

# LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

01.06.2017 – 31.05.2021

*PROGRAMME PROGRESS REPORT JUNE 2017- MAY 2018*

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## General Information

This report is presented to the Programme Steering Committee and it provides a summary of the Leave No One Behind (LNB) programme's main achievements during the implementation period of June 2017 – May 2018.

The LNB programme, financed by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), is a four-year programme (2017-2021) implemented by UN agencies under the management of UNDP. The implementation arrangements are formalized through a Standard Administrative Agreement on May 31, 2017, covering the period of June 1, 2017 – May 31, 2021. Its main goal *is to empower the vulnerable persons in Albania to have equal access to public services and opportunities, to have a voice in public decision-making affecting their lives.*

As per the Standard Administrative Agreement four financial instalments in the total amount of CHF 8,000,000 have been received by Albania One UN Coherence Fund.

## Executive Summary

The Government of Albania is committed to address social protection and inclusion, with a particular focus on the most marginalised groups with high proportions of them living close to the poverty line. The government structures at central and local level quite often fail to address adequately the needs of marginalized and vulnerable groups due to limited resources and capacities on implementation of social inclusion and social protection programmes and policies as well as incomplete legal framework.

LNB programme, a is a response to government's efforts to social inclusion of Vulnerable Groups (VG). Its main goal *is to empower the vulnerable persons in Albania to have equal access to public services and opportunities, to have a voice in public decision-making affecting their lives.*

LNB marks initial progress towards achievement of its outcomes and overall goal during the first year of implementation (June 2017-May 2018). Concrete results are achieved mainly focusing on (i) *improved access to social services through the implementation of integrated service delivery models for VGs, (ii) further completing of legal framework on implementation of the Law on Social Care Services, (iii) capacitated duty bearers in improved service delivery, data collection, use of technology and rights holders in demanding and monitoring quality inclusive services and (iv) good practices of social inclusion promoted in (social) media.*

It should be noted that during year 1, most of the efforts have focused mainly on planning, establishing partnerships, multi stakeholder coordination and preparing the grounds for facilitating the implementation of project activities and tailoring the support based on knowledge generated on social inclusion situation at local level.

The pace of project initiation and implementation was slowed down and affected by the structural changes of the newly elected government in office as of September 2017 where the functions of the main project beneficiary MLSWY were split into three ministries with the social protection function being delegated to the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, the restructuring of which was finalized in December 2017. The first PSC committee was held in December 2017 where the work plan was endorsed enabling the initiation of implementation of project activities gaining more speed during the third and fourth quarter of Year 1.

UN agencies interventions are building on their previous work and achievements under UNISSIA and Social Care Reform programmes as well as other relevant projects which have helped in planning and implementation of their activities. Efforts have been made to build synergies with other donors working on social inclusion to maximize support and avoid overlapping.

Gender balance has been ensured through equal representation of women and girls in participation in project activities and accessing inclusive services along with good governance principles showcased in project activities and promoted with relevant stakeholders at central and local level.

Institutional partnerships are established at central and local level with relevant stakeholders and continuous consultations and coordination mechanisms are in place to ensure their commitment not only in implementing the project activities, but also to ensure their sustainability.

## **Chapter 1: - introduction**

### *1.1 Context:*

The Government of Albania has expressed commitment to increasingly address social protection and inclusion, with a particular focus on the most marginalised groups<sup>1</sup>. This is particularly important within the context of its goals to achieve EU accession as a determining factor for the undergoing public sector reforms. However, its importance stems from the fact that in Albania large segments of the population are economically and socially vulnerable and marginalized with high proportions of them living close to the poverty line. Social policies have limited coverage and social cohesion and

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<sup>1</sup>Roma and Egyptian communities, people with disabilities, women survivors of violence and victims of trafficking, people living with HIV/AIDS, drug users, prison populations, children at risk

inclusion is only partially addressed. Public spending for social inclusion programmes is modest and all too often the government structures fail to address adequately the needs of marginalized and vulnerable groups. Until 2017, the unit for the needs assessment and referral of social care services was established only in 26% of the municipalities in Albania. Furthermore, in 47% of the municipalities there is no additional staff employed in the social protection sector. 16% of the municipalities in the country have set up a unit for assessing the needs and a referral system for people with disabilities<sup>2</sup>. 63% of the municipalities have not participated in any training related to the topics of needs assessment and referrals. 23% of the local municipalities have drafted a local action plan for this vulnerable group but only Tirana and Durres have approved the plan. In 48% of the municipalities there are no day care centres while in 15% of them there are day centres for PWDs only. In 21% of the municipalities there exist multifunctional centres that provide social care services for several vulnerable groups. Regarding Roma and Egyptian (R/E) people, until 2017, a local action plan for the implementation of the national action plan for R/E inclusion has been developed in 21% of the country's municipalities<sup>3</sup>. However, 78% of the country's municipalities do not have trained officials for the implementation of the national plan, as well as 41% of the municipalities have not yet established cooperation with line ministries in the form of consultations on the development of local programs for the implementation of planned measures as foreseen in this plan. Most of the municipalities have not yet cooperated with any of the regional line ministry structures in order to integrate the two communities.

