

Acknowledgements

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RECOMMENDATIONS TO DECREASE GENDER INEQUALITIES AND DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN IN PRRENJAS AND DEVOLL

Recommendations based on Measures and Actions



Study report on

RECOMMENDATIONS TO DECREASE GENDER INEQUALITIES AND DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN IN PRRENJAS AND DEVOLL

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Implemented in the context of the Project:

*"Tackling the root causes of discrimination against women in Albania
Prrenjas and Devoll, 2020"*

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1. Socio economic context of gender equality in Albania

Social norms and unequal legal treatment of women and men are still an obstacle for women to develop their financial knowledge, confidence and skills in this area.¹ The key to fostering women's economic empowerment and removing discriminatory social norms and practices, is enabling equal access to financial products and services so that they can fully realize their potential.² Due to gender inequality, women and girls continue to be deprived of their basic human rights as well as of opportunities to choose their own development pathways. Discrimination against women and girls in respect to men and boys reflects unequal power relations, which are formalized in laws and replicated in practices and traditions.

The OECD Development Centre's Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) is a cross-country measure of discrimination against women in social institutions (formal and informal laws, social norms, and practices) across 180 countries, including Albania. The SIGI covers four dimensions of discriminatory social institutions, spanning major socio-economic areas that affect women's lives: discrimination in the family; restricted physical integrity; restricted access to productive and financial resources and; restricted civil liberties.³ The SIGI includes 27 variables combined into 16 indicators and 4 dimensions and the SIGI and its sub-indices range from 0 for no discrimination to 100% for very high discrimination. So, this means that higher values indicate higher inequality. Countries are classified into five groups: Very low level of discrimination (SIGI < 20%); Low level of discrimination (20% < SIGI < 30%); Medium level of discrimination (30% < SIGI < 40%); High level of discrimination (40% < SIGI < 50%); Very high level of discrimination (SIGI > 50%). Based on the SIGI report, in 2019, Albania is categorized as a country with relatively low level of discrimination of about 23%. More specifically, the discrimination level in Albania in 2019 was 33,3%, restricted physical

1 <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264202733-en>

2 <http://www.oecd.org/dev/addressing-discriminatory-socialinstitutions-%20to-accelerate-gender-equality-G20-countries.pdf>

3 <https://www.genderindex.org/sigi/>

integrity 16.4%, restricted access to productive and financial resources 26% and restricted civil liberties 13.4%. It is worth mentioning though that Albania has made a lot of progress during the years, taking into account that the SIGI report in 2014, categorized Albania as a country with high level of discrimination.⁴

The Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Index is a measure that captures women's autonomy and empowerment at home, in the community, and in society. The new 2019 WPS Index, analyses 167 countries on women's equality and reveals trends in women's wellbeing. The index is structured around three basic dimensions of women's well-being: inclusion (economic, social, political); justice (formal laws and informal discrimination); and security (at the individual, community, and societal levels, which are captured and quantified through 11 indicators. All countries are ranked on a 0-1 scale with a score of 1 being the highest possible outcome. In this report Albania ranked 57th (index: 0.759). The other countries of the region are ranked as follows: Bosnia and Herzegovina 56th (index: 0.760), Montenegro 40th (index: 0.791), North Macedonia 37th (index: 0.806), and Serbia 24th (index: 0.839).⁵

The Albanian legislation does not differentiate between women in rural and nonrural (urban) areas. Women in rural areas find themselves in worse conditions of discrimination than those in urban areas because their economic situation is weak and usually dependent on remittances from abroad. In addition, in rural families, women are generally not employed and dependent on men financially and they mostly engage in housework.⁶ Unemployment in rural areas is also very high, due to the fact that women mostly engage in agricultural or animal husbandry work, which are usually unpaid jobs. This is also the result of the perception that in these areas women are supposed to stay at home and not seek jobs outside their house. Furthermore, unpaid care work is also an important aspect of economic activity, which affects the wellbeing of individuals and in this case of women. Most of the time,

4 https://www.genderindex.org/ranking/?region=&order=field_sigi_value19_value
Note: Higher values indicate higher inequality.

5 <https://giwps.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/WPS-Index-2019-20-Report.pdf>

6 https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/ALB/INT_CEDAW_NGO_ALB_46_7926_E.pdf

women who do not engage in another work, outside the house, spend their time cooking, cleaning and caring for children, the ill and the elderly. But, despite the importance of well-being of these categories of people, **unpaid care work is commonly left out of policy agendas** due to a common misperception that, unlike standard market work measures, it is too difficult to measure and less relevant for policies.⁷

The labor market shows disparities between women and men in Albania, which are greater than in the EU-28. Women have lower labor force participation rates and employment rates, and higher inactivity rates, mainly due to prevailing perceptions of gender roles. Whereby household responsibilities such as laundry and ironing of clothes, cleaning the house, cooking, washing dishes, taking care of sick family members, or taking care of children are seen as “women jobs”, and as such, the place of women is perceived to be at home.

The largest difference in labor market indicators between women and men is in the labor force participation rate, with a gap of 17.2 percent.⁸ Employment rate for the population aged 15-64 is 66.7% for men and 52.4 % for women. Women and men belonging to the 15-64 years old age group are mostly employed in the agriculture sector, of which 42.3% are women.⁹ The agricultural sector has the highest share of employed people with 36.4 % of the total employment rate.

From the perspective of gendered social norms, that view unpaid care work as a female prerogative, women across different regions, socio-economic classes and cultures spend an important part of their day on trying to meet the expectations of their domestic and reproductive roles. According to the calculations of Institute of Statistics in Albania (INSTAT), during 2019 the value of the Gender Inequality Index (GII) increased from 0.07 to 0.10, compared to 2018. GII presents gender disadvantages from three perspectives: reproductive health, women empowerment and the labor market. This index marks potential loss in **human development**, as a result of inequalities between achievements

7 http://www.oecd.org/dev/development-gender/Unpaid_care_work.pdf

8 http://www.instat.gov.al/media/6661/gender_equality_index_for_the_republic_of_albania_2020.pdf

9 <https://china-cee.eu/2020/04/01/albania-social-briefing-albania-and-gender-inequality/>

of females versus males in these aspects. GII may have a value of 0, when achievements of females and males are equal, to 1 where one of the genders has the worst possible results in all dimensions. Therefore, in the case of Albania, the GII shows a loss in human development as a result of a gender inequality of 10.0 %. This deterioration of the Gender Inequality Index compared to previous years comes as a result of the deterioration of maternal mortality rate, while all other indicators (regarding reproductive health, women empowerment and labor market) have improved. It has to be stressed here, that in general all the indicators used in the calculation of GII have shown slight but constant improvements, except maternal mortality, which with its oscillations has played the main role in the downward variations of this indicator.¹⁰

Another important factor that has deepened the inequality for women is the gap between legislation and implementation:

- There is a gap between legislation and implementation in Albania, despite many efforts taken by the Albanian government to reduce gender inequalities in the last two decades. There is still space for improvement in connecting gender and rural development strategies.
- Gender inequalities remain socially accepted and tolerated, especially in rural areas, where gender inequalities are more deep-rooted habits. But this faces a challenge for the implementation of laws and policies on gender equality.¹¹

The statistics of Domestic Violence (DV) data from the Albanian State Police (first trimester 2020), show that the number of cases reported, followed by those who requested protection orders, or followed according to the specific article of Criminal Code related to DV, or number of cases where a protection order is violated/broken, etc., are lower compared to the data for the same trimester a year ago (2019).¹² This tendency of a lower-case number was evident even during March 2020, when

10 <http://www.instat.gov.al/media/7376/burra-dhe-gra-2020.pdf>

11 <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5413e.pdf>

12 <https://www.coe.int/en/web/genderequality/promoting-and-protecting-women-s-rights#%2263001324%22:00>

emergency from the Pandemic COVID-19 was declared, compared to the same month of the previous year (March 2019). But a similar decrease was witnessed also in other countries, and is thought to be a consequence of the lack of ability of victims to report the abuse due to very strict lockdowns. In reality, however, Covid-19 has led to an increase in domestic violence. Consequently, despite the fact that statistically there is no increase in DV cases, this has not influenced the attention paid to this issue. During the first months of the pandemic, measures as quarantine, social distance, self-isolation, were the most important steps taken, to be protected from the virus. In this regard, specific attention was paid to the issue of violence against women and domestic violence, taking in consideration the potential risk of its increase during the quarantine and self-isolation period.

1.1. Focused analysis in the region of Korça, Pogradec, Devoll, Prrenjas

Korça is considered the regional center for arts and culture in the southeastern part of Albania. Its geostrategic position has played an important role in its social, economic and cultural development. Being in a cross border with Greece and North Macedonia in Korça's territory pass important transport axes which connect Albania with Southeast Balkans and beyond.¹³

Prrenjas municipality is located close to the border with Northern Macedonia and many families' livelihood is depended on the seasonal work in the neighboring country. The same can be reported for Devoll.¹⁴ The municipality of Pogradec is part of the county of Korça. The city of Pogradec was built on the southwestern shores of Lake Ohrid and is one of the most notable cities of Albania for its tradition in hosting "family tourism". Pogradec has a favorable geographic position because it connects many cities between them, but it serves also as a border crossing from the Republic of Macedonia and in reverse.¹⁵

13 https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20albania/attachments/publications/2019/05/english_web.pdf?la=en&vs=355

14 Municipality of Prrenjas official webpage: <https://www.bashkiaprrrenjas.gov.al/bashkia-prrenjas-3/#>

15 <https://www.albaniandf.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/esmp-Pogradec-Tushemisht-en.pdf>

In line with the OECD (SIGI), Balkan Center for Cooperation and Development (BCCD) and Observatory for Children and Youth Rights (Observatory), in cooperation with Forum for Equitable Development and the support of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Slovenia, have carried out a study about Gender Equality (GE) in general in Albania and with focus on Devoll, Prrenjas, Korce and Pogradec. The main purpose of the study is to assess the state of gender equality in Devoll, Prrenjas, Korce and Pogradec through the following **4 dimensions** of the social institutions gender index¹⁶:

- discrimination in the family (child marriage, household restricted physical activity (violence against women, female genital mutilation (FGM), missing women, reproductive autonomy (sexual and reproductive health and rights, SRHR)
- restricted access to productive and financial resources (secure access to land, non-land resource, financial services, and workplace rights)
- restricted civil liberties (citizenship rights, freedom of movement, political voice, access to justice)

The study is based on three parallel processes: i) the analysis and findings of 400 questionnaires conducted by the Economic Center, based in Korca, during September and October 2020, in the municipalities of Korca, Devoll, Prrenjas and Pogradec - aimed at identifying the individual perceptions on 4 SIGI dimensions; ii) the analysis and findings of focus groups questionnaires, carried out among different target groups (municipality councillors, professionals, intellectual people, administrative staff) in municipalities of Korca, Devoll, Prrenjas and Pogradec, during September and October, in line with the protocol of protection against COVID-19 and; iii) desk research on the influence of Covid on gender equality.

Below are the data and findings from the questionnaires and the structure of the focus groups involved:

- 47% of the respondents of individual questionnaires are males and 53% are females.
- 53% of them are part of the group age '18-29' and 47% are over

¹⁶ <https://www.genderindex.org/methodology/>

29 years old.

- Based on the findings about the Education, 2% of the respondents are without school, 11% have finished Primary Education, 41% have finished Secondary Education and 46% have a university degree.
- In Devoll, Prrenjas, Korce and Pogradec, males are the main financial contributors to the household (63%), only 8% of women are the main contributor and 5% of adult children are the main financial contributors.
- From the findings, 25% of the respondents have stated that there are also other main financial contributors (as grandmother/grandfather or remittances) to the household.

In the section below, are presented the data gathered from the questionnaires divided into the 4 dimensions of the SIGI.

