

Observatory for the Children and Youth Rights

ANNUAL REPORT 2019



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»» FOREWORD

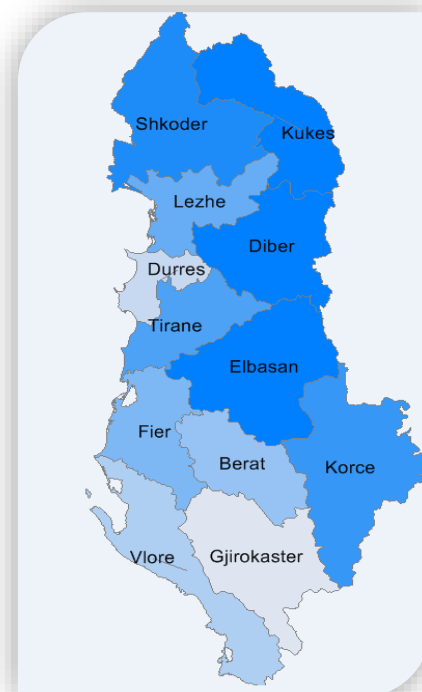
Observatory for Children and Youth Rights

Observatory for Children and Youth Rights, hereby known as Observatory, is a non-governmental entity established in 2013 in Albania whose mission is to improve children, youth, women and vulnerable groups rights situation. Observatory engages everyday in monitoring the situation of children and youth at the national and strategic level.

Our mission is to ensure the dignity and well-being of children and young people across Albania through observation, research and analysis, communication and advocacy; by cooperating with other stakeholders / institutions; and getting involved in public awareness and education campaigns.

To fulfill its mission, Observatory, operates in twelve regional nationwide branches (one in each main municipality in Albania). A qualified and experienced local staff supports us to monitor the situation of children and young people and allows to address issues related to their rights from local to national level.

Through its representatives at the regional level and in collaboration with local government units in municipalities and communes, the Observatory is collecting statistical information from administrative records of health, education, social protection and other local authorities. Using the DevInfo software the wealth of statistical information is consolidated into a database accessible online at: <http://www.observator.org.al/odf-map/>.



So far, the database provided by Observatory has served as a unique source of information in the designing of a range of interventions at national and local level by collaborating closely with public institutions and NGOs, and has served in different strategic plans of international and national institutions.

Using this data obtained from different institutions at central and local level, Observatory has conducted several monitoring and assessments on the situation of children and youth in Albania, by contributing to the drafting of action plans for children and youth at the national and local level.

An important contribution of the Observatory's strong presence on the ground is their ability to advocate with government authorities to expand central and local measures to address the needs of children and young people in Albania.



During these five years, Observatory has been one of the initiators and mobilizers of the establishment of the “Youth Voice network, enabling to address the local policies for young people to authorities and supporting national and international activities with and for young people.

Observatory is the first and the only entity in Albania that has raised the voice and has undertaken four years intensive engagement in making public the underage marriage for saving the life of girls and boys; Observatory voice has been raised from local community awareness initiatives, up to central Government attention and policy, by making part of the discussion tables representatives of line Ministries.

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» PROJECT IN 2019

Monitoring the rights of children with focus on out-of-school children in Albania

During 2019, Observatory, in partnership with UNICEF Albania, has continued the implementation of the program "**Every child in school**", which during this year is oriented towards the implementation of:

- Monitoring on every child to go to school;
- Monitoring and reporting of children's rights at national and local level.

While most children of compulsory school age in Albania attend school, some remain excluded from education due to complex and overlapping factors, such as migration, extreme poverty, disability, parental attitudes or cultural practices, issues of language or difficult family circumstances.



In recent years, the Observatory together with UNICEF, and in partnership with the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth (MoESY) have engaged on the issue of out-of-school children with different partners, supporting the functioning of a mechanism for identifying children (6 to 8 years old) who have not started their compulsory education and enrollment in school on time.