The new Social Housing Law was approved by the parliament in May 2018. It addresses shortcomings in the field of housing and forced eviction, introducing key concepts and principles regarding social housing. The implementation of the law hinges on the stipulation of around 40 sub-legal acts that need to be developed and enacted.

Two important pieces of secondary legislation deriving from the Law on Social Care Services have been adopted: (1) a Minister's instruction on the standards of home assistance service for persons with disabilities; and (2) a Council of Ministers' Decree on the Social Fund. Other by-laws on social care services are still to be developed and issued, while there is no progress regarding the drafting of by-laws deriving from the Law on Inclusion of and Accessibility for persons with disabilities. Following the national elections of 2017, the National Council on Persons with Disability has been reconstituted to reflect the shifts of ministerial portfolios. The disability focal points are appointed, while the Technical Secretariat of the Council is not yet in place.

Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) has been identified as important tool for advancing gender equality and social inclusion. It has been included as a legal requirement to the Local Government Financial Management cycle. The approval of law no. 68/2017 "On Local Government Finances",

<sup>2</sup> Municipalities in the EU integration process of Albania, First Report 2018

<sup>3</sup> Municipalities in the EU integration process of Albania, First Report 2018

paved the way for the effective inclusion of GRB in all the phases of local financial management cycle (medium term and annual budget programming, monitoring & reporting, evaluation and auditing) by local government units. This provides greater responsibilities and challenges for public entities in effectively managing gender-based policies, by allocating the budget resources to achieve them.

During 2017 a series of actions have taken place to boost the capacity of public administration to deliver social protection measures and absorb relevant good practices related to social reintegration of vulnerable women and girls as per national and EU standards. Following the approval of a package of six by-laws which help in the implementation of the Social Enterprise Law, MHSP has now commenced the work to explore and adapt best practices in terms of legal and financial mechanisms needed to make the Law on Social Enterprises a reality. This has opened the opportunities to more than 2,378 active NGOs (INSTAT, 2014) to apply for the status of Social Enterprises. It is expected that 150 people will be employed and possibly half of them will be women and men beneficiaries of the economic aid scheme. New Social Enterprises can benefit up to USD 7,000 from the government fund support.

The first progress report on the implementation of the National Action Plan on R/E was prepared in spring of 2018. Also, the first progress report for the implementation of the National Action Plan for Persons with Disabilities is currently underway (expected to be launched later during the year).

Government changes prior to the national elections of June 2017 brought decision-making at the (former) Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth to a standstill. Once the new government took office in September 2017, the Social Protection portfolio was assigned to the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, which as of December 2017, continued consolidating the management structures and operational procedures. A cross-governmental agency group required for the coordination of the monitoring of social inclusion indicators across sectors and government institutions is yet to start functioning. In 2017, the budget for the social protection sector at the central level marked a slight increase of 1,7% in absolute figures compared to 2016 which is attributed to pensions' increase. However, the share of this sector's budget to GDP decreased from 1,45% in 2016 to 1,40% in 2017. The weight of the sector in overall public spending also declined slightly between 2016 and 2017, as sector expenditures grew at a slower pace than the overall budget<sup>4</sup>. Cash transfers constitute 95% of social protection sector's overall budget. When stripped of cash transfers, the social services budget constituted 0.34% of the whole government budget in 2016 which declined to 0,24% in 2017.

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<sup>4</sup> Review of local budget spending on social care services, Internal project report 2018



With regard to local level spending in the social, excluding cash transfers, they comprised in average 0.82% of the total municipal expenditures in 2016 and 0.85% in 2017, although in particular municipalities the share of social expenditures was several times higher. Regarding the quality of social services delivered at local level by both central de-concentrated and local service providers, the overall satisfaction of vulnerable users of these services (PwD and R&E) was estimated<sup>5</sup> at 1.48 in a scale of 1 (very poor) to 5 (very good).

A UNDP-commissioned assessment of DPOs and other CSOs working in disability outlines that 68% of CSOs are not financially sustainable as they depend on foreign donor priorities. In addition, while 37% of CSOs report to have good cooperation with local governments, only 11% of them can state the same about cooperation and partnership with the central government.

### *1.2 Intervention logic*

“Leave No One Behind (LNB)” aims to empower the vulnerable persons in Albania to have equal access to public services and opportunities, to have a voice in public decision-making affecting their lives.