I. Discrimination in the family

i. Households responsibility

According to Family Code, men and women within marriage have the same rights and obligations and they can both be recognized as the head of the household.¹⁷ Furthermore, according to the law, women and men have the same rights and obligations when talking about parental responsibility. Spouses have an obligation to have a common residence and the residence of the family shall be selected by the spouses by a mutual agreement, where both of them have the same right to decide. Referring to article 68, each of the spouses can designate the other spouse to represent him/her in the marital property regime, according to the provisions of the Civil Code.¹⁸

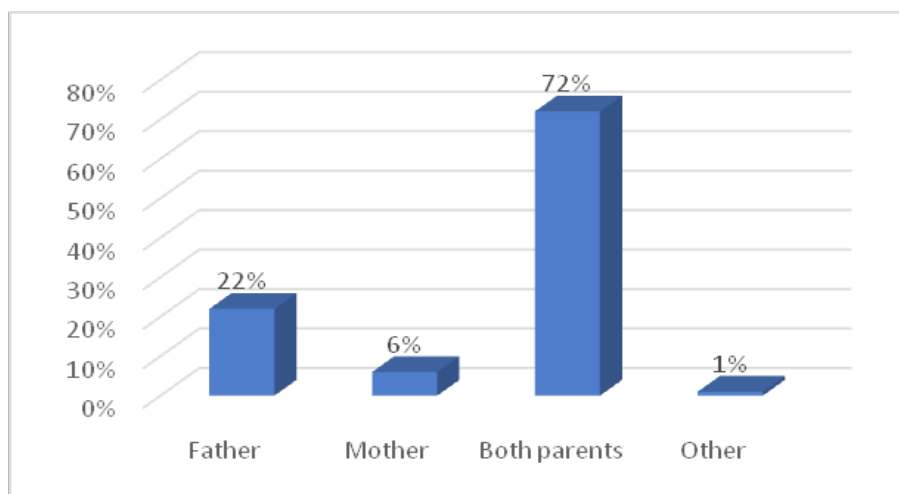
But, in rural areas, exist stronger gender stereotypes and expectations over women's and men's roles in the household. De-facto men are considered as heads of household who also, have control over the family's earnings (how to spend them) and choose where to live, meanwhile

17 [https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/65148/89474/F1958881334/ALB65148%20\(English\).pdf](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/65148/89474/F1958881334/ALB65148%20(English).pdf)

18 <http://www.cclaw.al/wp-content/uploads/law/The-Albanian-Civil-Code.pdf>

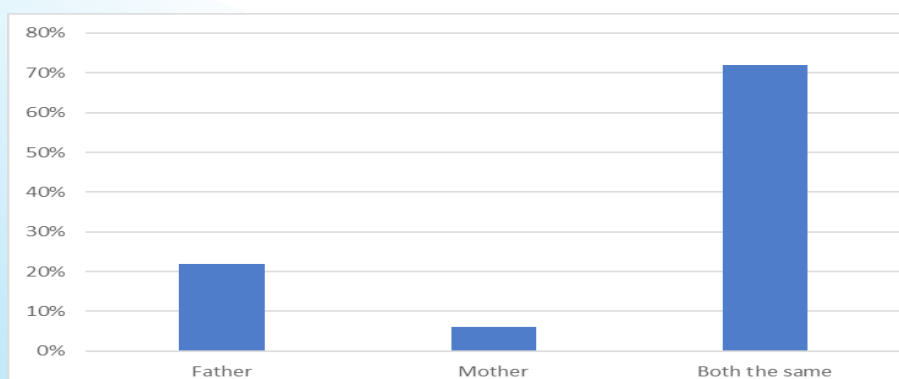
women are usually responsible for taking care of the household, children and other family members in need. In addition, if women want to travel or leave the house, they have to ask for permission from their husband.¹⁹

Graph 1. *Who takes decisions in the family regarding the purchases and expenses in the family?*



Graph 1 shows that in Devoll, Prrenjas, Korce and Pogradec, both parents take decisions about the expenses and purchases in the family (72%). In some families, fathers are the ones who decide more about expenses and purchases in a percentage that goes approximately to 22% and only 6% of mothers are the ones who make such decisions in the family.

Graph 2: *Who had the last word on high value expenses in your family?*

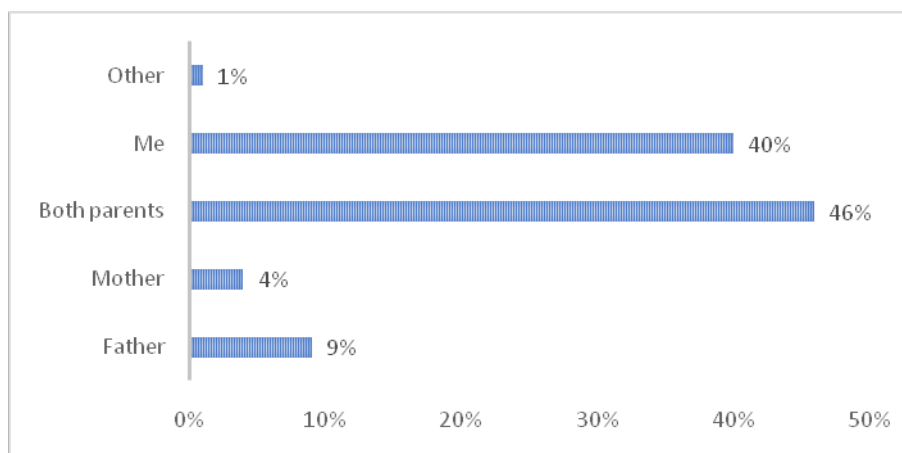


The graph above shows who has the last word on high value expenses in the family, including buying a house, buying a car, arranging a house, buying furniture, participating in a business etc. As the graph shows. In approximately 70 % of the families, both parents have the same right to

¹⁹ <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5413e.pdf>

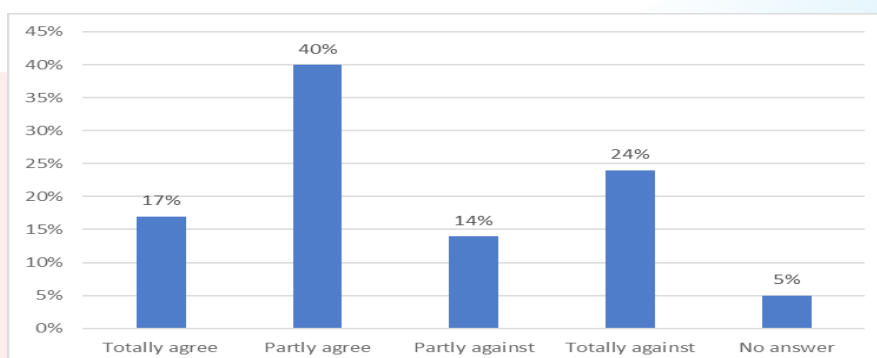
decide how to spend money on high value expenses. 22% of the people who answered, affirmed that in their family, only the father decides on high value expenses and only 5 % claimed that the mother decides on big purchases.

Graph 3: Who decides on children's education?



In most of the families in Devoll, Prrenjas, Korce and Pogradec, both parents decide on children's education (46%). Nevertheless, a big percentage, in about 40% of the families, are children themselves who decide on their own education. Only a small percentage of fathers (9%) and mothers (4%) decide about their children education on their own.

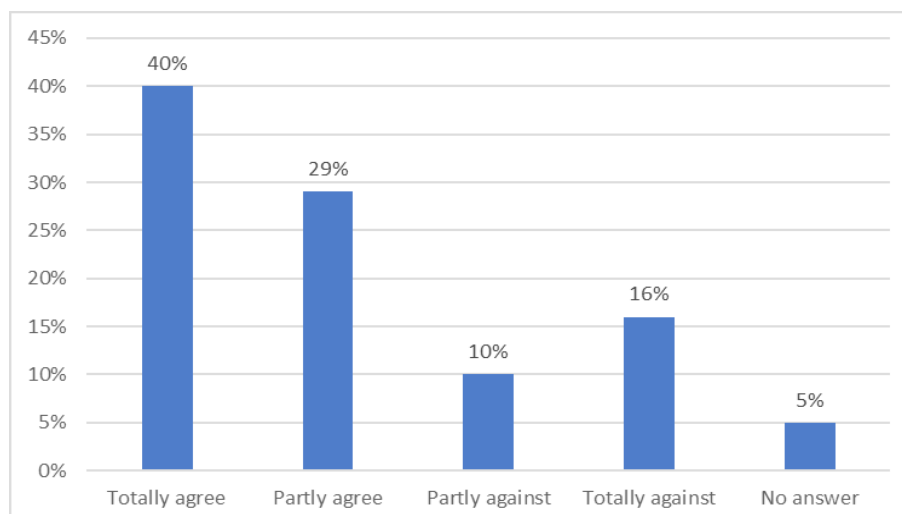
Graph 4: It is up to the woman to take care of the house and cook for the family



As the graph shows, 40% of the respondents partly agree that women have to take care of the house and cook for the family and 17% totally agree with this. Meanwhile 24% are totally against the fact that women should take care of the house and cook for the family and 14 % are partly against. The high percentage of people who think that women are responsible for taking care of the house and cook for the family,

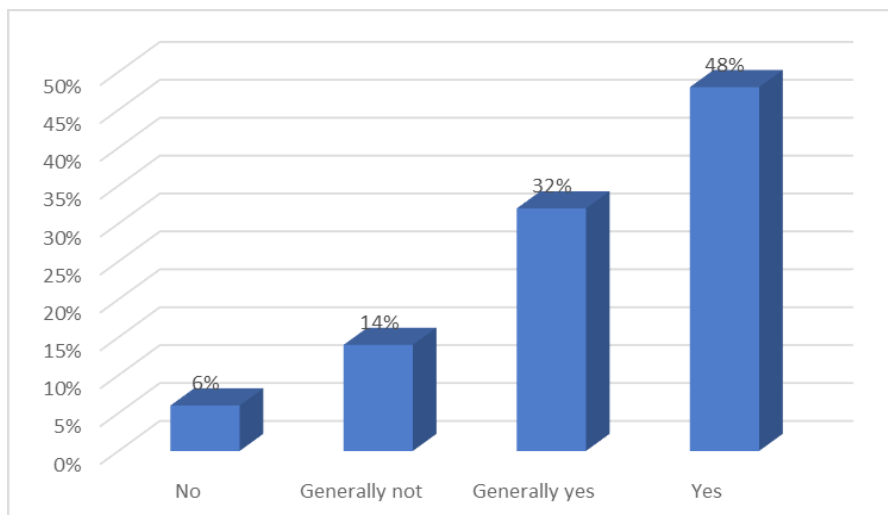
confirm once more the theoretical view that in Devoll, Prrenjas, Korca and Pogradec exists a general perception that women should take care of home chores.

Graph 5: *The division of household chores between husband and wife is fair*



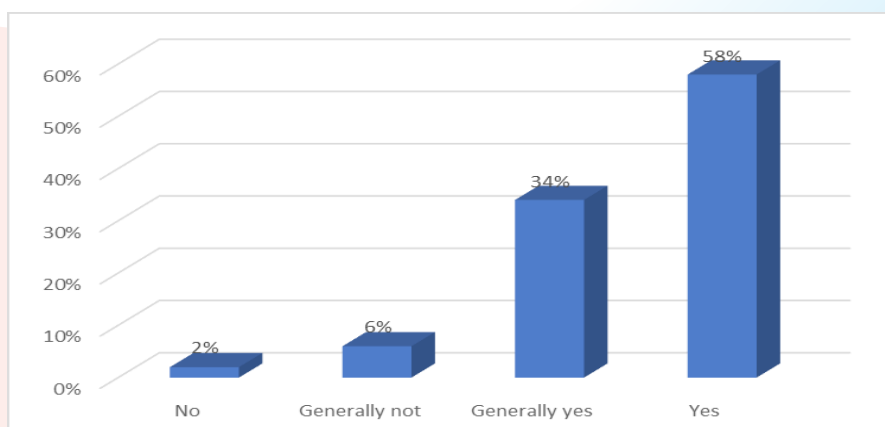
The above graph shows that approximately 70% of the respondents agree with the fact that the division of household chores between husband and wife is fair and 26% don't agree that exists a fair division of household chores between wife and husband. This answer shows that not only is the division of work in the household alongside gender roles, but that these roles are perceived to be the appropriate and fair. These perceptions are based on the strong presence of gendered roles that continue to point out the traditional norms and practices.

Graph 6: During childhood, do you feel that your father has spent enough time with you?



According to the answers, 80% of the respondents agreed that their father has spent enough time with them during their childhood and only 20% didn't feel that their father spent enough time with them during their childhood. Reasons behind these answers may be different, but the lack of time spent at home may be explained with the fact that fathers had to spend a lot of time at work, or due to the fact that many Albanians (usually men) were obliged to emigrate due to financial difficulties and had to live far away from their children.

Graph 7: During childhood, do you feel that your mother has spent enough time with you?



As the above graph shows, the majority of the respondents has spent enough time with their mother during childhood and a very small percentage feel that their mother didn't spend enough time with them during their childhood. As mentioned before in this report, generally

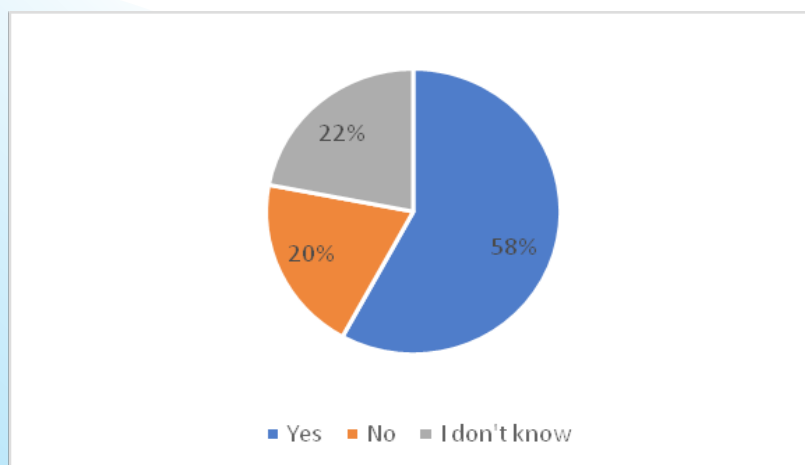
women spend more time taking care of their children and this comes more to the fact that in Devoll, Prrenjas, Korce and Pogradec many women spend a lot of time taking care of household responsibilities

ii. Inheritance

In Albania, according to the law both daughters and sons have the same rights to inherit land and other assets from their parents (Civil Code, art. 360).²⁰ In addition, the law provides women with the same rights as men to make a will and both parents can use the income from the child's wealth, which they administer, for his/her care, education and edification.

