends to attract women and girls of all ages.

The library of YWCA contains books from various types: classics, books by Albanian authors, psychological, philosophical and sociological books; medical books; books in foreign languages, historical books, etc. An important focus in our library, have the books for children, with stories and fairy tales, but also with instructions for a healthy growth and education, for parents and teachers. In our library, readers have access to the best Albanian and foreign authors. Currently the library has **3470** books.

Reading has an *incredible influence on the empowerment of women and girls* because it helps them to grow mentally, emotionally and psychologically; it gives them an opportunity to learn new things and

explore new ideas and it can also increase their knowledge. Through books women can discover themselves, because every good book opens up new dimensions of thoughts for the reader.

The Library Project intends to improve emotional health, because books are full of emotions. So, books are no doubt a huge source of motivation. Women can derive *great inspirations* from them and transform their lives positively. Women need access to books that engage their imagination and spark their interest so that they are inspired to start reading and keep reading throughout their lives. YWCA will continue to have a special focus on women and girls' education, as the main strategy to empower them.

Links with photos from the activities

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GOAL 3: BECOME ONE OF THE BEST PRACTICE ENTITIES IN PROVIDING QUALITATIVE EDUCATION SERVICES TO CHILDREN

Project 3.1: "Speak! Protect! Believe! Report"

The project "***Speak! Protect! Believe! Report***" implemented by *YWCA of Albania*, with the support of *Global Albanians Foundation*, was applied in Berat and Shkoder areas. The overall aim of the project was to educate and to raise awareness of children, parents and teachers on the negative consequences of sexual abuse and manners of prevention.

Unfortunately, sexual abuse of children is wide spread in all societies. Due to gender norms and cultural taboos, sexual abuse is an experience that occurs frequently but remains unreported. In Albania there is a lack of systematic or longitudinal studies on the phenomenon of sexual abuse. The stigmatization of children who are victims of sexual abuse in the society makes professionals, parents, and children hesitate to report it.

The initiative was applied through the development of workshops with students, teachers, parents and psychosocial staff that have explored sensitive issues such as: child sexual abuse and harassment, myths and facts, prevention strategies, self-defense skills, the need for psychological support and information sharing. As part of the project philosophy, materials for different age groups have been drafted and an intensive online campaign has been launched, which has helped to raise awareness of a wider audience.

The schools in Albania, regarding a lot of studies and cases reported in media, are facing a major problem: the presence of *sexual harassment and abuse*. There are a lot of reasons that explain this phenomenon, such as: the lack of information, the power imbalance, the gender inequality, the attitudes of society and the lack of support for the survivors. The project was applied through: workshops with students, parents and teachers; practical exercises; brainstorming sessions and social media campaign.

The results achieved:

- ✚ **120 children** trained about the phenomenon of sexual abuse
- ✚ **40 parents** trained on sexual abuse
- ✚ **33 teachers** trained
- ✚ **Awareness raised** of direct and indirect beneficiaries about sexual abuse
- ✚ **Social media campaign** developed
- ✚ **Information** shared and awareness raised for whole community
- ✚ **Myths** about sexual abuse challenged

GOAL 4: HEALTH EDUCATIONAL SERVICES PROGRAM - TO RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT HEALTH AND BREAST CANCER

Project 4.1: Breast cancer awareness campaign

"Pink Ribbon reminds me that early detection of breast cancer can save lives." Following this slogan, YWCA of Albania has developed the 13th campaign on the fight against breast cancer.

Our mission has been dedicated to the pink winners, who have taught us to never give up, because hopes are far greater than fear. This year, a very big challenge for all of us, has continued to be dealing with the Covid-19 virus, a situation that has greatly affected women with breast cancer. Postponement of treatments, surgeries, but also the lack of routine check-ups are among the main problems identified. YWCA's Pink Ribbon has been close to girls and women this year, offering various services to them.

YWCA's activities have been numerous during this year, driven by the desire and constant effort to write a story of courage, regardless of the pain and the challenges!

YWCA of Albania held the 13th Pink Ribbon campaign with the support of *U.S. Embassy-Tirana, Roche, American Bank of Investments, Top Channel, UNFPA Albania, ONE Telecommunications, Hausbrandt, Artemis Bio Line*, etc.