The initiative is being implemented in Durrës, Korçë, Lezhë and Shkodër. For the first time, as part of the implementation of this initiative, the Albanian government has *allocated a special fund to support scholarships* for children who do not go to school due to economic difficulties. For this purpose, on 10.10.2019, DCM no. 666 "On financial quotas and determining the criteria for obtaining scholarships for students of pre-university education in public educational institutions" was approved. The fund made available to MoESY is to *support about 600 children at the national level* in order to integrate them into the school.

Through this initiative, over 2000 first-line service providers have been contacted regarding the tasks and deadlines that must be met by each of them for education of every child. Through field meetings with the parents of marginalized groups (unemployed, in economic aid, with disabilities, from Roma and / or Egyptian communities) and media approaches (visual and social media) over 15,000 individuals have been reached.

The initiative "Every child in school" during 2019 has been documented through a video, which brings the perspective on the implementation of the initiative by key actors for children's education, such as: MoESY, UNICEF, Municipality, Child Protection Unit, school. The video also reflects the voice of children

supported by scholarship, and the impact of this support not only for children's present, but for their future and lives.

The full version of the documentary video of the initiative "Every child in school" can be found at the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=njglQdOpNAM&feature=youtu.be>.



The focus during this period has been on monitoring the rights of children at both the national and local levels.

The National Agenda for the Rights of the Child 2017-2020 (Agenda) in Albania is also the main document that plans and provides measures, initiatives and activities related to children at the central level. It is also an important instrument for improving the accountability of various government officials in implementing actions towards the progressive realization of children's rights. At the end of 2018, the Agenda achieved half of the implementation by displaying as a need and monitoring its implementation as well as its reformulation according to not only the progress achieved, but also the subject of new priorities.

In collaboration with UNICEF, the Observatory provided dedicated technical support to Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MoHSW) and the State Agency for the Protection of Children's Rights (SAPCR) in developing data collection instruments and conducting information analysis to inform the Draft Medium Term Reporting Report including the

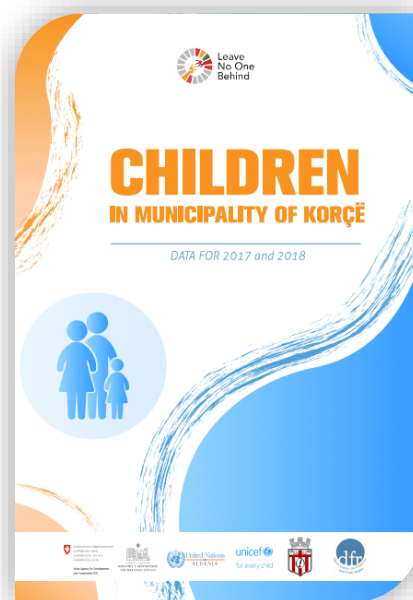
implementation plan for the remaining period 2019- 2020.

This process was carried out in cooperation with all central institutions and municipalities responsible for the implementation of measures and activities provided for in the Agenda which reported according to the pre-prepared instruments.

The information gathered during this process was used to design the Agency's medium-term monitoring report which can be found at: https://observator.org.al/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/PRINT_raporti_final_shqip.pdf.

As an innovation during this process was the involvement of children and adolescents in the process of monitoring and reporting the Agenda. In total, 7 activities were organized in consultation with children in different areas of Albania, including children from vulnerable groups (Children with disabilities and children in care institutions).

On the other hand, the focus was also on the local level. While the Municipalities are also the institution responsible for coordinating the work between different sectors for issues related to children and to reliably monitor the implementation

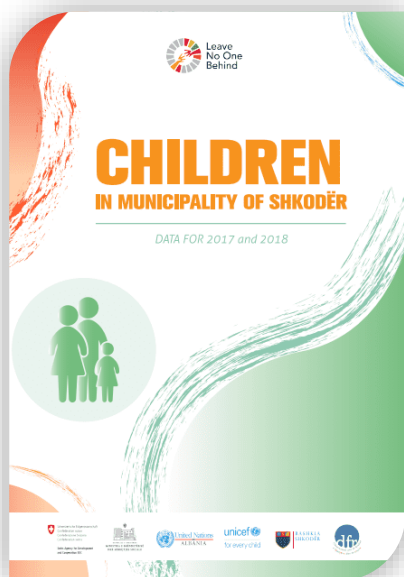


of their rights, lack of dedicated staff in the municipality and direct non-subordination of other local institutions from the municipality complicate this process.

