

Observatory for the Children and Youth Rights

ANNUAL REPORT 2020



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»» FOREWORD

Observatory for Children and Youth Rights

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

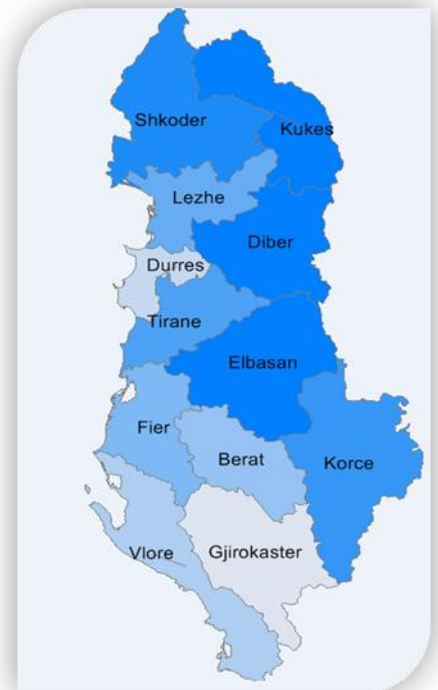
Our mission is to ensure the dignity and well-being of children and young people across Albania through observation, research and analysis, communication and advocacy; by cooperating with other stakeholders / institutions; and getting involved in public awareness and education campaigns.

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

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

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

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



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



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

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

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Observatory for Children and Youth Rights
Rruga “Brigada e VIII”, Pall. LID, K.1, Z.1, Tiranë, Shqipëri
Email: info@observator.org.al
Webmail: www.observator.org.al

»» PROJECT IN 2020

Wonder- Child Friendly Destinations

WONDER - CHILD project's main overall objective is to increase the attractiveness and competitiveness of destinations from the Adriatic-Ionian Region thanks to a child-friendly approach, aimed at improving the liveability of cities and the touristic offer (governance, environment and services) through the development of new and innovative participatory methods. In this sense, the expected results produced will be:

- New touristic offer addressed to children and families through innovative participatory methods
- Improved cooperation at local and transnational level among tourism sector, local authorities, civil society organizations and citizens/children.
- Well-defined transnational identity and raising awareness developed on child-friendly tourism in the Adriatic-Ionian area.

The above mentioned results will be reached through 2 main outputs:

- WONDER Action-Plan aimed at collecting the actions and strategies to be undertaken by cities to become "Child-friendly destinations";
- WONDER -Transnational Network of Child-Friendly Destinations, targeting different groups from general public (including children), education institutions, civil society and NGOs, to public bodies and authorities, but also the private sector, including enterprises in the tourism sector.

The WONDER project will combine a top-down approach (decisions and strategies at local authority level) with a bottom-up approach (children's, civil society, business sector, media involvement) to develop an innovative approach for child-friendly destinations. Cooperation among partners and the transnational approach will be strategic in order to properly address a complete and integrated policy targeted to children, both as residents and tourists establishing a transnational network of "Child-friendly destinations" featured by a common brand.

Implementantion of a Communication Campaign for Behavioral Impact (COMBI) that could lead to men and boy's behavioral change targeted communities"

Under the framework of the regional programme "Ending gender-based discrimination and violence against women in the Western Balkans and Turkey: Implementing Norms, Changing Minds", supported by UN Women and funded by the European Commission, Observatory for children and Youth Rights (Observatory) has been responsible for collecting quantitative and qualitative data on gender stereotypes and public perceptions of gender roles and attitudes towards violence against women in Albania. Under this programme, Observatory has collected quantitative and qualitative data during three phases: Baseline, Mid – Term Review and 3rd phase Endline (during November –December 2020).



From the survey conducted during endline (2020) regarding the recognition / familiarity of the law "On gender equality" it resulted that 65% of respondents are aware of the existence of this law. 81% of respondents are aware of the law "On violence against women and domestic violence". Regarding the perception of roles from surveys during the endline evaluation (2020) it resulted that less than 1 in 3 respondents believe that girls / women belong to the household sphere, while boys / men should pursue careers and leadership opportunities.

Reports and factsheets prepared on behalf of the data collection initiative in the following links:

- English_Info-Sheet_A-comparative-overview-from-the-survey-conducted-in-2-different-phases_BaselineMid- Term-Review_nov2019.pdf <https://observator.org.al/>

- INFOGRAPHIC: <https://observator.org.al/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/>

/ <https://observator.org.al/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Comparative-factsheet-baseline-midterm-review-online-14april2021.pdf>

Recently Observatory has designed “Strategic Communication Plan to address violence against women in Albania” under the program “Implementing norms, changing minds”. The main goal of the initiative is to develop and implement a strategic communication process that will encourage changes in attitudes, behaviors, and social norms relating to VAWG. This initiative will be implemented in the same municipalities where the baseline study has been conducted, in 6 municipalities (Tirana, Durrës, Korça, Shkodra, Vlora, Kamez) and 1 region (Elbasan).

