

# “ON REPORTING THE SITUATION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND GENDER- BASED VIOLENCE DURING COVID-19”

NATIONAL  
REPORT

JULY 2020

Adjusted  
Gross  
Income

1 Total number of dependents. Attach Schedule B if required.

2 Wages, salaries, tips, etc. Attach Schedule B if required.

3 Taxable interest. Do not include tax-exempt interest. Attach Schedule B if required.

4 Ordinary dividends. Attach Schedule B if required.

5 Qualified dividends

6 Taxable refunds, credits, or offsets of state and federal income tax.

7 Alimony received

8 Business income or (loss). Attach Schedule D if required. If no business, enter 0.

9 Capital gain or (loss). Attach Form 4797 if required.

10 Other gains or (losses). Attach Form 4797 if required.

11 IRA distributions

12 Pensions and annuities

13 Rental real estate, royalties, partnerships, S corporations, and trusts. Attach Schedule F if required.

14 Farm income or (loss). Attach Schedule F if required.

15 Unemployment compensation

16 Social security benefits

17 Other income. List type and amount

18 Combine the amounts in the far right column for line 19.

19 Educator expenses

20 Certain business expenses of reservists, performing artists, and certain government officials. Attach Form 2106.

21 Health savings account deduction. Attach Form 3903.

22 Moving expenses. Attach Form 3903.

23 One-half of self-employment tax. Attach Form 4684.

24 Self-employed SEP, SIMPLE, and qualified plans. Attach Form 4684.

25 Self-employed health insurance deduction. Attach Form 4684.

26 Penalty on early withdrawal of savings. Attach Form 5898.

27 Alimony paid. b Recipient's SSN

28 IRA deduction

29 Student loan interest deduction

30 Tuition and fees. Attach Form 8917.

31 Domestic production activities deduction. Attach Form 5712.

32 Add lines 23 through 31a and 33 through 36.

33 Subtract line 36 from line 22.

34 Add lines 23 through 31a and 33 through 36.

35 Subtract line 36 from line 22.

36 Add lines 23 through 31a and 33 through 36.

37 Subtract line 36 from line 22.

38 Privacy Act, and Paperwork Reduction Act.

This report is based on the information obtained from the Committees on Gender Equality and Social Inclusion in 48 municipalities in Albania, within the process of monitoring the work of the Municipality, as one of the competencies of the Municipal Councils.

This information was provided with the support of *Bashki të Forta* experts with the aim of analyzing and understanding the situation of domestic violence and gender-based violence during the Covid-19 pandemic situation.

This report is an ongoing work practice of the Committees on Gender Equality and Social Inclusion and its content should not be viewed as an unchangeable static. The report contains a summary of opportunities and processes to understand the good practices implemented in the course the Covid-19 pandemic during the period March - June 2020, as well as issues that can be addressed in the coming months, in cooperation with the National Alliance of Women Councilors. The report is a working document that will continue to be updated in response to further developments regarding Covid-19 situation.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Commissions of Gender Equality and Social Issues in the Municipality Councils and the team of experts of Bashki të Forta, led by the Women's Network "Equality in Decision Making" and "Woman in Integration", would like to thank all representatives from municipalities and all other institutions who contributed to this report through a dynamic participatory process and information sharing.

## DISCLAIMER

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The opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views of "Bashki të Forta" and The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

## **ABREVATION**

CRM - Coordinated Referral Mechanism of domestic violence cases

ITT - The Interdisciplinary Technical Team

LCDV - Local Coordinator against Domestic Violence

IPO – Immediate Order of Protection

IPO –Order of Protection

MC – Municipal Council

DMC – Decision of the Municipal Council

MHSP - Ministry of Health and Social Protection

AU - Administrative Unit

LEO - Local Education Office

CPS - Community Policing Specialists

DCM - Decision of the Council of Ministers

CHPW - Child Protection Worker

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## INTRODUCTION

Gender-based violence, and especially domestic violence, escalates when there is a crisis or emergency situation, and the situation created by the Covid-19 pandemic poses an increased risk of domestic violence.

The conditions of physical and social distancing that were imposed in Albania to avoid the spread of the Covid-19 virus, resulted in women and girls facing increased violence in family relationships in conditions of complete isolation and inability to receive help.

In conditions of isolation from COVID-19, the experience of domestic violence is deteriorated by factors such as constant emotional stress, shrinking family economy as well as changing roles and responsibilities among family members. When these factors are combined with each other and intertwined with other movement restrictions, the home can turn into an environment at increased risk of violence, where abusers can escalate the violence while survivors have limited opportunities to seek help.

Considering the conditions of isolation due to COVID-19 and realizing that the pandemic intensifies the existing inequalities of rights between women and men and different social groups, initiated by the Committees on Gender Equality and Social Inclusion, with the support of *Bashki të Forta*, the municipal councils of 45 municipalities in Albania adopted the Resolution "On taking special measures due to the situation created as a result of the pandemic caused by Covid-19."

The adoption of the Resolution came as an immediate need to respond to domestic violence and gender-based violence during the Covid-19 pandemic. The resolution aims to increase the efficiency of the existing structures and relevant resources in the territory of the Municipality, to prevent and protect the victims and survivors of domestic violence.

In the framework of monitoring the implementation of this resolution, the report "***On reporting the situation of domestic violence and gender-based violence during Covid-19***" was drafted by the Committees on Gender Equality and Social Inclusion to analyze and compare case data of domestic violence and presents data and information to understand the identified needs and take measures at the decision-making level to address and handle domestic violence in 48 municipalities of Albania.

This report also serves to understand the level of cooperation between different actors working to address cases of domestic violence during and after Covid-19.

## METHODOLOGY

The information presented in this report includes data that 48 Committees on Gender Equality and Social Inclusion have received from various sources, the municipal administration and stakeholders, to understand the situation of domestic violence and gender-based violence during the period March - May 2020.

The working method for drafting this report is based on two main pillars: i) Basic data produced by the administrations of the Municipalities included in this report and ii) Basic data obtained from focus group meetings, stakeholders and beneficiaries of services.

The Committees on Gender Equality and Social Inclusion in the respective municipalities have collected basic information from the administration of the Municipality on the measures taken and services provided during the isolation conditions by COVID-19 through a periodic report prepared by the responsible structures in the Municipality. Through periodic reports, members of the gender equality committees have assessed cases of domestic violence during the period of isolation caused by Covid-19 and identified the needs for action at the decision-making level. A total of 48 periodic reports have been prepared.

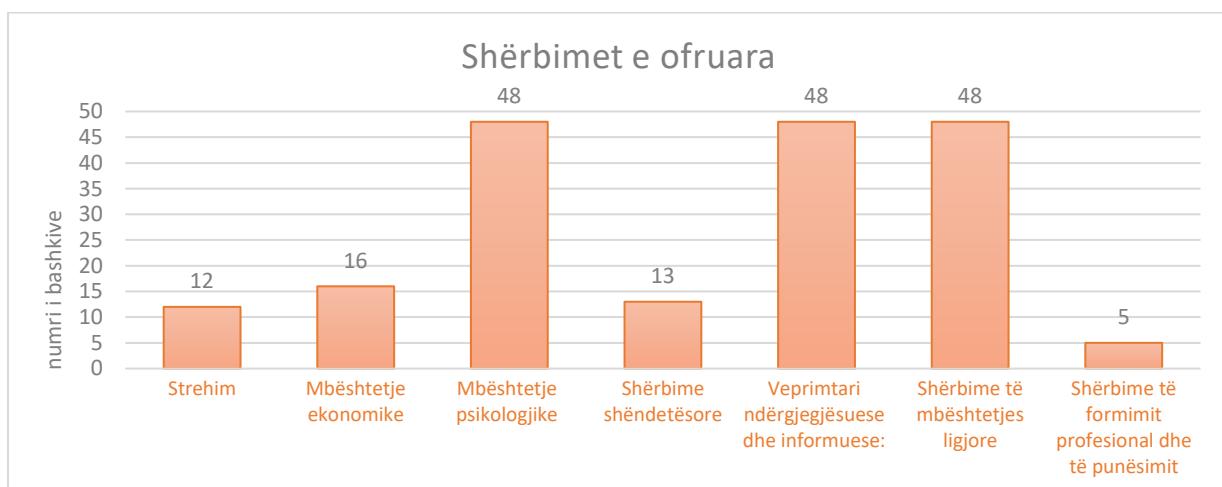
The Committees on Gender Equality and Social Support, as a second source of information, have provided data from meetings organized with focus groups, stakeholders and service beneficiaries. In total, 48 meetings were held with focus groups and stakeholders in each of the 45 Municipalities for which this report has been drafted.



# KEY FINDINGS

The following are summary data and information regarding the implementation of the resolution for all 48 Municipalities, the measures taken and inter-institutional cooperation, the encountered needs and challenges, innovative practices, as well as recommendations made to the Municipality and the Municipal Council for a more effective addressing of domestic violence and gender-based violence.

- **What are the main services provided by municipalities to address domestic violence during Covid-19?**



*Chart 1: Data on main services provided by municipalities to address domestic violence during Covid-19*

The three types of services provided to victims / survivors of domestic violence, at most, in each of the 48 municipalities that were part of the report, were economic packages (including food packages, medicines and hygiene products), psychological counseling and support, as well as legal support.

Victims and survivors of domestic violence have been supported with housing/accommodation by receiving services related to rent subsidies, covering the costs of water and electricity, temporary accommodation in emergency centers for cases of violence, accommodation in social housing.

To follow up on cases of violence, but also to report violence, telephone lines have been made available for psychological counseling in those cases when personal contact with victims of violence has not been possible or pressing. Psychological services are also provided in cooperation with local organizations working on domestic violence issues.

Cases of violence reported during Covid-19 and those cases that have been under management have received legal aid services in all municipalities.

Meanwhile, victims and survivors of domestic violence have been supported in 5 Municipalities with vocational training and employment services through vocational training courses or employment opportunities in cooperation with employment offices and local businesses.

Victims and survivors of domestic violence were assisted in 13 municipalities out of analyzed 48 municipalities in which services were provided such as: escorting for medical assistance and purchase of medicines for cases of domestic violence and sexual violence, in cooperation with the local hospital and the police.

All municipalities have paid special attention to informing the public about the increased risks

of domestic violence during the Covid-19 period. Telephone numbers are available 24 hours a day on the official websites of the Municipalities, as well as on the social media of the municipalities to report cases of domestic violence, and in some cases awareness leaflets too.



pandemic caused by Covid-19.

- **What are the challenges faced by municipalities in addressing domestic violence during Covid-19?**

Based on the periodic reports of the municipal administration for which this report was produced, the main challenges faced by the municipalities are:

- i. **Lack of human resources of social workers and psychologists** in administration and administrative units.
- ii. **Lack of dedicated budget** for managing domestic violence cases and gender-based violence.
- iii. **Preservation of personal data** of domestic violence cases, which leads to a higher degree of risk for victims or withdrawal of denunciations.
- iv. **Lack of a logistics system to provide transport** for service workers as well as for victims / survivors, to institutions or to a safer place.
- v. **Lack of emergency centers for cases** of domestic and gender-based violence.
- vi. **Lack of dwellings or social housing** for domestic and gender-based violence cases.

- vii. **Difficulties in identifying cases of violence at an early stage** due to the non-functioning of the Coordinated Referral Mechanism.
- viii. **The programs and services provided by the institutions are mainly support programs** and not programs for the reintegration of survivors of violence.
- ix. **Reluctance to report violence and withdrawal of denunciations of cases of violence** due to the mentality of tolerating violence, preservation of personal data, economic dependence, fear of societal prejudices.

#### **Recommendations made to Municipalities in the framework of improving services provided to domestic violence and gender-based violence cases**

In order to improve services provided **in case of domestic violence or external violence**, some recommendations have been identified in the municipalities included in this report as follows:

42% suggested establishing a multifunctional center.	In 42% of the municipalities it was suggested to set up and operate a multifunctional center to deal with cases of domestic violence and gender-based violence.
58% suggested organizing awareness and information activities.	In 58% of municipalities it was suggested to organize awareness and information activities to prevent and end domestic violence and gender-based violence.
21% suggested allocating funds for transport.	In 21% of the municipalities it was suggested to allocate funds for transport within the services for domestic violence to cover also the administrative units of the municipality.
69% suggested increasing the number of qualified staff.	In 69% of the municipalities it was suggested to increase the number of employees such as: social workers, psychologists and social administrators for the provision of social services in municipalities and administrative units.
27% suggested setting-up emergency centers.	In 27% of municipalities it was suggested to set up emergency accommodation centers for domestic violence and gender-based violence cases.
58% suggested budget allocation to manage violence cases.	In 58% of municipalities, a special budget allocation for the management of violence cases was suggested.
58% suggested developing re-integrating programs.	In 58% of municipalities it was suggested to establish re-integration programs for cases of domestic violence, including employment strategies, vocational training and financial support.

## I. DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE SITUATION DURING COVID-19

Throughout the isolation caused by Covid-19 pandemic, municipalities were mobilized to provide services for domestic violence cases reported during this period, as well as to follow up on domestic violence cases prior to Covid-19 period. Although some services were performed remotely, through online communication, it was made possible to organize working group meetings, provide economic assistance services, housing services, and in cooperation with various actors, the municipalities enabled the performance of legal, psychological, health and vocational training and employment services. The chart below presents the number of reported cases during 2019 and 2020.



Chart 2: Difference of reporting violence cases comparing 2020 and 2019

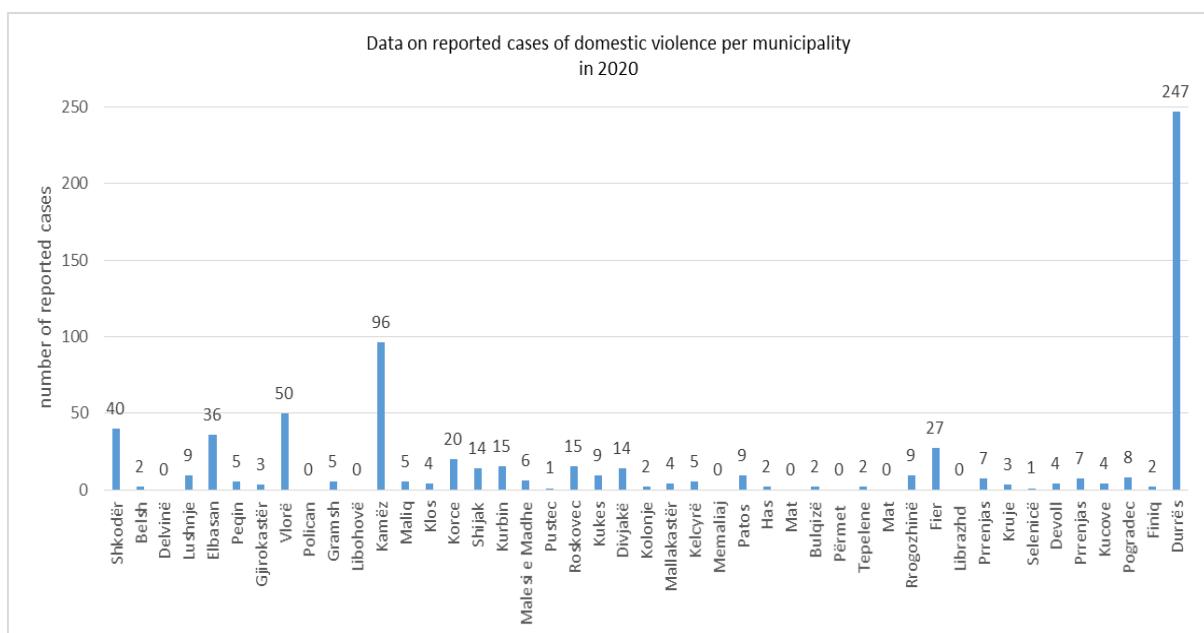
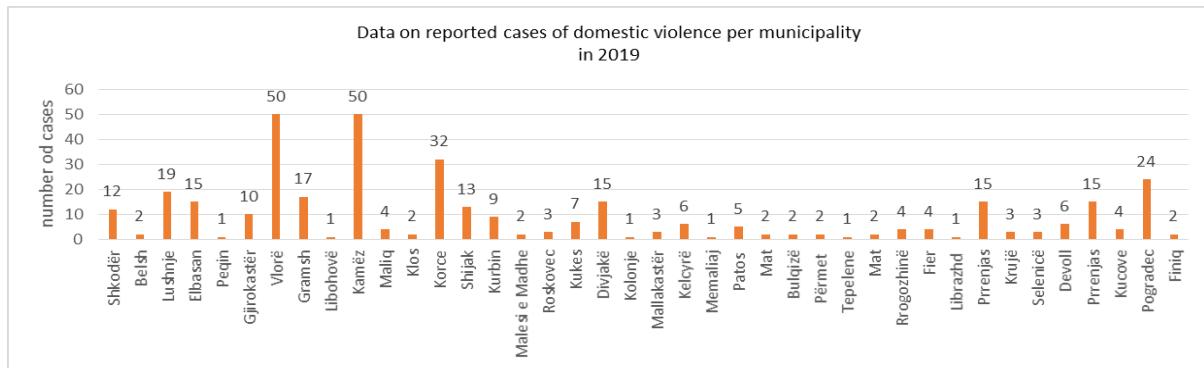


Chart 3: Data on reported cases of domestic violence in 2020



*Chart 4: Data on reported cases of domestic violence in 2019*

## II. PROVIDED SERVICES DURING COVID-19 TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CASES

Throughout the state of emergency caused by COVID-19, the attention of domestic violence employees was increased. The municipalities have provided various services to help the survivors of domestic violence and gender-based violence, according to the specific needs that have been presented.

### 2.1 Social Services



#### 2.1.1 Housing domestic violence cases

**Gramsh Municipality** provided rent bonuses up to two years to the survivors of domestic violence.

**Klos Municipality** has approved a fund to cover the housing of homeless persons, including victims of domestic violence if they are in conditions of lack of housing.

**Korçë Municipality** has a fund for abused women to cover the costs of rent, water, and electricity.

Also, **Poliçan Municipality** the Municipality of Poliçan has provided temporary shelter for cases of domestic violence.

**Mirditë Municipality** has made available facilities as an emergency service for cases of violence.

In **Pogradec Municipality**, two cases of domestic violence, who have received protection orders, have been addressed to the 2-day emergency center where they have been provided with psychological services.

For the cases with which it was possible to secure contacts and communicate, support and counseling was provided by the social services office at **Shijak Municipality**.

**Vlorë Municipality** has also treated cases of domestic violence with rent bonuses.

**Rrogozhinë Municipality** has reconstructed and furnished the apartment for 2 minors who are victims of domestic violence and has been given them a monthly stipend.

In **Kamëz Municipality**, two cases were referred to the Directorate for Housing Issues for the benefit of the rent bonus and one case to local organizations.