In rural areas, where exist more patriarchal marriages, women mostly move in with the husband after getting married and, in this regard, they usually are excluded from their family's inheritance. In northern Albania, many families still respect and enforce the Kanun Code, which is a set of oral traditional norms, written and published in the 20th century. It indicates that a widow may manage land if her sons are minors and in the case that she has no children, her in-laws will take the land and she will return to her family house.²¹

Graph 8: Women and men rights to own property



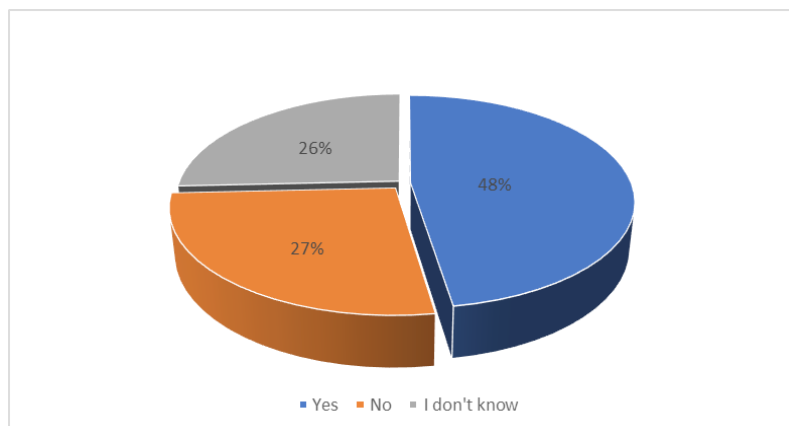
As the graph shows, most of the respondents (58%) answered that women and men have the same right to own a property, 20% of the

²⁰ <http://www.cclaw.al/wp-content/uploads/law/The-Albanian-Civil-Code.pdf>

²¹ <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5413e.pdf>

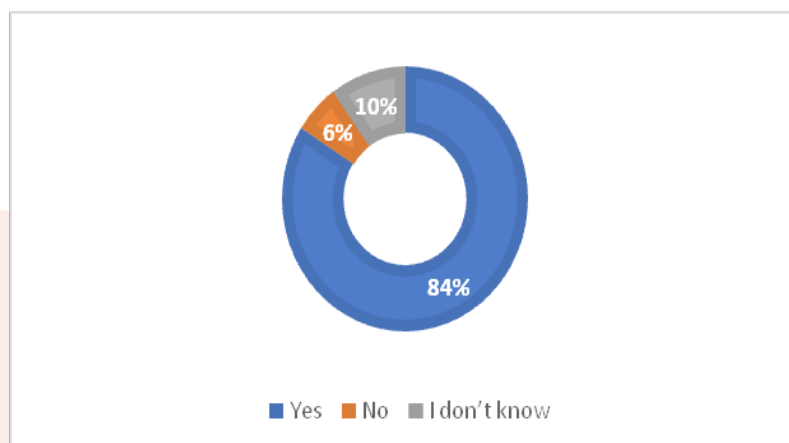
respondents don't think that women and men have the same rights, meanwhile 22% of them said that they don't know. This shows that the society mostly believes that women and men are equal when it comes to owning property.

Graph 9: Women and men rights to inherit property



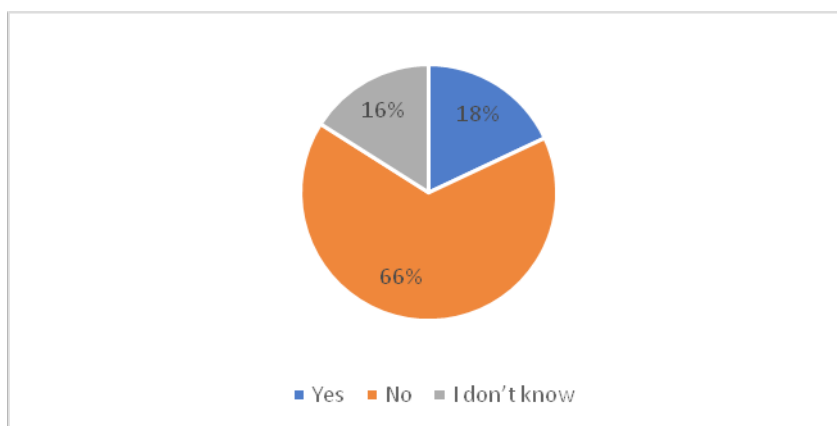
The data show that 48% of the respondents think that women and men in Albania have the rights to inherit a property, 27% of them think that women and men don't have the same rights, followed by 26% who don't have any information about this topic.

Graph 10: Women and men rights to own land and inherit the house



The majority of the respondents (84%) think that women and men should have the same rights to own land and to inherit the house, only 6% of them think that women shouldn't have the same rights as men to own a land or inheritance rights.

Graph 11: *Women's property or money should be taken care by men*



Based on the answers, 66% of the respondents think that men should not take care of women's property or money, 18% think that only men should take care of women's property and money and 16% of them don't know.

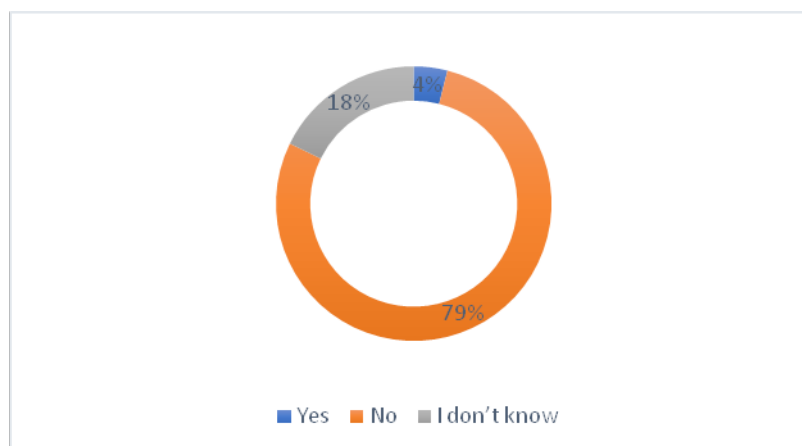
iii. Child marriage

According to the law, women and men can get married only when they get 18 years old, and only when there exists a special and sufficient reason, the court can allow a marriage below the legal age of 18 years old (Family Code, art. 7).²² According to UNFPA (2012), in Albania exist several factors that drive child marriages, including poverty, geographical isolation, social exclusion, lack a value placed on girls' education trafficking and emigration. In rural zones, where family life is mostly dominated by a strong patriarchal culture, child marriage affects specifically girls who get married before 18 years old, mostly based on their parents will. Meanwhile boys get married usually around their 20s-30s. In Roma communities, both girls and boys are affected by child marriage, due to the fact that they get married in an early age.²³

²² [https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/65148/89474/F1958881334/ALB65148%20\(English\).pdf](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/65148/89474/F1958881334/ALB65148%20(English).pdf)

²³ <http://eeeca.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/unfpa%20albania%20overview.pdf>

Graph 12: *Is age 18 a proper age for girls to get married?*



The majority of the respondents (79%) think that it's not okay for girls to get married before they turn 18 years old in a percentage, while 18% of them think there is not a problem if girls get married before they turn 18 years old.

iv. Divorce

According to the law, both women and men have the same rights to initiate a divorce, in agreement or by request of one of the spouses. In addition, both women and men have the right to require the dissolution of marriage and the court may assign fault, in the dissolution of the marriage, only when requested to by one or both spouses. When the court approves the marriage dissolution, the legal framework, provides both women and men with the same rights to be the legal guardians of their children after divorce. Additionally, they have the same rights and responsibilities with regards to their children after divorce (Family Code, art. 125, 132, 133 & 154).²⁴

²⁴ [https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/65148/89474/F1958881334/ALB65148%20\(English\).pdf](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/65148/89474/F1958881334/ALB65148%20(English).pdf)

II. Restricted physical integrity

i. Violence against women

Albania's legislation covers gender equality, domestic violence, sexual harassment, sexual and physical assault, rape within marriage, mandatory reporting and sex-disaggregated data collection²⁵.

- The 2006 Law on Measures against Violence in Family Relations aims to prevent and reduce domestic violence and to provide protection for survivors. In 2018, following a wave of cases of violence against women, the law was amended to include protection for victims who were not sharing a residence with the perpetrator, the issuance of preliminary protection orders and the inclusion of children in protection orders.²⁶

- Article 130a of the Criminal Code²⁵ (2012, amended in 2013) made domestic violence a crime. The Criminal Code also recognizes stalking (Article 121a), sexual harassment (Article 108a) and rape, including rape within marriage (Article 102), as criminal offences. However, the definition of rape is based on proof of the use of force or a threat of force and not on the lack of consent.²⁷

- The 2008 Law on Gender Equality in Society includes provisions against sexual harassment and gender-based harassment, specifically in labor relations, and the 2010 Law on Protection from Discrimination includes provisions against gender-based discrimination.

The question about the referral systems (CRM) on the focus group questionnaires was not filled in by all the interviewees, because some of them did not understand the question properly (those living in rural areas, especially in Prrenjas) and some institutions did not have specific CRM mechanisms. While in Pogradec, Korca and Devoll, some of the inputs taken from the focus groups are listed below:

- The CMR functioned following the official order from the Mayor (signed decision);

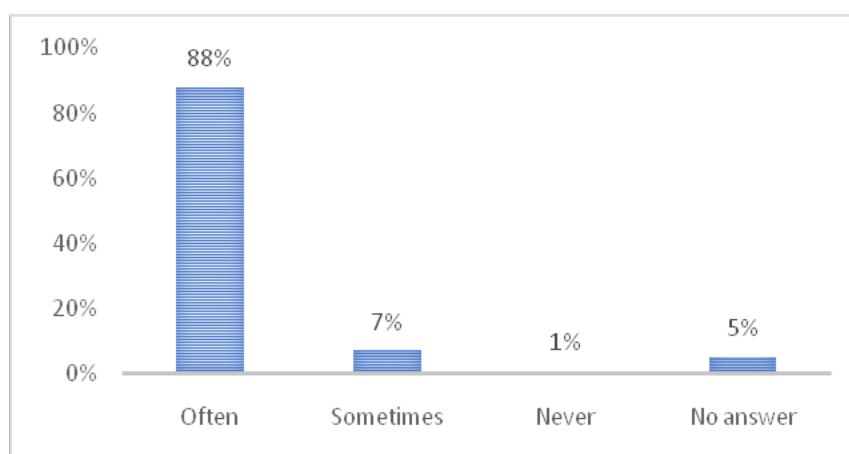
²⁵ https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/c/8/434849_1.pdf

²⁶ <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/4/6/30436.pdf>

²⁷ <http://www.eurallius.eu/index.php/en/library/albanian-legislation/send/10-criminal-law/56-criminal-code-en>

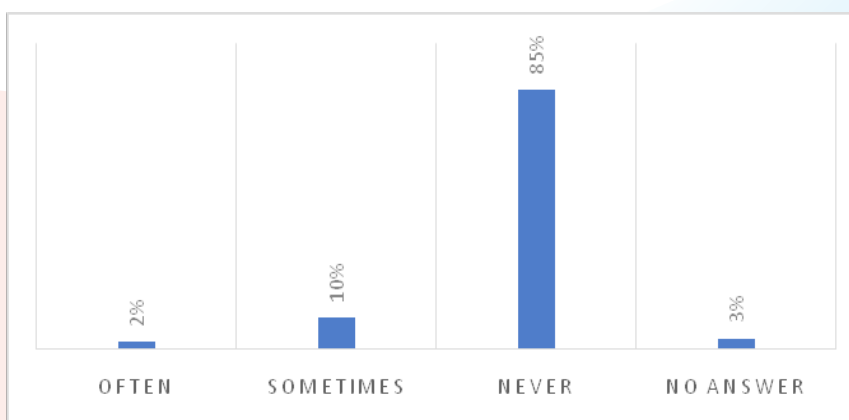
- The counselling link was created;
- Rule of law adoption by the local institutions, meaning that law enforcement is fostered by local authorities/institutions;
- Civil awareness about prevention of gender violence was raised.

Graph 13: *Father has treated mother with respect*



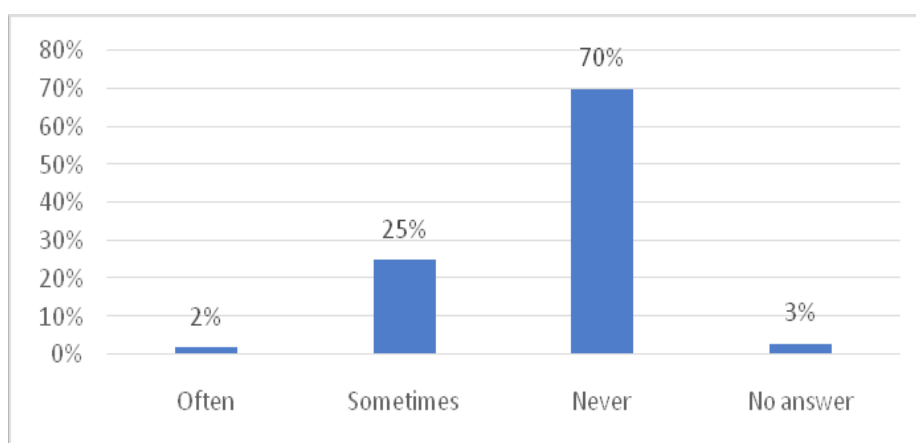
The graph shows that the majority of the respondents believe that in most cases the father treats the mother with respect (88%), meanwhile a 7% believe that only sometimes the father has treated mother with respect. 1% of the respondents have never seen their father treating mother with respect and 5% of them preferred not to answer the question.