In cooperation with UNICEF, Observatory, during 2019 has assisted two pilot municipalities (Shkodra and Korca) to collect data and statistics from various sectors (demography, health, education, social protection, children in contact with the law and the protection of children from violence) for two years (2017 and 2018) by providing these municipalities with a document that presents the nature of children in their territory.

Publications can be found:

- Korça Municipality: <https://observator.org.al/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Korca-Anglisht-final-14.10.2019.pdf>
- Shkodra Municipality: <https://observator.org.al/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Shkodra-Anglisht-final-14.10.2019.pdf>



Moreover, through this initiative, the first steps were taken to draft a methodology on how municipalities can analyze the situation of children in their territory.

As at the central level, and at the local level, special attention was paid to the engagement of children in decision-making. In both pilot municipalities (Shkodra and Korca) meetings were held with the responsible staff of the municipality to discuss the commitment of children in the decision-making process at the local level.

In both municipalities, this process was considered important and the Observatory found the cooperation of the municipalities to coordinate this process. Consultative meetings were also held with the children to set up a methodology for setting up children's councils near the municipality. The whole process was finalized with documents (1 for each municipality) detailing the necessary steps to raise these children's councils at the local level.

Implementing Norms, Changing Minds – Regional Programme

Observatory has gradually increased its commitment to issues of gender equality and violence against women and girls in Albania. During 2019, Observatory was engaged in the implementation of two components of the regional program "Stop Violence against Women and Girls - Implement Norms, Change Minds" (implemented in: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Northern Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Serbia and Turkey), as follows:

- Collecting data on gender stereotypes and public perception of gender roles and attitudes towards violence against women;
- Drafting a Strategic Communication Plan to address violence against women in Albania.

The program was implemented in partnership with UN Women in Albania and with the support of the Delegation of the European Union.

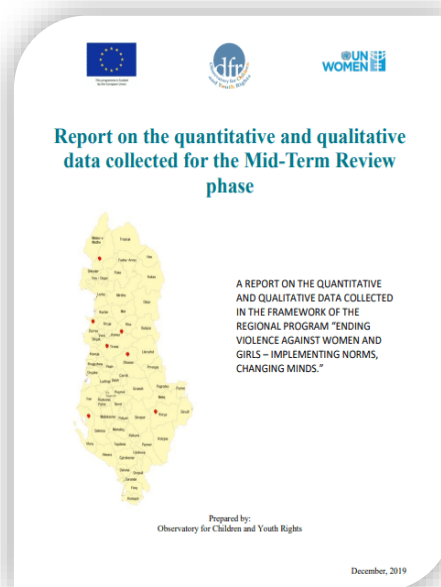
In this regional program, the Observatory was engaged in *collecting data on current and prevailing attitudes, perceptions, opinions and public beliefs towards gender equality and violence against women and girls and domestic violence at the community level*, during two different phases:

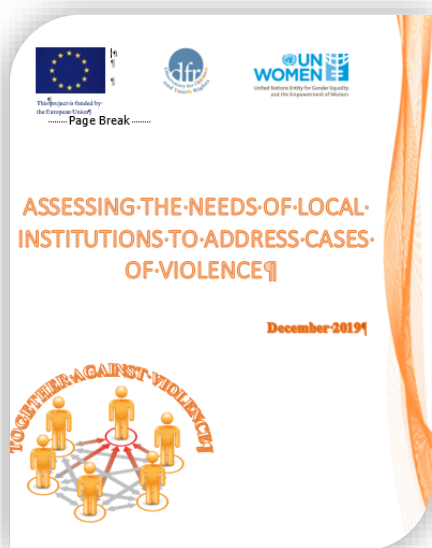
- First phase: Initial assessment (Baseline: November 2017 - April 2018)
- Second phase: Medium term assessment (Mid-Term Review: September - December 2019).