**Kolonjë Municipality** has allocated a rent bonus to 1 case of domestic violence and child care by enrolling them in kindergarten.

**Devoll Municipality** has provided rent subsidy to cases of domestic violence.

**Fier Municipality** has provided a rent bonus to help all victims / survivors with a Protection Order and by making available rental housing at minimal cost.

**Cërrik Municipality** has provided a rent bonus in aid of victims / survivors and has continued to support soft loans for housing.

## 2.1.2 Economic Support



Cases of domestic violence were provided with support through economic packages including food packages, medicines and

hygienic-sanitary products. Among some of the municipalities we can mention:

The focus in **Belsh Municipality** has been, mainly, on the distribution of economic aid, food packages and clothing, which have been donated and provided by donors. The municipality has paid full attention to the coordination and distribution of assistance to categories in need, cases of domestic violence, poor families, the elderly, and tetraplegics.

**Elbasan Municipality** has provided 45 food and sanitary packages to victims of domestic violence during the pandemic situation. Also, for new cases equipped with POs during this period, an online application was provided by the Local Coordinator for economic assistance.

**Peqin Municipality** from its funds as well as in cooperation with businesses has provided food packages to cases of domestic violence and for persons with low economic status. For each case of violence with a protection order, the social service has provided a fund of 3,000 ALL.

**Korçë Municipality** distributed food and hygienic-sanitary packages. Civil society and other actors focused more on coordinating and distributing food packages. In cooperation with donors such as UNICEF, about 144 food and hygienic-sanitary packages were distributed. 20 abused women were supported with food packages. Also, the regular economic assistance of 3,000 ALL was doubled for this period by decision of the municipal council with five (5) cases benefiting from it.

In **Shijak Municipality**, the structure of Civil Emergencies has been set up in the conditions of the pandemic, for the distribution of food packages and medicines from the revenue of the Municipality, various foundations and state emergencies, for persons receiving economic assistance, families in need and those with protection orders.

**Mallakastër Municipality** has supported four cases of domestic violence with food aid as well as with economic packages.

The local coordinator for violence in **Pustec Municipality** has verified the economic situation and food packages have been provided through the emergency fund of the Municipality and a monthly stipend of 3,000 ALL has been allocated.

In **Shkodër Municipality**, in necessary cases, after the assessment of the situation and needs, the support of cases with food and hygienic-sanitary packages was carried out.

Also, **Klos Municipality** has provided economic packages: food packages for six victims of domestic violence in 2019 and two victims of domestic violence in 2020. In cooperation with donors such as UNICEF, 20 abused women were supported with food and hygiene-sanitary packages.

**Kolonjë Municipality** through the employment office has enabled the employment for cases of domestic violence.

**Kukës Municipality** has performed the service of payment of economic assistance to the victim for cases with protection orders.

Survivors of domestic violence and families equipped with POs / IPOs were supported with food packages by **Gjirokastër Municipality**.

Also, **Malësi e Madhe Municipality** has distributed food aid packages to families in need who are also victims of violence.

**Lezhë Municipality** in cooperation with civil society organizations has enabled the provision of food packages to victims of domestic violence.

**Këlcyrë Municipality** has provided support with economic packages to cases of domestic violence.

In **Pogradec Municipality** during the period of Covid-19, the municipal structures, the social service in cooperation with the child protection unit contacted the victims of domestic violence and provided assistance with 100 food and hygiene kits to these families.

**Cërrik Municipality** has distributed food and sanitary packages to cases of domestic violence

several times during the COVID-19 period, as well as has integrated victims / survivors of violence into the system of economic assistance.

**Durrës Municipality** has provided domestic violence cases with:

- Economic assistance in cooperation with UNICEF for **11 cases** during the COVID-19 period.
- Assistance with food and hygienic-sanitary packages for **16 cases**.

## 2.2 Psychological support services



During the Covid-19 period, psychological support services by conducting field visits as well as on-line psychological counseling have been provided.

Among some of the municipalities we can mention:

Depending on their needs, the victims of domestic violence have received appropriate psychological and legal support from the staff of the Community Centers and partner organizations that provide such services in **Shkodër Municipality**.

**Këlcyrë Municipality** has made available the telephone number of the local coordinator, to provide online counseling.

**Roskovec Municipality** has provided psychological support services (online) to 35 cases of domestic violence, of which 5 cases during the Covid-19 pandemic.

In **Maliq Municipality**, LCDV shares ongoing information with the RED / EO regarding the identified cases of children facing direct violence or have witnessed violence in their families. RED / EO also play an active role by making the services of psychologists available to abused children in schools. This service is provided to children by telephone or other means of online communication by school psychologists.

**Belsh Municipality** together with non-profit organizations cooperate to inform the community about the presence of psychological or legal services in case they experience violence.

**Kamëz Municipality** has cooperated with school psychologists for the children of victims of domestic violence, also 1 case of domestic violence has been referred organizations.

**Dropull Municipality** has provided psychological counseling service (online), information and referral to other specialized services to the only case they had.

**Mirditë Municipality** has provided psychological counseling through the telephone line by social services employees to cases of domestic violence.

In **Pogradec Municipality** there is a free telephone number for the counseling line, psychological service, face-to-face meetings, which in addition to the Municipality, are also offered by non-profit organizations.

**Durrës Municipality** has provided psychological counseling to 70 cases and 115 cases from the green phone, which is a free line. Also, 127 cases were handled by "Gender, Peace and Security" Association for psychological counseling.

### 2.3 Legal support services



All municipalities have assisted domestic violence cases by providing them with information on all legal provisions and the prosecution of cases of domestic violence. In

all cases of reported domestic violence, the LC has cooperated with the judiciary to provide legal assistance as well as the issuance of IPOs and POs, as well as in some cases with non-profit organizations for counseling and free legal aid.

The municipalities have cooperated closely with the structures of the Police, the Prosecutor's Office and the Courts to consider cases of domestic violence and the issuance and certification of POs and IPOs.

### 2.4 Vocational training and employment services



**Kukës** and **Gramsh Municipality** have referred cases of domestic violence to the employment office for providing them with employment opportunities or vocational

training.

**Maliq Municipality**, for the cases addressed in the online meeting of ITT has also discussed a plan after COVID-19 to support cases of domestic violence with vocational training courses or employment opportunities. LCDV continuously informs the Employment Office about cases of domestic violence, in order to include them in the lists for vocational training and employment.

**Kamëz Municipality** has referred 4 cases of domestic violence to the Employment Office for employment opportunities.

**Fier Municipality** in cooperation with 'Che Buono' confectionery in Fier has offered free cooking courses to all abused women who have protection orders.

### 2.5 Health services



**Memaliaj Municipality** has accompanied people to get medical assistance and purchase

medicines, as well as to receive treatment for mental health, in cooperation with the regional hospital and the police.

In **Kölcsey Municipality**, 1 case of sexual violence was accompanied by area mental health workers and the psychologist of the local education office for medical assistance and psychological treatment in a psychiatric hospital.

Also in **Mallakastér Municipality** 1 case of domestic violence was accompanied for medical assistance of mental health. The case was followed up with online treatment by a psychologist assigned by the Municipality.

In **Elbasan Municipality**, cases of violence have been assisted with health care and reimbursement of prescriptions for children.

## 2.6 Awareness and information activities



violence.

All municipalities have paid special attention to informing the public about the increased risks of domestic violence during Covid-19 and the ways of contacting to report

On the official websites of the Municipalities, as well as on their social media, during the period of the Covid-19 pandemic, the municipalities have made available 24 hour telephone numbers to report cases of domestic violence, as well as information leaflets on violence and the response to it.

## III. BEST PRACTICES UNDERTAKEN TO PREVENT AND ADDRESS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CASES

One of the most important measures to prevent and combat violence is the cooperation of local authorities with civil society organizations as well as the provision of ongoing financial support. From the data and reports of the Committees on Gender Equality and Social Support cases with a positive impact on reducing cases of violence and solving problems through intervention have been identified, which are presented as Best Management Practices and refer to the municipalities as follows:

**Belsh Municipality**, for managing and handling cases of violence has received major assistance from the civil society organization "Woman's Forum in Elbasan" referring all cases of violence in this Municipality to this organization. Thanks to this cooperation, this organization has provided the Municipality of Belsh with:

- *Psychological service*: a part-time employed psychologist will be supported for almost a year by the Women's Forum in Elbasan. This is an assistance that makes it possible for cases to no longer be sent to Elbasan, but they can be handled in Belsh.
- *Legal service*: The forum has hired a full-time lawyer who will exclusively cover only the concerns and monitoring of cases that have received a Protection Order throughout the region of Elbasan.

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To address cases of domestic violence in **Delvinë Municipality** during the Covid-19 pandemic and to identify cases of violence the following are available:

- Services for reporting violence in an emergency situation - a 24-hour telephone number of social services in the Municipality has been made available to report cases of violence.

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In response to cases of domestic violence during Covid-19, **Maliq Municipality** has undertaken the following initiatives:

- *Operation of a multifunctional center* funded by UNDP providing economic assistance, housing, psycho-social assistance and reintegration programs.
- *Psycho-social support services, integration and housing for abused persons*, provided by the Directorate for Social Services and NGOs.
- *Psycho-social support and economic assistance* provided by UNICEF during the pandemic, such as disinfectants and other equipment to deal with the situation.

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**Elbasan Municipality** has paid special attention to awareness activities and campaigns. These campaigns include a series of awareness activities addressing gender-based violence issues organized by the Municipality of Elbasan in cooperation with local institutions and civil society.

- *Information about domestic violence during the state of emergency caused by Covid-19*: The Municipality of Elbasan has distributed information online on the official website, Facebook and the local media; it has distributed messages against domestic violence, and where help can be sought by making available the necessary contacts, such as the Local Coordinator, the Child Protection Unit, the police and the psychologist.
- *Initiator of "Family for Family" campaign*: The Municipality of Elbasan has been the initiator of "Family for Family" support campaign, for families in need and abused women.

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**Roskovec Municipality** has taken several initiatives to respond to and address cases of domestic violence:

- *Cooperation with education services.* Education services have often identified and referred cases to the local coordinator for domestic violence and the Child Protection Worker, who have then considered the relevant situations.
- *Continuous contact.* The local coordinator for domestic violence has posted various messages on the social networks of the Municipality and has made available the personal number, police number and service line number for girls and women to inform citizens about the provision of services even during the pandemic situation.
- *Awareness and information.* Leaflets on domestic violence awareness have been distributed.
- *Cooperation with judicial services.* Judicial services have issued protection orders for five cases during the pandemic.

In **Patos Municipality**, during the months of April-June 2020, awareness campaigns were organized with young people in the form of online competitions and sports competitions to increase awareness of domestic violence in times of pandemics.

**Dropull Municipality** has undertaken several practices for addressing and dealing with cases of domestic violence in the conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic:

- *Protocols for dealing with cases of domestic violence.* The protocol prepared and forwarded for handling cases of domestic violence by CRM members, both under normal conditions and in the conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic, has been shared in advance with all Dropull CRM members for its approval in the next meeting of the Steering Committee of this mechanism. The Local Coordinator for Domestic Violence has been trained by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection and UNDP on the implementation of this protocol.
- *Information on reporting cases of domestic violence.* The numbers that are available to the community during the COVID-19 situation have been made known in an announcement published on the website of the municipality where the importance of reporting cases is emphasized, especially in conditions of isolation due to the COVID-19 pandemic. On the Facebook page of the municipality, videos or posts of MoHSP prepared for domestic violence and its treatment during the conditions of restriction due to COVID-19 are also constantly shared.

**Vlorë Municipality** financially supports "Vatra" Center and through an agreement with it offers accommodation to victims / survivors of domestic violence.

**Kolonjë Municipality** cooperates with local organizations, which provide free legal services. The Municipality also helps victims / survivors of domestic violence with economic

difficulties, through rent bonuses, employment through the employment office and enrollment of children in kindergarten.

In **Shijak Municipality**, work is underway to establish an interdisciplinary technical team (ITT) for cases of domestic violence and a meeting with ITT members will be held soon. The organization with which the Municipality of Shijak has cooperated during Covid-19 for handling cases of violence is "Initiative for Social Change", ARSIS, specialized in providing social support for children, young people and families who are in difficulty, danger or vulnerable situation and in protecting their rights. Establishing contacts with organizations enables the addressing of cases of violence and receiving services that cannot be provided by the Municipality, such as: emergency and long-term housing, inclusion of victims and children in centers where they can receive psycho-social, medical services, etc.

In **Finiq Municipality**:

- For one of the cases, temporary accommodation was provided in the premises owned by the Municipality, which were set up in order to protect against domestic violence.
- 24-hour telephone service is made available for reporting cases of domestic violence.
- Economic assistance is provided to families in need and victims of domestic violence.

**Korçë Municipality** has undertaken several practices as follows:

- Free telephone installation (0800 34-34);
- Assistance in food and clothing for cases of domestic violence encountered in practice.
- Promoting local government-civil society partnerships (service delivery agreements e.g. "Kennedy Foundation, Jesus Christ for the Balkans, etc."). Cooperation with the Foundation "Jesus Christ for the Balkans" through a project supported by the Municipality, an apartment "emergency shelter" (1 + 1) has been made available to accommodate emergencies. The capacity of this shelter is for 2 victims of domestic violence with their children.
- Handling cases in a multidisciplinary manner and the participation of more than two institutions in the management and handling of these cases.
- Awareness campaign regarding the phenomenon and the concrete work carried out by the actors, members of the mechanism against domestic violence.

Throughout Covid-19 pandemic, in **Memaliaj Municipality**:

- The number of the local coordinator for reporting violence in an emergency situation is made available 24 hours a day;
- Communication and close cooperation was maintained with the village elders to identify cases of domestic violence.

**Gjrokastër Municipality** has undertaken several new practices to handle DV cases during Covid-19:

- *Increasing cooperation between institutions and continuous support of victims of domestic violence*, despite the physical difficulties created by the pandemic, was the tool that enabled good case management.
- *Support with food / financial packages and counseling* (mainly by phone), *legal aid* even during the pandemic period. This has made it possible for the victim to have more confidence and be more motivated to improve her life.

**Lushnje Municipality** considers communication and online counseling a good practice, a novelty due to the impossibility of face to face meetings. Although at a distance, counseling contacted persons has been made possible.

In **Këlcyrë Municipality** for two cases of violence (one case of sexual violence and one case of domestic violence) taken under protection, the work was immediately coordinated to initiate procedures for issuing the protection order.

- For food packages there was co-financing, of which 75% from the Counseling Line for Women and Girls and 25% from the Municipality. Transportation for distribution has been a financial contribution of the employees of municipal administration.
- The commitment of the Municipality has resulted in the employment in the private sector of a woman abused by her husband, near her place of residence.
- The telephone number of the Local Coordinator for reporting domestic violence has been made available 24 hours a day.

**Pogradec Municipality** in cooperation with USAID, on 28.05.2020 signed the European Charter for Gender Equality which is expected to be finalized in August 2020 and which is expected to have an impact on next year's budget. Meetings and communication for the signing of the European Charter for Gender Equality started in March 2020.

The free counseling line for abused women, "I, Woman" association operates in cooperation with the Municipality of Pogradec, as in each case the referral mechanism has worked.

The operation of a day center for cases of domestic violence and gender-based violence is also a good practice. In addition to accommodation, free psychological and legal counseling is provided in this center. During the period March-May, 2 cases were accommodated.

In terms of good practices, In **Gramsh Municipality** there have been collaborations with other local organizations:

- Cooperation with the "Woman's Forum" in Elbasan has made it possible to find solutions to emergency violence cases providing women with housing, psychological counseling and legal support.

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**Peqin Municipality** has undertaken several initiatives to manage cases of domestic violence during Covid-19.

*Economic assistance:*

- Despite the addressed and identified cases, the Municipality fund and businesses have provided food packages for both abused and low-income people.
- For each case of violence with a protection order, the social service has provided a fund of 3,000 ALL.

*Cooperation with civil society:*

- "Woman's Forum" and "Other Vision" associations have provided not only financial assistance with food, but also 4-5 days accommodation, free courses, food packages for families in need and the abused.

*Inclusiveness:*

- Center for children with disabilities started operating during the Covid-19 pandemic period funded by the Municipality, as it had been closed for years.

*Initiatives of municipal councilors:*

Municipal Council members have suggested initiatives to support women in this area. The members of the municipal council express the efforts they have made continuously to include in the municipal budget:

- Construction of a kindergarten and a playground for children.
- Establishment of a multifunctional center for the support of abused persons and persons in economic need.

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Some of the main services and good practices provided in the framework of addressing domestic violence, undertaken by **Cërrik Municipality** have been the following:

- Drafting and approving the Local Action Plan for Gender Equality (2020 - 2023) in order to fulfill the official public commitment of the Municipality of Cërrik regarding the guarantee of gender equality in local life.
- Setting up a telephone line (8:00-16:00) at the social service office in the Municipality to report cases of domestic violence and gender-based violence, as well as to provide the necessary information regarding assistance, protection and support services provided for this purpose.

- Undertaking awareness campaigns in cooperation with international organizations (such as USAID) regarding information and awareness on domestic violence, *especially during the COVID-19 pandemic period.*

*Setting up a national database.* One of the best practices, which has been undertaken by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection and is being implemented in the Municipality of Cërrik and other municipalities in the country, is the creation of a national database regarding the management of cases of domestic violence and gender-based violence.

In **Kamëz Municipality**, the local coordinator has been present in almost every school, presenting her work and sharing information on violence and the rights and responsibilities of children.

As a good practice for **Divjakë Municipality**, it is emphasized that during the period of Covid-19 it became possible to handle cases of domestic violence online, follow up on each case and provide counseling online or by phone at any time. Also, the technical group meeting during the pandemic was held online depending on each case and each need.

In **Klos Municipality**, in addition to counseling provided by the local coordinator for domestic violence, victims of domestic violence are also supported with housing services. There is no social housing in the municipality of Klos, so the rent bonus is used as a practice.

To prevent and address DV cases, **Mirditë Municipality** has undertaken the following initiatives:

- *Awareness raising, counseling and communication* with the community during the COVID-19 period.
- *Addressing cases to the relevant directorates* to provide solutions to cases of domestic violence.

In **Skrapar Municipality**, despite the fact that there have been no addressed and identified cases, food packages have been provided for families in need by the Municipality funds and by businesses,. Also, in the Municipality of Skrapar *the center for children with disabilities* is in place to facilitate their families.

During the Covid-19 period, **Përmet Municipality** has undertaken several initiatives to prevent and address cases of domestic violence:

- In cooperation with the psychologists of the local Education Office, an awareness-raising process has been launched to prevent violence in 9-year schools and high

schools since the start of the school year, which has continued online during the quarantine.