Graph 14: *Have you seen or heard the father hit the mother?*



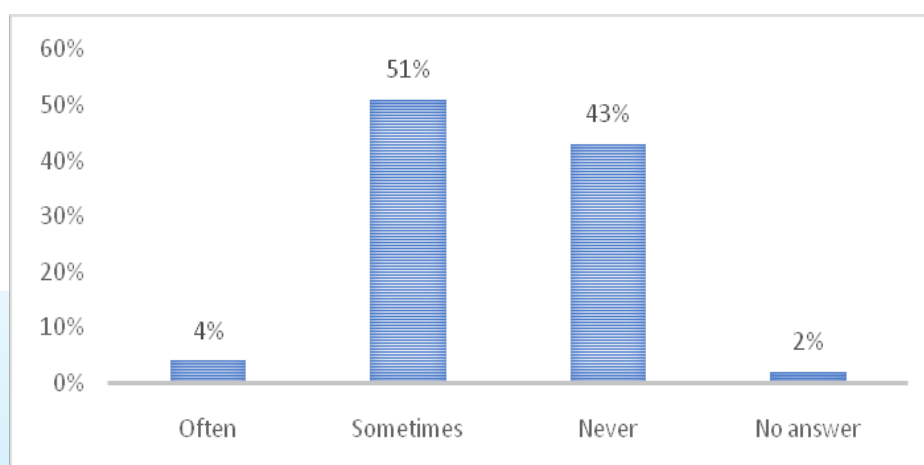
As the above graph shows, 85% of the respondents have never seen the father hitting the mother, while 10% of them have been part of such situation sometimes, followed by a 2% of the respondents who have seen this scene often in their life.

Graph 15: Are you offended by mom and dad in front of other people?



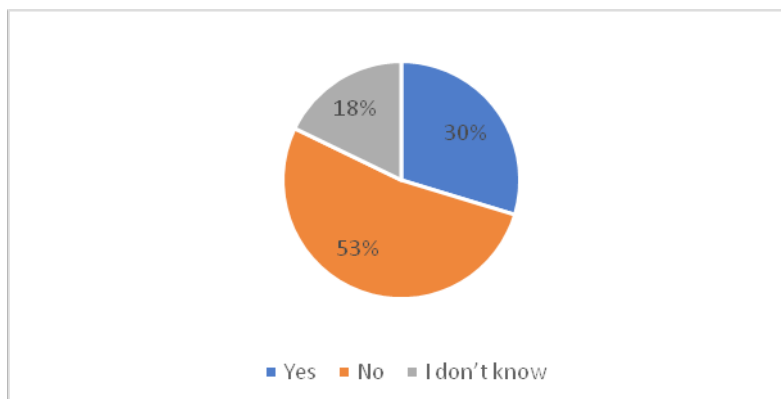
70% of the respondents answered that they have never been offended by their parents in front of other people, 25% of them sometime have been offended by mom or dad in front of other people, while 2% have been offended often and 3% preferred not to answer.

Graph 16: Did you get hit by your parents?



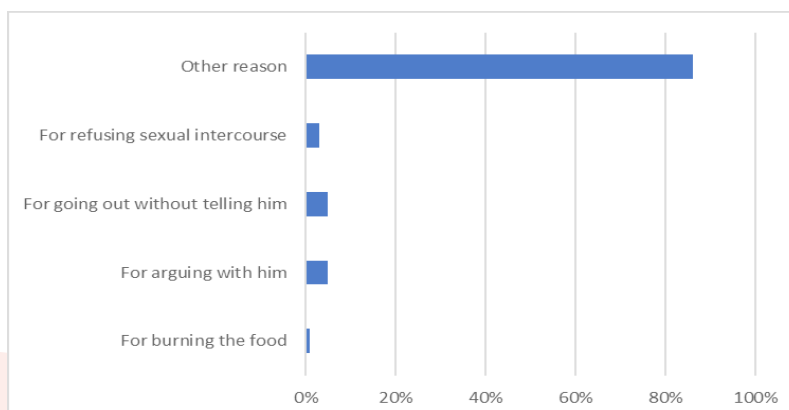
The 51% of the respondents said that sometimes they were hit from their parents, 43 % of them answered that they had never been hit, while 4 % responded that they were hit often.

Graph 17: *Do you think that the laws in Albania protect women from violence?*



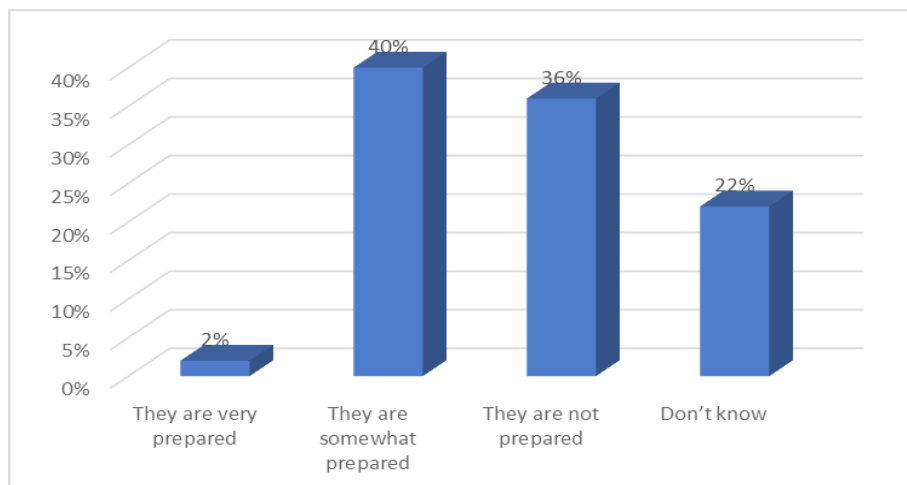
As the graph shows, 53 % of the respondents think that laws in Albania don't protect women from violence, 30% of them think that women are protected from laws and 18% preferred not to answer at all. These answers show that the belief in laws, policies and institution in these municipalities is relatively low and more should be done in this regard.

Graph 18: *Do you think the husband is justified to hit or beat up his wife?*



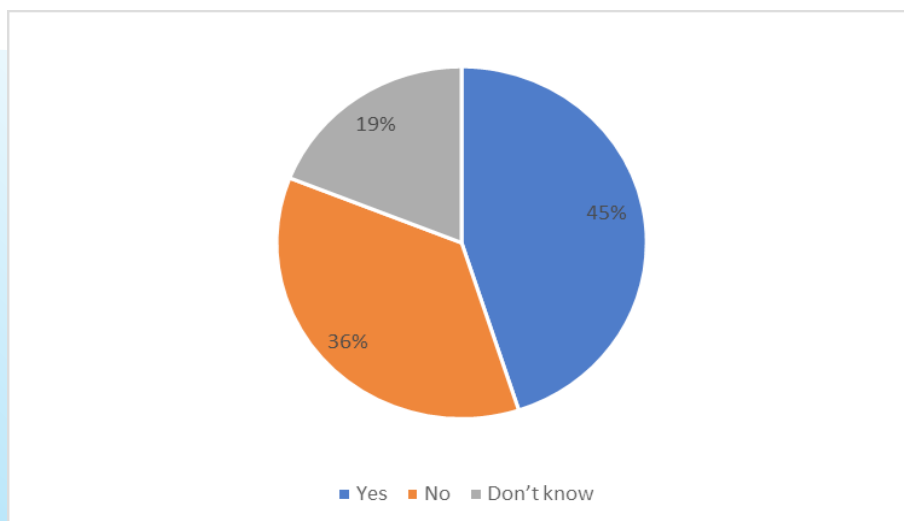
The graph shows that most of the respondents don't justify the husband to hit or beat up his wife. But even though it is a small percentage for the answers: for refusing sexual intercourse, for going out without telling him, for arguing with him, it shows that any of these reasons can justify the violence.

Graph 19: *To what extent do you think Albanian institutions are prepared to deal with the phenomenon of violence against women?*



As the graph shows, many of respondents (36%) think that Albanian institutions are not prepared to deal with the phenomenon of violence against women and 40% think that they are somewhat prepared, but not fully prepared to help women fight violence against them. While 22% of the respondents don't have enough information about the Albanian institutions.

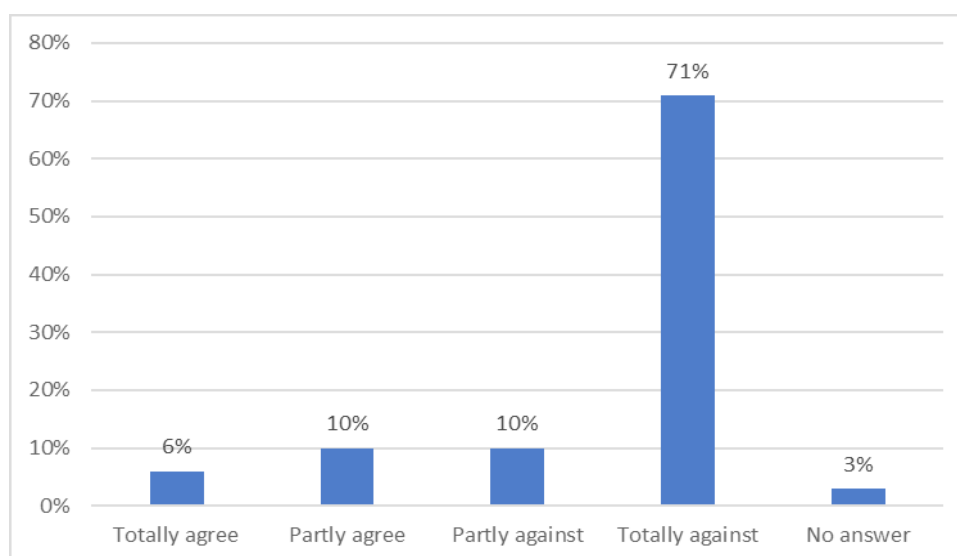
Graph 20: *Do you think that men need permission from the woman to have sex.*



A major part of respondents (45%) in Devoll, Prrrenjas, Korca and Pogradec think that men need permission from women to have sex, meanwhile 36% of them think that there is no need for permission. These percentages show the relationship between women and men in these municipalities and more specifically about the sexual life in these

families. Some real differences between female and male sexuality relate to the opposition that exists between women's resistance to sexual activity and men's controlling pursuit of it. Furthermore, gender inequality has shaped sexuality through two complex and contradictory processes where men have expressed their dominance through their sexuality and on the other side women have used their sexuality to fight their subordination.

Graph 21: *A woman must tolerate violence in order to keep the family together*



The graph shows that 71% of the respondents think that women must not tolerate violence in order to keep the family together, meanwhile 16% of them agree that family is a good to reason to tolerate violence. The fact that violence against women is still an important issue in Albania and patriarchal norms and practices still exist, explains the percentage of people who think that violence should be tolerated.

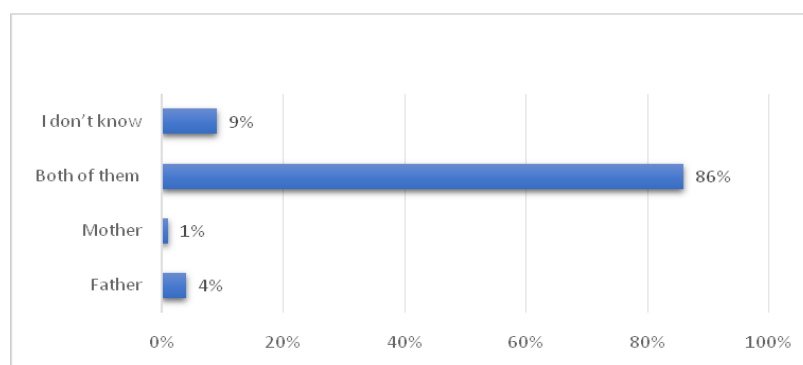
ii. Reproductive autonomy

The Constitution of the Republic of Albania ensures the right of the mother and child to healthcare services.²⁸ The reproductive rights of individuals and couples are recognized and protected by the law on "Reproductive Health" that also ensures that these rights are protected in accordance with the national laws and policies, as well as other internationally recognized principles. Also, the law foresees the right that all pregnant women should benefit from free periodic medical follow-up

28 <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/3/2/41888.pdf>

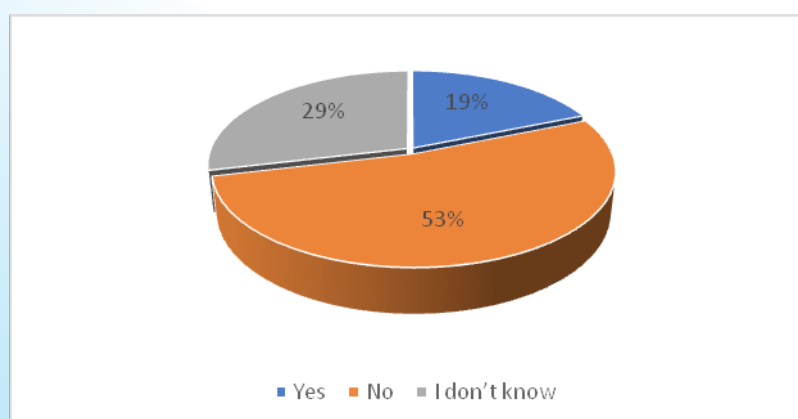
during pregnancy, birth and post-partum, in particular the mandatory pre and postpartum examinations, as defined by decision of the Minister of Health.²⁹ Furthermore, a National Contraceptive Security Strategy (ANCSS) was developed in 2003, which covered the period 2003-2010, with the aim to assure an adequate supply and choice of quality contraceptives for every Albanian who needed them, in accordance with the International Conference on Population and Development goal of universal access.³⁰

Graph 22: *Who decides on the number of children in the family?*



The graph shows that in 86% of the families, are both parents who decide on the number of children. Only in a few families (4%) are fathers who decide on the number of children, and only 1% of mothers decide on the number of children.