E-Learning response to the COVID-19 crisis in Albania. AKELIUS Digital Language initiative.

The Akelius digital language learning platform is co-developed by the Akelius Foundation and UNICEF in collaboration with UNICEF Implementing Partners. Although still in development, the platform offers rich interactive multimedia accessible through authentic video, audio, text, visual / graphic products, songs and games that provide meaningful content relevant to students' needs and interests pre-selected by the teacher (for lower level students) or discovered by students when navigating digitally (higher levels). This rich, interactive contribution is one of the key elements that helps motivate students and teachers to create a lesson that can respond to different learning styles and levels of learning, as mentioned above, without set aside face-to-face learning.

The main principles are:

- Communication - The Akelius Platform prioritizes the understanding and practical communication of language. It aims to make students understand spoken and written language - the aim is to familiarize users with conversational skills as a first step towards language acquisition. The student learns lexical elements through interactions with the online platform and discovers how to

form these into phrases and sentences while interacting with written text in a variety of formats - audio, visual and video, through games, songs, text and conversation. .

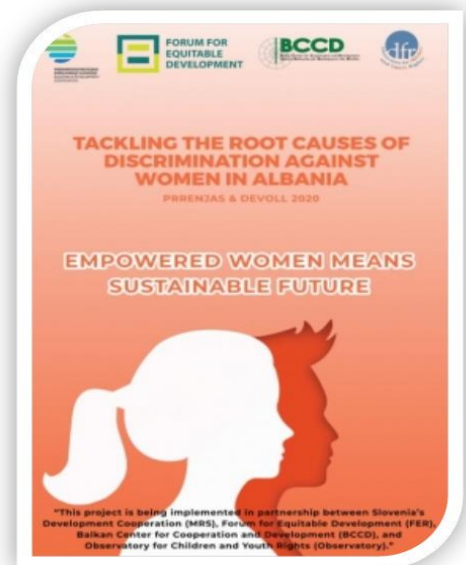
- Learning at your own pace - Within the Akelius digital platform, the student can choose his or her own way through the platform's components according to needs and interests, at their own pace, knowing full well that they can come back to refresh knowledge if needed before we go forward. The teacher can also assign chapters or lessons based on the needs of the students, especially for the beginner levels, while the advanced students can navigate on their own or as needed.
- E Perfect digital pedagogue (State of art) - The platform is simple. There is no confusing terminology or grammatical instructions. The A1 level of languages in Akelius, Lexis (words) and grammar are closely related, so the platform uses vocabulary and small phrases to learn morphology and syntax at the same time. Students learn to produce languages by learning words in groups that come together. Students gain a deeper understanding of grammatical structures through repeated interactions with these phrases. They will understand the individual words as well as the word order. Students will receive a set of phrases for immediate use. Then, they can begin to use those phrases to predict meaning and to process new linguistic content.

Following the changes in the ground and after a programmatic review the project was extended to vulnerable children and those of Roma background. Tablets and smart boards facilitating the use of the Akelius platform were distributed in a refugee center in the capital Tirana and two elementary schools in poor areas of Tirana and Elbasan municipalities. Over 580 children used Akelius platform during 2021 surpassing the target of 250 children. Almost 120 teachers are trained in using Akelius platform in the context of hybrid and blended teaching surpassing the target of 90 teachers and actually extending the training into other areas with poor schools not originally included in the project.

Tackling the root causes of discrimination against women in Albania

The project aims at eliminating the root causes of discrimination against girls and women in Prrrenjas and Devoll, due to which they do not have full access to their rights in both the private and public spheres. The norms and values are responsible for keeping the women in a subordinate position, which also negatively influences the economic and social progress of the municipalities. The project addresses societal inequalities through the 4 SIGI dimensions. Through the same 4 dimensions, the reasons for discrimination against girls and women, the lack of information for women about waste management, and for better access for girls and women to safe, inclusive and green public spaces. To achieve that, youth trainers were trained, who will then transfer their knowledge within their respective municipalities. Decision makers at local and national levels will be informed and their awareness will be raised with the aim of ensuring gender mainstreaming into new laws, as well as with the implementation of already existing ones. Partners; Balkan Center for Cooperation and Development (BCCD); Forum for Equitable Development (Forum za enakopraven razvoj, društvo);

For more information about the initiative you can read the report



at the link: <https://observator.org.al/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/anglisht-OK.pdf>

Monitoring Methodology of Cash Transfers- Phone Calls”

Humanitarian cash transfers, designed to provide immediate emergency support for the poorest, should be further supported as an effective means to address poverty while supporting children.