- The Chair of GEC, in the Municipal Council of Përmet, Mrs. Elena Mullaraj, who is currently facilitating a Council of Europe initiative for Egyptian minorities in Përmet, has provided protective equipment for landscaping workers. As well as from the cooperation with the community group in action, 30 families were supported with food packages, out of which 15 divorced women, heads of families.
- The telephone number of the Directorate for Social Affairs is made available 24 hours a day for reporting violence in an emergency situation.

In **Selenicë Municipality**, continuous online meetings were held to coordinate the work for the management of domestic violence cases between employees of the state police, the Directorate for Social Services at the municipality, teachers and educators, and health workers.

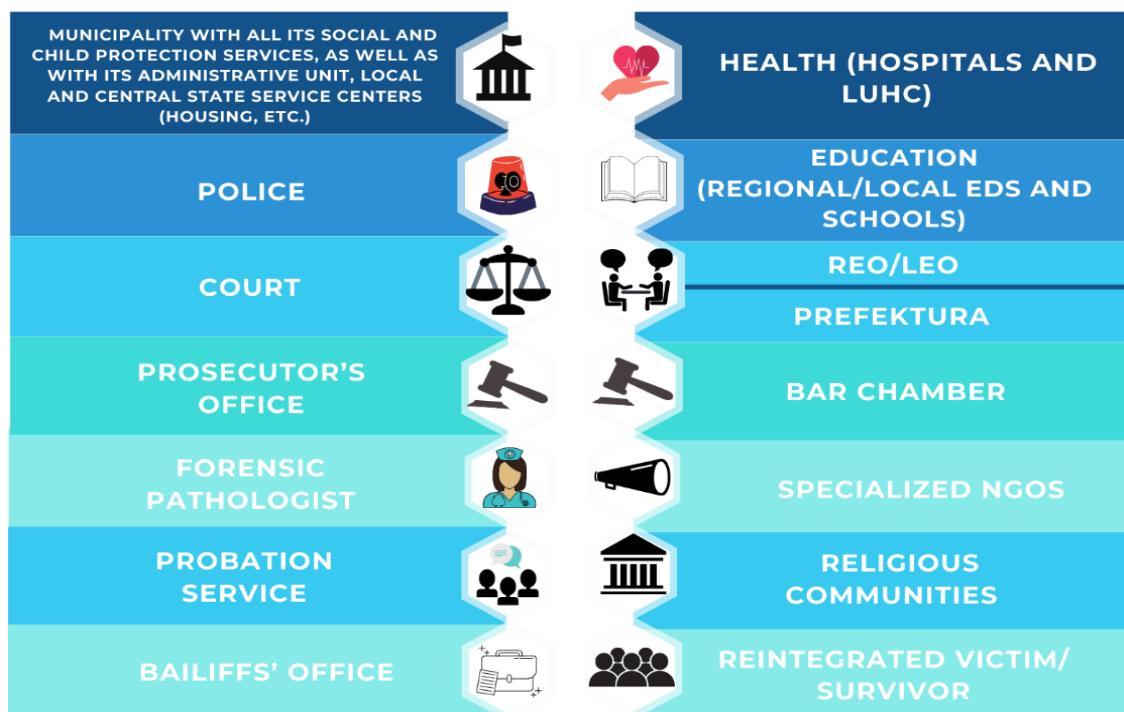
**Devoll Municipality** has signed an agreement with the Counseling Line for women and girls. The Counseling Line will provide information via the hotline and address relevant support as needed. The telephone number will be posted on the official website of the Municipality of Devoll.

## IV. COORDINATED REFERRAL MECHANISM OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CASES

The "Coordinated Referral Mechanism of domestic violence cases" (CRM) is an organized network of responsible institutions at the local level for the prevention, protection, support and rehabilitation of victims of domestic violence. The Coordinated Referral Mechanism of domestic violence cases consists of:

- a) Steering Committee (SC) "On the coordination of the activity of the institutions of the responsible authorities, at the local level, and the referral of domestic violence cases", which operate within each municipality.
- b) The Interdisciplinary Technical Team (ITT), which is defined by a decision of the Steering Committee, composed of technical representatives/specialists of the institutions represented in the CRM.
- c) Local Coordinator against Domestic Violence (LCDV) - Specialist appointed full time in the Municipality, with the duty and responsibility to fulfill the duties set out in DCM no. 334, dated 17.02.2011, "On work coordination mechanism for the referral of domestic violence cases and how it proceeds".

The following institutions are part of CRM:



Also, the Municipalities have performed services for cases of domestic violence, respecting the protocols for managing cases of domestic violence at the local level through the Coordinated Referral Mechanism during the Covid-19 situation, approved by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, addressed specifically to ITT members. Due to established social distancing rules, ITT meetings in most municipalities were held mainly online to discuss domestic violence cases identified during this period.

The situation of the management of violence cases identified during the period of isolation due to the Covid-19 pandemic according to the respective municipalities is presented below:

## SHKODËR MUNICIPALITY

In 2020

- 40 managed cases

**In Shkodër Municipality,** in compliance with the measures taken in response to Covid-19 during this time, ITT has not physically met. All cases of domestic violence have been handled by the Directorate for Social Services of the Municipality of Shkodra, as well as "For the Family" Community Centers, part of this directorate in close cooperation with some of the main actors of the CRM, such as: Local Police of Shkodra, civil society organizations (Woman to woman, Woman in Integration, Hope for the World, etc.), Regional Employment Directorate for Shkodra and LUHC of Shkodra, fully observing the relevant legislation. In 2020, during the Covid-19 situation, 40 cases were managed in the Municipality of Shkodra, of which 13 had IPOs and 10 had POs. While in 2019 for the same period 12 cases were managed, of which 2 had IPOs and 10 had POs.

In 2019

- 12 managed cases

During this period, the Ministry of Health and Social Protection with the support of UNDP, in the framework of "To end violence against women and girls in Albania" joint program has prepared two protocols to help all CRM aiming at a unified practice for all municipalities. In this context, the relevant protocols were forwarded by email and official letter to all institutions part of the CRM and two trainings were organized with CRM members for the implementation of this protocol.

Shkodër Municipality during the period March-June 2020 handled, managed and monitored a total of 40 cases of domestic violence. Except for new cases, the management and monitoring of protection orders that are in force from previous months (year 2019) continues. For all cases, the relevant monitoring reports are drafted and sent every 60 days to the Local Police Directorate for Shkodra.

Throughout the state of emergency caused by COVID-19, staff care for victims of domestic violence has increased. Following the continuous contact and recommendations of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, specifically with the sector of Policies and Strategies for Social Inclusion and Gender Equality, communication with cases was conducted by phone

and in necessary cases; home visits were conducted in cooperation with the APSs of the area, with whom the cooperation has been effective.

## BELSH MUNICIPALITY

In 2020

- 2 managed cases

In 2019

- 3 managed cases

**In Belsh Municipality**, CRM did not meet during the isolation period due to Covid-19. During this period, in Belsh Municipality there was a slight decline in the number of the reported cases of DV and GBV compared to the same period of the previous year. In 2019 there were 3 cases, while 2 cases were identified in 2020. According to the focus group participants, the situation is not problematic and the work has continued normally, but with high workloads related to the coordination of economic assistance in food and clothing for the needy, including violence cases. The only case with a protection order is normally followed by the Municipality and the Local Coordinator always provides a report and detailed information of the cases.

In the municipality of Belsh, during the COVID-19 period, based on the situation of reported cases, the Protection Orders were not monitored, but constant contacts were maintained with the cases and the police.

## DELVINË MUNICIPALITY

In 2020

- 0 managed cases

In 2019

- 0 managed cases

During the period of the Covid-19 pandemic, **Municipality of Delvina** did not report any cases of violence. Also for 2019, 0 identified cases were reported. Despite this, the Coordinated Referral Mechanism (CRM) operated in the Municipality of Delvina and met online during this period. Local Coordinators have periodically reported to the Gender Equality Committee and drafted protocols for the functioning of CRM both during the pandemic and post-pandemic period.

During the period of the Covid-19 pandemic the protocol of preventive measures was observed. For each of the cases, the communication between the Gender Equality Committee and the administration in the Municipality was conducted using online means of communication.

Although during the pandemic period the municipality of Delvina did not have any cases of reporting domestic violence, 1 case of sexual violence is being handled, reported at the end of 2019, in cooperation with *Jona* NGO and the Police in Delvina.

## LUSHNJE MUNICIPALITY

In 2020

- 9 managed cases

In 2019

- 19 managed cases

Cases of violence have been referred by the institutions part of the Coordinated Referral Mechanism in the **Municipality of Lushnja** periodically, always requesting specialized service. For the period March-May 2020, 19 cases have been identified compared to 19 cases identified in 2019.

CRM has coordinated the work with all members, part of this mechanism by following up on the cases of violence, both cases of violence against women, children or other persons in the family.

## ELBASAN MUNICIPALITY

In 2020

- 36 managed cases

In 2019

- 15 managed cases

During the state of emergency caused by COVID-19, the coordination of the Referral Mechanism at **Municipality of Elbasan** to victims of domestic violence has increased. The last meeting conducted by CRM of Elbasan was held on March 9, 2020. Communication between the following members was carried out by telephone and in necessary cases; home visits were carried out in cooperation with the APSs of the area.

For the period March-April 2020, 10 cases of violence were identified, respectively: 3 IPOs and 2 POs were issued in March 2020 and 2 IPOs and 3 POs were issued in April 2020. While in 2019, respectively, 15 cases were handled, from which: 6 with IPOs and 1 PO for March 2019 and 3 IPOS and 5POs for April 2019.

In addition to the new cases, during the period January-April, other protection orders that are in force from previous months were addressed and monitored. A total of 36 cases were managed and addressed.

During the period March - April 2020, ITT did not meet. All cases were handled by the Directorate for Social and Community Care Services of the Municipality of Elbasan, as well as

by Community Policing specialists and other CRM members, such as the Elbasan Local Police, the Child Rights Protection Unit, civil society organizations, such as A2B, Woman's Center for Development and Culture, Other Vision, Elbasan Woman's Forum through on-line meetings.

The Local Coordinator in the Municipality of Elbasan has performed her functions according to the planned schedule. She has communicated, monitored and managed cases through telephone conversations and face-to-face meetings while maintaining security distances. This process has also been supported by Community Policing specialists and other CRM members to identify and support cases of domestic violence. The police have been informed of any case of violation of IPOs / POs identified by the Local Coordinator. For cases with medium and high risk level, the work is coordinated with the respective APSs.

## PEQIN MUNICIPALITY

In 2020

- 5 managed cases

In **Municipality of Peqin**, according to the meeting minutes, CRM met twice to discuss the situation of domestic violence. Based on the data from the coordinator of violence in the Municipality of Peqin during the pandemic period caused by Covid-19, a total of 5 cases were addressed, of which 4 cases with protection orders and 1 case without protection orders.

In 2019

- 1 managed case

In the same period with 2019 there was only 1 case without a protection order. Local coordinators have periodically reported cases of domestic violence to the Gender Equality Committee. In the municipality of Peqin, the cases with the Protection Order have been monitored by the police and representatives of the municipal social service.

## GJIROKASTËR MUNICIPALITY

In 2020

- 3 managed cases

In **Municipality of Gjirokastra**, during the Covid-19 period there was no physical meeting of the CRM as there was no concrete case to show this need. For the period March-May 2020, 3 cases of domestic violence were identified and 10 cases were identified in 2019 for the same period. Three online meetings were held through platforms which enable the realization of meetings. CRM has discussed the problems that may be encountered as well as the solutions, i.e. a preparation for certain situations which may have a more complex nature and require specific treatments.

In 2019

- 10 managed cases

In the Municipality of Gjirokastra the situation, in general, is well managed as there have been no emergencies. Existing cases are monitored normally and attention is paid to the distribution of food aid as well as monitoring the situation over the phone.

In the Municipality of Gjirokastra, according to the legal provisions (Law No. 9696/2006 "On measures against domestic violence, as amended) the periodic monitoring report of the implementation of the Protection Order for cases of domestic violence is made available every 60 days by the local coordinator to the state police structures in the LSGU where the monitoring is performed.

To implement the protection protocol during the pandemic this report was conducted over the phone with the victim and / or her relatives. Communication has been ongoing to see the progress of the POs. A copy of this report was then sent to the state police for information regarding the situation. Cases are monitored normally, but through a different method than prior to Covid-19 pandemic.

## DROPULL MUNICIPALITY

In 2020

- 1 managed case

The number of gender-based violence and domestic violence cases in recent months reported in **Municipality of Dropull** has been only one.

For the only case presented during this period, the implementation of the Protection Order is being monitored by the parties, but through telephone communication, due to the restrictions of COVID-19, but also because the survivor has left Albania. The monitoring report has been made available to the police.

The Municipality of Dropull set up the Coordinated Referral Mechanism (CRM) of domestic violence case in December 2019. The formalization of CRM was done through the signing of the Cooperation Agreement for this purpose, on 05.12.2019 by 15 members: Dropull Municipality, Police Station, Judicial District Court, Gjirokastra Judicial District Prosecutor's Office, Local Bailiff's Office, Forensic Pathologist of Gjirokastra, Local Probation Service Office, Gjirokastra Regional Hospital, Dropull i Sipërm Health Center, Dropull i Poshtëm Health Center, Local Education Office, Regional Employment Office, Gjirokastra Regional State Social Service Directorate, Gjirokastra Region Prefect, and Compulsory Health Care Insurance Fund.

Also, starting from 08/11/2019 at the Municipality of Dropull, a full time employee has been appointed in the Directorate for Economic and Financial Development in the position of Local Coordinator against Domestic Violence CRM of Dropull. Also the Steering Committee (heads of all member institutions mentioned above), Interdisciplinary Technical Team (case handling

specialists, one representative for each member institution) and the Local Coordinator are in place.

Since the beginning of the operation of the CRM, the Local Coordinator against domestic violence has received a series of trainings. The Steering Committee held its first meeting on the date of signing the Cooperation Agreement for the formalization of the CRM, while it met again in June to approve the above-mentioned protocols.

ITT has met twice this year, in two trainings held on 22 January 2020 on the applicable legal framework and obligations of ITT, as well as in February 2020 on sexual violence and the handling of such cases by CRM. During the pandemic there were no meetings because even the only case was handled with the two-three responsible members (as explained above), but contacts were maintained with CRM members regularly and they received brief information via e-mail to keep ITT members informed that there were no new cases to handle. Despite the pandemic situation, communication between the responsible institutions has been coordinated and has been done continuously.

In the Municipality of Dropull there is a continuous follow-up and monitoring of the situation regarding the implementation of IPOs by parties, local actors and the responsible structure in the Municipality.

## VLORË MUNICIPALITY

In 2020  
January -June

- 50 managed cases

Multidisciplinary technical group in **Municipality of Vlora**, CRM has met twice with the participation of all representatives of public institutions and non-profit organizations that are part of this group. According to *Vatra* Center, during the isolation from the Covid-19 pandemic, 22 more cases of violence were recorded compared to the same period of 2019.

In 2019  
January -June

- 50 managed cases

Meanwhile the cases of violence reported to the state police are the same figures with the same period last year. Even the number of cases of protection orders referred by the Prosecutor's Office and the Court in the municipality has not increased.

Protection Orders in **Municipality of Vlora** are monitored through telephone contact and social networks by the Local Coordinator for domestic violence pursuant to the decisions of the Court.

## POLİÇAN MUNICIPALITY

In 2020  
and  
2019

- 0 managed cases

In **Municipality of Poliçan** CRM has not been convened, nor has any monitoring plan been drafted. Despite the fact that there were no cases of violence identified, during the focus group it was emphasized that the reasons that victims of violence do not report is related to their poor economic situation which affects their economic dependence on abusers.

Women do not find support and have uncertainty in solving their problem by the system, as even the municipality does not have an available budget. According to the physicians participating in the focus group, women find the solution to their psychological needs through sedatives.

## GRAMSH MUNICIPALITY

In 2020

- 5 managed cases

In 2019

- 7 managed cases

During the Covid-19 pandemic period in **Municipality of Gramsh** there were no physical meetings with members of the Interdisciplinary Technical Team (ITT) pursuant to the guideline issued by the Ministry to avoid gatherings of many people. For the period January-May 2020, 5 cases were reported and 4 POs were issued. Meanwhile, for the period January-May 2019, 7 cases were reported and 10 POs were issued throughout 2019.

The cooperation was realized through the telephone to provide service and to learn about new possible cases, being in constant contact and reacting to any possible suspicion of cases of domestic violence.

Gramsh Municipality and the police station have had a regular cooperation to monitor cases of domestic violence and follow up on any new cases.

## SKRAPAR MUNICIPALITY

In 2020

- 0 managed cases

During the Covid-19 pandemic, **Municipality of Skrapar** did not have any reported cases of domestic violence. In Municipality of Skrapar the protocol for preventive measures has been respected and the communication of information has been done through e-mails. Local coordinators have reported periodically to the Gender Equality Committee, although no cases have been addressed.

## LIBOHOVË MUNICIPALITY

In 2020

- 0 managed cases

**Municipality of Libohova** has met online to be on alert, but during this period there have been no reports of cases of violence.

In 2019

- 1 managed case

## MIRDITË MUNICIPALITY

In 2020

- 0 managed cases

The Coordinated Referral Mechanism for cases of domestic violence is not set up in **Municipality of Mirdita**. No meetings of the Interdisciplinary Technical Team were held during the pandemic period due to the situation caused by COVID-19.

In the Municipality of Mirdita, all cases handled with a Protection Order are monitored by social services in the Municipality. Every month, contact is made with the abused persons and if there are cases when the abused people move to other districts, family visits are made. In cases where there have been complaints of violations by the abusers, the police have been contacted.

## KAMËZ MUNICIPALITY

In 2020

- 96 managed cases

In **Municipality of Kamza** the referral system was re-established and reactivated in June 2018 and monthly meetings were held. The meetings were held all online through the "Skype" and "Zoom" platforms. The situation was monitored through telephone calls and in priority cases with high risk, direct contact was made with the abused persons, following the measures pursuant to the security protocol. Police assisted in all cases of domestic violence during Covid-19. Transportation is provided by the Police Station and in other cases by non-profit organizations.

In 2019

- 50 managed cases

The number of cases of domestic violence for the period reported for 2020 has reached 96 cases reported to the Police Stations. Meanwhile, in 2019 for the same period there were 50 cases under management.

Cases reported to police stations for violence against minors are considered priority cases with high risks. The children received immediate protection and were placed in the emergency center, to be oriented towards partner organizations, which provide the necessary services.

In terms of the management of cases of violence, the municipality of Kamza has addressed the following:

- 1 case was sent to the Center for Treatment of Domestic Violence Victims.
- 1 Case was referred to Girls & Women Counseling Line ALO 116 117.
- 7 cases were referred for free legal service to TLAS.
- 4 cases were referred to the Employment Office for employment opportunities.
- 2 cases were referred to the Directorate for Housing Issues to benefit from the rent bonus

The Interdisciplinary Technical Team (ITT) meeting was not held due to the Covid-19 situation, but all services were provided by individual communications with each actor. The Local Coordinator and the Child Protection Specialist have ensured the smooth running of the referral system and the provision of services to victims of domestic violence and children despite the pandemic. This is ensured through maintaining intensive contacts with other actors in the mechanism and referring cases to NGOs for the provision of services in emergency situations.