During 2019, the perceptions and attitudes of **1260 individuals** were measured - women, girls, men, boys and others, between **15-64 age**, in the **Region of Elbasan and the municipalities of Durrës, Kamza, Korça, Shkodra, Tirana and Vlora**, in urban and rural areas, including persons from marginalized communities (Rome, Egypt, persons with disabilities, and LGBTI persons). Also, 19 key actors of institutions (central and local) were interviewed on issues of violence in Albania.

Findings from the surveys support the Albanian Government and civil society to implement more effective measures in terms of prevention; increase the level of information on society's attitudes and perceptions on gender stereotypes and roles and violence against women, as well as identify awareness campaigns that have had a positive impact on the community.

The report of the collection of quantitative and qualitative data in the medium-term evaluation phase can be found at the link: https://observator.org.al/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Report-Mid-Term-Review_Dec2019.pdf





The second component of this project was "Drafting a Strategic Communication Plan to address violence against women in Albania." This initiative was implemented in the same municipalities where the initial study was conducted, namely in 6 municipalities (Tirana, Durres, Korca, Shkodra, Vlora, Kamza) and 1 region (Elbasan).

As part of this project, a communication strategy was developed that aims to change a specific behavior related to violence against women and girls. In consultation with central and local institutions, it was decided that the behavior to be targeted would be to increase reporting of violence by both victims and witnesses. After a long consultation process, a proper communication plan was finalized which includes a specific objective, the necessary steps to achieve it and the relevant deadlines.

On the other hand, as during the consultations with local institutions, service providers and citizens themselves, it was emphasized as motivation to report violence and their conviction that the responsible structures would manage cases effectively and provide appropriate services for victims. Before the reporting of violence was motivated, the need arose to assess the possibilities and needs of the institutions responsible for managing cases of violence. Such an assessment was carried out within this project and a summary report was drafted on the needs of local institutions to address cases of violence.

"Youth Voice"

Observatory in partnership with the UNFPA office in Albania, has been engaged since 2017 for the implementation of the Youth Voice program: "To create, coordinate and expand the civil society protection platform for ICPD issues and Development Goals Sustainable (SDG)". In 2019, this network consists of 21 organizations and youth clubs specializing in various areas of sexual and reproductive health, education, social and health services, human rights, community work and working with marginalized groups and in need. Organizations are networked with each other, implementing various activities at national and regional level. During the implementation of the youth program in 2019, Observatory conducted surveys with 500 young people on their knowledge and perceptions about sexual and



the youth program in 2019, Observatory conducted surveys with 500 young people on their knowledge and perceptions about sexual and

reproductive health, in 5 municipalities (Pogradec, Maliq, Kruja, Ura Vajgurore, Shijak). The most interesting findings from the surveys were conducted as factsheet on the knowledge and perceptions of young people regarding sexual and reproductive health, SDGs and municipal programs, in each municipality. Also, through the expertise of the Observatory, *Plans of activities and budget for young people have been drafted in 4 Municipalities* (Dibra, Lezha, Pogradec and Maliq), giving concrete suggestions for initiatives, programs that should be run by the municipality taking into account all competencies according to Law 75/2019 “On Youth”, Law on Local Government and the National Action Plan for Youth 2015-2020.