This year's campaign included the following activities:

- ✓ ***Free online psychological counselling for family members of women diagnosed with breast cancer***

During last year's campaign YWCA of Albania launched the service of free online psychological counselling for breast cancer survivors, where **50 women** received support and promoted the importance of mental health care. As a very successful initiative, we decided to extend this service to the whole family, with the hope and desire to help each member overcome the fear and challenges that the disease presents. The free online psychological counselling offered by YWCA of Albania for family members of women diagnosed with breast cancer, aims to encourage them to discuss their emotional distress, fears and help them find new ways to cope more effectively with the situation, beyond the difficulties!

- ✓ ***Social media campaign***

Considering the massive use of social media and the great impact it has on every user, YWCA of Albania has continued to develop the online campaign by sharing different posts regularly on every channel.

The campaign this year was mainly characterized by the following elements:

- ***the challenges*** faced by women diagnosed with breast cancer, focusing not only on their physical health, but also on their emotional well-being, family dynamics and social relationships.
- the importance of ***receiving all of the services*** that will help these women take care of their mental health
- information sharing on the importance of ***early detection of breast cancer***
- coping with ***stress and anxiety***
- changes on ***individual self-image***
- the importance of ***self-esteem***
- the signs and symptoms of breast cancer and the importance of ***routine check-ups***

Activity on the stadium

Sports unite! Sports inspire! Following this slogan, ***Partizani Football Club and Dinamo Football Club*** joined the cause of Pink Ribbon to share awareness raising messages on the importance of early detection, self-examinations, check-ups, etc. The derby of the capital started with a big banner on the field with the message from the football players. The main objective of this activity was to emphasize that we should all contribute and gather our forces on the fight against breast cancer.

Men support women

Pink Ribbon reminds us that this is not just a battle of women, but it is the battle of everyone, including men! An important focus of YWCA's work throughout this year's campaign has been encouraging men to be participate in the cause, through sharing photographs and creating videos as a manner to show support for women diagnosed with breast cancer. YWCA of Albania has produced a video with men of different occupations and background to share messages of hope, faith, strength and to raise awareness on the importance of support from men to all women and particularly to women fighting the disease. In this video participated ***Marin Mema, Piro Milkani, Ernest Gjoka, Florian Agalliu, Dr. Roland Hasa, Blendi Salaj, Endrit Bardhi and Flori Gjini*** who emphasized the importance of solidarity and sticking together to overcome this challenge!

Pink ribbon in Parliament

YWCA's Pink Ribbon was again in the ***Albanian Parliament this October***, to raise funds for the continuation of free online psychological counselling for women diagnosed with breast cancer and their family members. This activity brought together all members of the Parliament, who contributed to the cause by purchasing masks, scarves and bags designed for this campaign. Our objective was also to raise awareness of governmental structures to focus on the needs of women with breast cancer, through the improvement of services and changes in legislations. This activity is part of the ongoing work to raise community awareness and take the identified needs to higher levels of policy-making.

✓ ***Breast Cancer Awareness Walk in Tirana***

YWCA of Albania, ***for the 13th year*** organized the symbolic walk this October, as one of the most important activities of the Pink Ribbon Cause.

The walk took place ***in Tirana on October 15, 2021, at 4 PM***. It started on the square in front of the National Arts Gallery and then the participants walked symbolically along the segment of "Dëshmorët e Kombit" Boulevard, towards the stage that was set up on the "Italia" Square. Part of the symbolic walk were our partners, representatives of local government, representatives of embassies, non-governmental organizations, volunteers, breast cancer survivors, community members, media, etc.

Some of the most important moments of the walk are as following:

- Starting the activity by ***distributing awareness raising*** materials designed by YWCA during the whole year. We distributed leaflets, brochures, umbrellas, face masks, bracelets, t-shirts, pins, bookmarkers, postcards, etc., as a symbol of the fight against breast cancer.
- ***Putting pink ribbons*** to all the participants, as a sign of awareness and solidarity
- ***Walking united*** along the boulevard towards the stage
- Screening the video message of the ***ambassador of Pink Ribbon, Mrs. Ermonela Jaho***. She greeted the participants and also reemphasized the importance of examinations on the early detection of breast cancer and the positive impact of receiving psychological counselling.
- The "***Pink Ribbon Volunteer***" award-giving ceremony, moderated by ***Flori Gjini***. Award Ceremony, where awards and certificates were distributed to individuals who have been continuously participating on the activities of YWCA of Albania. Following the speeches, the awards were given by various personalities, Head of Parliament ***Mrs. Nikolla***, Minister of

Health and Social Protection **Mrs. Manistirliu**, Permanent Coordinator of the United Nations, **Mrs. McCluney**, Deputy/Mayor of Tirana **Mrs. Ruseti**, UNICEF Deputy Representative **Mrs. Kozma**, Ambassador of the United States, **Mrs. Kim**, etc.