In the Municipality of Kamza, the monitoring of DV cases during Covid-19 was carried out by the Local Coordinator through home visits and telephone contacts, also in cooperation with Police Station no. 5 Kamza and APSs of the area.

## MALIQ MUNICIPALITY

In 2020

- 5 managed cases

In 2019

- 4 managed cases

In **Municipality of Maliq** CRM for domestic violence cases has organized continuous online meetings based on the cases presented and the importance of recognizing the protocol by the Steering Committee for the protection of victims of domestic violence to unify the actions of local institutions, in case management process. ITT members were informed about the importance of the operation of ITT even in the pandemic situation and the ways in which services can be provided by addressing the needs of cases, but also the safety of professionals.

Local coordinators have periodically reported to GEC on domestic violence issues, especially in rural areas, where information is more limited.

The Municipality of Maliq, for monitoring Protection Orders has cooperated with other municipalities where victims / survivors of domestic violence are residents and has referred relevant cases.

## KLOS MUNICIPALITY

In 2020

- 4 managed cases

In **Municipality of Klos**, CRM met on December 10, 2019 where it was reformed with the support of UNDP.

In 2019

- 2 managed cases

The Interdisciplinary Technical Team met on 16 January 2020 and 14 February 2020. Although ITT met twice during 2020, the difficulty lies in the non-participation of all members: the court and the Bailiff's Office. No ITT meetings were held during the COVID-19 pandemic. During 2020, only 2 POs were issued, and 2 cases of domestic violence were managed in 2020, but also 2 cases in 2019.

In the municipality of Klos, Protection Orders were issued during June 2020, so there was no monitoring of them during the COVID-19 pandemic period during isolation.

## KORÇË MUNICIPALITY

In 2020

- 20 managed cases

During the Covid-19 period in **Municipality of Korça** there was a decrease in reported cases of domestic violence. During the period March-May 2019 there were 32 reported cases of which 27 females and 5 males while in the period March-May 2020 there were 20 reported cases of which 17 females and 3 males. Despite the decline in figures, experts in the field, municipal employees, but also key actors working in this sector, claim that this decline is not explained by the reduction of cases of violence, but by the impossibility of reporting given that individuals remained isolated together during 24 hours. This is also confirmed by the fact that after the termination of isolation there has been an increase in reporting. Further monitoring of the situation including the number of divorces post Covid-19 can further identify the real situation.

The Coordinated Referral Mechanism (CRM) has met twice during the pandemic period. The last meeting conducted by CRM of Korça was held on 11/5/2020. The communication was carried out online to discuss cases that took place during this period. In the meeting of 2/4/2020, the cases handled during the 3 months January-March 2020 were discussed.

Cases identified in the Police Station receive support from the Local Coordinator for Gender Equality, who is responsible for identifying needs and providing specific services. Of all the cases reported during this period in cooperation with the police only in one case the abuser was kept away from home.

To monitor the situation in the municipality of Korça, the police had received special instructions to control or observe cases or families, for which there was preliminary information that they have problems with violence.

## SHIJAK MUNICIPALITY

In 2019

- 13 managed cases

In **Municipality of Shijak**, a cooperation agreement has been reached between the responsible institutions and work is underway to establish CRM and a meeting of the Interdisciplinary Technical Team (ITT) will be held soon, with members from each responsible institution to come to the aid of domestic violence. The institutions that have signed the cooperation agreement for the establishment of CRM are: Shijak Municipality, Shijak Police Station, Durrës Judicial District Court, Durrës District Prosecutor's Office, Shijak Health Center, Social Service Office of Shijak Municipality, Durrës Regional Education Directorate, Durrës Regional Employment Office.

In the municipality of Shijak pursuant to the legislation and according to the Protocols approved by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, the Local Coordinator for Domestic Violence every 60 days should prepare a report on monitoring protection orders and this report should be made available to the police, in case there are PO violations.

## KURBIN MUNICIPALITY

In 2020

- 15 managed cases

In **Municipality of Kurbin** the Steering Committee and the Referral Mechanism have not been set up. The Municipality of Kurbin is in the process of drafting a Cooperation Agreement between the institutions and for cases of violence the steps are followed pursuant to Law No. 9666, dated 18.12. 2006, as amended.

In 2019

- 9 managed cases

For the period March-June 2020, 15 cases were reported, of which 10 cases were issued POs and 5 cases were issued IPOs. While in 2019 for the same period 9 cases were reported, of which 5 cases were issued POs and 4 cases were issued IPOs.

In the Municipality of Kurbin, for monitoring cases of domestic violence, telephone contacts were maintained and psycho-social reports were prepared, which were submitted to the court.

## MALEŠI E MADHE MUNICIPALITY

In 2020

- 6 managed cases

During Covid-19 pandemic period, in **Municipality of Malësi e Madhe**, CRM has operated by providing support with food aid and counseling according to the needs presented. ITT online meetings have also been organized. The topics discussed were: domestic violence situation, difficulties encountered, for 2 Protocols: 1) Domestic Violence Case Management Protocol at the local level through the COVID-19 situation referral mechanism and 2) Management Protocol of domestic violence cases at the local level through CRM.

In 2019

- 2 managed cases

During this period, in the Municipality of Malësi e Madhe, protection orders were monitored, but because the administrative units are far from each other for the situation of COVID-19, the social workers of the units were engaged to receive information on the situation in which persons, victims of violence were. All cases have been removed from the place where they lived with the abusers and sent to a safer environment.

## PUSTEC MUNICIPALITY

In 2020

- 1 managed case

In **Municipality of Pustec** the Coordinated Referral Mechanism did not work and there was no communication between the members of the Interdisciplinary Technical Team (ITT) and no meetings were held. The local coordinator for domestic violence has no official contact with the police, although these are the two main actors in supporting domestic violence.

In 2019

- 0 managed cases

In the municipality of Pustec, the monitoring of cases of violence was carried out through telephone contacts.

## ROSKOVEC MUNICIPALITY

In 2020

- 15 managed cases

In **Municipality of Roskovec** during the Covid-19 pandemic period, for the March-May period, 2 regular online meetings of the Interdisciplinary Technical Team and online training on the Domestic Violence Case Management Protocol were held. Meanwhile, the local coordinator has attended other trainings such as: on the Shelter Management Protocol during the pandemic period and training on violence case management and training on the REVALB system.

In 2019

- 3 managed cases

During 2020, 10 cases of violence were identified, of which 5 were during the Covid-19 pandemic period. The cause has been forced isolation for cases of domestic violence. Two of the cases were provided with free legal services, within the project: "Strengthening the Coordinated Referral Mechanism for Cases of Violence" by UNDP. From year to year there is a clear increase in lawsuits against violence, as the Municipality has improved the quality of services and strengthened protection of victims.

The last report of the Municipality of Roskovec on the results of the monitoring in February 2020 was sent to the police. Also, the next report is being prepared for 10 new cases from January 2020 and for 4 cases with an active Protection Order.

## KUKËS MUNICIPALITY

In 2020

- 9 managed cases

In 2019

- 7 managed cases

In Municipality of Kukës during the pandemic period, respecting the rules of social distancing, ITT information was used using the email addresses of members. The members were informed about each case and on their part the case was addressed by giving suggestions for drafting the intervention plan. The municipality has established the relevant structures and relevant resources for contact. Local coordinators have reported once a week to the Committee on Gender Equality and Social Protection on the number of victims of violence contacted, as a preventive measure for violence.

Based on the data received from the Local Coordinator for Domestic Violence in the Municipality, for the period January - March 2020, 9 cases of domestic violence were reported, of which 6 cases were reported during the period of isolation of the pandemic caused by Covid-19 .

Their monitoring was carried out in cooperation with police officers. Monitoring reports were prepared for each case and no violations of protection orders were found.

## DIVJAKË MUNICIPALITY

In 2020

- 14 managed cases

Violence cases in **Municipality of Divjaka** have been referred by institutions as part of the referral mechanism periodically. Also, for the most emergency cases, ITT was physically convened, respecting all the rules of social distancing.

In 2019

- 15 managed cases

For the period March-May 2020, 14 IPOs were issued by the Lushnje Judicial District Court and all cases were verified by the domestic violence coordinator in cooperation with the social administrator of the respective units and they were given the necessary assistance by providing all relevant services. It was not possible to conduct the quarterly report to the Police Station due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Also, difficulties were encountered in managing cases due to the inability to pay home visits.

## KOLONJË MUNICIPALITY

In 2020

- 2 managed cases

Coordinated Referral Mechanism in **Municipality of Kolonja** has not met, as cases of domestic violence have not posed difficulties in their management and no emergency cases have been presented.

In 2019

- 1 managed case

The monitoring of POs for cases under management is being carried out according to the procedure and no problems have been encountered with their implementation.

## MALLAKASTER MUNICIPALITY

In 2020

- 4 managed cases

In **Municipality of Mallakastra** CRM during the Covid-19 period has been coordinating the work for the management of cases of violence and has met 4 times online.

In 2019

- 3 managed cases

The information was obtained after the victims of violence informed the police and following the contact by the police of the social services administration in the Municipality, the support process with short-term services started immediately.

Short-term services include: immediate protection and security from the police, escorting for health support by the area medical staff and social workers of the Municipality, provision of psychological services by LEO psychologist, as well as follow-up and information on initiating procedures for the immediate order of protection. These cases have also been referred to GEC in the Municipal Council. For all 4 cases of violence, the monitoring continues pursuant to the legal procedure.

## KËLCYRË MUNICIPALITY

In 2020

- 5 managed cases

CRM in **Municipality of Këlcyrë** during COVID-19 has maintained communications electronically. For cases of violence, the information was forwarded by the Këlcyrë Police and they were immediately taken under protection by the police.

In 2019

- 6 managed cases

In cooperation with the specialist for social issues in the Municipality, food packages were offered to the abused persons. Under the security of the police and the staff of social affairs of the Municipality, the abused persons were accompanied for treatment in the hospital of Këlcyrë. During the period of the Covid-19 pandemic, respectively from the social service in the Municipality and from the Coordinator for Violence, the cases were monitored pursuant to the legal procedure.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, 2 victims of violence were taken under protection by the police, where 1 of the cases is sexual abuse and 1 case is violence of the husband against the wife. Meanwhile, other cases are reports of psychological violence from the circle of relatives.

## MEMALIAJ MUNICIPALITY

In 2020

- 0 managed cases

During the pandemic period Covid-19 CRM operated and met 1 time online. During this period in **Municipality of Memaliaj** there were no referred cases of violence. The local coordinator reported periodically to GEC. Also, protocols have been drafted for the functioning of CRM both during the pandemic and post-pandemic period.

In 2019

- 1 managed case

## PATOS MUNICIPALITY

In 2020

- 9 managed cases

In **Municipality of Patos** the coordinated referral mechanism for domestic violence cases has been established and is functioning since 2014. During the period March-July 2020 in the Municipality of Patos, ITT has met regularly and held monthly meetings, in order to share information on new cases and progress of handling existing cases. March meeting was held at the beginning of the month and ITT members met physically, while in the following months the meetings were held online. During the pandemic period, monitoring of protection orders was carried out through telephone communications with victims / survivors of domestic violence.

In 2019

- 5 managed cases

## HAS MUNICIPALITY

In 2020

- 2 managed cases

During the period of the Covid-19 pandemic in **Municipality of Has**, CRM met twice and the local coordinators reported periodically to the Gender Equality Committee. Protocols have been drafted for the functioning of CRM both during the pandemic and after the pandemic.

In 2019

- 0 managed cases

Despite the difficult situation during the Covid-19 pandemic, ITT online meetings were held observing the rules. During the meetings, the challenges and difficulties for reporting cases of domestic violence and their management were discussed.

## TROPOJË MUNICIPALITY

In 2020

- 2 managed cases

During the pandemic period in **Municipality of Tropoja** CRM has functioned through online communication with ITT members as well as groups created on social networks. On 03.06.2020 CRM meeting was held in the hall of the Municipal Council with most of the members always respecting the rules of distancing.

On 05.06.2020, a meeting of the ISTG was held again for an emergency case, which referred to CPU in the Municipality of Tropoja. Meanwhile, for 2019, the local coordinator does not have data on cases of domestic violence.

## BULQIZË MUNICIPALITY

In 2020

- 2 managed cases

Despite the difficult situation, during the Covid-19 pandemic in **Municipality of Bulqiza**, online ITT meetings were held. At the meetings, the challenges and difficulties during this period were discussed, such as cases of domestic violence and case management, as well as protocols for managing cases of domestic violence among CRM.

In 2019

- 2 managed cases

The Coordinated Referral Mechanism (CRM) has functioned and met once during the Covid pandemic period - 19. Local coordinators have reported periodically to the Gender Equality Committee.

To respond to cases of domestic violence, protocols have been developed for the functioning of CRM during the pandemic. This protocol enables the initiation of procedures immediately so that the response to domestic violence is immediate and operates in real time to deal with cases of domestic violence and gender-based violence.

## PËRMET MUNICIPALITY

In 2020

- 0 managed cases

In **Municipality of Përmet** protocols on the functioning of CRM have been drafted by the line Ministry and approved by CRM members, implementing measures for the protection of victims of violence. These protocols describe the procedure for the operation of CRM both during the pandemic and post-pandemic, to operate in real time to deal with cases of domestic violence and to initiate proceedings immediately.

In 2019

- 10 managed cases

## TEPELENË MUNICIPALITY

In 2020

- 2 managed cases

CRM in **Municipality of Tepelena** has operated and has met 2 times online during the Covid-19 pandemic period. The local coordinator reported periodically to GEC.

In 2019

- 1 managed case

For one of the violence cases, temporary accommodation was provided by the Municipality. Also, for both immediate protection orders, procedures have been initiated and cases have been referred to GEC in the Municipal Council.

## MAT MUNICIPALITY

In 2020

- 0 managed cases

In **Municipality of Mat** there was no meeting of CRM, since there was no case for the period March-May 2020. However, there were constant telephone contacts with police specialists and the court to exchange information on cases of domestic violence.

In 2019

- 2 managed cases

## RROGOZHINË MUNICIPALITY

In 2020

- 9 managed cases

In **Municipality of Rrogozhina** on 17.6.2020 a meeting was organized with the Steering Committee for Domestic Violence on the "Agreement on Cooperation of Work Coordination for the Referral and Handling Cases of Domestic Violence". The agreement was reached between the Municipality of Rrogozhina and the Counseling line for women and girls, victims of violence.

In 2019

- 4 managed cases

The protection order is monitored once a week by checking them in the apartment and talking every day on the phone during the Covid-19 period by the coordinator for domestic violence in cooperation with the coordinators of the social service of the administrative units of the Municipality.

## FIER MUNICIPALITY

In 2020

- 27 managed cases

CRM in **Municipality of Fier** was regularly convened until February 2020. The situation caused by COVID-19 has prevented ITT from meeting. But, although the meeting of the technical group was not carried out physically, constant telephone contacts were maintained depending on the case. For the period January-April 2020, 27 cases were managed, while in 2019 for the same period, 38 cases of violence were reported.

Monitoring of protection orders was not carried out through direct visits to dwellings, but through continuous telephone communication with victims / survivors.

In 2019

- 38 managed cases

## LIBRAZHD MUNICIPALITY

In 2019

- 0 managed cases

In **Municipality of Librazhd**, ITT met once online where the local coordinator reported on the situation of domestic family cases.

In 2019

- 1 managed cases

## CĒRRIK MUNICIPALITY

In 2020

- 16 managed cases

The functioning of the Coordinated Referral Mechanism for Domestic Violence has been one of the challenges for several years in the Municipality of Cērrik, since it was established in 2015, but only in the last few years efforts have been made to put it into action effectively. In this Municipality, cases of violence have been managed and they have received all relevant services.

In 2019

- 17 managed cases

## PRRENJAS MUNICIPALITY

In 2020

- 7 managed cases

In **Municipality of Prrenjas** to respond to cases of domestic violence, a protocol has been drafted for the functioning of CRM, during and after the pandemic period. CRM has been in charge of cases of violence during the Covid-19 period and the local coordinator has reported on the situation during this period to the Gender Equality Committee.

Meanwhile, only 1 case of domestic violence was provided with a Protection Order, which is periodically monitored pursuant to the legal procedure.

## SELENICE MUNICIPALITY

In 2020

- 1 managed cases

**Municipality of Selenica** has established a Coordinated Mechanism for Referral of Violence which is operational, but CRM was not convened during the quarantine period as a result of Covid-19. During the period January-June 2020, only one case of domestic violence was reported, while during the quarantine period, no cases of violence were reported. For the same period in 2019, 3 cases of domestic violence were managed.

In 2019

- 3 managed cases

## DEVOLL MUNICIPALITY

In 2020

- 7 managed cases

CRM has been established in **Municipality of Devoll** and is operational. For the period January-July 2020, information was received from time to time with the APSs of the areas on the denunciations of IPOs cases for victims of violence.

Telephone contact was also maintained with victims of violence to obtain information about the situation in the family. The monitoring was carried out continuously in cooperation with the APSs of the areas. For the period January-July 2020, 7 IPOs were reported to the Welfare and Social Care Sector, of which four cases were reported during the Covid-19 pandemic period, while for the period January-July 2019, 6 IPOs were reported.

In 2019

- 6 managed cases

## POGRADEC MUNICIPALITY

In 2020

- 8 managed cases

In the **Municipality of Pogradec** the Coordinated Referral Mechanism has been on alert to coordinate the work for the management of domestic violence cases. During the Covid-19 period, 3 online meetings were held in order to organize an individual plan for each case of domestic violence. All the referred cases were discussed at the meeting of the technical group, in which 3 physical meetings were held respecting the safety protocol within Covid-19.

In 2019

- 24 managed cases

In the period of Covid-19 there were 2 cases of domestic violence with protection orders on which the Local Coordinator for domestic violence reports according to the law.

During this period March-June 2020, 8 new cases of domestic violence were reported. These cases were referred by the Pogradec Police Station. It is noticed that the number of cases compared to the period with the previous year is lower. During 2019 for the period March-June 2019 there were 24 cases.

All cases are managed by the Local Coordinator for Domestic Violence and Gender Equality. All cases have been followed up in frequent telephone contact with victims of domestic violence. Reporting every 60 days of cases did not take place in this pandemic period as most cases of domestic violence are from the area of Mokra and other Administrative Units where public transport has been closed. But this has not hindered our work as we have had constant contacts with the Administrator of Economic Assistance in the administrative units. This administrator also serves as a contact point for all persons seeking social assistance from the Municipality of Pogradec.