Graph 23: *Is it a woman's responsibility to avoid a pregnancy?*



53% of the respondents stated that it is not a woman's responsibility to

²⁹ https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/ALB/INT_CEDAW_NGO_ALB_23255_E.pdf

³⁰ <http://www.un.org.al/sites/default/files/Contraceptive%20Security%20Strategy%202017-2021%20%281%29.pdf>

avoid a pregnancy, 19% of them think that it is woman's responsibility, meanwhile 29% don't know to whom belongs the responsibility.

iii. Missing women

In 2006 the Albanian Parliament adopted a resolution “condemning the crimes of communism in Albania” and this was the first time that an Albanian legislative body in the post-communist era appealed for the resolution of the fate of missing persons.³¹ Furthermore, gender-based discrimination is manifested in forms of trafficking (prostitution, kidnaping etc.) and the public opinion is aware of the fact that women and girls from poor families are in a greater risk of trafficking, due to poor educational achievement, little access to information and little support from the family.³²

iv. Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

In Albania doesn't exist a legal framework that addresses female genital mutilation and there are also no policies or measures that target this category.

III. Restricted civil liberties

v. Political voice

According to the law, for each electoral zone, at least 30% of the multi-name list and one of the first three names on the multi-name list shall belong to each gender. Gender quotas are enforced by the Central Election Commission, who is also in charge to set sanctions when there is a Failure by the electoral subject to comply with the obligations. (art. 67, 175)³³.

Additionally, the Law on Gender Equality encourages the establishment of temporary special measures to increase the participation of the less

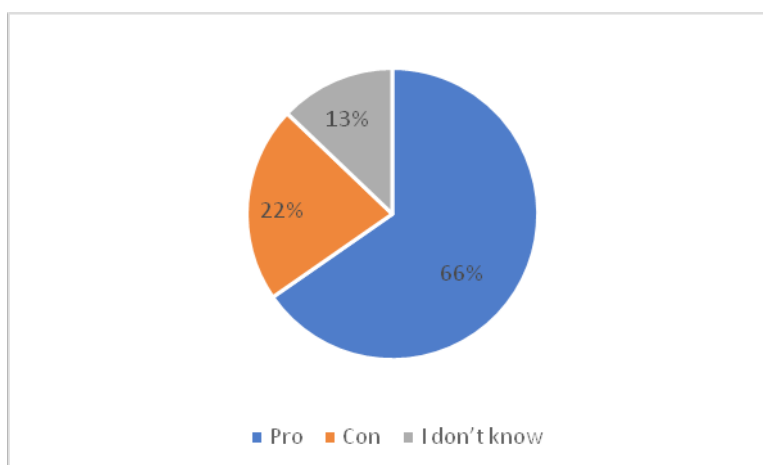
31 <https://www.icmp.int/where-we-work/europe/albania/>

32 <https://www.unicef.org/s?job=W1SiZiZlZlMTUvMDEvMjcwMTIvMzlvNTIvNjAwL0FzYmFuaWFFv29tZW50Q2hpbGRvZW5fUmVwb3J0LnBkZiJdXQ&sha=1ee4b676448da56d>

33 <http://aceproject.org/ero-en/regions/europe/AL/albania-electoral-code-2015>

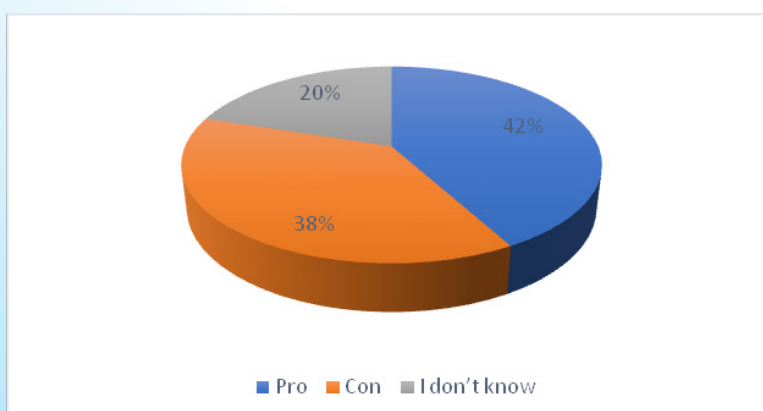
represented gender in decision-making and public life. Furthermore, the Law on Gender Equality provides that should be “equal gender representation” in cases when neither of the genders is represented by less than 30% in any institution, hierarchical instance, nominated body, political parties.³⁴

Graph 24. *Are you for or against a system that guarantees a certain number of women in government?*



The graph shows that 66% of the respondents are in favor of a system that guarantees a certain number of women in government, 22% of them are against a system like this and 13% don't have an opinion about this topic.

Graph 25. *Should the system guarantee a fixed number of positions for women in parliament and municipal councils?*

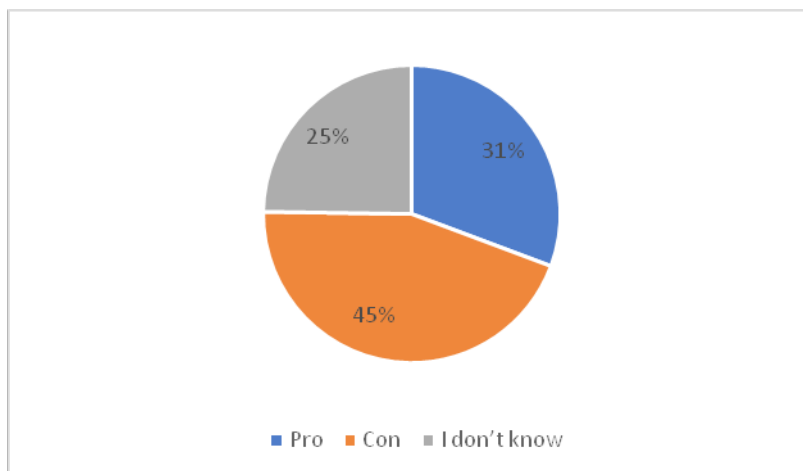


42% of the respondents are for a system that guarantees a fixed number

³⁴ https://www.legislationline.org/download/id/3408/file/Albania_Law_Gender%20Equality%20in%20Society%2024.07.2008%20ENG.pdf#:~:text=1.,by%20the%20Republic%20of%20Albania.

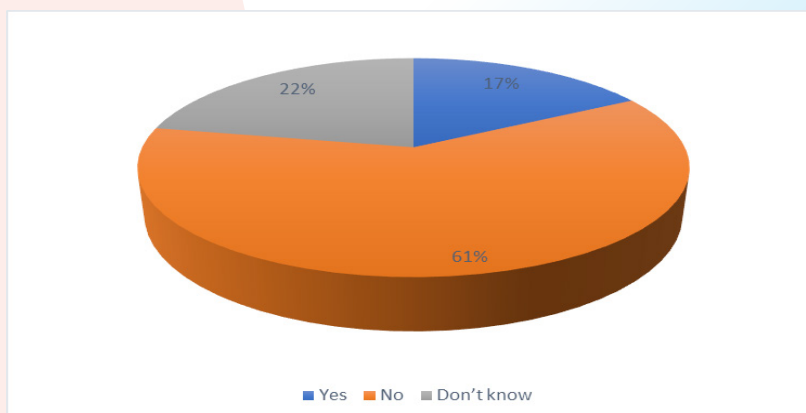
of positions for women in parliament and municipal councils, 38% think that there shouldn't be fixed numbers for women in parliament and municipal councils and 20% said that they don't know.

Graph 26: *Participation of women in government and parliament*



The graph shows that 45% of the respondents think that women who don't deserve to be part of the government, definitely shouldn't be part of it, while 31% of them think that women should be part of the parliament and government, whether they deserve it or not. There seems to be double standards about the male and female participation in politics. According to this graph, most of the people asked believe that a woman should be in politics only if she demonstrates that she deserves it through the quality of her contribution, whereas when it comes to men, this is not usually an issue.

Graph 27: *Do you think that Albanian women have achieved political equality with men?*



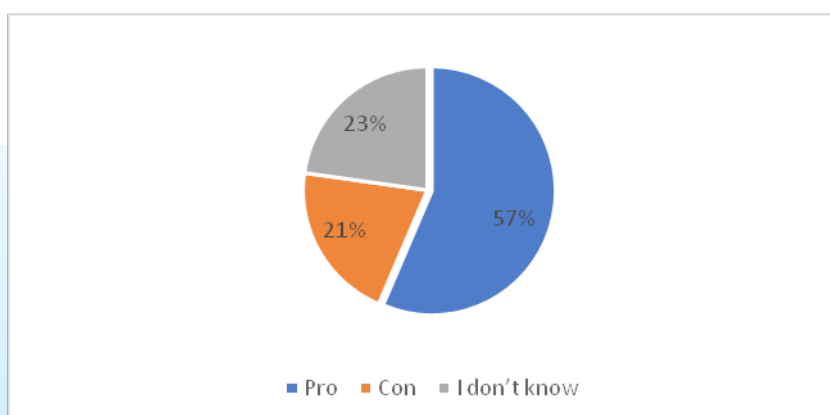
The graph shows that 61% of the respondents in Devoll, Prrenjas, Korce and Pogradec think that women and men in Albania haven't achieved

political equality, 17 % think that Albanian women and men are equal in politics and 22% don't have any opinion about this question. The answers reinforce the fact that in Albania still exists a general perception that for women is not easy to be part of the politics and men are more likely to be in politica and represent Albanian citizens.

i. Citizenship Right

According to the law on Albanian Citizenship, both married/unmarried women and men have the same rights to acquire, change and retain their nationality (art. 9, 10 & 15). In this regard if one of the spouses wants to confer their nationality to other one, the law provides equal rights for both of them to do that. The law also provides same rights to married/unmarried women and married/unmarried men to confer nationality to their children. If one of the parents acquires Albanian citizenship, his children under 18 years of age become Albanian citizens if that is requested by both parents, and this is equal for both parents.³⁵

Graph 28: Does culture and environment in Albania prevents women from advancing in politics, business and society?



57% of the respondents think that the culture and environment in Albania prevent women from advancing in politics, business and society, 21% of them think that the culture and environment doesn't prevent women and 23% don't have an answer about this topic.

35 <http://www.legislationline.org/documents/action/popup/id/6645>.

ii. Freedom of movement

There are no legal restrictions on women's access to public space in Albania, either within the country or abroad.³⁶ The Constitution guarantees every Albanian citizen (regardless of gender) the right to travel freely within the country, apply for a passport, and to choose where to live. Even though in rural areas, women's freedom of movement is legally granted, in Albania it is de facto restricted due to predefined gender roles. A married woman is usually expected to move to her husband's family location and she needs a permission from her husband or family to travel within Albania or abroad.³⁷

iii. Access to justice

According to the law both women and men, married or not, have the same capacity to be sued and to sue, to accuse and are all the same before the law. The CEDAW Committee (2016) confirms that despite positive legal amendments to enhance women's access to justice, women suffer from lack of information and knowledge about their rights. Furthermore, an important reason that women suffer from lack of information is patriarchal attitudes by the judicial staff, which in most of the cases may be detrimental to women, especially in cases of domestic violence.³⁸

36 <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/55dd6ba24.pdf>

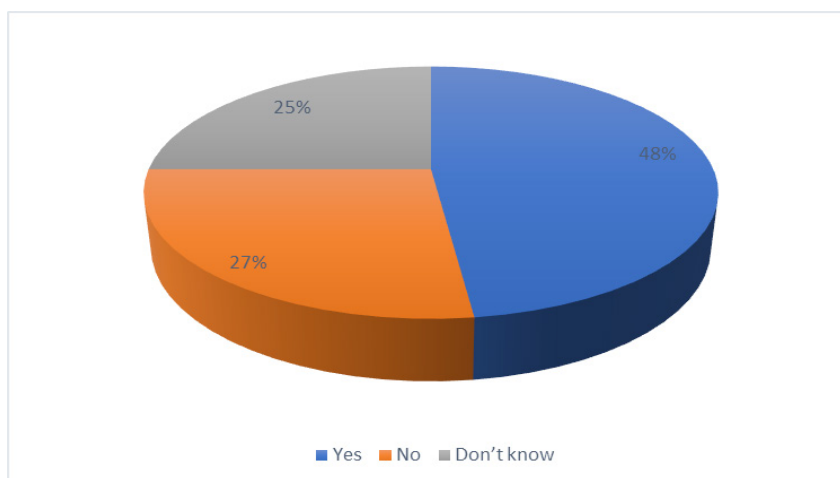
37 <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5413e.pdf>

38 http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/ALB/INT_CEDAW_NGO_ALB_46_7926_E.pdf

IV. Restricted access to productive and financial resources

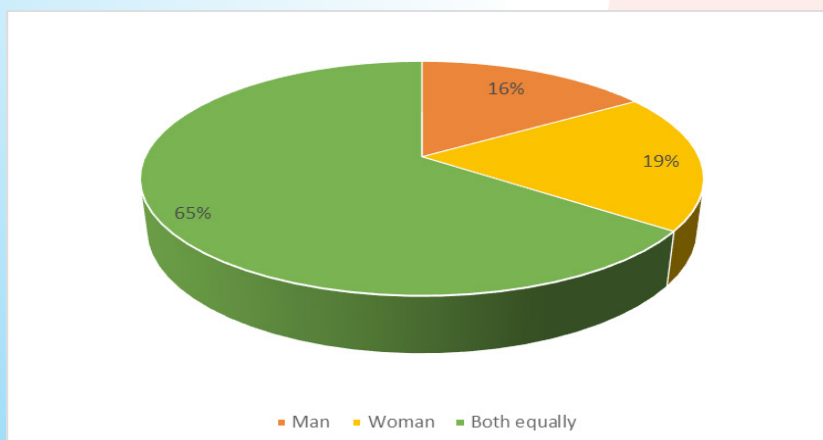
i. Secure access to land

Graph 29: Do you think women should have the same rights as men to own land and inherit the house



The graph shows that 48% of the respondents think that women should have the same right as men to own land and to inherit the house, 27 % of the respondents think that women shouldn't own land or inherit the house as men do and 25% of them have no answer about this question. Eventhough the law gives the same right to men and women to own land and to inherit land, still many people have the opinion that this right should belong only to men and this may come due to unwritten rules and norms from the past. Property rights are a very important factor for women's economic independence. At the same time, perceptions about land tenure for women also influence the possibilities for women to make decisions about the use of land and resources.