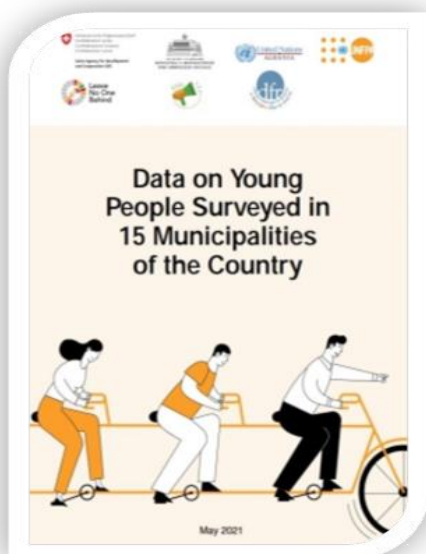
Situations of emergency, similar to COVID-19 lockdown, provide an opportunity to reconsider relief and support towards disadvantaged children and their families while addressing vulnerability as well. Local governments should be involved while upgrading their sectoral plans for children.

NGO engagement in monitoring the process provides transparency and regular assessment of the transfer processes allows for effective policy making and good governance addressing vulnerability and poverty among children.

With the support of UNICEF, municipalities developed a clear, simple and cost-effective feedback mechanism to make sure that the cash reached the targeted families. The process of distribution and use of cash was monitored by the “Observatory for Children and Youth Rights” through a process of 622 random phone calls with cash recipients all over the country and follow up discussions with the Managers of Social Services in each recipient municipality. The cash recipient families were contacted via cellular phone to confirm that the cash transfer was executed. Upon confirmation they were asked questions regarding how they used the funds and about the pressing needs that they covered with the cash received. 95% of them indicated that they had not received any other kind of aid or support.

From a quick assessment for the period May - August 2020 it resulted that no. of families that have received cash in all 3 municipalities (Durrës, Korçë and Shkodër) is 1747 in both phases. 599 families were contacted by phone, of which 366 families confirmed their receipt of transfers from UNICEF. Contact with 139 families was not possible due to no. faulty phone or its non-existence. 146 families have confirmed that they have not received the UNICEF transfer. More detailed information will be provided in a report that will be made public soon on the Observatory website www.observator.org.al

For the Establishment, Coordination, and Expansion of the Civil Society Protection Platform for ICPD Issues and Sustainable Development Objectives



Observatory in partnership with the UNFPA office in Albania, has been engaged since 2017 for the implementation of the Youth Voice program: “To create, coordinate and expand the civil society protection platform for ICPD issues and Development Goals Sustainable (SDG)”. In 2019, this network consists of 21 organizations and youth clubs specializing in various areas of sexual and reproductive health, education, social and health services, human rights, community work and working with marginalized groups and in need. Organizations are networked with each other, implementing various activities at national and regional level. During the implementation of the youth program in 2019, Observatory conducted surveys with 500 young people on their knowledge and perceptions about sexual and reproductive health, in 5 municipalities (Pogradec, Maliq, Kruja, UraVajgurore, Shijak). The most interesting findings from the surveys were conducted as factsheet

on the knowledge and perceptions of young people regarding sexual and reproductive health, SDGs and municipal programs, in each municipality.

Also, through the expertise of the Observatory, *Plans of activities and budget for young people have been drafted in 4 Municipalities* (Dibra, Lezha, Pogradec and Maliq), giving concrete suggestions for initiatives, programs that should be run by the municipality taking into account all competencies according to Law 75/2019 “On Youth”, Law on Local Government and the National Action Plan for Youth 2015-2020.

Observatory has *monitored the Declaration of Commitments for Youth*, signed by the Municipality of Tirana since 2015.

Surveys of young people about knowledge of SDGs showed that 1 in 10 young people have heard what SDGs are. In terms of young people's knowledge of SHSR it turned out that 1 in 7 young people have never received information on sexual and reproductive health. The most favorite programs that young people would like to benefit from the Municipality are; social activities, information, awareness, training, entertainment and sports activities, environmental and cultural activities, etc. Regarding youth budgeting, 15 Action Plans and Youth Budgeting at the municipal level have been drafted.

For more information click on the link: <https://observator.org.al/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Summary-of-the-youth-work-in-15-Municipalities.pdf>

Improving children rights monitoring mechanisms around Western Balkan region

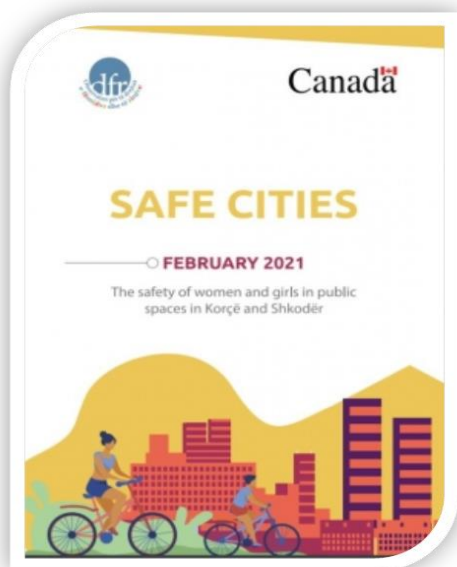
Observatory for Children and Youth Rights was partnering in one of the regional projects funded by WBF and finds the opportunity to cooperation in the regional level tremendously important to push forward the reconciliation processes around the Balkans.