Under the umbrella of LNB programme, the UN Agencies continue to support GoA in implementing interventions that aim at strengthening intersectoral and cross-sectoral vertical cooperation between central and local governments as well as intra-governmental cooperation in delivering, monitoring, collecting data and reporting delivery of specific social inclusion measures. This is one of the gaps within the current Social Protection sector which the LNB project is seeking to address in order to maintain GoAs commitment to mainstream the SDGs as expressed in the National Strategy for Development and Integration 2016-2020 (NSDI)

LNB programme focuses on three interlinked outcomes:

- Empowered persons with disabilities, Roma and Egyptians, and vulnerable women, to request and have access to social services, as a pre-condition to improve their lives
- Enabled municipalities to effectively manage the provision of rights-based social services and promote social inclusion
- Strengthen capacities of national institutions to implement their policy framework, to fund and provide social services

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<sup>5</sup> Access to and satisfaction with social services with special focus on persons with disabilities, R/E

These are being achieved through a cascade of interventions at national and local level contributing to the achievement of all three outcomes and their deriving nine outputs. Since service delivery is realised mostly at local level, the project's interventions focus largely at local level provision. Two of the three outcomes reflect this thrust: (1) persons in need of benefiting from social protection measures are empowered by the project to demand and obtain meaningful access to the system and to contribute themselves to their social inclusion, and (2) municipal service providers have enhanced capacities to provide better services and to promote social inclusion. The third outcome reflects the project's concern with anchoring its interventions at system level: furthering development and implementation of policies relevant to social inclusion, including related funding.

### *1.3 Synergies with development partners*

Following the municipality profiling exercise which guided the geographical focus of the LNB programme, the participating agencies worked with national partners to decide on the target intervention areas. Consultations were held with the focal points at the Ministry of Health and Social Protection and Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth, Ministry of Finance to define approach of interventions and ensure that the target groups are supported in a holistic way. The analysis suggested that an integrated approach was needed in certain municipalities to maximize and accelerate the impact of project interventions. This way, 4 municipalities were selected (Permet, Ura Vajgurore, Diber and Korce) that are being targeted though a joint integrated approach through several interventions of the participating UN agencies. In addition to this analysis consultations were carried out also with local actors in some of the municipalities (Shkoder, Durres, Diber, Ure-Vajgurore, Prrenjas, Permet, Lezhe, Fier, Kruje) which revealed important information in better mapping their needs and capacities. Three of these municipalities (Lezhe, Fier and Kruje) are benefiting directly from the specialized support of Ndihme Per Femijet (NPF) in addressing social inclusion challenges for R&E people.

A coordinated approach is followed for all project activities at subnational level therefore several joint actions are taken by the participating agencies and their partner organizations operating at local level, including setting up information sharing systems, networking, joint monitoring in target locations, communicating objectives and results in joint activities with local authorities and local development partners, etc.

Besides Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) and several UN agencies, other donors and development partners that are active in the areas of social cohesion, protection, social inclusion, health, education and gender-based violence include the EU, World Bank, GiZ, Italian Cooperation, Austrian Cooperation, USAID and many other international and local CSOs and DPOS. In carrying out its actions LNB has coordinated and collaborated closely with all concerned UN agencies, SDC and several partner project initiatives.

The programme has continuously exchanged and coordinated with other programmes and organizations working in the area of disabilities such as Save the Children (e.g. Vlora municipal centre), World Vision (e.g. activities in Dibra), UNDP STAR 2 Programme, UNDP Youth for Employment Programme (disability employment funding).

With regard to the development and implementation of programme interventions focused on persons with disabilities, the cooperation with central government authorities (MoHSP) has been limited as no specific structure/official is assigned to coordinate and monitor and report on measures and actions for persons with disabilities at national level. In contrary, the cooperation with the targeted local self-government units has been positive since the latter have been responsive in mobilizing their staff for participation to capacity building activities, and collaborative in designing community services for persons with disabilities and related infrastructure projects.

The central and local level collection of data, as part of the review of social service expenditures incurred at municipal level, was carried out in coordination with partner projects incl. UNDP's STAR 2 and Helvetas-Swiss Cooperation's DLDP and Bashki te Forta.