Graph 30: In your household, who makes decisions about natural resources (land, water, waste management)?



Most of the respondents (65%) answered that in their household both men and women make decisions about natural resources, meanwhile in 19% of the families, women are the ones who decide about natural resources and 16% of the respondents said that in their household, man decide about natural resources. There is a wide gap between decision-making at the household and community levels. As seen in the survey, women are very much involved in household decisions, yet the results from the focus groups show that they are not as present at the community level. Unfortunately, there is still very little recognition of the women's knowledge and role in environmental management. At the same time, degradation of natural resources also influences the capability of women to carry out perceived women's household and caretaking roles. This can lead to strained household relations, possibly to higher levels of domestic violence.

ii. Secure access to non-land assets

Each spouse has the right to administer and freely possess their personal wealth, during marriage. Spouses, through a marriage contract, can change the legal property regime by agreement and both of them have same rights on this. Furthermore, when spouses have specified in their marriage contract a separate property regime, both women and men reserve the right to freely administer, use and dispose of his/her property.³⁹ Regarding land, property and other non-land assets, married women are provided with the same rights as married men to own, use, make decisions and use as collateral.

iii. Secure access to formal financial services

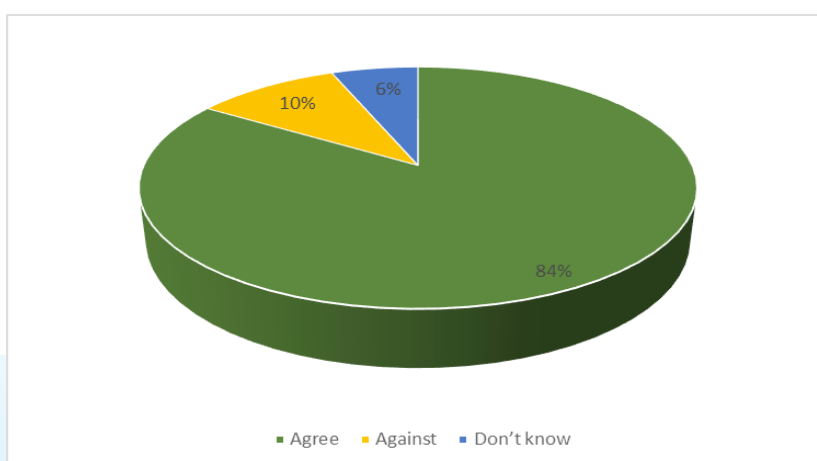
According to the law on Protection from Discrimination, married women have the same rights as married men to open a bank account at a financial institution, to obtain credit and to ask for a loan for different needs.

39 [https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/65148/89474/F1958881334/ALB65148%20\(English\).pdf](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/65148/89474/F1958881334/ALB65148%20(English).pdf)

iv. Workplace rights

According to the law on Albanian Gender Equality, there shouldn't be gender discrimination involved when the state takes special measures, including legal provisions. In this regard, shall be provided a special protection to women during their pregnancy by creating conditions for their protection and comfort at work; social insurance and social aid. Also art. 9 of the mentioned law aims at limiting certain sectors of hard and dangerous work for pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers.⁴⁰ Furthermore, the job should promote equal distribution of males and females in different job positions and within various categories of employees, through training and development of professional skills and other temporary measures

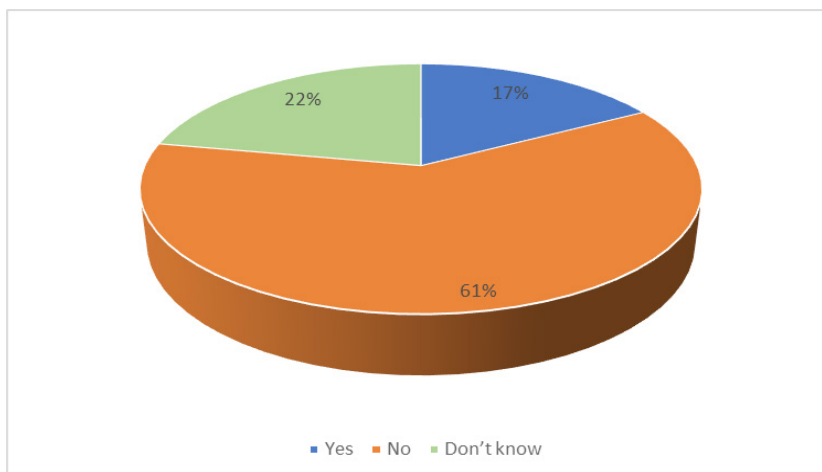
Graph 31: Are you for or against a system that guarantees equal pay for men and women for the same job



The graph shows that 84% of the respondents are for a system that guarantees equal pay for men and women, 10% of them think that men should be paid more than women and 6% don't have an opinion about that.

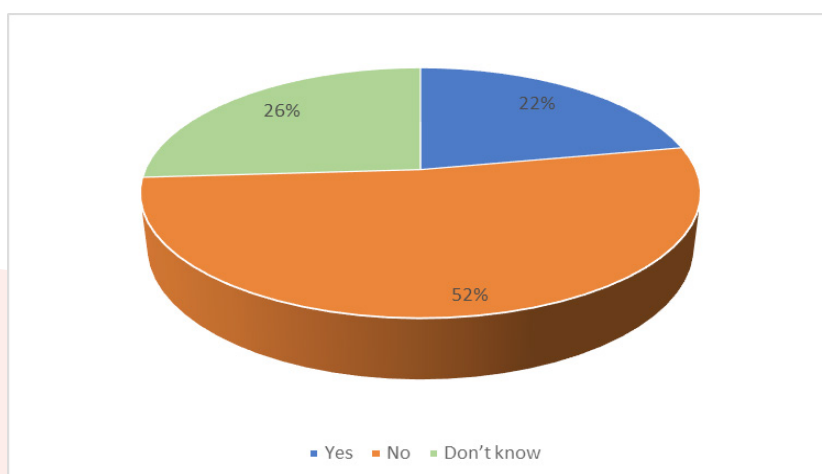
⁴⁰ https://www.legislationline.org/download/id/3408/file/Albania_Law_Gender%20Equality%20in%20Society%2024.07.2008%20ENG.pdf#:~:text=1.,by%20the%20Republic%20of%20Albania.

Graph 32: *Do you think that Albanian women have achieved economic equality with men*



Most of the respondents (61%) think that women in Albania haven't achieved economic equality with men, 17% think that, in the economic perspective, women and men are equal. While the 22% of them have not answered the question. The answer is most likely related to the fact that even though nowadays women have jobs, there still exists a general perception that men have more rights regarding economic aspects.

Graph 33: *Do you think men are better at managing*



The graph shows that 52% of the respondents think that men are not better at managing when compared to women, 26% of them think that men are better at managing and 26% don't have an answer.

1.2. Norms, Values and Practices in Devoll, Prrenjas, Korce and Pogradec

The struggle to realize women's rights and gender equality is real in the present situation in Albania and specifically in Devoll, Prrenjas, Korce and Pogradec. Even though it might sound like surreal in the time that we are living, the reality provides a different approach.

Practices that are seriously harmful to women's health; legal and political systems that justify neglect of women's health needs; violence against women and other violations of their human rights, still exist in areas like Devoll, Prrenjas, Korce and Pogradec. Girls, in some contexts, are fed less, educated less, and are more physically restricted. Women are typically employed and segregated in lower-paid, less-secure, and informal occupations. Gender hierarchy governs how people live and what they believe and claim to know about what it means to be a girl or a boy, a woman or a man. In these regions, somehow girls and women are considered as less capable to do the same things as men do and be employed in jobs that are considered only for "men". Due to these perceptions, women stay mostly at home, taking care of the house, children and performing other related endeavours that are not paid. There still exist some norms that create barriers to the education of girls, include negative perceptions about women that devalue their capabilities, strong beliefs about the division of labor that places inequitable burdens on females, gender-biased beliefs about the value of educating girls, and curricula that are seen as inappropriate for girls.⁴¹ These norms are very cohesive in these regions and even though there has been a lot of progress on women empowerment, in rural areas there is still a lot to do. Such norms are exacerbated by structural barriers such as school fees or school-going costs, distance from schools, actual lack of safety for girls going to school, absence of female teachers, lack of gender sensitivity in schools etc. These barriers affect especially students that attend education above the primary level. School fees or school-going costs, in many poor families may be a reason not to send their children to school, especially girls. This many times may lead in girl's marriage at an early age. In other cases, less educated parents, may deprive their

41 https://www.who.int/social_determinants/resources/csdh_media/wgekn_final_report_07.pdf

daughters from school if the zone in which they live suffers from lack of safety.

2. Institutions and Policies of Relevance to Gender Equality in Devoll, Prrenjas, Korce and Pogradec

The Government of Albania has made national and international commitments to advance gender equality and empowerment of women in many different areas of life. The participation in several international conventions and platforms, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform for Action, demonstrate Albania's commitment to the realisation of women's rights and the achievement of gender equality.⁴²

The **Law on Gender Equality in Society**, No. 9970, dated 24.07.2008 specifically aims to guarantee protection from gender discrimination.⁴³ It also foresees measures for discriminatory practices, anti-discriminatory provisions and role of the responsible institutions to protect against anti-discrimination at work, education and decision-making process and the media. Furthermore, the **Law on Protection from Discrimination**, No. 10221, dated 4.2.2010 further extends from gender discrimination to include many grounds of discrimination. The purpose of this law is to assure the right of every person to equality before the law and equal protection by law, equality of opportunities and possibilities to exercise rights, enjoy freedoms and participate in public life, and effective protection from discrimination and from every form of conduct that encourages discrimination.⁴⁴

The Commissioner for Protection Against Discrimination is an independent body established in 2010 that protects individuals from discrimination, including gender-based discrimination. The activity of the Commissioner is conducted through the review of the complaints of the subjects that claim to be victims of discriminatory behavior or behavior that incites it,

42 <https://www.unjobnet.org/jobs/detail/10656135>

43 <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/6/e/36682.pdf>

44 http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/ed_protect/protrav/ilo_aids/documents/legaldocument/wcms_178702.pdf

not only from the public administration, but from private subjects as well.⁴⁵ In addition, the Commissioner conducts administrative investigations after receiving reliable information about violations to the law, conducts surveys and monitors the level to which the law is implemented.⁴⁶ The Commissioner for the Protection from Discrimination, in cooperation with UN Women in Albania, has carried out a study on “Gender Equality and Discrimination in appointed Local Government Bodies”, in 2019, indicating manifestation of gender-based discrimination in Albania, in high governing level of local government bodies.⁴⁷ This report came to the conclusion that despite the fact that Albania has made a lot of progress, so far statistics show that women remain to be under-represented. Furthermore, the lack of involvement and representation of women in public services at local level, but also various local agencies have a number of serious administrative implications and the reason why there should be a sufficient number of women in public administration, is not to have state services unilaterally provided by only one gender. Another conclusion of this report confirms that the public bureaucracy at national and local level must have women’s talent as a valuable human resource due to the increased competitiveness of governance in this modern world.