- Speeches from the **winners** which emphasized the importance of examinations, the changing of policies for women who are or have been fighting with breast cancer and the importance of support and solidarity.
- Sharing of **personal stories from breast cancer survivors**, emphasizing the necessity of not giving up despite the challenges. One of these stories was shared by the husband of one of the breast cancer survivors, as part of the YWCA campaign, **“Men support women”**.
- Donation of **5 mobile phones from ONE Telecommunications**, for women diagnosed with breast cancer with low incomes, in order for them to benefit from the free online psychological counselling offered by YWCA of Albania
- The closing speech from **YWCA of Albania’s Executive Director Mrs. Godaj**, who introduced the elements of the campaign and presented the plans for future activities of YWCA of Albania
- **“Nën petkun tënd” exhibition**

YWCA of Albania organized an **exhibition with 37 paintings** of students from different schools in Berat, Durrës and Shkodra. On the event participated all the students who were engaged in the process, along with their teachers and other guests. The exhibition served to increase the attention of young people on the cause of breast cancer and to make them active volunteers of Pink Ribbon, by sharing the messages of hope and solidarity!

Through the paintings, the messages shared were related to:

- the importance of examinations, checkups on the **early detection** of breast cancer
- the impact of breast cancer on **parent-child relationships** and other family dynamics
- the **psychological struggles** faced by women with breast cancer
- the importance of **community support**
- the need to encourage **strength and hope** during the fight with breast cancer

Links with photos from the activities

<https://www.facebook.com/AYWCA/posts/1843970295787438>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=goXnQs23N58>

<https://www.facebook.com/AYWCA/posts/1853407418177059>

<https://www.facebook.com/AYWCA/posts/1842198932631241>

<https://www.facebook.com/AYWCA/posts/1837181469799654>

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Project 4.2: Reproductive and sexual health awareness as a form of sexual abuse prevention

Reproductive and sexual health awareness as a form of sexual abuse prevention` implemented by YWCA of Albania was applied based on two important objectives:

- the information sharing about *sexual reproductive health*, the rights and the prevention of sexual abuse
- the awareness raised about *breast cancer* as an important component of sexual and reproductive health

Education on sexual and reproductive health is important to provide appropriate information, to clarify values and reinforce positive attitudes, and to strengthen decision-making and communication skills.

The schools in Albania, regarding a lot of studies and cases reported in media, are facing a major problem: the presence of *sexual harassment and abuse*. There are a lot of reasons that explain this phenomenon, such as: the lack of information, the power imbalance, the gender inequality, the attitudes of society and the lack of support for the survivors.

At the same time, is identified an increase of young girls diagnosed with breast cancer, due to the lack of knowledge about the disease and the lack of routine medical examinations.

Considering the situation, the project objectives were related to:

- the information about *sexual and reproductive health*
- the main techniques related to the *prevention of harassment and sexual abuse*
- the *rights and issues* on sexual and reproductive health
- the importance of the *early detection of breast cancer*

The students were the direct beneficiaries of the project. The youth were the main target group of the initiative. Teenagers face many difficulties when it comes to sexual health and their future. With access to a lot of information online and the growing presence of social media, teens are exposed to an array of information regarding sexual and reproductive health. For this reason, youth have specific needs for appropriate information and services about sexual and reproductive health services.

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Goal 5: STRENGTHENING THE COMMUNITIES THROUGH STRUCTURES BUILDING, SUPPORT AND TRAINING, INFORMATION SESSIONS AND AWARENESS RAISING

Project 5.1: Children in the center of local policies of local services

“Children in the center of local policies of local services” is the project applied by YWCA of Albania, with the support of *UNICEF and USAID* in Lezha, Durrës and Berat area. Through this initiative families with *more than 3 children*, currently recipients of EA scheme in 3 municipalities of Albania (Lezhë, Berat and Durrës) will experience less barriers to social protection services, a lower level of isolation that poverty brings, and will be empowered with information and knowledge of all adequate social and other services they have the right to request and should have full access to.