## Chapter 2: Programme implementation

Overall LNB in its first year of implementation marks initial progress towards achievement of its outcomes and overall goal. It is to be noted that the delivery of planned activities and outputs has contributed mainly in preparing the ground work for facilitating the implementation of its activities, yet concrete results are achieved in **(i) operationalizing at local level integrated service delivery models for VGs, (ii) further completing legal framework on implementation of the Law on Social Care Services and (iii) capacitating relevant stakeholders in service delivery, data collection and monitoring and demanding quality inclusive services.**

The first two quarters in 2017 were slower in project implementation due to (i) establishment of project management team following competitive recruitment procedures and particularly (ii) the reorganization of the newly elected government in September 2017, where the functions of the main project beneficiary MLSWY were split into three ministries with the social protection function associated with the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, the restructuring of which was finalized in December 2017. The first PSC committee was held in December 2017 where the work plan was endorsed. Most of the efforts during the first two quarters was mainly focused on project planning and establishment of institutional partnerships with relevant stakeholders at central and local level, whereas the project implementation activities gathered more speed during the third and fourth quarter. UN agencies built on their previous work and achievements under UNISSIA and Social Care Reform in planning and implementing their activities.



**Outcome 1: The vulnerable population requests and receives adequate social services from local authorities that support their social inclusion.**

Progress towards this outcome is initiated and delivery of planned activities and outputs has contributed mainly in preparing the ground work for facilitating demand and delivery of adequate social services for VGs along with implementation of concrete models of social services provision for VGs. The main achievements to date relate to:

- 1) support provided for enabling an increased demand for adequate social services by VGs which mainly consists in :
  - knowledge generation on existing capacities and awareness of PWDs and their CSOs to claim their rights and entitlements;
  - CSOs working with PWDs capacitated to claim their rights
  - mechanisms established to support VGs to participate in the monitoring of national policies and strategies relevant for social inclusion;
- 2) support for delivery of adequate social services for VGs ensuring improved access to (specific) services:
  - knowledge generation on LGUs quality and typology of social service delivery;
  - institutional partnerships established with 9 LGUs through MOUs for establishing and upgrading sustainable community services for vulnerable groups with a particular focus on children with PWDs;
  - adequate services for children with PWDs are being provided in one LGU and Institute of Blind Students following staff capacity building and provision with assistive technology;
  - the Swiss model of integrated social services model through an inclusive package of social services for R&E is being implemented in three selected LGUs with the potential of scaling up in other LGUS;
- 3) Good practices of social inclusion of PWDs are promoted through (social) media and training of journalists to support demand and delivery of adequate social services.

***Output 1.1: Marginalized and vulnerable persons and groups throughout Albania and in selected municipalities are empowered to request social inclusion.***

- A desk review on socio-economic profiles of 15 target municipalities is conducted.
- A satisfaction survey of social services received by Roma, Egyptians and PwD at municipal level kicked off and is currently underway. It is conducted across 15 municipalities and focuses on both quality and quantity of services. It includes also a mapping of social services delivered at this level.
- ADRF, an Albanian NGO, has been entrusted to conduct: 1) an analysis of the level of knowledge of PwD on the rights and entitlements as per the existing legislation, their perception on participation in the society and their capacities to claim social care services (involving 500 PwDs in Ura Vajgurore, Permet and Diber municipalities); and 2) a public opinion survey to get non-disabled citizens' attitudes on persons with disabilities, level of awareness and acceptance to inclusion (involving 350 non-disabled people in the same municipalities). Both reports will be finalized within June 2018.
- ANAD, a deaf people's organisation, is being empowered to raise awareness of approx. 140 deaf women in 24 municipalities about their rights and entitlements for protection against discrimination, equality, reproductive health. This activity will last for 12 months. 72 deaf women, 28 men and 4 children have attended the information session on equality and protection from domestic violence organised so far in Tirana, Shkodra, Durres and Elbasan.
- A capacity needs assessment involving 28 CSOs working in disabilities is conducted. The main Report findings and recommendations are shared and discussed with the involved CSOs and representatives from MoHSP during a workshop.
- A capacity building program on inclusive education methodologies for 160 teachers from Berat, Korca Tirana and Durres and a methodology to identify and keep in school vulnerable children who are at risk of drop out is underway.
- Three video-documentaries, featuring the Development Centre in Lushnja, the Deaf Students Institute in Tirana and the Multifunctional Community Centre in Pogradec, have been produced and are divulged across UN websites and social media platforms with a view to promote good practices for inclusion of PwDs. A 1-minute video (tv spot) in sign language interpretation and an advertisement in the form of subtitles was broadcasted by News 24 TV for 5 days in September 2017. It aimed at raising awareness on importance of quality education for deaf children.<sup>6</sup>
- A training session facilitated by an international media and communication expert was provided to 12 written, online and TV media professionals, focusing on standards, approaches and terminology on ethically portraying and reporting on people with disabilities.

<sup>6</sup> News 24 TV was selected since they broadcast 24 hours a day and provide news in sign language.

- A network of health educators is established in 8 towns part of Berat, Korce and Elbasan regions (expanding to Shkoder too), aiming to increase demand of the most vulnerable and marginalized for quality integrated (SRH) services.