## KUÇOVË MUNICIPALITY

In 2020

- 3 managed cases

In the **Municipality of Kuçova** CRM met four times during the period of the pandemic caused by Covid-19. During this period, 3 cases were submitted with an immediate protection order, compared to 4 cases in 2019 for the same period.

In 2019

- 4 managed cases

In 2020

- 3 managed cases

In the **Municipality of Kruja** the Coordinated Referral Mechanism has been functioning since 2015 and meets regularly where all cases are specifically addressed, enabling concrete solutions for families in difficulty and specifically women and girls victims of violence.

In 2019

- 3 managed cases

For each of the cases, a detailed social report is prepared by the municipal administration and referred to CRM. During this period March-May 2020, 3 cases of domestic violence were reported, the same figure as the same period for 2019.

## FINIQ MUNICIPALITY

In 2020

- 3 managed cases

In the **Municipality of Flniq** the Coordinated Referral Mechanism (CRM) has functioned and met twice during this Covid-19 period. Local coordinators have reported periodically to the Gender Equality Committee. In order to respond to cases of domestic violence, protocols have been drafted for the functioning of CRM both during the pandemic and after the pandemic period.

In 2019

- 3 managed cases

This protocol enables the initiation of procedures immediately so that the response to domestic violence is immediate and operates in real time to deal with cases of domestic violence and gender-based violence. Also, 2 protection orders have been monitored and their monitoring continues periodically, pursuant to the legal procedure.

## DURRËS MUNICIPALITY

In 2020

- 247 managed cases

The **Municipality of Durrës** has the leading role and responsibility of taking measures for the establishment, consolidation, monitoring and continuity of the effective Coordinated Response System to Domestic Violence. The Municipality of Durrës since 2010 has established the Coordinated Referral Mechanism for Cases of Domestic Violence, which consists of 11 Institutions and 3 local NGOs: Municipality of Durrës, Forensics, Local Educational Office, Regional Directorate for State Social Service, Regional Office of Employment, Local NGOs, Head of Emergency Shelter, Local Health Care Unit, Bailiff's Office, Local Police Directorate for Durrës Region, Prosecutor's Office, the Court.

In the period January-June 2020, **247** Lawsuits were filed by the Local Police Directorate for Durrës for the issuance of POs and IPOs.

- **311** decisions on POs and IPOs were issued by the Durrës Judicial District Court.

CRM was set up in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and Social Protection and with the support of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) with funding from the Swedish Government.

CRM has also functioned during the period of the COVID-19 pandemic, depending on the cases and the problems encountered in each case, the most urgent contact has been made with the closest core actors for referral, addressing and following up on the case from where they alternated and in group meetings, on ZOOM platform and over the phone such as: Whatsapp.

With the support of the police, during the isolation situation in the Covid-19 period, families in violence situations were constantly monitored by the municipality and the police.

The Green number 08009888 mainly supported cases that had different needs for help, such as: psychological, legal and information services. Calls for psychological and legal counseling have included providing psychological support to overcome feelings of anxiety, insecurity, fear, emotional fluctuations, and fear for the future, and so on.

Constant information about the situation, ways and protective measures has been posted on social networks.

## V. CHALLENGES IN ADDRESSING AND HANDLING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CASE

In **Belsh Municipality** during Covid-19 pandemic, transport to Elbasan or receiving other services has been difficult. Lack of funds has led to the services or even the basic tools needed to operate during Covid-19 to be provided by the employees themselves. Employees have had almost no support for protective equipment and transportation to carry out their work normally.

In this context, it is important to have special funds for the emergency so that the employees of the municipality or even the employees who should be on the front line of readiness are protected and supported to carry out their work most effectively.

Some of the challenges encountered in managing cases of violence in **Shkodër Municipality** and reported by the Directorate for Social Services, Housing and Health are:

- **Finding contacts of domestic violence cases**, as court decisions lack the contacts of individuals, which makes it difficult and creates a time gap with getting in touch with the case.

- **Time delays in sending IPOs.** During the state of emergency caused by COVID-19, forwarding of IPOs and POs by Shkodra Judicial District Court continued, but with time delays and not in a regular manner.
- **Difficulties in case management due to limitations received under the COVID-19 pandemic:**
  - Providing the necessary services depending on the specific needs of the case;
  - The response and reliability of phone calls with cases in the absence of face-to-face visits makes it difficult to build empathy and credibility.

Challenges and problems carried over in **Delvinë Municipality** reported by the Office of Social Services in terms of dealing with cases of domestic violence are:

- **Lack of human resources in the administration** of social workers and psychologists;
- **The need for a dedicated budget** for services and support programs for domestic violence cases.

For **Kolonjë Municipality** the provided services are incomplete due to the limited budget. The state police are a safe entity for addressing violence, but on the other hand it does not have good management in terms of safeguarding data on cases of domestic violence. The focus group brought a concrete case of non-safeguarding of data on a case of domestic violence and where the whole community managed to learn details about the case.

In **Gjirokastër Municipality**, during the focus group discussion it was said that, the employees, especially those of the administrative units, are maximally committed, even with extended hours, especially considering the unfavorable situation that the victims of violence could be in. But, there was a need in terms of protective equipment such as masks or gloves, which employees often provided themselves. Also, there were costs and expenses more than normal especially in the field visits, which the employees also covered at their own expense.

Monitoring the implementation of protection orders in **Kukës Municipality** has presented a challenge during the pandemic period. Their monitoring was carried out in cooperation with police officers. Monitoring reports were prepared for each case and there were no violations of protection orders.

- One of the observed problems was that after the expiration of the immediate protection order, some of the victims did not appear for the verification of the protection order, withdrawing from the request for a protection order on the grounds that we "settled the problems". These cases have presented difficulties to be monitored due to the lack of legal basis, and have been processed by maintaining telephone contacts to be informed about the post protection order situation.

*In the administrative units of **Pogradec Municipality** the point of contact is the administrator of Economic Assistance, who also refers to the Municipality cases of violence that are*

submitted for assistance. However, ***there has been a delay in receiving the service and in addressing the cases in the Administrative Units, as in the village due to the recognition the abused women are reluctant to talk about the problem. Therefore, in most cases the addressing is done when the situation is at high risk levels.***

*All cases of domestic violence and gender-based violence have been addressed by the State Police. This means that ***the identification of cases is done at the stage when they have been aggravated.****

**The social service in the Administrative Units is organized only by one employee who deals mainly with economic assistance, but who is authorized to address any social issues, including those of domestic violence and gender-based violence.**

During the focus group discussion in **Bulqizë Municipality**, employees of the administration of administrative units underlined that:

- **Violence is present in every family**, especially in those remote villages where economic conditions, patriarchal mentality and family culture play a key role in the exercise and acceptance of violence.
- **Many women are abused, but they are afraid and feel ashamed** if they make domestic violence public. The safety of their lives would be endangered if the violence would be made public.
- **The inability to afford living due to divorce makes women and girls silent in the face of violence.** Also, not informing women and girls about issues of violence and how they can be protected, influences women and girls to see violence as a part of their daily lives.

In **Tropojë Municipality** there is only one employee for gender equality in its structure, but among other things this employee is in charge of other functions. And only one of the tasks performed by this employee is to follow up on cases of violence.

In the focus group discussion in **Poliçan Municipality** it was emphasized that teachers would rather solve situations with children themselves than refer them to a psychologist.

- **Lack of information and reporting domestic violence on school premises:** Children often report violence in their families, but teachers advise them not to speak, to protect them from the prejudice of their fellow citizens. Meanwhile,
- **Fear of women who are victims of violence to report:** The Health Center has referred cases, but in the face of insecurity, poverty and fear, women victims of violence have preferred not to report.

For **Vlorë Municipality**, the following were identified as challenges during Covid-19 pandemic:

- **Lack of human resources** in managing domestic violence cases. In the Municipality Qender, as well as in the administrative units there is only 1 social administrator, who deals mainly with economic assistance and social assistance.
- **Lack of alternative services.** The Directorate for Social Services in the Municipality of Vlora is very cooperative with all other actors, but its direct services are limited. The municipality can only provide treatment with economic assistance to victims / survivors of domestic violence, free treatment of their children and treatment with rent bonus for these victims.

In **Roskovec Municipality** challenges have been encountered regarding the police structures and the media:

- **The state police** remains a reliable partner and entity to be addressed, but has not updated the new changes in the legal framework regarding risk assessment cases and this leads to inaccurate case assessments.
- **The media**, mainly the social one, has a negative impact, leading to the reluctance of victims of violence to report violence, as in many cases which were mentioned during the focus group discussion, sensitive information was misused to create 'news' and not to assist victims of violence or to assist the operation of the CRM.

Data collected from the focus group conducted in **Peqin Municipality** point out that the economic situation and education are the main factors for domestic violence.

Unemployment dominates in this small town, as there are no private entities to employ people. Challenges and problems in managing cases of violence are encountered at all times, but these challenges became even more apparent during Covid-19 pandemic, such as:

- **Lack of information:** Conversations with participants in remote rural indicated that areas lack the right information to turn to the right structures to address violence.
- **Lack of services for victims of violence:** For abused women and girls there is no multifunctional center where they can get all the appropriate services.
- **Lack of human resources of specialists in the administration** to handle the presented cases.
- **Withdrawal of denunciations about cases of violence:** From the data collected by the focus group, the patriarchal mentality makes it difficult to identify cases of violence and denunciations are revoked.
- **Lack of funds:** The municipality does not have the funds to prevent or deal with cases of domestic violence.

Due to the lack of full operation of CRM in **Shijak Municipality**, the Local Coordinator encountered difficulties and problems due to the lack of contact among ITT members. Because of this it was not possible to contact the victims of domestic violence to then complete the report on monitoring the protection order.

The lack of an emergency center is a challenge in **Fier Municipality**. Therefore, cases of violence were provided with short-term accommodation in the Roskovec emergency center.

Although the Coordinated Referral Mechanism has not yet been set up in **Mirditë Municipality**, during the Covid-19 pandemic there was effective cooperation between institutions, such as the police, local units, educational and health institutions, the Diocese and non-governmental organizations.

- Positive efforts have been made by the social services, but there are **difficulties in identifying cases of violence at an early stage due to the lack of CRM.**

During the focus group held in **Gramsh Municipality**, several factors were identified that affect the denunciation of cases of gender-based violence and domestic violence:

- lack of income, i.e. of economic independence of women;
- fear of prejudice of fellow citizens.

During the discussion with the focus group as well as with the employees of **Libohovë Municipality**, it was underlined that there are several barriers to non-reporting of violence:

- Prejudice and mentality** to tolerate Gender Based Violence and Domestic Violence.
- Lack of seriousness on the part of the state police**, who are not considered a safe addressee.
- Lack of economic independence**, which remains a serious problem and conditions women to live in the same environment / home with abusers, as they have nowhere to turn to.
- Lack of a center for psychological support.**

For the challenges presented above during the focus group meeting it was suggested:

- Working closely with local media to raise awareness and combat domestic violence, and to encourage women to turn to local authorities.
- Strengthening the support of the Municipality through the implementation of initiatives and projects.
- Providing support to businesses that employ women, and in particular those in need, by developing tax relief policies.
- Construction of a multifunctional center for women, girls and children, victims of violence.

In **Kamëz Municipality**, in terms of handling cases of domestic violence, the findings of the focus group present several factors that affect the challenges to deal with cases of violence:

- Lack of human and logistical resources** making the services provided only supportive. **As a result, local institutions lack staff, lack of psychological services and lack of budget.** The Local Coordinator for Domestic Violence works long hours, and the high

number of denunciations reduces the possibility of providing the service to all persons in need, taking into account in most cases only high-risk situations.

- **Inability to handle all cases** from the existing center for protection against violence.
- **Economic factors:** Lack of economic stability and unemployment.
- **Social and cultural factors:** The patriarchal mentality of accepting violence and the reluctance to denounce violence, which deepened even further during Covid-19 pandemic. Kamza Municipality has heterogeneity of cultures and marriages between "different cultures" lead to family disputes and as a result become a cause for domestic violence and gender-based violence.
- **Coordination of service delivery** by institutions responsible for specifying the services that the Municipality provides to victims of violence. Institutional cooperation as well as cooperation with non-profit organizations is close, as institutions need the economic support that organizations provide, without which there is no case management, as the latter provide services. These services include: transport of victims / survivors from one institution to another, provision of food packages, emergency rent payments, emergency clothing, etc.
- **The negative role of the media** in approaching cases of violence by psychologically harming victims / survivors and publishing personal data about the case, and often making it difficult for local institutions to carry out their work.
- **Re-victimization**, a challenge that remains one of the most difficult, where victims of domestic violence often find themselves in their 'role as victims' and find it difficult to seek help and improve their lives.

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In **Klos Municipality** it is reported that there is no organization to provide concrete support to victims of domestic violence. "Argita Vizion" association, which is located in Dibër, is the only association that offers emergency housing, in addition to legal and psychological counseling. Short-term accommodation is provided through the "Argita Vizion" association in Dibër.

During the focus group held in **Pustec Municipality** it was emphasized that women or children of this area even in case of referral of violence, except the Protection Order, do not find any other support. This is due to a number of factors:

- **lack of budget for dealing with cases of violence;**
- **lack of a psychologist in the municipal staff;**
- **lack of an employment awareness and provision program.**

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In **Cërrik Municipality** there is no center for immediate shelter of victims / survivors of domestic violence but these cases are sheltered in Elbasan. The Municipality of Cërrik, in the framework of supporting long-term housing, has supported the housing of victims / survivors of domestic violence with rent bonuses and the possibility of soft loans.

One of the challenges mentioned during the focus group discussion has been related to **health care** and **the lack of important referral and prevention links in schools**, such as social workers and psychologists.

**The lack of psychologists and social workers in schools** has been one of the main issues raised during the focus group and the immediate addressing of this issue through cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Sports, has resulted in an urgent need in terms of handling and managing cases of violence.

For **Korçë Municipality**, the issues that present challenges even during the Covid-19 pandemic period are:

- **Transportation and escort of victims / survivors** to perform the necessary services in various institutions such as health centers, police stations, etc. Currently, victims are accompanied by a police car, but this is not positive as it attracts attention and may create difficulties for the victim / survivor. The specific emergency fund can create space to provide more personalized transport.
- **Emergency service for victims of domestic violence** would be very difficult almost impossible without the help of partner organizations. This is because the funds and human resources are insufficient to cover the psycho-social service and direct assistance to the beneficiaries.
- **Reporting to health centers.** There seem to be difficulties in health centers, especially in administrative units. Cases are mostly reported by elders, while family doctors or even nurses can do more to identify cases.
- **Functioning of the psychosocial service.** The psychosocial service operates at the level of the hospital service, but not in the health centers, especially in the administrative units.

**Durrës Municipality** has encountered several challenges in dealing with cases of violence during the Covid-19 pandemic:

**Management of cases of violence when:**

- the abuser is a child.
- the person under protection is both the abused and the abuser.

**Lack of medium and long-term housing** poses a challenge for the social service, as well as for the whole mechanism, including the municipality.

**Lack of financial support programs** for mothers with young children who are not employed. “Women with Social Problems” association emphasizes that the economic empowerment of women can be achieved through employment programs in order to have an impact on increasing the economic independence of abused women.

**Timely referral of cases by the State Police:** New legal changes require further attention. The police at the time the case arrives, should notify the local coordinator in real time to make an assessment of each case of the level of risk and the latter have the responsibility to refer to

the Mechanism of the entire necessary system (based on the level of risk assessment to be made by the specialist).

**Correction and completion of data in Court decisions:** The entry of information into the REVALB System is blocked when the Court decisions do not have accurate and complete data on personal information.

There are several challenges presented on the part of the State Police:

**Staying in the same apartment of the victim and the abuser**, which leads to increased risk, pressure and even loss of life.

**Managing homeless children cases.** During the last 6 months, the number of cases of homeless children has increased, coming mainly from the city of Elbasan and Fier. After the earthquake situation they were seen sheltering under bridges and in abandoned buildings that pose a high residential risk.

For "World Vision" the situation is challenging in some cases:

**Reaction from the Court and the Prosecutor's Office:** the responsiveness and measures taken by the judiciary staff show that they are not familiar with all the extraordinary work of municipal institutions and NGOs. And this is noticed **in the lack of initiative** to get acquainted with each of the profiles of domestic violence cases, thus endangering the proper handling of the case. This is most evident in cases where:

- The judgment rules the woman to leave the house and not the abuser;
- The judgment rules the abolition of parental rights and revoking children custody.

Even at the ITT meeting no representative from the Court institution was present (as they were on vacation) and did not consider the possibility of delegation.

The head of the Emergency Center emphasizes that a support from the police and the court is required to increase the cooperation and functionality of the center as much as possible.

Meanwhile, the Local Health Care Unit of Durrës raises concerns about:

- **Referral of cases of violence by the Directorate for Public Services.** Family doctors have not referred any cases of domestic violence. The latter are one of the key actors in addressing violence and should be as involved as the rest of the authority.

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During the period of the pandemic in **Kuçovë Municipality**, difficulties were encountered in dealing with cases of violence in:

- Lack of human resources of specialists in the administration to handle the presented cases.
- Continuous movement of employees in the administration.

- Lack of dedicated budget to cases of violence and lack of concrete policies to support these cases.
- Lack of a multifunctional center to handle reported cases of violence.

In **Kurbin Municipality** stakeholders during the focus group discussion stressed the importance of increased attention to domestic violence and gender-based violence cases and in particular:

- **Preservation of personal data of domestic violence cases** was one of the identified problems. Communication for the protection of personal and sensitive data would further foster trust in police and state / service structures.

For **Rogozhinë Municipality**, the focus group discussion highlighted some challenges encountered during the Covid-19 pandemic in terms of services provided to address domestic violence:

- **Lack of a specific budget** for managing cases of violence;
- **Lack of a logistics system for transporting** victims / survivors to court or to a safer place;
- **Lack of a 72-hour emergency shelter**, which in most cases puts victims at a higher risk of violence against them.
- **Lack of a psychologist at the police station**, which is considered very necessary to provide psycho-social support to victims / survivors of violence.

Problems encountered in **Prrenjas Municipality**, regarding the handling of domestic violence during the Covid-19 pandemic are:

- **Lack of human resources for social workers and psychologists** in the administration;
- **Lack of dedicated budget** for services and support programs to deal with cases of violence;
- **Lack of a multi-social and professional center** for abused women and girls.
- **Lack of an emergency center for cases of violence**. One of the cases of violence was sheltered in the center of the Woman's Forum in Elbasan for 24 hours.

In **Selenicë Municipality** there is a good inter-institutional cooperation between the municipality and the institutions that are part of CRM.