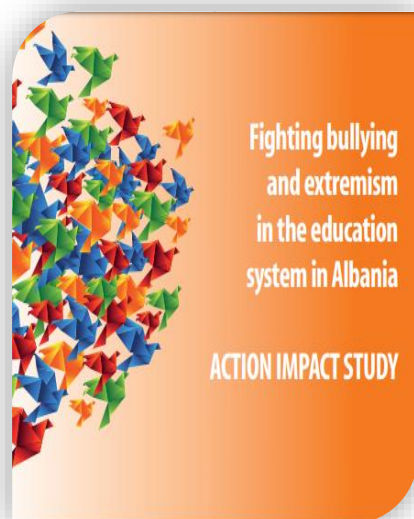
Observatory have *monitored the Declaration of Commitments for Youth*, signed by the Municipality of Tirana since 2015, analyzing in more detail:

- Three times the budget of the Municipality of Tirana for the youth (from 1% to 3%);
- Establishment of a transparent public instrument that shows the initiatives and youth enterprises supported by the municipality;
- Opening of Youth Centers in the suburbs of Tirana;
- Entry into force of the Student Card;
- Establishment and functioning of the Youth Advisory Board of the Municipality of Tirana.

The products made by the Observatory for the youth program can be found at the link: <https://observator.org.al/sq/publikime/>

Fighting bullying and extremism in the education system in Albania

The study “Fighting bullying and extremism in the education system in Albania” was conducted in 21 pilot schools. This study was based on findings from the national survey on bullying and violent extremism in the education system in Albania. The initiative projected its intervention by focusing on three levels: developing effective school mechanisms in creating a secure school environment (policy making), capacity building, and developing awareness-raising activities.

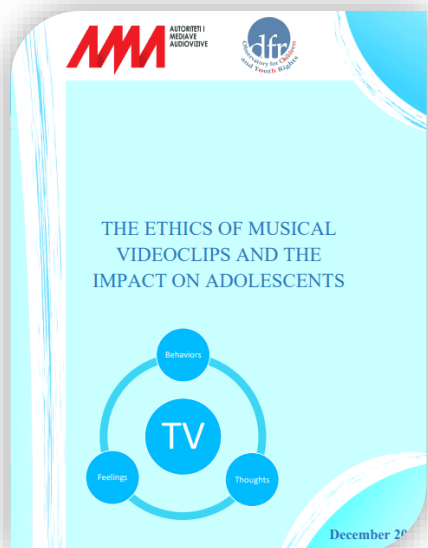


Specifically, the main purpose of this study was to collect and analyze data on the effectiveness and efficiency of the action; to measure the impact and sustainability of action on the education system in Albania. Participants in this study were students, teachers, project staff and parents from the beneficiary schools and non-profit schools.

The findings provide an important contribution regarding the impact and perceived changes due to the implementation of the initiative, shedding light on the necessity of continuing the initiatives on the phenomenon of bullying in the education system in Albania.

For more information about the study click on the link: https://observator.org.al/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/HF24_Action-Impact-Study_Bullying_ENG.pdf.pdf.

Pop culture in broadcast media and the impact on adolescents - Impact of video clips of songs



In partnership with the Audiovisual Media Authority (AMA), has launched the initiative "Pop culture in broadcast media and the impact on adolescents - Impact of video clips of songs". This initiative consisted of piloting and setting up an instrument to analyze the music art of music video clips, observing ethical issues.

As part of this project, a monitoring methodology was set up which included TV channels to be monitored, monitoring schedules as well as a list of indicators that target both song lyrics and images transmitted during clips. The methodology was piloted for a 6-week period. The findings and issues identified during this initiative were included in an evaluation report and shared with the responsible staff of AMA.

For more information about the initiative you can read the report at the link: https://observator.org.al/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Raporti_final-anglisht_5.12.2019.pdf

» OBSERVATORY'S PARTNERS

Partners Contribution

PROJECT TITLE	IMPLEMENT PERIOD	DONOR
Monitoring the rights of children with focus on out-of-school children in Albania.	January – December 2019	UNICEF
Implementing Norms - Changing Minds - Regional Program	January – May 2019	Un Women
Youth Voice	January – December 2019	UNFPA
Fighting bullying and extremism in education system in Albania	January– March 2019	European Union
Pop culture in broadcast media and the impact on adolescents - Impact of video clips of songs	September– December 2019	AMA