***Output 1.2: Roma, Egyptians and persons with disabilities throughout Albania and in selected municipalities are supported in their access to specific services.***

- The Swiss model of integrated social services is introduced and implemented - in 3 project municipalities: Fier, Lezha, Kruja (Fushe-Kruja). This intervention, in one hand, has established partnerships with relevant actors at local level, and on the other hand, has created an inclusive package of social services for R&E, considering baseline data and consultations with LGUs & communities. **300 R&E children and 197 project families** are being supported with *integrated social services* that include:
  - **Facilitation for quality education and school integration** – 300 R&E project children, aged 6-15 years old in public schools (157 M/143 F), are supported through counselling, school progress monitoring, equipment with school materials, school-parent cooperation, etc; and 89 teachers and school leaders, in 10 nine-year schools, are trained on “Friendly learning environments through intercultural education”.
  - **Referral & Facilitation to access social services at local level** – access to social services is created for 197 project families R&E, (68 in Lezha, 64 in Fier and 65 in Kruja), aiming to address the beneficiaries’ needs - 13 youngsters R&E (7M/6F), are enrolled to Vocational Education and Training (VET); 2 mothers are supported to access pre-school services (2 boys, are registered to child care centres); 2 cases are referred to TLAS for specialized support on divorce procedures; 19 cases are facilitated to requests for NE; 5 cases are facilitated for civil registration; 17 cases are referred for VET courses; 33 cases are referred for employment; 1 case is facilitated to request for social housing; 2 cases are facilitated to access health services.
  - **Support to access employment opportunities in Labor Market:** 11 adult R&E are employed, 5M/6F. Two of women beneficiaries are young mothers.
  - **Support for families’ economic empowerment** - 21 families R&E, are benefiting from income generation schemes, 17 Males and 4 Females.
  - **Community awareness activities** - 126 community members R&E, have actively participated in awareness raising sessions for education, health, employment, and advocacy for social services. Special attention was devoted to gender mainstreaming, promoting empowerment and integration of women and girls.
- Capacity building support is being provided to the Institute of Blind students to apply international standard teaching methodologies for visually impaired and learning-disabled pupils.

Assistive technology to allow blind people to participate in editing the audio-recorded books, and staff capacity building to effectively use the (assistive) technology is accomplished. Two key staff members of the Institute attended a 10-days training abroad on how to apply technology for making written materials accessible for blind students/people.

- The Community Centre for PwD in Shijak became operational in March 2018. 4 professionals provide services to 10 children with disabilities aged 6 to 13 years old. A five-day formal training on standards for service provision and on the job training for staff is underway.
- MoUs were signed with 10 municipalities, namely Dibra, Korca, Ura Vajgurore, Permet, Fier, Kruje, Lezhe, Lushnja, Durres and Pogradec, aiming primarily at establishing new models of sustainable community services for vulnerable groups with a particular focus on PwDs. Preliminary missions and discussions in Ura Vajgurore, Dibra, Permet and Vlora have taken place and the models are conceptualized on the basis of the municipality needs. Consequently, detailed plans for setting up new community centres for children with disabilities are developed.

***Output 1.3:*** *The capacity of groups of Roma, Egyptians and persons with disabilities as well as CSOs and researchers is improved in holding municipal service providers accountable.*

No activities planned for this reporting period.

***Output 1.4:*** *Vulnerable and marginalised persons and groups, including Roma and persons with disabilities, participate in the monitoring of national policies and strategies relevant for social inclusion.*

- The Local Partnership Model on SRH and Rights in the regions of Elbasan, Vlore, Berat and Shkoder is strengthened and expanded to the regions of Kukës and Lezhe.
- The first coordination meetings took place in of Fier, Permet and Lezhe to initiate the strengthening of the capacities of coalitions/CSOs and Youth Advocacy Platforms at municipal level on SRH / ASRH. In follow-up, a survey on perceptions and knowledge of young people regarding municipal services is finalised.

**Outcome 2:** Municipalities effectively manage the provision of rights-based social services and promote social inclusion.

It should be noted that during this reporting period ground work is prepared to support municipalities to provide effectively social services and promote social inclusion. The main contribution to this outcome focuses on the following:

- knowledge generated on existing situation of social service expenditures at municipal level which will inform tailored support to LGUs in financing social service provision;
- work initiated in supporting 8 selected LGUs in developing social care plans in compliance with the Law on Social Care Services;
- professional local staff in five municipalities capacitated in providing services for PWDs and other VGs in municipality run development centres.