- However, **there is a lack of civil society organizations and local media** working on domestic violence and gender-based violence in Selenica;
- As a result, **services for cases of violence are more limited**. The Directorate for Social Services in the municipality can only provide treatment with financial assistance for cases of violence, psychological counseling for their children and treatment with rent bonus for victims / survivors;

- **Exercising violence against the elderly** according to the actors in the focus group is a problem that should be seen as a priority in this municipality;
- **Lack of information and trust** in rural areas for services on domestic violence and gender-based violence;
- **The programs and services provided by the institutions are not long-term or sufficient** to ensure the continuing livelihood of victims / survivors of violence. For this reason victims are reluctant to report violence against them.
- **Victims' lack of trust in the assistance provided by the services** and fear of prejudice from the community but also the victim's own judgment makes the number of reported cases of violence higher compared to those that have been reported.

The problems encountered in **Finiq Municipality** regarding the treatment of cases of violence during the Covid-19 pandemic are:

- **Lack of human resources** in the administration of social workers and psychologists.
- **The need for a dedicated budget** for support services and programs.
- **Lack of a multi-social and professional center** for abused and unemployed women and girls.

Such challenges were also identified during the focus group, including the speed with which to respond to cases of violence, due to the lack of a proper team of professionals to closely monitor cases of violence, as well as the insufficient budget for the provision of services.

An emergency shelter has been set up in **Roskovec Municipality** since 2018 and 5 cases have been sheltered, but during the Covid-19 pandemic period no case has been sheltered.

During the meeting with the members of the focus group in **Devoll Municipality**, it was emphasized that the **domestic violence cases, in reality, are in greater numbers than those reported**. As a result of the mentality, many of them coexist with violence. It is therefore difficult to identify and address cases of domestic violence.

**Lack of dwellings or social housing** for domestic violence cases. Some of violence cases are addressed for shelter to the city of Korça.

## VI. INTERINSTITUTIONAL COOPERATION FOR COORDINATING AND ADDRESSING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

**Shkodër Municipality** has signed the cooperation agreement in 2017 for the reorganization of the work coordination mechanism for referring and addressing cases of domestic violence and the manner of its processing. This agreement has been signed by all public institutions operating in the territory of the municipality of Shkodra with cases of domestic violence and also civil society organizations that are active and operating in the territory with this target group.

- Thanks to this agreement, the *Municipality coordinates the work on cases of domestic violence*. After assessing the needs of each case, a work plan is drafted and for each specialized service the opportunities and capacities are initially assessed by the institutions, part of the mechanism and in case these institutions do not provide them, support from various private or public partners is required. Every case, which is handled by the Directorate for Social Services of the Municipality of Shkodra, as well as "For the Family" Community Centers, part of this directorate, are handled in full compliance with the relevant legislation.
- The Municipality of Shkodra has a tradition of *continuous cooperation with civil society organizations*. One of its objectives is the close partnership with civil society, non-profit organizations aimed at protecting human rights. Following the good tradition of continuous cooperation with civil society organizations, the Municipality of Shkodra has cooperated closely with international organizations such as: UNDP and UNWOMEN, as well as other organizations such as: Woman to Woman, Woman in Integration, Terre Des Hommes Albania, Easy Steps, Albanian Disability Rights Foundation, Pope Giovanni XXIII, World Vision, Initiative for Social Change, Hope for the World, Gender Alliance for Development Center on gender-based violence issues. Depending on the needs, the victims of domestic violence have received appropriate psychological and legal support from the staff of "For the Family" Community Centers of the Municipality of Shkodra and partner organizations that provide such services in the Municipality of Shkodra.
- In addition to the *activities, online communication campaigns in order to increase information and awareness of the community* to not accept and tolerate the use of gender-based violence and domestic violence have been organized continuously throughout this period through social media posts of the Municipality of Shkodra and the Directorate for Social Services, Housing and Public Health. Throughout the state of emergency caused by COVID-19, posts have been circulating with the necessary information on where the necessary help and contacts can be sought.

From the meetings with the municipal councilors, but mainly in the focus group meeting, the correct and professional cooperation in assisting the cases referred by the local and central institutions was pointed out.

- Engagement of all social service staff in the municipality and at the administrative units in following up on cases of violence and provision of assistance by psychologists and social workers.
- Professional coverage and treatment of cases of violence by NGO specialists, such as *Woman to Woman* (shelters), legal assistance and economic assistance from the *Easy Steps Women's Center*, housing, creation of quarantine facilities, integration opportunities for abused women and girls by the *Pope Giovanni 23 Community*.
- Long-term treatment for abused women and girls -residential center with a capacity of up to 15 people (*Santa Maria Guest House*).

Inter-institutional cooperation in **Cërrik Municipality** for the provision of services in terms of COVID-19 referring to domestic violence has been very good. Cooperation with social service structures, the state police, non-profit organizations and the media has been effective.

In **Pogradec Municipality** the institutional cooperation of the actors involved in the process has been good. The police representative suggested that more health institutions be involved as all cases addressed during this period were by the State Police. The representative of the state police stated that there were at least 2 cases of violence which were presented in the ambulance, but that the denunciation was made by the victim, was not referred by the Health Institution.

It is also required closer cooperation with the Employment Office in order to include these women in vocational training or employment promotion programs, in order to empower them economically.

In order to monitor Protection Orders, **Maliq Municipality** has cooperated with other municipalities where victims / survivors of domestic violence are residents and has referred relevant cases.

Also, the Municipality has provided services with all institutions of the Municipality for identifying and providing the necessary services to cases of domestic violence. The focus group highlighted cooperation between the municipality and village elders, who have identified families at risk of domestic violence.

With the establishment of CRM in **Bulqizë Municipality** there is good cooperation between the institutions. Institutions part of CRM participated in each meeting, where the management of cases was discussed, the manner of their denunciation, and the necessary services were provided on a case by case basis.

In the case of domestic violence (administrative unit of Shupenzë) the responsible institutions of the municipality immediately provided the necessary assistance for psycho-social, medical and food services.

In **Delvinë Municipality**, after receiving the information, the social affairs specialists in the Municipality open the files and the cases are reviewed to find solutions according to the needs and then they refer to GEC in the Municipal Council. In the focus group it was discussed that this inter-institutional cooperation and coordination be concretized in a formal agreement. The Mayor suggested organizing a forum with the participation of the Municipality, Police, Health and Education in the area to raise community awareness about gender-based violence and domestic violence.

For **Krujë Municipality**, the institutional cooperation has proven successful, being close to the victims, women and girls, in real time. The local government, the state police institution, the education office, NGOs and religious communities have an institutional cooperation.

The administration of **Prrrenjas Municipality**, for handling cases of domestic violence has cooperated with the police, the judiciary and the hospital in the case of gender-based violence. Meanwhile, for one of the cases of violence, legal assistance was provided free of charge by the Woman's Forum in Elbasan.

But the actors who took part in the focus group expressed reservations about inter-institutional cooperation, stressing that it is not at the right level. This is due to the lack of specialized human resources in the police and in the Municipality, stating that this lack leads to the failure to act in a timely manner to respond to cases of violence.

**Vlorë Municipality** cooperates with *Vatra* center to provide housing services to victims / survivors of domestic violence.

The following initiatives have been undertaken in **Kukës Municipality** to address cases of domestic violence.

- **Drafting Cooperation Agreements between institutions** part of the Coordinated Referral Mechanism. An agreement has been prepared by the Gender Equality Committee to cooperate with a hotel to assist emergency accommodation cases of victims of violence. This agreement will be proposed to the Municipal Council for approval.
- **Approval of work protocols** for taking measures to protect victims of violence. The Municipality of Kukës through the Steering Committee, which is chaired by the Mayor and members of ITT, is the first to have approved these working protocols on 09 June 2020.

In **Mirditë Municipality** during the period of Covid-19, serious efforts have been made for cooperation and exchange of information from the directorates within the Municipality as well as institutions, such as the police, the judiciary and business. Although the Coordinated Referral Mechanism has not yet been set up in the Municipality of Mirdita, during the

pandemic there was an effective cooperation between institutions, such as the police, local units, educational and health institutions, the Diocese and non-governmental organizations.

Cooperation with civil society organizations has resulted in effective results in **Kurbin Municipality**. Organizations such as *World Vision* and the *Red Cross* have a database of families living on subsistence as well as cases of domestic violence. Also, these two organizations have a long experience in providing case assistance and supporting women with rent bonuses and employment opportunities.

There is a good cooperation between local institutions and organizations in **Roskovec Municipality**, which is also reflected in the increase of cases of denunciation of violence. During the Covid-19 pandemic, an online service was provided for psychological support against 5 cases, legal advice for 2 cases, health service for 2 cases, as well as distribution of food packages for 9 cases.

- State Police: is supportive and sensitive to cases of violence, but as it was identified by the focus group, problematic is the fact that it has not updated the new changes in the legal framework, related to risk assessment cases and this leads to non-assessments accurate cases that may be critical.
- Social services at the municipal level: provide psycho-social support, transport and legal support.
- Services provided by civil society organizations. Currently with UNDP, the project "Strengthening the Coordinated Referral Mechanism of Violence Cases in the Municipality of Roskovec" is being implemented.

During the period of Covid-19, **Mallakastér Municipality** has realized several collaborations to respond to cases of domestic violence.

- In the framework of managing cases of domestic violence, the work is coordinated with the Police, Judiciary and Hospital. The judiciary has issued immediate protection orders for 4 cases through an expedited procedure. From the administration of the Municipality, accompanied by the police, the victims received medical services in the hospital. Meanwhile, the Police have escorted the cases to the temporary shelter and continue to have them under protection.
- Also, in cooperation with LEO Mallakastér, an online service was provided by LEO psychologists for the psycho-social treatment of families & children, individually and in groups.
- During this period, the telephone numbers of social workers, the State Police, the Heads of Administrative Units for reporting violence in an emergency situation were made available and published in the local media. Also, announcements have been made to raise awareness and report on domestic violence, reports on media such as

*Top Channel, News 24* in order for the information to be transmitted to the communities in our rural areas.

In **Elbasan Municipality**, the communication and inter-institutional cooperation has been realized in continuous communication of the Directorate for Social Service at the Municipality with the Directorate for State Police.

The Municipality of Elbasan beyond the coordination of work with the actors of CRM, during the period of the Covid-19 pandemic has also cooperated with the Directorate for Social and Community Care Services of the Municipality of Elbasan, Community Policing Specialists, Protection Unit for the Rights of Children, civil society organizations such as A2B, *Woman's Center for Development and Culture*, *Other Vision* and Elbasan *Woman's Forum*.

In **Dropull Municipality** the inter-institutional cooperation is evaluated as positive:

- The State Police conducted a timely risk assessment for the reported case and forwarded it to the court. The survivor of domestic violence is familiar with the measures and services provided by the mechanism against violence and then IPOs.
- Social services in the municipality have provided monthly economic support in the amount of 3,000 ALL.
- In addition to the above, constant contact has been maintained with the Ministry of Health and Social Protection for all specific measures suggested by them to handle cases in conditions of restrictions due to COVID-19.

During the focus group for **Gjirokastër Municipality**, the cooperation was appreciated, in particular with the police, the municipality and the psycho-social service. Based on the opinions given during the focus group, the quality of service delivery is satisfactory, but there should be more help and attention to children in the category of victims of violence, but also to groups in need.

**Durrës Municipality** cooperates with local agencies and organizations to address and handle cases of violence:

The social service office with the help of local organizations has continuously followed the cases of domestic violence. But, even closer cooperation is required regarding the sharing of data on cases of violence with the municipality.

The administration of **Gramsh Municipality** has close cooperation with other institutions that help address domestic violence.

- State Police, which provides an immediate and efficient service, and are sensitive to cases of violence, being available at any time.
- Social service structures, which are present throughout the process of managing the domestic violence situation.

- Organizations provide psychological and legal support (including divorce cases) becoming a key factor in combating domestic violence.

In **Kamëz Municipality** there is an effective cooperation with other institutions and actors involved in dealing with cases of violence.

- There is an active cooperation between local institutions and organizations, in the *exchange of information and addressing cases by local institutions and in the provision of services by organizations*. Also, the State Police provides considerable assistance and support in any case.
- *In the framework of the functioning of CRM, an agreement was signed again between the main institutions at the local level*: Municipality of Kamza, Health Center, National Center for the Treatment of Victims of Violence, Employment Office, Local Education Office and *Human Rights in Democracy* Center, where all cases that have come to the police stations and have requested protection orders or have a precedent of domestic violence, have been addressed by identifying the needs and further directed to services to partner organizations. The main organizations with which the Municipality of Kamza cooperates are: *World Vision, Caritas, Global Care* and the *Center for Protection against Violence*.
- *The state police are considered the most cooperative institution* by escorting the local coordinator to families that pose a risk of violence and are available at any time.

In **Lushnje Municipality**, the Directorate for Social Services has cooperated in every case with the directorates within the municipality to provide food aid to families where violence is exercised and have had a close cooperation with the elders and the state police directorate. Cooperation with religious communities has not been lacking either.

In **Klos Municipality**, the focus group actors appreciate the effective cooperation between local, local and central institutions, namely the Municipality of Klos, the Directorate for Health, the Regional Directorate for Employment in Dibër and the Police Directorate.

**Peqin Municipality** has provided cooperation with all institutions for the identification and necessary services to these families. The actors that cooperate in addressing DV and GBV are: Prefecture, Court, Bailiff's Office, regional hospital, family doctor, Emergency Service, Police, Employment Office, Regional Directorate for Social Service. From the data collected by the focus group, inter-institutional cooperation has not been at satisfactory levels, as according to them there is a lack of human resources to follow up on cases of violence.

During the focus group communication conducted in **Pustec Municipality**, a deadlock in inter-institutional cooperation was pointed out. There is formal and not at all effective cooperation between the Interdisciplinary Technical Team (ITT). The only reported case of violence for the years 2019-2020 was referred to the Municipality only at the moment when the Protection

Order was issued by the court, limiting the possibility of assistance if the victim needed emergency shelter.

There is passivity in communication and indifference from local authorities. The municipality has contacted the *Church of Jesus Christ for the Balkans* to set up an emergency center in Pustec. But the latter does not have enough capacity to support this initiative; however it offers cooperation for emergency housing in their center in the city of Korça.

The Administration of **Municipality Skrapar** has cooperated during this period with the Police, Judiciary, Hospital, Education Office, Post Office and telephone lines have been made available. Inter-institutional cooperation has been at satisfactory levels and they have been on full alert to serve correctly and promptly in potential domestic violence situations.

The administration of **Finiq Municipality** has cooperated during this period with the Police, the Judiciary, and the hospital for both cases of gender-based violence. The judiciary has issued an immediate protection order for the 2 victims through a fast procedure, free of charge and without the need for the help of a lawyer. From the administration of the Municipality, accompanied by the police, the victims received medical services in the hospital. Police escorted a case to a temporary shelter, and have taken both cases into custody. Focus group participants think that inter-institutional interaction is not at the right level and required, as there is a lack of human resources in the police and specialized in the Municipality, stating that they were aware that the police due to lack of staff did not act swiftly in terms of violence cases.

For **Divjakë Municipality** during the Covid-19 period there has been a very good cooperation with all administrative units to follow up every case referred by local specialists with the state police in relation to the reporting of violence and with the court to expedite the issuance of protection orders.

## VII. SUGGESTIONS TO MUNICIPAL COUNCILS IN TERMS OF BETTER ADDRESSING AND MANAGEMENT OF DOMESTIC

The Commissions for Gender Equality and Social Inclusion in the respective municipalities have collected information from the administration of the Municipality and meetings organized with focus groups regarding the needs and relevant suggestions for the improvement of services against domestic violence. The following are the suggestions of the municipal councils for each of the municipalities.



Directorate for Social Services, Housing and Health and GEC suggested the following to Municipal Council of the **Municipality of Shkodra**:

- **Long-term housing of victims of domestic violence** and expanding capacities for emergency housing;
- **Improving inter-institutional cooperation** through taking responsibilities according to the legislation in force by each of CRM members;
- **Increasing financial resources** to expand human, infrastructural capacities, which are lacking in most cases;
- **Socio-economic empowerment and reintegration** into society of victims / survivors of violence in family relationships of any form of violence.

The stakeholders participating in the focus group suggested the following:

- **Organization of more frequent roundtables and meetings** by the Municipality of Shkodra in relation to the most accurate addressing of the needs and cases of domestic violence. Getting acquainted with the situation so that there is no overlapping of services;
- **Preparation for a statistical system**, which is automatically updated and is based on documenting and mapping cases of violence;
- **Follow-up on violence issues throughout the territory of the Municipality by the MC** in order to help solve problems and address cases for assistance to the administration of the Municipality.



The Directorate for Social Services suggested the following to the Municipal Council of the **Municipality of Belsh**:

- **Allocation of funds in the budget** for the management of cases of domestic violence and gender-based violence.

In the focus group, participants suggested the following to Belsh Municipal Council:

- **Improving services for addressing violence by the Municipality.** The organization chart of the municipality should include more staff to support social services. The service of the psychologist (s) that will be attached to the work of the local coordinator should be covered by the Municipality itself and not by special projects;
- **Increase of emergency funds and special funds** in support of cases of violence;
- **CRM should increase the focus of its work for monitoring violence against women with disabilities** as this category also has many difficulties and shortcomings in receiving services.



Office of Social Services suggested the following to the municipal council of the **Municipality of Delvina:**

- **Addition of staff for social workers and psychologists** for handling cases of gender-based violence and domestic violence at the municipal level as well as in administrative units;
- **Dedicated budget allocation** to the management of cases of gender-based violence and domestic violence;
- **Financial support for:**
  - 1) organizing more awareness activities focused on educating women about their rights;
  - 2) increasing the qualification of social workers for the management of gender-based violence and domestic violence;
  - 3) setting up an emergency center to help abused women and girls.



Stakeholders in the focus groups suggested the following to **Dropull Municipal Council:**

- **CRM support in Dropull**, beyond the support provided by the UNDP project;
- **Planning and approving a special fund in the municipal budget**, to continue the work of the Local Coordinator against domestic violence, and the operational administrative progress of the office of violence in the Municipality of Dropull.



In the focus group, the participants suggested the following to **Gjirokastër Municipal Council:**

- **Resuming awareness campaigns to inform the population** about addressing gender-based violence and domestic violence as soon as the measures taken to tackle the Covid-19 pandemic have been alleviated;
- **Increasing funding to support victims / survivors of violence and their children, especially** during periods of crisis and emergencies similar to Covid-19.



In **Kamëz Municipality**, the Directorate for Social Services suggested the following:

- **Establishing a special sector for Child Protection and Domestic Violence** within the Directorate for Economic Assistance and Social Affairs in the Municipality;
- **Increasing the staff of CPW/ Coordinator** at the level of Administrative Unit;
- **Annual budget allocation for case management** by the Municipality;
- **Providing a vehicle** to carry out home visits;
- **Establishing support services** with day centers, residential centers, etc;
- **Increased attention to the municipal structure for social assistance**, which has significant needs for budget, staff and a well-structured social plan.