The project implementation built on YWCA’s well-established networks and cooperation with local government units and communities in Lezha, Berat and Durres. Activities were designed and implemented to work simultaneously with different actors at the local level. Based on its 20 years+ experience, YWCA could directly work with responsible staff and departments in all the three selected municipalities. Capacity building measures (including targeted training based on the needs of social services employees) were combined with information campaigns and direct support to families in economic aid.

During the 12 months of project implementation, YWCA reached several targets, especially, in terms of reaching out to the direct beneficiaries. In this regard, YWCA managed to support 598 families and 1495 children that are currently living in poverty and receiving cash assistance. They had direct

access to important information on social protection entitlements, and they were supported to access social care services, health services, education and psycho-social services.

In the three municipalities engaged, the project worked at different levels, with families that are beneficiaries of economic aid, social administrators, and other municipal responsible staff. Jointly with the municipalities and local services providers barriers and obstacles were identified that families face and that affect especially the wellbeing of the children. After identifying barriers, several key measures were taken to directly tackle these vulnerabilities with information and direct supplies. In addition, a strong focus was put to empower the responsible staff with approaches and tools to improve the assessment of families' needs, especially from the perspective of the wellbeing of their children, as well as to improve the way they provide the services to these families.

More concretely, programme activities resulted into:

- 45 social administrators and responsible municipal staff trained on the new approach of social care services provision
- Services were brought closer to the families (municipal employees and social workers visited the families where they live instead of citizens showing up at the municipal offices)
- Detailed information on the economic aid and other social care services was provided to the families that are beneficiaries of social aid in all the three municipalities.
- Families of economic aid scheme were empowered with opportunities, such as vocational training, as a bridge from passivity to active participation in the social and work life.
- Social reintegration of families with economic aid, through their involvement in meetings and activities
- Direct and multidimensional support was provided to the families, ranging from information sessions to food and other supplies to help them cope with COVID-19.
- Increased coordination and cooperation among different sectors and directorates within the municipalities through the project support.
- Support to municipalities to put the child at the center of social protection services through education, vaccination, positive parenting, and provision of entertainment opportunities.
- Barriers in the communication between families in economic aid and social services employees were reduced.

- A holistic approach was developed to improve needs assessment of families that are beneficiaries of the economic aid.
- Specific needs of families were identified through focus-groups and mobilization.
- Increased information of families living with economic aid and consolidated the collaboration of different structures related with social services, through the development of Open Informative Days.

Links with photos from the activities

<https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=1629549563896180&set=pcb.1629550040562799>

<https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=1629549773896159&set=pcb.1629550040562799>

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Project 5.2: Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America

In 2020 YWCA in collaboration with CADCA has implemented a *prevention strategy against alcohol and drugs use*. The work on this project reflects its domestic mission: to create safe, healthy and drug-free communities.

The initiative was applied in two regions: Tirana and Shkodra. The approach of the project was based in the creation of coalitions. YWCA and CADCA have worked to strengthen the capacity of community coalitions by providing technical assistance and training, public policy education and advocacy, coalition-specific media strategies and special events. According to the objectives of the initiative were held various activities to increase awareness of community in these sensitive issues.

Activities at schools

CADA-10 and DMA coalition has organized a lot of activities at different schools. In these open discussions were introduced the purpose of coalitions, were presented the *main reasons* youth starts using drugs and alcohol, were discussed relationship between *psychological distress and addiction* amongst youth and were shared real stories and personal experiences. The students were encouraged to be *active participants* in creating a safe and healthy community, *by joining the CADA-10 and DMA coalitions*.

Activities in community

Cleaning a hot spot area. The DMA coalition members have identified a hot spot area and have created an intervention strategy. In collaboration with different structures of the community, coalition worked to clean the area and to transform the hot spot area into a friendly place through lighting the street and painting the wall from youth members.

Distribution of packages with food products. On the International Day against Poverty, DMA coalition in collaboration with 12 markets has *supported families* with low incomes and families with substance use problems.