***Output 2.1. Municipal and non-public service providers are strengthened in their capacity for providing and monitoring social services and promoting social inclusion.***

- A review of social service expenditures at municipal level, including those offered by the State Social Service, Regional Councils and other NGOs, was carried out in 15 municipalities. The initial draft report provides a clearer view of the extent to which the municipalities under review finance their social services thus feeding useful baseline information for focusing LNB project's capacity building interventions.
- Following the endorsement of the new Standard Budget Preparation Instruction for LGUs on the specific GRB, procedures were drafted and submitted to the Ministry of Finance and Economy (MoFE). Special attention was given to inclusion of participatory budgeting procedures that ensure effective citizen participation at all stages of the budget cycle.
- In support to implementation of the Law on Social Care Services, the municipalities were guided in elaborating the Social Care Plans. The focus is on the development of the Social Care Plans in 10 municipalities (Permet, Bulqiza, Ura Vajgurore, Fier, Pogradec, Librazhd, Sarande, Shijak, Mallakaster and Malesia e Madhe)<sup>7</sup> to comply with the law and to capture the realities of the population most in need for social services. A capacity building plan for social welfare directories is prepared focusing on the implementation of the Law on Social Care Services and development of social care plans and its monitoring.
- Regarding the strengthening of LGUs capacities to operationalize their functions related to SRH, Education, Gender and Social Protection and Inclusion, work has started with first meetings in Fier and Permet.

***Output 2.2: Social services that have demonstrated their effectiveness are scaled up.***

- 29 professional staff of LGU-run development centres of Pogradec, Saranda, Lushnja, Bulqiza and Shijak are capacitated through peer to peer exchanges and formal training.

<sup>7</sup> Municipalities of Lezha, Kruja and Lushnja (initially planned along with Fier and Pogradec) had developed their social care plans and have been replaced by municipalities of Permet, Bulqiza and Ura Vajgurore.



A total of 172 of mandays are spent to effectively address these training requirements through mentoring and on-the-job support.

***Output 2.3:*** *A grant scheme is set up for municipalities to introduce innovative social services that draw on community mobilization.*

No activities planned for this reporting period.

**Outcome 3:** National institutions implement their policy framework for providing social services and adequately fund social services.

During this reporting period, LNB main contribution to this outcome has focused mainly on:

- further completing of legal framework related to the implementation of the Law on Social Care Services and Social Enterprises through approval of several by-laws and awareness raising among relevant stakeholders at central and local level on the new approved by-laws;
- INSTAT capacitated to improve and standardize social inclusion data collection system in compliance with EU SILC requirements;

It should be noted that outputs delivered under this outcome built upon the achievements under UNSSIA and Social Care Reform Programmes particularly those related to further completion of legal framework on social care services and data collection system on social inclusion.

***Output 3.1:*** *The Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth and other competent Ministries are supported in their implementation of policies and strategies relevant for social inclusion and in plans for funding and in the adaptation of policies and strategies based on monitoring data.*

As result of LNB support:

- The Council of Ministers drafted the Decree which includes the result indicators that will facilitate the monitoring and reporting of the Children Agenda till 2020 by the MHSP.
- The MHSP developed the bylaws for the implementation of the Law on Social Care Services. Three DCMs are approved by the government rendering the system functional: (i) the DCM on establishment of the Social Fund, and (ii) the DCM on establishing the component of social care services in the national MIS for Social Protection; (iii) the DCM on the role and mission of SSS. Work is ongoing to complete the relevant regulatory framework.

- MoHSP carried out the mid-term evaluation of the implementation of the National Action Plan on Persons with Disabilities 2016-2020. The mid-term evaluation report will be finalised within Q3 2018.
- MoHSP finalized and consulted with the relevant stakeholders including MoFE the DCM “On the forms of supporting social enterprises through subsidies”, which is pending approval. .
- Albanian Parliament adopted the Social Housing Law in May 2018. The implementation of the law hinges on the stipulation of sub-legal acts that need to be developed. Technical expertise will be provided to the Ministry of Finance and Economy during Year 2 of project implementation.
- INSTAT improved the data collection and management systems on vulnerable groups: child-focused indicators, marginalized youth and elderly through hands-on support to improve modules and questionnaires of the ongoing surveys and studies. In addition, INSTAT’s institutional capacity was strengthened through support to upgrade technology for data collection for SILC indicators along with capacity building to standardize its social inclusion-relevant data collection system in compliance with EU SILC requirements. A workshop on the methodology of SILC with representatives from line ministries was conducted in October 2017. More technical support to the analysis and presentation of SILC findings as well as to enhancing the participation of central and local institutions in the provision of disaggregated data to INSTAT is foreseen for Year 2 of project implementation.
- Work has just started for the information and promotion of the Law on Social Enterprises at local level in Tirana, Shkodra, Korca. Preliminary meetings with municipal staff in these 3 areas has been conducted which will be followed with the capacity building plan and related trainings and promotion sessions. A communication plan is drafted and ready to be discussed and agreed with MHSP. “User-friendly manuals” are being drafted and organized in three modules, respectively 1) social enterprise start-up practices, 2) social enterprise formal registration, required criteria and related scoring and 3), existing best social enterprise practices in the country and abroad.