While the stakeholders who were part of the focus group suggested the following:

- **Increasing human resources capacities** to manage the situation of domestic violence and cover the entire territory of the Municipality;
- **Involvement of a psychologist** in the staff;
- **Creating a dedicated budget** to social protection and domestic violence;
- **Creating transport facilities** for the violence coordinator in the Municipality;
- **Application of a 5-year social plan**, structured to be implemented in the city of Kamza;
- **Setting up a multifunctional center or day center** with the relevant psychologist for all categories: children, women, young people and the elderly;
- **Setting up an Emergency Housing center** for cases with high risk and priority;
- **Including in the curriculum** a series of lectures on awareness of violence;
- **Increasing the number of psychologists and social workers** in schools.



Suggestions to the municipal council of the **Municipality of Klos** made by the Directorate for Social Services:

- **Budget allocation** for managing cases of domestic violence.

Suggestions made by the stakeholders present in the focus group:

- **Conducting activities for raising awareness and informing citizens**, extending to rural areas as well, regarding their rights and services provided in the territory to victims of domestic violence by the Municipality or other institutions;
- **Approving a dedicated fund** only to the management of domestic violence cases;
- **Setting up a multifunctional center**, which will provide psychological services, legal and vocational training courses;
- **Following up on violence issues throughout the territory of the Municipality** by the MC to help solve problems, inform, but also address cases for assistance to the administration of the Municipality.



The Directorate for Social Services suggested the following for the municipal council of the **Municipality of Korça**:

- **Establishing an emergency fund** for abused women. As women have emergency needs, a fund should be created to cover the urgent needs especially of the first 72 hours, such as transportation, food, clothing or similar needs;
- **Conducting trainings with CRM members.** Joint training is needed, with the participation of all members of the mechanism so that law enforcement is as effective as possible and the information is complete even for those members who have been replaced over the years within the referral mechanism. The occasional change of representatives of public institutions part of CRM, creates an obstacle to the proper management of cases, because the new representatives are not familiar with the process and concrete legal tasks;
- **Cooperation with the Vocational Training Center.** The Municipality of Korça should cooperate with the Vocational Training Center to offer abused women the opportunity for vocational courses;
- **Self-employment for victims of violence.** The possibility of self-employment for abused women should be considered. A fund to support women who can start a private business for their economic empowerment should be created. Creating favorable conditions for local taxes for a certain period of time, which will serve to strengthen them in business.



The stakeholders participating in the focus group suggested the following to the municipal council of **Korçë Municipality**:

- **Raising awareness on violence prevention.** Prevention is very important to reduce cases of violence, so greater focus should be given to prevention through awareness-raising activities;
- **Monitoring cases of violence even after the Covid-19 period**, as well as divorce cases that may be filed in the following period;
- **The publication of personal data on cases of violence** should be restricted. Reporting on violence cases should focus on victim / survivor protection, data protection and fact-finding;
- **Taking measures based on the legal framework for the media which do not respect the protection of victims of violence.** The media should be constantly trained in sensitive reporting on cases of violence;
- **Establishing a network for gender equality issues** where there will be media representatives to understand and recognize issues of violence;
- **Developing programs for the rehabilitation of abusers** in order not only to prevent or stop violence, but also to enable the reintegration of persons to end the cycle of violence.



Suggestions to the Municipal Council of **Kurbin Municipality** from the Directorate for Social Services:

- **Setting up an emergency or residential center.** Kurbin Municipality does not have emergency or residential centers for managing cases of domestic violence;
- **Allocating an available fund for the management of domestic violence cases.**

Suggestions to the Municipal Council of Kurbin Municipality from the focus group:

- **Update the website of the Municipality of Kurbin** regarding the services provided and the responsible persons;
- **Carry out continuous monitoring of the administration of the Municipality by the municipal council** for the follow-up of social problems and issues in the territory of the Municipality;
- **Organize awareness raising activities on domestic violence** with young people and mainly in schools.



Suggestions to the Municipal Council of **Malësi e Madhe Municipality** made by the Social Services Sector:

- **Budget allocation for the management of cases of violence.** Given the current need for violence cases to be managed by the social services sector, it is required by the municipal council to allocate the budget for the management of violence cases.

While the stakeholders who participated in the focus group suggested the following:

- **Raising awareness and informing the institutions and the community** about the referral of potential cases of violence;
- **Setting up centers for providing services to victims of violence** within the territory of the Municipality of Malësi e Madhe;
- **Creating reserve funds** for emergency cases of domestic violence.



Stakeholders who were part of the focus group suggested the following to the municipal council of **Maliq Municipality**:

- **Undertake awareness campaigns to inform the public** about addressing and assisting domestic violence and gender-based violence;
- **Allocate a dedicated budget** each year to help victims of violence;
- **Draft gender budgeting in every investment in the territory of the Municipality**, having initially consulted with stakeholders;

- **Make available a telephone number from the Municipality** to address cases of domestic violence and gender-based violence;
- **Work with local media to inform the public** to report domestic violence as well as assistance and services provided in cases of domestic violence.



Suggestions made by the Directorate for Social Services to the Municipal Council of the **Municipality of Memaliaj**.



- **Increase the number of social workers and psychologists;**
- **Allocation of dedicated budget** to the management of cases of domestic violence and gender-based violence;
- **Financial support for the establishment of a shelter** for emergency cases of violence, as well as a multisocial center;
- **Financial support for the organization of more awareness-raising activities** focused on educating women about their rights.



Suggestions made by the Directorate for Social Services to the Municipal Council of the **Municipality of Mirdita**.



- **Restructuring the staff in the sector of Economic Assistance and social services in the municipality.** Division as a separate directorate and functioning with two sectors within this directorate, addition with 2 (two) social workers, 1 (one) for the Child Protection Unit and 1 (one) for case management;
- **Drafting the budget for the allocation of funds to the Economic Assistance and social services sector in the municipality**, as it is a necessity for the identification, management and monitoring of cases of domestic violence;
- **Budget allocation for travelling to Administrative Units.** The municipality has a very large territory and the distance from the center where the services are located to the Administrative Units is very big.

The stakeholders participating in the focus group suggested the following:

- **Initiative for recognition of the structure of social service at the local level** and promotion in community for the services provided;
- **Planning services with special protocol** for cases of domestic violence;
- **Organizing awareness raising and information activities** to prevent and report cases of domestic violence.



The Directorate for Social Services suggested the following to the municipal council of the **Municipality of Peqin**:

- **Allocation in the budget of the Municipality to set up a functional emergency center** for cases of violence to provide shelter and psychological counseling;
- **Hiring an employee in each administrative unit** for cases of domestic violence.

The stakeholders participating in the focus group suggested as follows:

- **Undertake awareness campaigns** to inform the public about reporting domestic violence;
- **Finance setting up a multifunctional center** to deal with cases of domestic violence;
- **Undertake awareness campaigns** in schools as part of the curriculum.



The Directorate for Social Services suggested the following to the **Municipality of Pustec**:

- **Creating a specific budget** for the management of cases of violence;
- **Hiring a specialized and trained psychologist** for cases of domestic violence.

Suggestions made by the focus group to the Municipal Council:

- **Establishment of collaborations with civil society organizations** that deal with cases of violence (one of which is located in Korça and offers an emergency shelter for 72 hours);
- **Supporting victims of violence with social housing or rent bonuses.**
- **Establishment of awareness programs** and increase of contacts with educational institutions;
- **Expanding employment opportunities** through collaborations with local businesses and drafting facilitating policies.



Suggestions made by the Directorate for Social Services to the municipal council of the **Municipality of Roskovec**:

- **Establishment of a center for providing psycho-social services;**
- **Drafting and approving gender sensitive initiatives.**

Meanwhile the stakeholders in the focus groups suggested the following:

- **Establishment of a special budget** for the management of domestic violence and gender-based violence;

- **Creating a more comprehensive economic package** to support women and girls survivors of domestic violence who do not have sufficient sources of income;
- **Establishment of social housing or rent payments** for victims/survivors of violence.
- **Increasing the number of psychologists in schools**, as many problems are identified in educational institutions.



To the municipal council of **Poliçan Municipality**, the social services sector suggested the following:

- **Hiring a psychologist** in the staff of the Municipality to manage cases of violence;
- **Capacity building of staff** with trainings and specializations for dealing with cases of domestic violence.

Suggestions made by the focus group to the municipal council of the Municipality of Poliçan:

- **Approval of a special budget** for the management of situations of violence;
- **Implementation of information activities** and awareness programs on violence in educational institutions.



Suggestions to the municipal council of the **Municipality of Shijak** made by the Directorate for Social Services:

- **Emergency accommodation:** creating a suitable environment for abused women and their children where they can stay for at least 72 hours to provide them with emergency accommodation.

Suggestions to the municipal council of the Municipality of Shijak from the focus group:

- **Emergency accommodation:** Support for the establishment of an emergency housing center;
- **Social housing:** Utilization of capacities / assets or drafting cooperation agreements for the construction of social housing;
- **Financial support:** for the organization of awareness-raising activities and for staff training and qualification programs;
- **Human resources:** Increasing human resources of the social sector;
- **Awareness activities in schools:** Realization of awareness, information activities and increase of presence in schools;
- **Cooperation with non-profit organizations:** Creating opportunities for cooperation with local NGOs.



The stakeholders that were part of the focus group suggested the following to the municipal council of **Skrapar Municipality**:

- **Support the municipal social plan project** for the functioning of a multifunctional center for the elderly and for cases of support of cases of violence that will be presented;
- **Allocate a special fund** to manage cases of domestic violence;
- **Undertake awareness campaigns** to inform the public about addressing and assisting in domestic violence and gender-based violence;
- **Undertake media campaigns**, as local media play an informative and educational role and are followed by the public;
- **Collaborate and coordinate** with all institutions to address domestic violence and gender-based violence.



Suggestions made by the Directorate for Social Services to the Municipal Council of the **Municipality of Libohova**:

- **Increasing the budget for economic assistance by the Municipality**, including the abused persons after the expiration of the Protection Orders.

Suggestions made by the focus group discussion to the Municipal Council:

- **Contact the local media so that the public becomes aware** of the fight against domestic violence;
- **Establishment of a project application department**, thus trying to secure support from foreign donors on issues of domestic violence and gender-based violence;
- **Open an office or center for psychological services**, where the psychologist is from another city as a major obstacle to addressing violence remains mentality and prejudice;
- **Apply the social plan**, which is still a draft;
- **Provide economic assistance or an employment strategy** to give independence to abused women, only in this way can they get out of the situation of violence.



Suggestions made and the Directorate for Social Services to **Vlorë Municipal Council**:

- **Advancement in the implementation of one of the Social Plan items** - The social plan of the municipality of Vlora has been drafted and approved in principle by the MC, but must also be financially supported by the municipality or line ministry, especially the implementation of one of the items of the Social Plan approved by MC of Vlora in November 2018, for the establishment of the Emergency Center for all categories in need;

- **Capacity building in the Directorate for Social Services** - increase the number of specialists for the Child Protection Unit as well as an additional specialist in the office of the Domestic Violence Coordinator.

The stakeholders that were part of the focus group suggested the following:

- **Increase the budget for social services in the municipality of Vlora** to support victims of domestic violence with housing;
- **Budgeting as a separate item in the budget of the Directorate for social services for the transport of victims/survivors of domestic violence and children** to national institutions in other cities;
- **Holding public meetings and hearings** with women and girls in the territory of the municipality to identify the needs and problems of their lives;
- **Capacity building of GEC members** and holding various meetings with other actors for violence management;
- **Hiring a social coordinator** available at weekends, or consider remunerating overtime working hours of current coordinators.



Suggestions made by the Directorate for Social Services to the Municipal Council of the **Municipality of Kukës**:

- **Lobbying by the Municipal Council** through the Committee on Gender Equality in presenting gender-based violence and domestic violence to all members;
- **Develop employment and housing programs** to address the needs of victims of gender-based violence and domestic violence;
- **Allocation of a social fund for the establishment of an emergency reception center** for up to 48 hours for victims of violence to take the measure of life safety;
- **Increasing the number of professional staff that provides services to victims of violence;**
- **Allocation of an annual dedicated budget** to cases of domestic violence;
- **Gender budgeting** by defining the number of beneficiaries by gender for each investment in the territory of the Municipality, as well as to consult it with stakeholders.



Suggestions made by the Directorate for Social Services to the Municipal Council of the **Municipality of Divjakë**:

- **Increasing the number of social workers or psychologists in the administrative units** to provide better care to victims / survivors of violence or families with various problems;
- **Additional budget forecasts for the Directorate for social services** as the services are in the open field and at a distance.

The stakeholders that were part of the focus group suggested the following:

- **Closer cooperation with the administration of the Directorate for services** to increase the performance of services against violence;
- **Budget allocation for the management of cases of domestic violence in the field.**



Suggestions made by the Directorate for Social Services to the Municipal Council of the **Mallakastér Municipality**:

- **Restructuring in staff for social workers & psychologists** for handling cases of domestic violence at the municipal level and in 9 administrative units;
- **Increase the qualification of current social workers** for managing cases of domestic and gender-based violence;
- **Financial support for the application of the social plan** of the Municipality of Mallakaster;
- **Allocation of dedicated budget** to the management of cases of domestic violence and gender-based violence.

The stakeholders that were part of the focus group suggested the following:

- **Drafting specific policies and budgeting these policies** for subsidizing the business managed by women.



Suggestions to the municipal council of the **Municipality of Këlcyré** made by the Directorate for Social Services:

- **Development of assistance programs for cases of domestic violence, such as: setting up an emergency shelter and providing a rent bonus;**
- **Organizational chart restructuring for two social workers and psychologists** to deal with cases of violence at the municipal level as well as in administrative units;
- **Dedicated budget allocation to the management of cases of violence;**
- **Continuous cooperation between the MC and the Social Service** in the Municipality;
- **Financial support for the organization of more awareness activities** focused on educating women about their rights;
- **Increase the qualification of social workers** to better understand and respond to domestic violence and gender-based violence.



Suggestions to the municipal council of the **Municipality of Kolonjë** made by stakeholders participating in the focus group:

- **Increase human resource staff** including a psychologist (s) to handle domestic violence cases;

- **Developing integration programs and policies** and opening of employment opportunities especially for women victims of violence;
- **Implementation of the already approved social plan;**
- **Creating opportunities for training the multifunctional center staff**, in order to maximally support the cases of domestic violence;
- **Developing awareness programs** to address domestic violence and gender-based violence;
- **Using online platforms for psychological help;**
- **Setting up a green line for local denunciation of domestic violence;**
- **Budget allocation for the management of cases of violence.**



Suggestions made by the Directorate for Social Services to the municipal council of the **Municipality of Elbasan**:

The Committee on Gender Equality at the level of the Municipal Council was established by the decision of the Municipal Council no. 138 dated 21.12. 2017, in the framework of the drafting the Action Plan for Gender Equality, as well as in accordance with the measures to be taken for the effective implementation of the European Charter for Equality. This committee has an important role in monitoring the implementation of the Action Plan for Gender Equality 2018-2020, at the level of objectives. In this context, we recommend the following:

- **Increasing the capacities of the Gender Equality Committee** for the implementation of the monitoring of the Action Plan for Gender Equality and other decisions of the Municipal Council.

Suggestions to Elbasan municipal council from the focus group discussion are related to:

- **Increasing the number of employees in the administrative units** for managing cases of violence in more remote areas;
- **Provision of an additional fund in the budget** to help the needy, mainly for abused women and girls.



Suggestions made by the Directorate for Social Services to the municipal council of the **Municipality of Finiq**:

- **Allocation of a dedicated budget** to services and support programs;
- **Organizational chart restructuring for two social workers and psychologists** to deal with cases of gender-based violence and domestic violence at the municipal level and in administrative units;
- **Support for the establishment of a multi-social and professional center** for abused and unemployed women and girls;

- **Financial support for the organization of more awareness activities** to prevent and report violence.

The stakeholders that participated in the focus group suggested the following to the municipal council of Finiq Municipality:

- **Develop employment programs and projects**, especially for women to prevent domestic violence and gender-based violence.



Suggestions made by GEC and the Directorate for Social Services to the municipal council of the **Municipality of Gramsh**:

- **Setting up a multifunctional center** with specialized staff to provide psychological, legal, social support to abused women;
- **Setting up an Emergency Center** as in most cases the victims are reluctant to declare violence, as they have nowhere to shelter;
- **Allocation of a specific budget** for the management of domestic violence and gender-based violence cases.

Suggestions to Gramsh municipal council from the focus group are related to:

- **Allocate a higher budget** to support abused women;
- **Economic Assistance/ Social Housing**: the municipality can reach an agreement with the constructors of the buildings, to reserve a space for social housing;
- **Expanding employment opportunities**: tax relief arrangements for a business that employs abused and needy women;
- **Carrying out awareness activities**, cooperating with local media and using social networks.

The stakeholders who participated in the focus group suggested the following to the municipal council of **Patos Municipality**:



- **Approve a special fund** for the management of domestic violence and gender-based violence cases;
- **Make existing emergency shelters operational** which lack furniture and dedicated staff;
- **Establishment of a comprehensive multifunctional center**;
- **Special staff for handling cases of domestic violence in administrative units**.



Suggestions to the municipal council of **Has Municipality** from stakeholders who participated in the focus group:

- **Financial support for the organization of information activities** on domestic violence;

- **Increasing the qualification of social workers** to better understand and respond to domestic violence and gender-based violence;
- **Adding professional staff, social workers and psychologists**, to deal with cases of domestic violence and gender-based violence at the municipal level and in administrative units.



Suggestions made by the Directorate for Social Services to the municipal council of the **Municipality of Tropoja**:

- **Set up of a day center** for victims / survivors of domestic violence and gender-based violence;
- **Create a special budget fund** for the management of cases of violence;
- **Allocate the social fund for setting up an emergency reception center for up to 48 hours** for victims of violence to take the life safety measure;
- **Establish new services and increase the number of professional staff** that provides services to victims of violence.

The stakeholders who participated in the focus group suggested the following to the municipal council of Municipality of Tropoja:

- **Continuous monitoring** on the part of the Municipal Council and the Committee on Gender Equality and Social Inclusion of the activity of the municipal administration for achieving gender equality indicators;
- **Strengthening the Coordinated Referral Mechanism** was considered a great need in this municipality regarding the recognition and interpretation of the legal basis;
- **Addition of special staff for the management of domestic violence cases;**
- **Capacity building of school psychologists, of the Local Unit of Health Care** through information sessions and specific trainings for the management of cases of violence.



Suggestions made by the Directorate for Social Services to the municipal council of **Bulqiza Municipality**:

- **Rent bonus for victims of domestic violence** who cannot afford to pay the rent of an apartment and do not have relatives who can support them;
- **Financial assistance** for at least a quarterly period until appropriate measures are taken to assist a case of violence;
- **Adding the position of 1 full-time psychologist at the Directorate for Social Services.** Currently, the position of psychologist is part-time and is part of the project with UNDP in cooperation with the Municipality of Bulqiza. The addition of the position of 1 full-time psychologist makes it possible for us to always be available for the management of domestic violence cases near the Municipality of Bulqiza.