Islam Alla street. The street Islam Alla was identified as a hot spot by coalition members. For this reason, in collaboration with the administrative Unit No. 10, the CADA-10 coalition members decided to light the area, as a manner to be less frequented by substance users.

Meetings with social services representatives. The DMA coalition has held meetings with representatives of Administrative Units of Shkodra municipality. Through this activity was collected information about the *current situation*, specifically related to alcohol and drugs use.

For a life without drugs and alcohol. DMA coalition has developed an awareness raising activity on the Tarabosh mountain, identified as a hotspot area by coalition members. The motto of activity was *"For a life without drugs and alcohol"*. The area was cleaned and was *transformed into a friendly place* for healthy social interactions.

Awareness raising through art

The students of schools, part of CADA-10 and DMA coalitions have painted *pictures* with awareness messages for addiction with *"No Drugs, No Alcohol"* slogan. Art is an effective communication tool for

these sensitive topics. The pictures presented the *youth perspectives* on addiction and the *importance of the prevention*.

Videos creation

The coalitions created awareness raising videos that contained *facts* about drugs and alcohol use, *paintings, symptoms of addiction, behavioral models* and *emotional disturbances*. Also, the youth were part of video, with awareness and prevention messages related with drug and alcohol abuse.

Awareness raising materials

Information is the key strategy of drug and alcohol abuse prevention. The member of coalitions worked to create an awareness material that has been shared on social media accounts and coalition's group. Awareness and active engagement are key strategies for educating young people who choose the values of life.

The intensive campaign on social media

The members of coalitions, leaded by YWCA have been engaged on social media campaign. The theme of the intensive campaign was: "The mental health and substance uses". Given that October is the month related with the awareness for mental health, the coalition decided to focus in this important issue. The members have founded and selected the materials. Also some members of the coalition have worked to design the posts, with attractive and meaningful elements. The themes defined by coalitions were: the end of stigma; the link between mental health and substance uses; trauma and substance use; the influence of emotional pain; beyond drugs and the mission of coalitions.

Links with photos from the activities

<https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=1588795897971547&set=pcb.1588798477971289>

<https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=1588796421304828&set=pcb.1588798477971289>

<https://www.facebook.com/105080007938761/videos/389036772068250>

<https://www.facebook.com/Koalicioni-DMA-Shkoder->

[105080007938761/photos/pcb.133576225089139/133575765089185/](https://www.facebook.com/105080007938761/photos/pcb.133576225089139/133575765089185/)

<https://www.facebook.com/Koalicioni-DMA-Shkoder-105080007938761/photos/pcb.121987202914708/121986569581438>

<https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=1377503152434157&set=pcb.1377503862434086>

Project 5.3 Poor families and children have access to social protection entitlements and services, including risk communication

This project was applied from YWCA of Albania with the support of UNICEF and USAID. Through this programme, families with more than 3 members and with at least one children, currently recipients of EA scheme in 3 municipalities of Albania (Lezhë, Berat and Durrës) have experienced less barriers to social protection services, a lower level of isolation that poverty brings, and are empowered with information and knowledge of all adequate social and other services they have the right to request and should have full access to. These families have received adequate and time communication in relation to COVID risk prevention and vaccination.

The activities of the project:

Trainings with social services staff. YWCA of Albania has organized trainings with social services representatives in Berat, Lezhe and Durres to present the project methodology and to increase their capacities.

Part of the trainings were 64 representatives of social services and municipality. During the trainings:

- the methodology of project intervention was shared
- the profile of families with economic aid was explored
- different support programs for families with economic aid were presented
- the skills needed for social services staff were introduced
- the positive strategies to empower families with economic aid were elaborated
- the techniques to work with children of families with low income were presented

The integrative approach was used as a methodology for the trainings. The participants were engaged on practical exercises and brainstorming sessions too. Also, they have benefited from the new information shared during the activities, according to the objectives of the trainings.

An important part of the trainings was the identification of the actual difficulties of families with economic aid. The representatives of social services have emphasized the need for continuous informative campaigns about Covid-protection and awareness raising on the importance of vaccination.

The activities were considered very successful and useful. The social services providers have affirmed the need for support and have shown willingness about the collaboration. The trainings served to increase the capacities of 64 representatives of social services and municipalities through new information, experience sharing and structures for continuous collaboration creation.

Monthly mobilization meetings and Open Informative Days. Following the objective of empowering vulnerable groups, YWCA has held monthly mobilization meetings and Open Informative Days with families with economic aid. The purpose of the meetings was the discussion of children's protection during the pandemic. The project has a special focus on children's wellbeing and their integration in the society. For this reason, were presented the strategies to protect children from physical and psychological effects of Covid-19, especially in educational institutions. Although children are less likely to get infected with the virus, the focus on this age group should be primary, because they don't have access to information about COVID-19 and many concepts could be difficult for them to understand. The situation caused by the pandemic is related with the increase of emotional distress, anxiety, fear, depression, behavioural problems and difficulties in global functions. The monthly mobilization meetings and Open Informative Days were used to share important information about the services with a focus on children's education, such as scholarship, additional payment in economic aid, support with free books etc. The representatives from schools and Education Directory Office have informed the parents about the policies used in school to protect children from Covid-19, like distribution of masks, hygiene products and social distance respecting. During the meetings, were presented the right steps of hand washing, the importance of physical distance and masks wearing. Apart from talking about the importance of a healthy and clean environment, the families were also guided to create a safe place for children, to engage them in common activities and to explain the

situation through play. At the end, the social workers shared information about the services offered for children in their municipalities. During the activities were distributed face masks and fliers.

Human stories. YWCA of Albania has published human stories related to problems faced by families with low incomes. The story, written based on the interviews, presented the everyday life of beneficiaries of economic assistance. During the narration, the difficulties faced from this category were identified.

The social services provided by municipalities were considered as very important to fulfil the needs of the recipients. Through this real story, we aimed: to present the actual situation of families with low incomes; to identify the best practices from social services; to explore the needs and difficulties of beneficiaries of economic aids; to increase the awareness of the community on the importance of social inclusion; to increase the attention and focus of social structures about the needs of the beneficiaries of EA .

Also, human stories have had in focus the social workers and their experience. These stories have served: to describe the important role of social workers; to introduce the services provided by social structures; to present the challenges and difficulties faced from social workers; to share the best practices and to raise awareness about the positive impact of the project. The stories have been shared on social media accounts and YWCA of Albania's website and have had a significant impact on the community.

Photos:

<https://www.facebook.com/AYWCA/posts/1904723406378793>

<https://www.facebook.com/AYWCA/posts/1871206889730445>

<https://www.facebook.com/AYWCA/posts/1862869940564140>

5.4 Supporting community and social services to prevent human trafficking!

YWCA of Albania has implemented the project ``Supporting community and social services to prevent human trafficking`` with the support of UNICEF, in Shkodra, Peshkopia and Vau Dejes areas.

In the selected areas was identified a lack of information about human trafficking phenomenon. Mostly human trafficking is related with the sexual exploitation of young girls, that in fact is only one of the types of human trafficking. The families were characterized by a lack of awareness about human trafficking. So, according to them only girls and women can be victims of human trafficking and only men and boys can be abusers. Also, they can be in danger only by strangers and have excluded the possibility of family members, as potential traffickers. So, the mobilization meetings held during the project have served to explain the real concept of human trafficking and to present facts about our country. The phenomenon is a serious problem and a sensitive issue.

During the activities held in the different phases of the project, it was identified a lack of collaboration between the social services structures and the families with economic aid. Thus, for different reasons, such as: lack of human resources, lack of appropriate logistics or the problems due to the geographical distance. Because of these factors, it is difficult to provide information and services, including raising awareness about the human trafficking. For this reason, YWCA of Albania has developed Open Informative Days, with the participation of representatives of health sector, education, police, social services, etc. The activities provide more opportunities for families with low income to meet social services staff and other representatives and to receive the necessary information on how they can prevent human trafficking.

Families, part of social protection scheme are the main target group of the project. Due to low incomes, they face a lot of difficulties to access different services, including education. So, the children are more vulnerable toward school dropout and have low socio-education background. To facilitate the access of children on the academic process, YWCA has distributed packages that contained learning and didactic materials.

To reach out a large number of families, were developed work visits near their settlement. To increase the information about human trafficking and social services available, the brochures were distributed.