***Output 3.2:*** *The establishment of state funding mechanisms that support the development and scaling-up of innovative social services is supported.*

No activities planned for this reporting period.

## Chapter 3: Gender Equality and Good Governance

### 3.1 Gender Equality

Gender balance and non-discrimination is mainstreamed in all *Integrated Social Services* provided in three target Municipalities (Fier, Lezha and Kruja). 50 % of beneficiaries involved in quality education, VET programs, employment and income generation activities are girls/women.

Two programme interventions, implemented in partnership with local NGOs (ANAD and ADRF), aiming at communicating to persons with disabilities their rights and entitlements so that they claim and receive them, have particular focus on women with disabilities including deaf women.

### 3.2 Good Governance

With regard to transparency and accountability, the programme has constantly supported the municipalities to develop and observe pre-established criteria when recruiting the professional staff to work with persons with disabilities and for the admission of service recipients (eg. Shijak Community Centre, operational as of March 2018).

In order to support the local governance authorities in upholding the principles of transparency, participation and accountability, the project organised a media trip to the municipality of Pogradec where the Mayor responded to several journalists' questions regarding availability, access to and quality of social care services for vulnerable people by accepting responsibility and openly committing to furthering actions for improvement.

### 3.3 Internal Monitoring

An Internal Monitoring Plan has been designed aiming to improve development effectiveness and efficiency of LNB programme, through reviewing performance, and using evidence to adjust programming for optimal results achievement. The monitoring plan has started to provide feedback on the consistency or discrepancy between planned and actual results.

Evidences collected from monitoring are communicated to LNB Team and UN Agencies in order to take the appropriate actions and decisions to improve effectiveness. Also, the evidences of monitoring are serving as a base to validate the information of reporting.

Internal monitoring process collect data for outcome and output indicators as agreed in the Performance Monitoring Framework of LNB. Field visits are conducted to monitor directly the beneficiaries and to communicate with the important stakeholders. Data collected for outcome one showed that LNB programme is reaching the intended target groups. While the monitoring process of outcome two and three showed the willingness of central and local government to cooperate and to improve the indicators of the programme.

## Chapter 4: Major challenges and mitigation strategy

LNB has faced a series of challenges during implementation which range from reorganization of institutional structures at central level in charge of social inclusion and protection, to ambiguous institutional roles and responsibilities on implementation of social inclusion and protection reform, weak coordination of the policy responses of line ministries along with limited resources and capacities at central and local level.

### 4.1 Structural changes at central level

The main challenge faced in the first year of the programme implementation has been the splitting of functions of MSWY into three ministries, where the social protection function was delegated to Ministry of Health and Social Protection which underwent major restructuring in terms of structures, revision of roles and responsibilities within the Ministry which were formalized only last December. This slowed down the pace of activity implementation, which was recovered to some extent as of January 2018.

A series of inter-related activities regarding support for the MoHSP for the introduction of mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of national policies and strategies relevant for social inclusion did not take place as planned. The mechanism dedicated to the monitoring and implementation of SIPD (2016-2020) has not become yet operational also due to unclear status of IPMGs and technical groups associated with them. The initial plan foresaw the establishment of SIIG (Statistical Integrity Indicators Group) as part of the IMPG system.

### 4.2 Limited resources and capacities

Several service providers have a limited number of professional staff due to limited financial resources of the concerned municipalities facing difficulties to satisfy the demand as per the envisaged centre's capacity. Also, several municipalities cannot identify eligible candidates possessing the education background and competencies that match the service requirements, hence they do not provide certain specialized services. Professional staff working with PwDs need differentiated support to improve their performance in service delivery, hence, additional capacity building support has been provided. Coaching and mentoring appears to be necessary for all municipal centres' staff. They systematically reiterate the need for service protocols to apply uniform and agreed procedures at service delivery (e.g. the management of crises behaviour).

Many service beneficiaries face difficulties to access the service due to lack of available, accessible and affordable public transportation. It is expected that the social fund will help in resolving this issue and capacity building will be provided for adequate budgeting of the services.

Organizations of and for persons with disabilities at local level are extremely weak or playing very poorly their advocacy and representation role therefore the number and quality of public services

remains unaffected by them. In order to address this the project, while envisaging the CSOs' empowerment through capacity building interventions in partnership with two NGOs, is developing, information and awareness raising activities for people with disabilities in the targeted municipalities

The involvement of beneficiaries' parents and other family members remains indispensable for the success of the provided therapies, hence the collaboration with the parents and their training has been strongly recommended. It is important to note that service providers need support to cope with this issue.