Overall objective this action is to contribute to regional cooperation, and strengthen regional cohesion in the WB6 region. The specific objective of this project are to introduce the Observatory initiative in two countries of the region and to increase knowledge and skills of CSOs activists concerning access to information on the implementation of children's rights. Through this cooperation we aim to expand our experience in children's rights in the region. This project contributes to the regional cooperation, and strengthen regional cohesion in the WB6 region since tackles issues to further be elaborated concerns us all and that is children. It brings together pillars of the society that continue struggling with lack of conditions to monitor the conditions and environment where our children are growing. This project, may consider as the first steps undertaken in regional level for exchanging experience for starting to build up the “same language of indicators” to be used for measuring child rights in regional level, by keeping strong connection with data provided by each country partner of this proposal. This project is crafted to create a roadmap for future child rights research productivity to identify each country specific for a specific topic, empower our current experience in Albania by paving the infrastructure to research development in regional level. Having said that, children are protected by Child Rights Convention in Albania, or in Western Balkan Countries, or in the entire word, but still remains a necessary action to bridge the



challenges and enforce the role of civil society on child rights monitoring agenda, for an wealthy child life in each of our countries.

For more information you can read the report at the link: <https://observator.org.al/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Child-Right-Situation-WB.pdf>



Making public spaces safe for every women and girl

The project “Making public spaces safe for every women and girl” implemented by “Observatory for Children and Youth Rights” supported by "The Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI)" and in cooperation with Korça and Shkodra Municipalities, aims to provide an understanding of women and girls’ safety in the selected areas. (September – December 2020).

The project goal is to generate evidence and provide good understanding of the types and scale of violence against women in urban spaces in “Neighborhood 10” in Korça and “Neighborhood nr. 1” in Shkodra Municipalities.

For more information about the study click on the link:

<https://observator.org.al/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Safe-Cities.pdf>

Social Assistance Modernization Project

The Consulting Service for "Training of Social Inspectors on Improving the Inspection Methodology and Complaints Review Mechanism" with ref. Number SAMP / CS / CQ / 10-2019 is implemented by the Observatory for Children and Youth Rights (Observatory). The objectives of this consultancy are:

- Improving the control methodology of psycho-social assessment of disability with concrete elements so that the methodology is a useful tool that can later be transformed into the DA MIS module
- Training of social inspectors on the improved methodology;
- Development of a case management methodology based on the Complaints Review Mechanism;

This project is part of the overall reform undertaken by the Government of Albania with the World Bank on the Social Assistance Modernization Project (SAMP) which supports implementation reforms in Albania to improve equity and efficiency of social assistance programs. The Ministry of Health and Social Protection (MHSP) is the ministry responsible for the implementation of the project. The Health and Social Protection Development Program (SDPS) at the MSSS is responsible for all activities related to the implementation of the Economic Assistance (EA) and Disability Assistance (DA) reform. In the framework of the original SAMP project, MHSP has undertaken the reform of the disability assessment and benefit system for the Albanian non-contributor (second group), to modernize the disability criteria to adapt to the wider context of the social model, reviewing evaluation criteria to include functional and medical evaluation, business procedures, and institutional arrangements.

» OBSERVATORY'S PARTNERS

Partners Contribution

PROJECT TITLE	IMPLEMENT PERIOD	DONOR
WONDER- Child Friendly Destinations	February 2020 – March 2022	INTERREG/ADRION
Implementantion of a Communication Campaign for Behavioral Impact (COMBI) that could lead to men and boy's behavioral change targeted communities	May 2020 – April 2022	UN Women
E-Learning response to the COVID-19 crisis in Albania. AKELIUS Digital Language initiative.	July 2020 – June 2021	AKELIUS
Tackling the root causes of discimination against women in Albania	March 2020 – October 2021	BCCD

Monitoring Methodology of Cash Transfers- Phone Calls	May – August 2020	UNICEF
For the Establishment, Coordination, and Expansion of the Civil Society Protection Platform for ICPD Issues and Sustainable Development Objectives	January – December 2020	UNFPA
Improving children rights monitoring mechanisms around Western Balkan region	June 2020- June 2021	Wester Balkan Fund- WBF
Making public spaces safe for every women and girl	July 2020 – February 2021	CFLI
Social Assistance Modernization Project	September – December 2020	SAMP