Based on the findings of this study, the Law no. 10221/2010 “On Protection from Discrimination”, needs to be amended by extending the competence of the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination in this regard. Furthermore, the Law “On Gender Equality in Society” needs to be reviewed in some other aspects and one of these being the fact that setting the 30% quota for municipal councils in article 15, is already lower than the provision that the Electoral Code has increased to 50%.⁴⁸

Policy making in gender equality is mainly driven by the National Strategy and Action Plan on Gender Equality (NSAPGE) 2016-2020. The Strategy and its Action Plan represents a commitment for 2016-2020, with

45 [UNWOMEN and UNDP. \(2016\). “Gender Brief Albania.” \[https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field_percent20office_percent20eca/attachments/publications/country/albania/unw_percent20gender_percent20brief_percent20albania_percent202016_en_web.pdf?la=en&vs=5235\]\(https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field_percent20office_percent20eca/attachments/publications/country/albania/unw_percent20gender_percent20brief_percent20albania_percent202016_en_web.pdf?la=en&vs=5235\)](https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field_percent20office_percent20eca/attachments/publications/country/albania/unw_percent20gender_percent20brief_percent20albania_percent202016_en_web.pdf?la=en&vs=5235)

46 <https://kmd.al/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/law-brochure-english.pdf>

47 https://equineteurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Summary-of-CPD-Annual-Report-2019_August-2020.pdf

concrete interventions towards economic empowerment of women and men; ensuring actual participation and engagement in political and public decision-making processes; reducing gender-based violence and domestic violence; and strengthening the coordination and monitoring role of the national mechanism of gender equality. This National Strategy and its Action Plan were prepared on behalf of the Government of Albania by the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth (now the Ministry of Health and Social Protection) and line ministries, in consultation with representatives of civil society organizations, and national and international organizations. The preparation of the strategy, including its action plan 2016-2020 and costing was supported by international partners such as UN Women and UNDP, in the frame of the Programme of Cooperation between the Government of Albania and United Nations 2012-2016. Government of Sweden has given financial support to the preparation process of the strategy.⁴⁹ It has four strategic aims:

- Economic empowerment of women and men,
- Guaranteeing factual and equal participation of women in the politics and public decision-making,
- Reduction of gender-based violence and domestic violence,
- Empowerment of the coordination and monitoring role of the National Gender Equality Mechanism, as well as awareness-raising of the society on gender equality advancing.

The National Strategy for Development and Integration (NSDI) 2016-2020 which is the strategic framework for all sector and cross-cutting strategies, also includes the gender equality aspect for greater inclusion through economic and social opportunities. Its objectives aim to strengthen and protect the system of property rights and legal and institutional mechanisms to promote gender equality, increase representation and participation in political and public decision-making, raise awareness on gender-based violence and provide legal and administrative protection and support services for victims and perpetrators.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ <https://awenetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/SKGJB-EN-web.pdf>

⁵⁰ http://www.instat.gov.al/media/6661/gender_equality_index_for_the_republic_of_albania_2020.pdf

But, despite all the measures that the government has taken so far with the goal to reduce the gap in gender equality, there is still limited technical and financial capacities to design and support plans of actions, to conduct vulnerability mapping that identifies social needs and services, to collect gender disaggregated data, identify existing gender inequalities, and to apply gender lenses through the entire process.

3. Women during and after Covid-19

The COVID-19 crisis will most likely lead to increased inequalities especially in vulnerable settings such as peri-urban and urban settlements, rural areas, indigenous communities, and fragile locations, such as informal settlements and slums, which are already underserved by social services, and where information and strategies such as testing, hand-washing, self-isolation and quarantine will be particularly difficult due to lack of space, water, resources and services.

Specific attention by decision-makers should be paid to women, as they are at-risk of experiencing a very high rate of socioeconomic marginalization. They also face many burdens, as high risks of economic insecurity and face increased risks of violence, exploitation, abuse or harassment during times of crisis and quarantine, due to deeply entrenched inequalities, social norms, and unequal power relations.

In addition, evidence from past crises and natural disasters suggests that confinement measures often lead to increased violence against women. Furthermore, pre-existing toxic social norms, combined with increased economic and social stress caused by isolation measures and financial difficulties in the household, have driven an increase in gender-based violence as many women are in lockdown with their abusers (UNDP, 2020). The rapid gender assessment conducted by UN Women confirmed that COVID-19 risks deepening gender inequalities, disproportionately affecting women livelihoods. The assessment reveals, for example, that the pandemic impacted psychological and mental health of women at higher rates compared to men (69% vs. 57%), with a widening gap among active working women (35-44 years) who experience higher psychological distress compared to men in the same age group (72% vs 58%). The gender gap of mental health impact goes up to 21 points in

rural areas.⁵¹

Women are among those most heavily affected. Evidences shows that many women in Albania are employed in informal, low-wage activities that are being disrupted at a greater extent due to COVID-19 quarantined measures. As such, many women are experiencing grave economic consequences.

UN Women Albania, with support from the government of Sweden and Joint SDG Fund⁵², conducted a nationwide survey to assess the social and economic impact of COVID-19 on women's and men's lives and livelihoods. The data collection, which covered 1,300 respondents (18+years), was conducted through telephone interviews between 13 March and 26 April 2020, and indicated the following conclusions:

- Women faced more limitations than men when trying to access food (46% vs. 43%) due to market closures and the reduced opening hours of stores.
- More women than men anticipate difficulties paying essential outgoings (paying for rent and utilities, keeping up with basic expenses (food, hygiene products etc.) if restrictive measures continue.
- More women (51%) than men (27%) worked from home instead of their usual place of work during the outbreak. As women's economic security was shaken, their share of unpaid care and domestic work increased.
 - 76% of women reported increased time spent on unpaid domestic work
 - 66% of men reported increased time spent on unpaid domestic work
- As a result of school and day-care closures, women and men spent more time playing with and teaching children. Gender discrepancies became more evident as the number of reported unpaid domestic activities increased:
 - 27% of women reported increased time spent on at least three unpaid domestic activities

51 <https://eca.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/7/covid-19-is-taking-a-higher-toll-on-women-shows-un-women-albania-rapid-assessment>

52 <https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20eca/attachments/publications/2020/07/factsheet-albania-fin-min.pdf?la=en&vs=1208>

- 20% of men reported increased time spent on at least three unpaid domestic activities
 - Women's psychological and mental health was more affected, 69% for women and 57% for men
 - Respondents faced greater difficulties in accessing health services and personal protective equipment, which may negatively affect women's and men's future health.
- Women experienced more challenges seeking health services, 55% for women and 45% for men
 - Women faced greater difficulties in accessing hygiene products and medical supplies for personal protection.

- **Women's caring responsibilities at home**

Covid-19 has amplified women's unpaid work burdens in Devoll, Prrenjas, Korce and Pogradec, because the widespread closure of schools and childcare facilities did not only increase the amount of time that parents had to spend on childcare and child supervision, but also forced many to supervise or lead home schooling and most of this additional responsibility has fallen on women. In addition, any increases in time spent in the home due to isolation are likely to lead to increased routine housework, for women including cooking and cleaning. This is due to the fact that **cultural construction of gender** has imposed certain roles to women and girls within the family such as caring for children and other dependent family members, as well as providing for basic needs of family life such as domestic work, food, hygiene and education for children. Furthermore, the lack of adequate social protection measures, brings them at a higher risk of harm from the social and economic shocks linked to measures that are being introduced to curb the pandemic⁵³. In Albania, including Devoll, Prrenjas, Korce and Pogradec, the pandemic has also caused some damages to employed women, due to the fact that the loss of income has direct consequences for women's abilities to afford housing and food for themselves and other family members.

53 <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25808&LangID=E>

- **Health system**

Health pandemics can make it more difficult, especially for women and girls to receive treatment and health services. This is compounded by some inequalities, such as ethnicity, socioeconomic status, disability, age, race, geographic location and sexual orientation, that influence access and decision-making to critical health services and information about COVID-19. Women and girls have unique health needs, but they are less likely to have access to quality health services, like essential medicines and vaccines, maternal and reproductive health care. This was observed more often in areas such as Devoll, Prrenjas, Korce and Pogradec, but not limited to them.

In addition, women with disabilities face different barriers, such as lack of information or transportation, especially during the lockdown, in accessing different gender-based violence programmes and services (community support services). This also includes the lack of information in accessible formats, lack of transportation to health facilities and women's centers. Social distancing and self-isolation measures are unfeasible for some people who depend on carers to provide for their essential needs.⁵⁴

- **Participation in decision making**

Although women are at the forefront of the fight against the pandemic, including the front line in health services and support, and engagement with communities, women's representation in policy development and decision making on COVID-19 is limited. Furthermore, women have unequal access to information and communication technologies often due to their lower levels of education and literacy.⁵⁵ This is more present in rural areas, in Albania, where there is a lack of technology and women are less likely to have access to internet and benefit from it.

54 <https://www.disabilityscoop.com/2020/03/17/coronavirus-brings-added-worries-disabilities/27989/>

55 https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Events/COVID-19_and_Women_Rights_7_Possible_Actions.pdf

- **Domestic Violence**

In Albania, as in many countries around the world, the pandemic has intensified gender-based violence. The lockdown has created fertile ground for gender inequalities to be exposed at their worst. One in two women in Albania have been subjected to sexual, physical or psychological violence, according to a survey supported by the Swedish Government, UNDP and UN Women. For nearly half, that violence has come from a partner. Albanian police reported 245 cases of domestic violence in March 2020. But the numbers may be higher, since many women remain in self-isolation with the perpetrators of violence.⁵⁶

4. Recommendations and suggestions

In this section are provided recommendations and suggestions on actions to overcome gender gaps in regions as Devoll, Prrenjas, Korce and Pogradec, Korca and Pogradec. Furthermore, recommendations are presented in the context to promote gender equality in response to the existing situation caused by Covid-19. Gender Inequality and discrimination against women have been identified as important issues even before the pandemic, but the crisis has shown a greater impact on them. Recommendations are divided in actions and measures that should be taken by central and local government authorities in Albania, such as short-term actions, specific policy recommendations, as well as mid-term to long-term recommendations.

4.1. Central and local government authorities in Albania should:

- Expand the number of studies about gender equality and discrimination in Devoll, Prrenjas, Korce and Pogradec and should add specific indicators relating to vulnerable groups of women and girls in data collection;
- Incorporate teaching about the various forms of gender-based

⁵⁶ <https://albania.unwomen.org/en/news-and-events/stories/2020/10/new-survey-shows-covid19-impacts-on-gender-inequality-in-albania>

violence against women and girls in curricula at all levels of formal education, from pre-primary to higher education, in every school including those in regions such as Devoll, Prrenjas, Korce and Pogradec;

- Continue to engage the media as a key partner to raise awareness on discrimination and violence against women, even for specific cases observed in areas such as Devoll, Prrenjas, Korce and Pogradec;
- Ensure that boys and girls have equal access to good-quality education, equal rights and opportunities to successfully complete schooling and making educational choices;
- Ensure that women are supported in receiving a minimum of 12 years of free, safe, quality and gender-responsive education;
- Ensure that girls' and women's voices are recognized and included at all levels of health system-strengthening, service-delivery interventions, research and development agendas, and in accountability mechanisms;
- Guarantee women's and girls' property and inheritance rights, so that they can be financially independent in the future.

4.1.1. General recommendations related to gender inequality

- Sexual and reproductive health and rights should be provided for all women and girls in Devoll, Prrenjas, Korce and Pogradec.
 - All girls and women should have access to health services despite age, geographical location, ethnicity, sexual orientation, legal status etc., and all of them should have universal and equitable access to comprehensive sexuality education by safe and affordable methods of contraception; safe abortion and maternity care. All women and girls should be free to decide on all matters of their sexuality (pregnancy, sexual life) without violence or discrimination.
 - All young people should be educated about sexual and reproductive health services and sexuality matters, in and out school.
- Decision-making & access to information. As long as women face difficulties in accessing important information about economic opportunities, legal rights, institutions where they can ask for help, laws

that protect their rights etc., more should be done in this regard.

- Lack of information means also lower opportunities for women to work. They should be provided with information about the labour market and what the cities where they live can offer, their rights to employment and also labour legislation. Furthermore, at the same time they get information about different opportunities to gain qualification and vocational training the more they should also be informed on how to get access to sources of income and how to receive loans.

- Enhancing women's participation in decision-makings institutions and increase the number of women in political life.

- People should be informed that the more active women participate in politics, the more there is potential for good changes to be achieved regarding discrimination and gender inequality. They also bring new point of view for many issues that the society faces today.

- More women should be part of decision-making bodies in Devoll, Prrenjas, Korce and Pogradec, as leaders in the municipalities, but also in other dependent institution and agencies.

- Increasing the number of women in decision-making at the community level will also mean a higher inclusion of women's knowledge in finding solutions to local challenges. Women who are, according to gendered role, more involved in providing livelihood needs, have vast knowledge and expertise regarding the states of environment and its sustainable management and protection.

4.2. Suggested Short-term Actions

➤ **Strong partnerships for greater reach and impact in Devoll, Prrenjas, Korce and Pogradec**

It is important to mobilize a vast network of partnerships required for the whole society, as a whole country response. Building extensive connections and networks with civil society organizations, women's groups and volunteer groups, will likely lead to a greater impact. Many of these organizations are facing their own challenges, but often they play an indispensable leadership role in the response, notably in reaching out to vulnerable people, especially those in remote places. They can amplify their responses to a greater extent.

In addition, the establishment of close relations with the private sector is recommended, as it is instrumental for the economic recovery towards sustainable development, within a whole-of-society approach.

Of a great importance as well, is the collaboration and partnership with the development partners (donor community) and International Financial Institutions (IFI). It is of particular value in the areas of impact assessments and analysis, financing and resource-mobilization, policy advocacy on urgent macroeconomic measures to provide relief especially for the mostly-affected sectors; effective programme design and delivery, and planning for the longer term.

➤ **Support on tracking and reaching vulnerable populations**

Taking in consideration that women living in areas as Devoll, Prrenjas, Korce and Pogradec suffer from lack of information, some activities should be taken in consideration. These activities are linked to community engagement to improve health information, as well as access to essential services, particularly for women. Especially now, with the Covid crisis, actions are needed to be taken also to intensify work with communities on risk mitigation, in locations and for populations who are vulnerable, have cultural or language barriers to access information and are unable to practice social distancing because of living in camps or in congested urban settings.

Special support should be provided for pregnant women and women caring for newborns and young children, as well as tailored health care interventions for survivors of gender-based violence, women with disabilities and women living with HIV/AIDS.

➤ **Access to basic social services and social protection policies**

During the Ebola outbreak, more people died from the interruption of social services than from the virus itself. Hence, it is of utmost importance to ensure that the population everywhere continues to have access to social services and social protection.

The COVID-19 crisis impacts the world's poorest and most vulnerable the hardest, with significant intergenerational implications for poor families. Unlike most of the recessions of the past 50 years, which were men-cessions, this crisis is a she-cession. It is still not to be neglected, as demonstrated during the 2008 financial crisis, the fact that countries with strong social protection systems and basic services suffered the least and recovered the fastest. Over the next months, governments around the world will need to adapt, extend and scale-up cash transfers, food assistance programmes, social insurance programmes and child benefits to support families, among others.

Social protection responses must consider differentiated impacts of COVID-19 on vulnerable groups, women and men and those surviving on income in the informal sector, as well as those now shouldering additional unpaid care work. Therefore, the scope of the challenges ahead requires an extraordinary scale-up of support.

4.3. Specific Policy Recommendations

- **Scale up and expand resilient and pro-poor social protection systems:** to support governments to rapidly design, adjust, scale up and implement cash transfer programmes to respond to immediate economic impacts of COVID-19. This includes supporting the shift to digital payments for governments and private sector.
- **Maintain essential food and nutrition services, with a focus on women as part of vulnerable populations, including those living with HIV/AIDS.** COVID-19 and related measures have an impact on the quality of diets and nutrition. This can quickly translate into increased mortality and malnutrition among the population groups with the highest nutrition needs. The response in this area should foster facility- and community-based programmes for the early detection and treatment of women impacted by malnutrition (wasted). Collaboration is needed with government and private sector partners to secure affordable healthy food options for women and families, as well as vulnerable populations, including those living with HIV/AIDS. This may encompass an array of options including food-support, cash-support, and vouchers coupled with volunteer-supported social behavior change communication programs to improve women's diets.
- **Support victims of Gender-Based Violence.** Support should be provided to national authorities, civil society and women's organizations in ensuring that basic essential services are maintained, such as maternal health care, sexual reproductive health programmes and services for survivors of Gender-Based Violence, and that new methods are rolled out as part of the response. Quarantine and isolation policies due to Covid, coupled with financial stress on families, individuals and communities, exacerbate domestic violence. Care and support to Gender-Based Violence survivors may be disrupted when health service providers are overburdened. Support is needed to distribute the information on how to prevent Gender-Based Violence or where to seek help. Shelters should be expanded, referral systems improved and hotlines and other options will provide remote support. Adoption of a do-no-harm approach and

Gender-Based Violence risk analysis should be mainstreamed into all response activities to COVID, including for marginalized and vulnerable groups.

- **Support the continuity of social services and access to shelters.** Collaboration and support is needed to be provided national and local social services to ensure continuity of the first line of response for women at risk of violence, abuse, exploitation, neglect and family separation. Fear and worry coupled with diminished availability of social workers leaves women exposed to violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect. Programmes that support prevention as well as a continuum of care for women experiencing violence should continue and be even intensified and extended in care settings. Specific programmes to support shelters should also expand, especially in fragile humanitarian situations, as well as in camps and densely populated urban areas where social distancing and other preventive measures are not possible.
- **Secure sustained learning for all girls:** About 90 percent of the total number of school children in the world have been directly affected by school closures, with a big number of children missing out on school meals. Collaboration is needed with the national education authorities and private sector education service providers to support preschools and schools that can safely remain open, while assisting governments to scale up digital and other forms of remote learning. There is the need to scale up innovative approaches to continue learning at all levels during the crisis, via parenting programmes, tv, radio, various digital platforms and other delivery mechanisms.
- **Protecting jobs, small and medium-sized enterprises, and women - vulnerable workers in the informal economy:** Most vulnerable workers are in the informal economy. They have no or limited access to social protection, nor do they have the economic security to take sick leave, get treated if required, or cope with lockdown. New business models, with non-standard employment relationships, also tend to reduce benefits and protection for workers. This has created the risk of growing informality, which underscores the need to redefine social protection systems to guarantee universal coverage of the basic elements associated to decent work.

- **Collection of gender disaggregated data in light of Covid-19:**

The current statistical system suffers from a lack of data and information collected by institutions and indicators required at national and international level for monitoring gender equality during the pandemic. Even though, in the time we are living it's a challenge to produce relevant, accurate, and timely gender statistics, coherent sex and age-disaggregation data across sectors and levels needs to be ensured so as to come to conclusion if gender inequality is increased during the pandemic. In this regard, health statistics need to be standardized, harmonized and gender-disaggregated.

There are also important gender dimensions. *Because of pre-existing gender-based inequalities, women will likely experience more difficulty finding new jobs or entrepreneurship opportunities for their economic recovery.* Women are overrepresented in some services most impacted by the crisis, mostly lacking social protection. They bear a disproportionate burden in the care economy. Women also represent approximately 70 percent of frontline workers dealing with the pandemic in the health and social sector.

- **E-commerce and digital solutions should be introduced to allow secure access to services needed, particularly by vulnerable groups.** These services include financial services for sending/receiving remittances, grants, and short-term bridge loans to micro and small businesses, and digital payments of emergency funds to individuals and households. **E-trade readiness assessments should be performed to provide a better basis for seizing advantages from digital solutions**

4.4. Mid-term to Long-term Recommendations

In this section are given mid-term and long-term recommendations that will affect women as part of vulnerable group in a general context. These recommendations tend to affect women's situation in a macroeconomic scale.

➤ **Policy action should be supported by country-specific and integrated policy advice and programming, such as:**

- active fiscal and monetary policies to stimulate the economy and employment overall, countering declines in aggregate demand and negative impacts in the labour market; sectoral policies to counteract the negative effects brought about by lockdowns and the contraction of international trade and global chains disruptions; and investments in the care economy (health and education), where women represent the majority of total employment, are now more important than ever.
- immediate financial support for SMEs, self-employed and others informally employed, at a much greater scale. Protection of vulnerable workers through:
 - Cash transfers and in-kind transfers to informal workers and self-employed, including domestic workers and casual workers, relying on existing social protection systems;
 - Ensuring provision of health services and information for groups not well connected to established services, including migrant workers and refugees;
 - Social insurance for vulnerable groups;
 - Access to care services for workers who are required to continue working during lockdowns;
 - Support for young workers who are hard hit, including measures to ensure continuity in apprenticeships,
 - preventing discrimination, exclusion and violence in the workplace;
 - Linking these target groups to social protection schemes where available, so that the disruption in income and the increasing childcare burdens can be mitigated.

➤ **Strengthening social cohesion and community resilience**

○ **Inclusive social dialogue, advocacy, and political engagement.** Foster social dialogue and consensus about key measures related to the socio-economic response to COVID-19. At the national level such support may include:

- rapid deployment of multidisciplinary expert teams to help open up dialogue spaces and facilitate participatory national responses;
- leveraging the networks and partnerships to bring together representatives of state institutions with a wide range of non-state actors such as civil society leaders, women and youth activists, representatives of migrants and diaspora groups, faith-based organizations and religious leaders, employers' organizations and business owners, trade unions, academia, think tanks and others to co-create recovery strategies;
- facilitating national and regional dialogues on the importance of press freedom and media independence for building social trust particularly in times of crisis;
- engaging culture entrepreneurs and practitioners to create spaces that enable communities to maintain social ties through artistic expressions;
- support to national actors in the design of national and local responses that are gender and conflict-sensitive and strengthen social cohesion, trust and confidence.

○ **Support the development of digital engagement platforms** which can be a useful tool to mobilize community engagement under conditions of social distancing, using traditional and new media, facilitating access to data bundles and communication packages for community leaders. Examples are digital data-platforms, which contain perceptions and opinions surveys, generates needs assessments as well as tracking misinformation and rumors.

➤ **Empower community resilience, participation, and equitable service delivery.** In this area, national and local governments will need support to empower and connect community-based organizations and networks into community-led response systems. A wide spectrum of rapid assessment tools and methodologies are needed to generate community-data and community-level mapping, capturing invisible acute vulnerabilities, as well as issues of acceptability and equity of assistance. Geospatial and innovative data collection techniques provide a 'heatmap' of informal urban settlements and slums that are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 impacts and to predict movements from urban poor in distress seeking refuge in their rural areas of origin. Existing initiatives on community-based disaster risk reduction must be expanded to reach vulnerable and marginalized groups with appropriate risk information. Innovative community engagement through mass media, digital media, local arts and culture may also be pursued.

5. Conclusions

In recent years Albania has improved the status of women and has managed to promote gender equality overall. However, the country still faces many challenges on these issues, as mentioned in the previous sections of this report. In Albania, there are generally observed lower women labor force participation rates and employment rates, and higher inactivity rates. This is a result of prevailing perceptions of gender roles, whereby household responsibilities such as laundry and ironing of clothes; cleaning the house; cooking; washing dishes, taking care of sick family members, or taking care of children are seen as women jobs, and the place of the women is believed to be at home. Furthermore, practices that are seriously harmful to women's health, legal and political systems that justify neglect of women's health needs, violence against women and other violations of their human rights, still exist in rural areas like Devoll, Prrenjas, Korce and Pogradec. The study of gender equality carried out in Devoll, Prrenjas, Korce and Pogradec through the **4 dimensions** of the social institutions gender index, comes to some important conclusion about this topic.

Based on the questionnaire, the first dimension **"Discrimination in the family"**, shows that in most of the families,

- Both men and women take decisions about the expenses and purchases in the family
- Both men and women decide on high value expenses in the family
- Most of the respondents think that women should take care of the house and cook for the family
- During childhood, the majority of the respondents has spent a lot of time with their father and mother;
- Both parents decide on children's education;
- Also, it is evidenced that according to the respondents, women and males have the same right to own and inherit a property;
- Men shouldn't take care of women's property or money;
- This study also comes to conclusion that girls shouldn't get married before they turn 18 years old.

The second dimension “Restricted physical integrity”, shows that in most of the families:

- In most cases the father has treated the mother with respect;
- Most children have never seen the father hitting the mother;
- Most of respondents think that laws in Albania don't protect women from violence and a woman should never tolerate violence in order to keep the family together;
- In these municipalities exists a general perception that Albanian institutions are somewhat prepared to protect women from violence, but not fully prepared;
- In most families, are both parents who decide on the number of children, but still, a big percentage of them think that men should not take permission from women to have sex.

Based on the third dimension “Restricted civil integrity”:

- Most of the respondents are in favour of a system that guarantees a certain number of women in government;
- Some of the respondents are in favour of a system that guarantees a fixed number of positions for women in parliament and municipal councils, but there are still people that think the contrary.
- Most of the respondents think that the culture and political environment in Albania prevent women from advancing in politics and women still haven't achieved political equality with men.

Based on the dimension “Restricted access to productive and financial resources”

- Even though many respondents think that women should have the same rights to own land as men, still exists a general perception that this right should belong more to men;
- In most of the families both parents make decisions about natural resources;
- Respondents are in favour of a system that guarantees equal payment for men and women but most of them still think that women in Albania haven't achieved economic equality to men.

Albanian government has taken a lot of incentives and recognizes the

importance of gender equality through dynamic policies and different strategies. Despite this, in Devoll, Prrenjas, Korce and Pogradec still exists e general perception that laws and institution in Albania are not fully prepared to protect women from violence which affects the increase of gender inequality in these municipalities. Taking in consideration the answers from the respondents, desk research and focus groups, it can be concluded that the level of GE in these municipalities it's in a moderate level, where still the provision of services and their accessibility remain a challenge.

In a more general context and also based on the Covid-19 situation we are all living in, this report comes to conclusion that most likely there will be no return to the "old normal". The massive fiscal and financial repurposing made by the governments in these months, are a glimpse of the future. The government of Albania has adopted two support packages for vulnerable people and businesses affected by the COVID-19 pandemic of a combined size of ALL 45 billion (2.8% of GDP). Part of the support packages was also the amount of ALL 2 bln allocated toward humanitarian relief for the most vulnerable. Its main objective was mitigating income losses for all those affected by COVID-19' crisis, aims to help the majority of workers retain their jobs, the unemployed get supported with increased unemployment benefits, and the remainder be supported through the economic assistance programme.⁵⁷ These packages suggest that the status quo and business as-usual are policy choices, not inevitable constraints on sustainable development. Recovering from this pandemic must not come at the expense of tackling other burning issues. The government needs to do everything possible to ensure that its efforts to support the economic recovery do not divert resources from other existing crises – addressing the needs of vulnerable groups; tackling the global climate emergency; and ending violence against women and girls.

How the recovery plans are implemented matters to what this recovery will look like. The global recovery needs to be fair and above all, it must be inclusive.

57 [file:///C:/Users/ASUS/Downloads/COVID%20support%20packages%20-%20implementation%20update%2024.08.2020%20\(2\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/ASUS/Downloads/COVID%20support%20packages%20-%20implementation%20update%2024.08.2020%20(2).pdf) - Covid support packages, Albania Overview