Meanwhile the focus group stakeholders suggested the following:

- **Build or put into operation a residential center** for abused women and their psychological and medical treatment;
- **Set up of specialized structure at the Police Station** for cases of domestic violence;
- **Continuous training of staff** dealing with cases of domestic violence;
- **Creating spaces for seasonal employment and vocational training** for victims of domestic violence;
- **Economic empowerment of women and girls** to prevent violence and help victims of violence.
- **Paying house rents for women** leaving the house and having protection orders.



Suggestions made by GEC and the Directorate for Social Services to the municipal council of the **Municipality of Përmet**:

- **Financial support to institutionalize specialized support services** for victims / survivors of violence and abusers;
- **Facilitation programs for women and girls' handicraft businesses** to employ women and girls who are victims of domestic violence;
- **Financial support to set up a multisocial day center** for abused and unemployed women and girls and marginalized target groups.

The stakeholders who participated in the focus group suggested the following to the municipal council of Municipality of Përmet:

- **Professional capacity building** in order to improve data collection and put in place the information system for managing cases of domestic violence;
- **Support with employment and training projects** especially for women and girls, as well as young people;
- **Setting up a rehabilitation and reintegration center** not only for victims of violence, but also for abusers;
- **Financial support for the organization of awareness activities** focused on educating the community on gender issues and reporting domestic violence;
- **Increasing the qualification capacities of social workers** to better understand and respond to gender-based violence;
- **Dedicated budget allocation to the management of domestic violence cases;**
- **Increasing professional staff, such as social workers and psychologists** for dealing with cases of domestic violence at the municipal and administrative unit level.



Suggestions made by the Directorate for Social Services to the municipal council of the **Municipality of Mat**:

- **Construction or operation of a residential center** for abused women and their psychological and medical treatment;
- **Establishing a specialized structure** at the Police Station with psychologists, lawyers and doctors;
- **Conducting continuous training of staff** dealing with cases of domestic violence;
- **Creating spaces for seasonal employment and vocational training** for women and victims of domestic violence;
- **Carrying out specialized treatments for abusers** to end the cycle of violence.



Some of the main recommendations for the **Municipal Council of Cërrik** are the following:

- **Allocation of a special budget** for the management of domestic violence cases (including all necessary expenses, especially emergency ones which must be undertaken on a case-by-case basis);
- **Reorganization and strengthening of the social services sector** to increase the quality of services in the context of domestic violence and gender-based violence;
  - a) Transformation of the social services sector into directorates and additional staff;
  - b) Added staff to administrative units for each approved position.
- **Increase the effectiveness of the multi-sectoral approach and basic specialized services** for victims /survivors of domestic violence and gender-based violence through:
  - a) Formalization of the Coordinated Referral Mechanism of Violence (cooperation agreement between the actors and the establishment and functioning of the Steering Committee and the Interdisciplinary Technical Team);
  - b) Appointment of a Local Coordinator against domestic violence as a special and full-time job position;
  - c) Organizing regular ITT meetings and building the capacity of its members.
- **Investing in the prevention of domestic violence and gender-based violence**, through information and awareness campaigns, especially in schools;
- **Creating safe public spaces for all social groups, assessing the needs for security and protection** of women and girls, men and boys in the areas where they are planned, street lighting, transformation of schools into community centers, installation of security cameras in schools and kindergartens, guaranteeing school guards, etc.



Suggestions made by the Directorate for Social Services to the municipal council of the **Municipality of Rrogozhina**:

**Setting up a 72-hour emergency shelter center for:**

- Immediate protection order for victims of domestic violence and their children;
- Immediate protection order or police record (minutes);
- Children without parental care or abused, exploited, abused in street situations and children with disabilities;
- Abandoned elderly in street situation.

**Planning an annual budget for managing domestic violence;**

- **Making available a means of transport** in the service of measures against domestic violence.



Suggestions made by the Directorate for Social Services to the municipal council of the **Municipality of Fier**:

- **Budget for transport services** for cases of domestic violence;
- **Increasing human resources for local coordinators in the municipality of Fier and in the administrative units.** Despite the help provided by social administrators, it is necessary to have employees who focus on domestic violence work in each administrative unit.



Stakeholders that participated in the focus group suggested the following to the municipal council of **Librazhd Municipality**:

- **Develop policies for the employment of women and girls** who are victims / survivors of domestic violence, such as: tax relief and local businesses that employ women and girls who are victims / survivors of domestic violence or seasonal employment and vocational training;
- **Construction of a residential center** for abused women and their psychological and medical treatment;
- **Organizing continuous trainings** for the social services staff dealing with cases of domestic violence.



The suggestions of the Directorate for Social Services in the **Municipality of Selenica** are as follows:

- **Increase the budget for social services and increase the number of the specialized human resources** (social workers and psychologists) for assisting and dealing with cases of violence.

Stakeholders participating in the focus group suggested the following:

- **Holding public meetings and hearings** with participants from all over the community, in order to inform the elderly, who do not have access to other forms of awareness and information, about addressing and referring cases of violence.



Suggestions made by the Directorate for Social Services and the stakeholders of the focus group to the **Municipality of Delvina**:

- **Publication of information to report violence on the website of the municipality**, telephone number for counseling in cases of violence and legal basis;
- **Organizing awareness and information campaigns about the prevention of gender-based violence** and the recognition of protection mechanisms that can be accessed and used by victims, while maintaining their safety. Campaigns can be conducted through posters, leaflets, roundtable meetings with the general public, the media, and employment offices and with experts and organizations working in the field of human rights.
- **Financial support of the dwelling's rent** in cases where there is a court decision and the injured party cannot stay in the same dwelling with the abuser.



Suggestions made by the Directorate for Social Services to the municipal council of the **Municipality of Kuçova** to improve services for addressing violence:

- **Gender budgeting** by defining the number of male, female beneficiaries for each investment in the territory of the Municipality and to consult it with stakeholders;
- **Support the municipal social plan project** for the functioning of a multifunctional center for housing and support of cases of violence.



Suggestions made by the focus group stakeholders to the municipal council of **Lushnja Municipality**:

- **Added attention to budget forecasts** to increase access through social services in administrative units;
- **Forecasting investments in community centers** where specialized services are provided for target groups in need.



To the municipal council of the **Municipality of Kruja**, the stakeholders that participated in the focus group suggested the following:

- **Improving the free consultation service** by sharing information with all administrative units;
- **Forecasting budget for the social services office** to resolve logistics issues;
- **Putting in place the multidisciplinary center;**
- **Increased attention to staff growth in social services.**



Suggestions made by the Services Directorate to the **Pogradec Municipal Council**:

- **Budgeting for undertaking gender initiatives;**
- **Budgeting for employing a social worker in the day center;**
- **Budgeting for employing social workers in the Administrative Units** in order to address cases of domestic violence and gender-based violence;
- **Capacity building of the municipal administration** in the service of cases of domestic violence and gender-based violence;
- **Promotion of handicraft products of women** in general and of abused women in particular.

Suggestions made by focus group participants:

- **Establish cooperation with the Employment Office** in order to engage women in vocational training and employment programs through the employment promotion program, with the ultimate goal of their economic empowerment by increasing their professional capacity and engaging in social life;
- **Conduct information campaigns on the prevention of gender-based violence**, as well as awareness of protection mechanisms that can be used by victims in order to maintain their safety;
- **Collaborate with various local actors or donors to establish a counseling center** for the treatment of violent persons with alcohol consumption problems, deviant problems or emotional disturbances.



Suggestions to the municipal council of **Durrës Municipality**:

The social services in the municipality suggested the following:

- **Develop emergency plans for people with mental health problems.**
- **Provide a budget for providing complementary services to** the family as a whole, including: psychological, social and economic support;
- **Support programs for abusers**, through counseling groups, specialist services and therapies;
- **Intensify awareness campaigns** to inform the population about addressing gender-based violence and domestic violence.

Stakeholders participating in the focus group suggested the following to the Municipal Council of Durrës Municipality:

- **Conducting awareness and information campaigns on the website of the municipality** to provide information to the public about all experts of the Technical Team, who are in the field and work directly with cases of violence, as well as where to convey a message to them, in order to be closer to the victims of violence;
- **Developing a “family service” program**, which will provide full service: psychological, legal, training opportunities and employment, according to the needs of all family members where there have been cases of violence and presenting economic difficulties. This helps strengthen the family and create long-term social stability;
- **Developing social programs for the management of cases of violence when children are involved.** Mainly these programs should include the category of children who are in families where violence has been reported and children who are in a street situation, who have neither documentation nor housing;

**Developing an employment program** to empower women who are part of cases of violence.



Office of Social Services suggested the following to the municipal council of the **Municipality of Tepelena**:



- **Financial autonomy and fiscal decentralization**, so that municipalities have sufficient funds to provide quality and tangible services to all citizens;
- **Financial support for organizing more awareness activities** focused on educating women.

Stakeholders in the focus groups suggested the following:

- **Support employment projects**, especially for women;
- **Allocate a budget dedicated to assist victims of domestic violence;**
- **Financial support for increasing the qualification of social workers** for conducting research to understand the social and cultural attitudes that hinder the reporting of violence, as well as to meet the needs of citizens who report that they are abused.

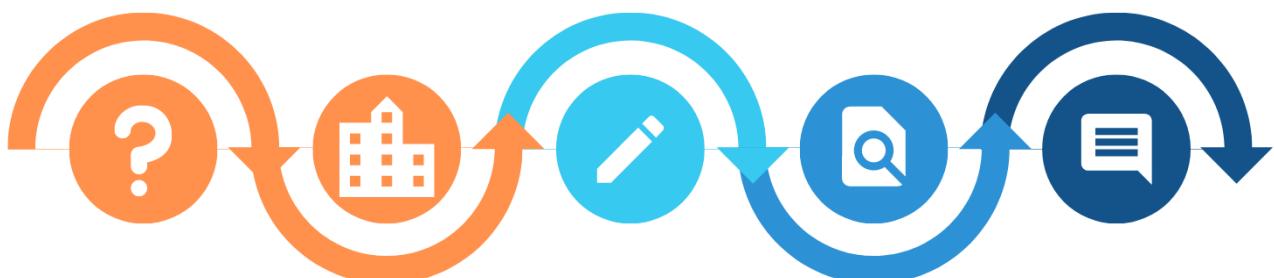
## VIII. Conclusions

During the isolation of the Covid-19 pandemic, municipalities have provided services for domestic violence cases reported during this period, as well as services to manage domestic violence cases reported prior to Covid-19.

The data presented in this report show that some of the services were performed online in cases where there was no need for emergency intervention. Such services include psychological counseling, legal assistance and the provision of information on a case-by-case basis. Also, in most cases the meetings of the working groups were conducted online through electronic platforms.

The main services provided by municipalities, and in cooperation with civil society organizations, are economic assistance services, housing services, legal assistance, psychological counseling, health assistance, and vocational training and employment services.

Based on the data analysis, the administration and stakeholders that were part of the focus groups are required to create specific budgets for municipalities and municipal councils for domestic violence case management services, including: staff restructuring and hiring more psychologists, social workers and social administrators; budget planning for reintegration programs for domestic violence cases, including employment strategies, vocational training and financial support; establishment of emergency accommodation centers for cases of domestic violence and gender-based violence and the establishment and operation of multifunctional centers and emergency centers for cases of domestic violence and gender-based violence.



## ANNEX 1: PERIODIC REPORTING FORMS ON THE SITUATION OF VIOLENCE DURING THE SITUATION COVID19

### PERIODIC REPORT

*This periodic report (weekly report) is prepared by the responsible structure in the Municipality for addressing domestic violence and gender-based violence (Directorate for Social Services / Social Inclusion Sector, Local Coordinator of Domestic Violence, etc.) to the benefit of the Gender Equality Committee and Social Inclusion in the Municipal Council of Municipality X (name of the municipality is placed) in order to assess the situation of domestic violence and gender-based violence during the pandemic situation caused by Covid-19, identified needs and taking measures at the decision-making level for addressing them.*

*To: Committee on Gender Equality and Social Inclusion – Municipal Council X*

*Prepared by: Mr./Ms. XX Local Coordinator for Domestic Violence*

*Approved by: Mr./Ms. XX, Director for Social Services*

- 1. The situation of domestic violence and gender-based violence for the reporting period in the territory of the Municipality (including Administrative Units) during the Covid-19 pandemic. Please complete the following table:**

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Value/Number</i>
<i>Number of identified cases for the reporting period</i>	
<i>Number of last year cases for the same period</i>	
<i>Reporting difference compared to the same period of the previous year</i>	
<i>Types of provided services in isolation conditions (specify/circle the provided service)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Emergency services (emergency shelters)</li><li>Transport to a safer environment</li><li>Health care</li><li>Psychological support services (online)</li><li>Legal counselling through accessible methods(online)</li><li>Services for reporting violence in an emergency situation (local phone lines, social media, etc. )</li><li>Vocational training and employment services</li><li>Long-term housing programs</li><li>Prevention programs online</li><li>Other (Please specify) _____</li></ul>

2. Information on the type of services they provided during the Covid-19 situation for addressing domestic violence in the territory of the municipality:

- State Police
- Social services at municipal level
- Social services at Administrative Unit level
- Health services
- Educational services
- Judicial services
- Prosecutor's Office
- Services provided by civil society organization
- Other (*Please specify*) \_\_\_\_\_

3. Information on the functioning of the Coordinated Referral Mechanism (CRM) for domestic violence cases. Situation of inter-institutional cooperation for service delivery in the conditions of COVID 19. *Please in this session make a description of the functioning of CRM during the pandemic. If there were ITT meetings for the period during the pandemic, describe how they took place (physical meeting with close members respecting the rules of physical distancing / online, etc.), what was the topic / cases treated? etc.*

4. Monitoring situation of Protection Orders in the territory during COVID 19. *Please describe in this session how the legal obligation of the Local Coordinator for monitoring POs in the territory has been fulfilled and the preparation of the monitoring report every 60 days for each case. If so, has this information been made available to the police? What have been the challenges encountered in this process?*

5. Measures taken by the executive in addressing the service against domestic violence in the conditions of COVID 19. *Please in this session make a description of the measures taken so far by the executive in addressing the service, as a result of changes in legislation, restrictions of emergency measures, increasing the demand for services (if any).*

6. Financial costs in providing the service. *Please describe in this session the amount of the pandemic service delivery fund.*

7. Safety situation of employees engaged in the field to address domestic violence and gender-based violence in pandemic conditions. *Please describe in this session how many municipal employees or service providers are engaged in the field (if any) and what protective measures have been taken against them (masks, gloves), etc.*

8. Best practices and innovations in addressing domestic violence. *Please in this session make a description of the best practices identified and the innovations proposed by the directorate for the provision of services against domestic violence.*

Conclusions and Recommendations for the Municipal Council (MC) / Committee on Gender Equality and Social Inclusion. *Please present in this session all the needs that the MC can address for an effective address such as budget allocation / reallocation for the management of domestic violence cases, changes in the number of employees / human resources in the municipal administration or in social service centers, interventions to improve inter-institutional cooperation for service delivery, the need for budgeting of services / other support programs, in the conditions of the pandemic.*

## ANNEX 2: FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONNAIRE WITH LOCAL ACTORS

### FOCUS GROUP WITH LOCAL KEY ACTORS GUIDE

*This focus group is conducted in the framework of the assessment of the situation of addressing domestic violence (DV) and gender-based violence (GBV) at the local level.*

The purpose of the focus group is to identify the situation of addressing DV and GBV from the perspective of local actors and will also serve as a way to identify the attitudes, thoughts, opinions of different actors on this issue as well as the level of cooperation among their work in addressing domestic violence cases during Covid-19, but also post Covid-19.

The generated data remains confidential and will be used only for the purpose of assessing the situation and needs to be addressed in the field of DV & GBV.

The following are guiding questions / areas to explore during the conducting of focus groups or hearings with stakeholders, such as civil society organizations in the territory to see their perspective on the work done, needs, challenges as also to gather recommendations for a more effective address of domestic violence and gender-based violence.

#### 1. Introduction of participants.

- *Role and services they provide in terms of DV and GBV.*
- *Experience in addressing DV/GBV.*
- *Partners they cooperate with in addressing DV and GBV.*

#### 2. Domestic violence and gender-based violence situation in the Municipality.

- *How do you view the situation of domestic violence and gender-based violence in the territory of your Municipality?*
- *In your opinion, how has the situation of violence in the territory of the Municipality during the Covid-19 pandemic been presented?*

#### 3. Provided services in addressing domestic violence

- *What can you say about services in addressing domestic violence throughout Covid-19?*
- *What services do you consider to have worked best throughout Covid-19 in addressing domestic violence?*
- *What can be said about:*
  - *The State Police:*
  - *Structures of social services:*
  - *Services provided by organizations:*
  - *What about other actors? The Media?*
- *Have you provided services throughout Covid-19?*  
*If so, how many cases have you supported?*

#### **4. Quality of provided services for addressing DV and GBV by local institutions**

- *How would you rate the quality of social services provided to address DV & GBV by local institutions (Municipality / Administrative Units) in your territory?*
- *What is missing?*
- *What are the aspects that need to be improved?*
- *What services need to be improved for a better response to domestic violence and gender-based violence in coping with situations like Covid-19?*
- *Based on the experience during the Covid-19 situation, in another similar situation, what would be the measures / services that would have to be provided by the responsible institutions (CRM) for a more effective address of domestic violence?*
- *What are the best practices and innovations in addressing domestic violence?*

#### **5. Inter-institutional cooperation**

- *Who were the actors involved in addressing DV & GBV?*
- *How do you rate the inter-institutional cooperation for addressing domestic violence in the territory of your Municipality during Covid-19?*
- *Who are the other actors that can be involved in addressing DV & GBV?*
- *How involved or informed were you in the decisions taken by the Municipality / Municipal Council to address DV & GBV?*

#### **6. Coordinated Referral Mechanism (CRM)**

*If* the municipality has established and operates the Coordinated Referral Mechanism:

- *How do you rate the performance of the Coordinated Referral Mechanism (CRM) for domestic violence cases in the territory of your Municipality during the Covid-19 situation?*

#### **7. Suggestions**

- *What are your suggestions / recommendations for better addressing DV & GBV in the territory of the municipality?*
- *What are your suggestions / recommendations to the Municipal Council (MC) / Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Committee for better addressing DV & GBV?*

#### **Expert notes:**

1. Name/Surname of expert \_\_\_\_\_

2. Municipality where the focus group took place: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Date when the focus group took place:

\_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

4. Time when the focus group took place: from time \_\_\_\_\_ up until to time \_\_\_\_\_

5. Venue where the focus group took place: \_\_\_\_\_

6. Provide the number of participants by organization/institution they represent:

## 7. Other impressions during the focus group: