

## *Annual Narrative Report*

*Year 2024*

[www.ywca-albania.al](http://www.ywca-albania.al)

<https://fjongoroze.al/>



ywcaalbania



YWCA of Albania/Shoqata Kristiane

## INTRODUCTION

YWCA of Albania remains steadfast in its commitment to supporting, empowering, and building capacity within our communities while fostering essential networks. We are dedicated to engaging women, youth, and children in a wide range of initiatives that promote justice, peace, health, human dignity, rights, freedom, and environmental sustainability—values that are at the core of our strategic plan.

In pursuit of these goals, YWCA of Albania has provided critical support to vulnerable communities, particularly women facing diverse challenges such as financial hardship, breast cancer, disabilities, and those who have survived human trafficking. Our approach centers on fostering women's leadership and offering specialized services to address these pressing issues. A key area of focus is mental health, where we provide free online counseling sessions to women diagnosed with breast cancer and their families, offering much-needed psychological support.

YWCA of Albania serves as a welcoming space for individuals from all walks of life, where we facilitate a wide range of activities. These include professional training, job placement services, mental health campaigns, support for low-income families, breast cancer awareness efforts, advocacy for gender equality, and empowerment initiatives aimed at preventing violent extremism. We have also established a Day Care Center for the Afghan community in Lezha, led anti-drug coalitions, and provided essential psychological services for women battling breast cancer.

This annual report highlights the significant impact of YWCA's initiatives on women, children, and youth. Through capacity-building efforts and the provision of effective management tools, we have delivered vital services and programs to our communities, all while upholding our commitment to the values of integrity, tolerance, respect, and inclusivity. These accomplishments would not have been possible without the unwavering support of our board members, staff, volunteers, partners, and donors.

I invite you to visit our website and media channels to learn more about our work and activities.

Sincerely,

Donika Godaj

## YWCA OF ALBANIA PROGRAMS

### Goal 1: CONTINUOUSLY ENHANCING THE LEADERSHIP ROLE OF ALBANIAN WOMEN THROUGH INFORMATION, EDUCATION, AND TRAINING PROGRAMS

#### *Project 1.1: Mother-Daughter Clubs*

The project has had a meaningful impact on empowering women and girls, raising awareness about gender-based violence, and fostering leadership. Evidence from training sessions, participant feedback, and advocacy activities suggests a shift in attitudes, increased knowledge, and stronger community engagement.

#### Key impact areas & indicators

##### 1. Increased awareness of gender-based violence & mental health

Training sessions on violence, gender inequality, and mental health reached 110 participants in Berat and Bulqiza.

- High engagement in discussions on gender-based violence (GBV), its root causes, and solutions.
- Participant testimonials highlight a new understanding of gender roles and family dynamics.
- 6 peer-to-peer activities were conducted, with the participation of 165 individuals focusing on mental health, violence prevention, and gender equality discussions in local communities.

##### 2. Strengthening leadership & resilience among women and girls

Leadership training sessions equipped 110 participants with confidence, public speaking, and decision-making skills.

- Many expressed increased confidences in leadership roles within their families and communities.
- Post-training evaluations showed improved knowledge of leadership skills and self-advocacy.
- Two human stories were developed, highlighting personal growth in leadership and resilience.

##### 3. Community mobilization & local advocacy

Participation in the “16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence” engaged approximately 70 students, local government, and civil society representatives.

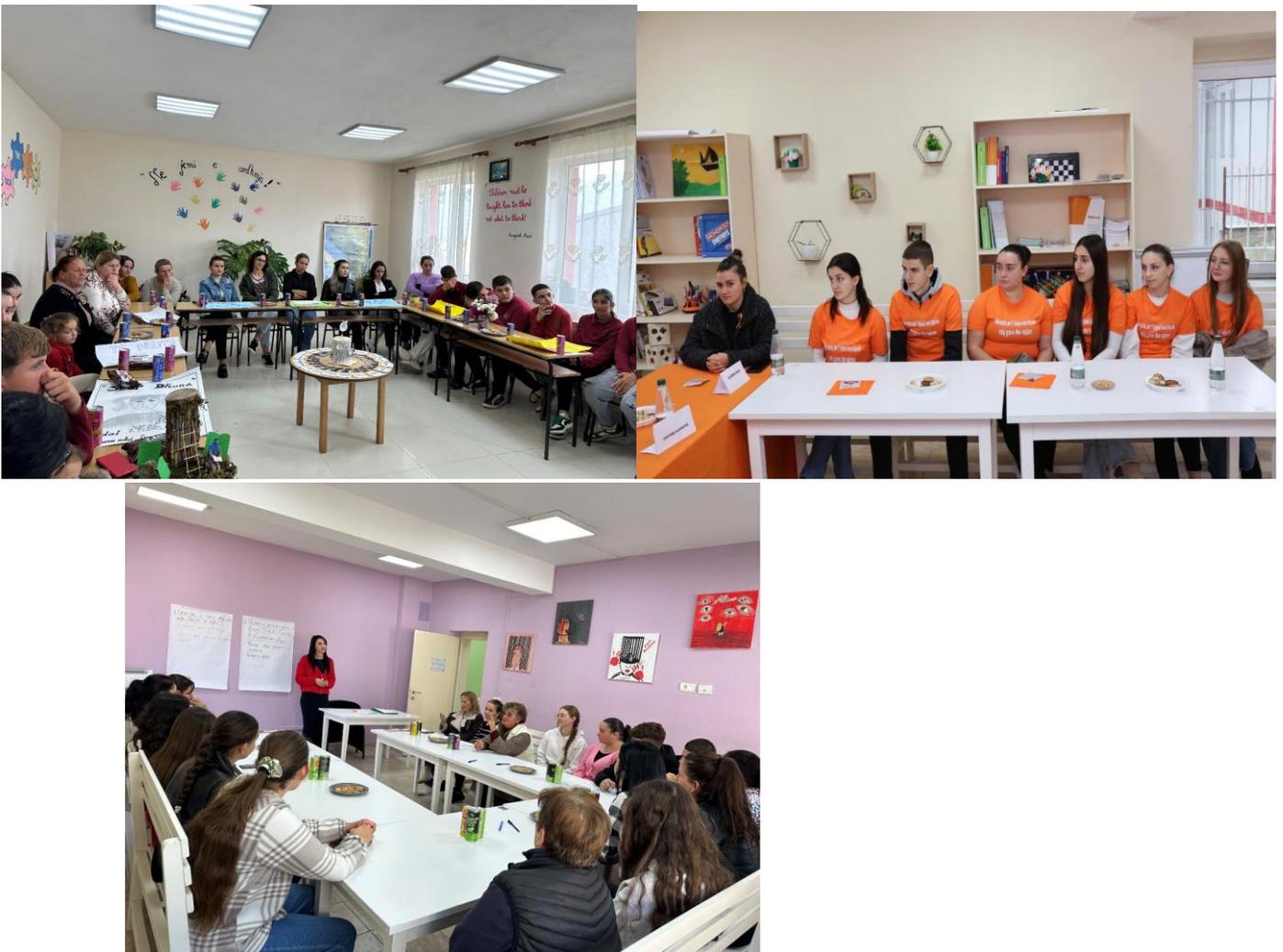
- Club members organized awareness events and delivered presentations at local schools.
- Municipal representatives actively participated in peer-to-peer activities, strengthening local support for gender equality efforts.

##### 4. Expanding social networks & digital outreach

Dedicated social media platforms were launched to sustain engagement.

- Online engagement increased, with club members regularly sharing experiences and advocacy messages.
- Participants emphasized the importance of mental health and self-care, a key shift in perspective.
- Club members began developing ideas for awareness-raising videos, brainstorming topics and key messages to be shared with the community.

The project successfully raised awareness, shifted attitudes, and empowered women and girls with the skills to lead change. Increased engagement in discussions, advocacy efforts, and leadership initiatives demonstrate that participants are more confident, knowledgeable, and willing to challenge societal norms.



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

### *Project 2.1: EmpowerHer: Young Women Leading Climate Action for a Sustainable Future".*

The Empowering Young Women for Sustainable Development project, launched at the end of 2024, is part of the Global Youth Mobilization initiative, funded by the European Union and supported by World YWCA. The project aims to empower young women to take on leadership roles in climate action and environmental sustainability, driving meaningful change in their communities. By focusing on youth involvement in climate action, the project contributes to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and YWCA's Goal 2035.

The primary goal of this project is to empower young women to become leaders in climate action and environmental sustainability, enabling them to create impactful changes in their communities while supporting global sustainability targets.

### ***Objectives***

#### *Build Leadership Capacity Among Young Women to Lead Climate Action Initiatives.*

Equip 90 young women with the necessary leadership skills, knowledge, and tools to design and implement community projects that address environmental challenges and promote sustainability.

#### *Engage Local Communities in Climate Action and Environmental Sustainability*

Mobilize communities through awareness campaigns, workshops, and environmental projects led by young women. These activities will focus on promoting sustainable practices, such as waste management, energy conservation, and climate resilience.

*Foster a Culture of Innovation and Sustainability in Local Communities*

Encourage young women to develop innovative solutions to local environmental challenges, promoting sustainable practices and climate action at the grassroots level.

**Key Activities****1. Leadership Training and Capacity Building**

A series of workshops and training sessions will be delivered using the *RiseUp! Leadership Guide*, focusing on climate action, sustainable development, project management, and community engagement. It will involve the recruitment of 90 young women aged 18-30 from various municipalities in Albania.

**2. Community Engagement and Mobilization**

Participants will lead community-based initiatives to raise awareness about climate action and promote sustainable practices. Activities may include waste management campaigns, tree-planting events, workshops on energy conservation, and collaborations with local environmental organizations.

**3. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Continuous Improvement**

A robust monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework will be developed to assess the project's progress and impact. Participants will be trained to collect data, track project outcomes, and assess the impact on the community.

Through this project, young women will become catalysts for sustainable development in Albania, driving climate action and promoting environmental resilience in their communities. Their leadership and the initiatives they spearhead will contribute to the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals and the broader YWCA Goal 2035 framework.

The Empowering Young Women for Sustainable Development project is a critical step in building a sustainable future, where young women lead the way in addressing climate challenges and fostering long-term environmental sustainability. This initiative not only empowers individual participants but also strengthens local communities through their active engagement in climate action and sustainability.



### *Project 2.2: Enhancing and Expanding Library Services Program*

The Library Project aligns with the primary goals of YWCA, aiming to empower women and girls by *fostering a love for reading*. This initiative not only enriches their cultural and social understanding but also catalyzes positive transformations in their lives, especially in the face of decreased reading habits due to economic challenges in Albania.

YWCA's library boasts a diverse collection, spanning classics, works by Albanian authors, as well as psychological, philosophical, and sociological texts. Additionally, medical, historical, and foreign language books are available. Of particular importance are the children's books, featuring stories, fairy tales, and guidance for healthy growth and education—valuable resources for both parents and educators. With access to the works of esteemed Albanian and international authors, our library currently houses **3,500** books.

Reading plays a pivotal role in the *empowerment of women and girls*, fostering mental, emotional, and psychological growth. It serves as a gateway to new knowledge and ideas, enabling individuals to explore diverse perspectives and discover themselves through literature's profound reflections.

The Library Project aims not only to enhance literacy but also to promote emotional well-being, as books are reservoirs of emotions and inspiration. Women can draw motivation and derive *inspiration* from literature, thereby effecting positive changes in their lives. By providing access to captivating books that ignite imagination and sustain interest, YWCA seeks to instill a lifelong passion for reading among women and girls.

Continuing to prioritize women and girls' education remains central to our strategy for empowerment. Through the Library Project, we are committed to nurturing minds, expanding horizons, and empowering individuals to realize their full potential.



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

#### *Project 3.1: Early Childhood Center as a Creative and Safe Space!*

During 2024, YWCA of Albania, with the support of UNICEF and the US Government, continued delivering essential support to the Afghan community in Shengjin. The Day Care Centre has been central to this mission, offering a safe and supportive space for Afghan families, particularly focusing on the well-being of children and their parents. Our efforts were directed toward empowering individuals, encouraging social inclusion, and reinforcing collaborations with diverse partners to aid Afghan families in integrating into Albanian society.

The services that YWCA of Albania offers at the Day Care Center are as follows:

1. Educational activities based on nonformal strategies and learning through play approach for preschool children
2. Counselling sessions to support Afghan children
3. Counselling sessions with Afghan parents

4. Informative and awareness raising meetings with parents
5. Establishment of Parents` Club
6. Art and play therapy sessions
7. Capacity building of staff members
8. Training of preschool teachers from local kindergartens to increase their capacities
9. Mentoring of teachers to ensure the sustainability of the project
10. Collaboration with others NGOs to support the Afghan community
11. Coordination with local structures to increase the inclusiveness of Afghan community in our society
12. Distribution of informative materials on the importance of early education, positive parenting and children`s development.

Through a blend of nonformal education strategies, learning through play, and psychosocial support, the initiative worked to support children`s cognitive, emotional, and social development while also facilitating their integration into the local community. The program emphasized inclusivity and creativity, ensuring that the learning environment was tailored to the unique experiences of displaced children. Throughout the year, the Centre developed a thematic curriculum, with monthly focuses that guided activities such as storytelling, group games, art projects, emotional intelligence exercises, and cultural awareness. These themes were designed not only to educate but also to support children`s emotional resilience, self-expression, and social connection. A structured yet flexible daily schedule ensured that children had a balance of guided learning and free play, promoting both educational growth and mental well-being. Over the course of 2024, the Day Care Centre served a cumulative total of 422 Afghan children, offering various services and integrating play-based and therapeutic approaches that proved especially effective for children who had experienced trauma and instability.

In parallel, the program worked extensively with Afghan parents to build their awareness and capacity around early childhood development (ECD). Through meetings and workshops, approximately 1,500 parents were engaged in discussions and training sessions covering topics such as positive parenting, the role of technology in children's development, and safe digital habits. These sessions not only equipped parents with practical tools to support their children but also created spaces for dialogue, peer support, and empowerment.

Another key component of the initiative was the training and mentoring of teachers and education professionals. Through ongoing coaching and mentoring, educators were supported in addressing the complex needs of refugee children, managing classroom dynamics, and creating emotionally supportive learning environments. These capacity-building efforts were essential for ensuring the long-term sustainability and quality of the program.

The children's creativity and transformation were proudly celebrated through two art exhibitions held throughout the year. These exhibitions featured the children's paintings, drawings, and hand-crafted projects created during their themed activities. Community members, including local authorities and partner organizations, attended these events, creating a shared space for cultural exchange and mutual understanding between refugee and host communities.

Overall, the 2024 implementation of the program represented a powerful model of inclusive, community-driven support for displaced populations. It successfully provided hundreds of children with access to quality early education in a safe and nurturing environment, empowered parents with knowledge and confidence, and built the capacity of the local education workforce. The initiative not only addressed immediate needs but also laid the foundation for long-term integration, healing, and development, making a meaningful impact on the lives of Afghan refugee families in Albania.



ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT



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

### *Project 4.1: Breast cancer awareness campaign*

The 16<sup>th</sup> annual breast cancer awareness campaign represents another major milestone in YWCA of Albania's unwavering dedication to women's health and empowerment. This year's campaign reflects YWCA's commitment to innovation and inclusivity. Through new activities and meaningful partnerships, the campaign reached diverse audiences, ensuring that awareness and prevention messages resonated widely. By amplifying voices, sharing survivor stories, and expanding access to breast health resources, YWCA continues to spread a message of hope, resilience, and action in the fight against breast cancer.

YWCA's impactful campaign was made possible through the generous support of *Hoffmann – La Roche LTD, U.S. Embassy-Tirana, Shkodra Municipality, Top Channel, UBA Bank, Kastrati Group, Albsig, Credins Bank, Know Your Lemons, The Pilates LAB, SunRide, Beauty Fair Albania, Fentimans*, and other partners.

This year's campaign included the following activities:

#### *Free online psychological counselling for women diagnosed with breast cancer and their family members*

This initiative aims to address the psychological challenges that often accompany a cancer diagnosis, such as anxiety, fear, and depression. By offering sessions in an accessible online format, the campaign ensured that support was available regardless of location or mobility constraints.

#### *Social media campaign*

The *social media campaign* continued playing a crucial role in amplifying this year's breast cancer awareness message, reaching a wide audience and encouraging community engagement. The *contest for the best idea for the campaign* was a new and engaging initiative introduced this year, designed to encourage community participation and generate creative contributions to support breast cancer awareness.

#### *"1 in 8" videos*

The *16th annual breast cancer awareness campaign* by YWCA of Albania was officially launched on *March 8, International Women's Day*, by the campaign ambassador, renowned soprano *Ermonela Jaho*.

Following her heartfelt video, many prominent figures from various fields joined the initiative by sharing their own versions of the “1 in 8” message across social media platforms, including *celebrities, politicians, breast cancer fighters, campaign supporters.*

### *Pink Ride*

In collaboration with *SunRide*, YWCA of Albania organized two “*Pink Ride*” events as part of this year’s campaign. Participants of all ages, including patients, supporters, and community members, cycled together to promote healthy living and demonstrate solidarity for those affected by breast cancer.

### *Seeds of hope*

In March, YWCA of Albania organized another special initiative titled *Seed of Hope with Pink Ribbon*. This meaningful event combined environmental action with community support for breast cancer patients and survivors. The event took place at the artificial lake of Tirana, where participants planted cherry trees.

### *“1 in 8” Exhibition*

YWCA of Albania proudly hosted the first “1 in 8” exhibition at *Galeria Kalo*, a powerful tribute to breast cancer survivors and a call for awareness on early diagnosis and prevention. The exhibition, by the photographer *Rezart Gurashi*, featured striking portraits that captured the resilience and strength of women who have battled breast cancer.

The “1 in 8” exhibition by YWCA of Albania, reached even more audiences with additional showcases in *Shkodër at the Gallery of Fine Arts, Tirana International Airport and Credins Bank.*

### *Pink Ribbon in stadiums*

Through making the Pink Ribbon part of important football and basketball matches, YWCA of Albania demonstrated that they can be a driving force for positive change, uniting players, fans, and communities for a life-saving cause.

### *CityLights*

From October 1st, citylights across key areas of Shkodër displayed YWCA of Albania’s breast cancer awareness campaign. The posters featured the campaign image, details about the annual symbolic walk, and the logos of supporting donors.

### Youth promoting pink life

YWCA of Albania continued collaborating with *schools and youth groups* on different cities in Albania to develop activities focusing on the awareness raising about breast cancer early detection and prevention. The competitions encouraged creativity and youth participation in raising awareness about breast cancer prevention, highlighting the vital role of younger generations in spreading important health messages.

### Awareness raising videos

YWCA of Albania continued producing and sharing impactful videos as part of the breast cancer awareness campaign, highlighting key moments, activities, and important messages.

### Fit for Pink

YWCA of Albania launched the *Fit for Pink* initiative, blending fitness with awareness to promote breast cancer prevention and healthy living. It featured diverse activities designed to inspire participants to prioritize their health while spreading a vital message about early detection, such as: *Fitness session at "Arben Broci" School gym, Outdoor pilates at Tirana Lake's Park, Pilates at GoFitness gym.*

### Info sessions

YWCA of Albania expanded its breast cancer awareness efforts through dedicated information sessions, reaching diverse communities and professional groups to promote early detection and breast health education.

### Breast Cancer Awareness Walk in Shkodra

On *October 10, 2024*, YWCA of Albania successfully organized its *16th consecutive annual breast cancer awareness walk*, marking a significant event in the city of Shkodra. This year's walk, held under the motto "*1 in 8*", aimed to highlight the importance of early detection and prevention of breast cancer. Additionally, YWCA advocated for increased state investment in breast cancer prevention programs and for ensuring dignified, comprehensive treatment for women and girls affected by the disease.

### Roundtable on breast cancer challenges and solutions

On *October 18, 2024*, YWCA of Albania hosted a roundtable discussion at Xheko Imperial Hotel, Tirana, as part of its 16th annual breast cancer awareness campaign. The event gathered women politicians, public

health representatives, oncologists, breast cancer patients, civil society leaders, and decision-makers to address the financial and social challenges faced by women with breast cancer in Albania.

During the session, YWCA of Albania presented key recommendations developed through extensive consultations with patients and experts, aiming to improve the quality of life for women battling breast cancer.

### *Advocating for breast cancer support at 2025 Budget Hearing*

YWCA of Albania participated in the 2025 draft *budget hearing* at the Committee on Labor, Social Affairs, and Health. The organization reiterated its dedication to advocating for sustainable support services for women with breast cancer, building on discussions from the October roundtable. The proposals presented were developed through meaningful dialogue with women politicians, public health experts, oncologists, patients, civil society, and decision-makers.

With the approval of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection's budget for 2025, YWCA's request for the *provision of wigs and prostheses for women undergoing mastectomy and chemotherapy has been included*. This marks a significant success, reflecting years of dedicated lobbying and advocacy efforts by YWCA to support women facing breast cancer challenges.

### *Partnership with Know Your Lemons Foundation*

YWCA of Albania has proudly established its partnership with the *Know Your Lemons Foundation*, a global leader in health education for the early prevention of breast cancer. This collaboration is part of YWCA's broader effort to promote women's health and well-being, building on the success of our previous initiatives.

### *Other awareness and community outreach activities:*

- A health education event at the *Health Care Unit in Fier* to promote early detection practices and provide information on available screening services.
- *Thea Beauty Salon – A Day of Care and Solidarity*: YWCA, in collaboration with Thea Beauty Salon, organized a special self-care event for breast cancer fighters. The women enjoyed complimentary treatments, reminding them that self-care is a courageous act.





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

### *Project 5.1: Municipalities support prevention of human trafficking through integrated social protection measures*

The project *"Local authorities and Municipalities Support Prevention of Human Trafficking through Integrated Social Protection Measures"* was a strategic initiative designed and implemented to prevent and combat human trafficking in Albania by strengthening the capacity and effectiveness of social protection delivery systems at local level. Implemented by YWCA of Albania in partnership with UNICEF Albania, the project targeted four municipalities: Kamëz, Bulqizë, Puka, and Kukës. The programme spanned from April 1, 2023, to September 23, 2024 supported by UNICEF.

The primary aim of the program was to prevent human trafficking by strengthening social protection systems at local level, thereby addressing poverty and exclusion that make individuals and families vulnerable to exploitation and human trafficking. The underpinning

The value of social protection in protecting, providing resilience and supporting the agency of poor and vulnerable individuals across the life cycle has been repeatedly demonstrated.

programmatic approach is that when poor and vulnerable families have adequate access to support and care through social protection, they have higher chances to stand on their feet, to feel included and supported to access employment opportunities within Albania.

In a simple way, the theory of change of the programme would be:

If a poor and vulnerable individual accesses timely cash benefits, is informed about where and how to access social care services and trusts that social administrators and social workers will link the individual and the family with the services, they will be less likely to opt leaving the country and be subject to human trafficking.

Key strategic actions included the following:

1. **Developing Tools and Models** To ensure social administrators are able to identify the needs, deliver social protection measures, deliver information and case assessment, the project aimed to develop tools and demonstrate models of work to use those tools. The tools and models of provision are based on the national legislation and policies of social protection and on the functional assignments that national and local authorities have. Tools included SOPs to streamline workflows, enhance the accuracy of assessments, and ensure a coordinated response to potential trafficking situations.
2. **Capacity Building** Comprehensive training programs were designed to increase the knowledge and skills of municipal social welfare personnel and other cross-sectorial professionals. This included social workers, police officers, psychologists, and representatives from health and education sectors. Capacity building was two faceted: on one side the training was focusing on human trafficking (trends, risks, causes, impact) and on the other side, the training was provided on social protection measures and their delivery. The training included building skills for proper information and communication with vulnerable groups.
3. **Community Empowerment and Awareness** The project aimed to empower vulnerable families and individuals by providing them with crucial information about the risk of human trafficking, their rights, and the social services available to them. Open informative days and mobilization meetings were key strategies used to engage directly with at-risk communities.

### Key results

The "*Local Authorities and Municipalities Support Prevention of Human Trafficking through Integrated Social Protection Measures*" project achieved the following key results:

**Practical, easy to use tools were developed.** In line with the legal and regulatory framework, as well as the priorities of the social protection policy of the country, a model was developed that provides a structured approach for identifying key groups at risk, outlining the different phases of trafficking, by providing the opportunity to professionals to understand trafficking dynamics and addressing human trafficking within vulnerable communities in the four targeted municipalities. It was developed based on the understanding that human trafficking is a complex crime requiring coordinated and comprehensive interventions.

Tools Developed include 1) *Risk Assessment Tools*: These tools help professionals evaluate the risk of trafficking within families and communities, considering socio-economic conditions, history of exploitation, and other contextual factors; 2) *Interview and Action Plan Development tools* were provided for interviewing potential victims and developing personalized action plans that address their safety, legal protection, and emotional well-being; 3) *Monitoring and Coordination*: Regular monitoring and collaboration with local authorities and NGOs ensure that the interventions are effective and adjusted as necessary.

The model and its tools aim to enhance the capacity of social service professionals to prevent human trafficking and provide comprehensive support to those at risk, ultimately contributing to a more effective and coordinated response to this complex issue.

**About 95 professionals were capacitated** through trainings and other capacity building measures. These measures aimed to enhance the knowledge and skills of municipal personnel providing them with the tools needed to effectively combat human trafficking and enhance coordination among the different actors at the local level. The training was divided into two phases, each designed to address specific needs and challenges within the target areas.

In addition to the trainings, capacity building also focused on continuous coaching and supervision of the responsible professionals at local level in the four municipalities. Twelve supervision meetings were conducted with municipal social welfare personnel throughout the project. These meetings were crucial for refining intervention strategies and ensuring the consistent application of best practices among the staff. They provided a forum for addressing personal challenges faced by the social workers, allowing them to share experiences and receive guidance on managing difficult cases. The supervision meetings also emphasized the importance of continuous learning and adaptation, enabling personnel to stay updated on the latest trends and tools in human trafficking prevention. By fostering a supportive environment, these meetings helped maintain high standards of service delivery and ensured that interventions were effective and responsive to the needs of at-risk individuals.

**Enhanced Local-Level Coordination:** A key achievement of the project in advancing the integrated implementation of social protection policies at the local level was the strengthened coordination among diverse stakeholders, including social services, law enforcement, health, and education sectors. This collaboration significantly improved the effectiveness of service delivery and support for at-risk individuals. This collaborative approach was essential for creating a more integrated and effective response to human trafficking. Regular meetings, joint training sessions, and coordinated intervention strategies ensured that all relevant parties were aligned in their efforts. This enhanced coordination not only streamlined the process of identifying and supporting trafficking victims but also improved the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the interventions. By breaking down silos and promoting inter-sectoral collaboration, the project laid the groundwork for a more cohesive and unified approach to combating human trafficking, ensuring that all stakeholders could work together seamlessly to protect vulnerable individuals.

**More than 200 poor and vulnerable families were empowered and linked to critical support services.**

The project facilitated the registration of 189 beneficiaries at employment offices, a significant step towards enhancing economic stability and reducing vulnerability to trafficking. Out of these beneficiaries, 44 individuals were offered employment, providing them with a stable income and a sense of financial security. Additionally, 39 beneficiaries enrolled in vocational training courses, equipping them with new skills and improving their employability in the labor market. These empowerment initiatives aimed to break the cycle of poverty and exploitation by offering sustainable economic opportunities to vulnerable individuals. By focusing on both immediate employment and skills development, the project created pathways for beneficiaries towards economic independence and resilience against trafficking risks.

**Community awareness and engagement was at the core of the project as an empowering and prevention instrument.**

A total of 54 Open Informative Days were organized across the four municipalities, reaching 1,509 individuals. These events were instrumental in providing critical information on human trafficking, including the risks, signs, and prevention methods. By dispelling myths and misconceptions about trafficking, the sessions empowered community members with knowledge and tools to protect themselves and their families. Additionally, these events served as a platform to connect families with municipal resources and service providers, ensuring they had access to necessary support services such as healthcare, legal assistance, and educational opportunities. The active participation and engagement of the community members highlighted the success of these initiatives in raising awareness and fostering a proactive stance against human trafficking.

**Long term plans.** All supported municipalities have long term plan to support linking poor and vulnerable families to critical social protection benefits.





### *Project 5.2: Building healthy, safe, and drug-free communities in Albania*

In 2024, YWCA, in partnership with CADCA, continued its work on preventing alcohol and drug abuse by implementing a comprehensive strategy aimed at building drug-free, safe, and healthy communities across five regions: Tirana, Shkodra, Berat, Kukes, and Lezha. This initiative focused on gathering data, engaging new members, and increasing the visibility of the coalition's efforts to strengthen community involvement and raise awareness.

#### ***Key Activities and Outcomes:***

- **Community Assessments:** Coalitions carried out detailed assessments in their communities using surveys, observations, and interviews with stakeholders such as students, parents, teachers, and local residents. These assessments helped identify substance use trends, gather essential data, and design targeted intervention strategies based on local conditions.
- **Vetting Coalition Members:** In line with CADCA's methodology, YWCA of Albania ensured a thorough vetting process for all training participants, including law enforcement and community members from various sectors, to maintain the integrity and effectiveness of the coalitions.
- **Informal Meetings:** Coalitions hosted informal gatherings with representatives from diverse sectors, including Community Centers, NGOs, local police, municipal staff, healthcare services, and schools. These meetings fostered discussions on issues such as the need for institutional backing, coalition cohesion, data analysis, and welcoming new members.
- **Membership Review and Expansion:** The coalitions prioritized inclusivity, ensuring representation from all sectors of the community. They particularly focused on sectors with limited involvement and emphasized the active participation of youth, with many students eagerly joining and contributing to the efforts.

- **Leaflet Distribution:** To spread awareness, coalition members distributed leaflets outlining the mission and vision of the coalition. These materials also educated community members about the importance of prevention and intervention in combating substance abuse.
- **Training Sessions:** YWCA of Albania and CADCA conducted additional training sessions in Kukes, Lezha, Berat, and Tirana, focused on coalition building, community assessment methods, strategy development, and understanding key elements necessary for combating substance abuse effectively.
- **Awareness-Raising Initiatives:** The coalitions organized various awareness campaigns, such as events in Shkodra, which utilized artistic expressions to promote a drug-free lifestyle. They also held a launch event for the CAD Tirana coalition aimed at high school and secondary school students to raise awareness about the dangers of substance abuse and the coalition's efforts.

These activities showcase the ongoing dedication of YWCA of Albania and CADCA to address substance abuse issues and build strong, supportive communities across Albania. Through collaboration, education, and active community engagement, the coalitions continue to make significant strides in improving the lives of individuals and families impacted by substance abuse.