Municipalities are much more collaborative at initiating the partnership with the project and less responsive to sustain the project results (e.g. they provide the facility, but they do not allocate adequate budgets for increasing the number or duration of services and the number of beneficiaries). In order to add more certainty that this happens, the programme is signing Memoranda of Understanding with all targeted municipalities.

#### *4.3 Need for cross sectorial and multi-stakeholder coordination*

MoHSP has the main role in leading, coordinating and monitoring policies and measures for persons with disabilities and the programme has requested this Ministry to influence the Ministry of Education for monitoring and expanding the use of upgraded assistive technology and knowledge provided to the Blind Students Institute. The initiative aims at addressing the matter with regard to not only the improvement of quality for blind children from receiving specialised education by this institute, but also for the set up of a national resource centre for the education of blind people.

The identification and agreement among institutions upon key indicators for children comprised the major work conducted, recognizing the imperative role of data / statistics to monitor the Agenda for Children till 2020. The prolongation of this process happened due to the required technical engagement of relevant institutions parallelly.

The programme promotes a range of rights and entitlements for persons with disabilities while its scope for direct support encompasses the social care services sector. Adult persons with disabilities receiving social care services need, in parallel, support in other areas such as employment and VET. This is one more rationale why the coordination role of the MoHSP at central and local level is indispensable.

A series of activities aiming at supporting the central government to implement and monitor the implementation of policies for persons with disabilities could not take place as anticipated within the timeline of the work plan. These activities relate to the elaboration of secondary legislation on personal assistants for persons with disabilities, the implementation of accessibility standards in public service provision, and the modelling of health rehabilitation services.



All of these have been brought up and agreed by in meetings and communications with MoHSP's management and will be followed up.

Municipalities are simultaneously partnering with multiple stakeholders and donors in the area of social care services. The programme has spent time and energy to support them to act up to the expectations of their role as coordinator of multiple stakeholders efforts in order to avoid overlapping agendas and unnecessary duplication of provision.

### Chapter 5: Communication and Visibility

The programme has pursued a mix of channels of communication to inform on its interventions. In May 2018, 13 journalists from the main media outlets in the country, including written press, portals and TV outlets were invited on a one-day mission to meet with the Mayor of Pogradec and the beneficiaries of the Community Centre for Persons with Disabilities in Pogradec. Journalists visited and interviewed programme beneficiaries and their caregivers in the centre and the Mayor. Their stories were featured in 13 articles, web-articles, portals and TV programmes. They also attended a training session on ethics of reporting for people with disabilities.

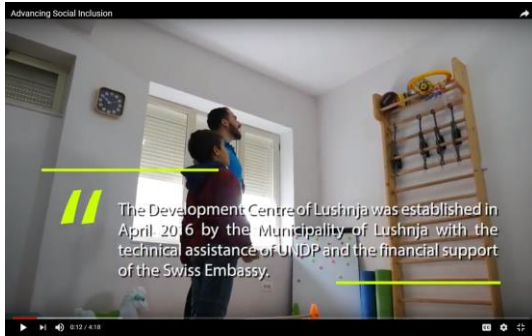
4 videos have been produced and published showcasing the social care services and facilities established in the framework of the programme with the aim to create an enabling environment for every member of society to progress. The videos have reached 11,208 visitors, amounting to nearly 1,165 clicks.



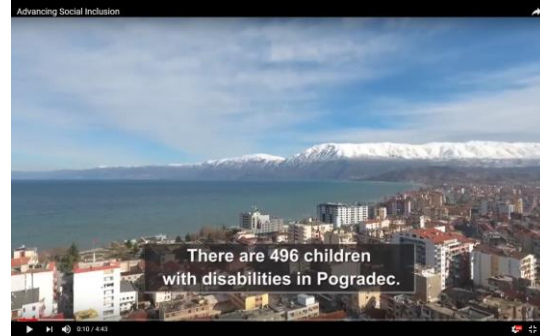
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TeHWNqC3JuU>



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FoQTuQ6frK0>



[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2kc\\_k0aI3iE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2kc_k0aI3iE)



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ENPOwHD7H9s>

Figure 1. The videos showcasing the social care services established

A communication plan specific to the visibility of Social Enterprises component is being drafted (including PR activities; social network engagement; documentation of activities through pictures, media articles and participation in media outlets; coverage of activities by media partners); User-friendly manuals are under development and will include information on social enterprise start-up practices, registration criteria and related scoring, existing practices in the country and abroad. 3 public awareness raising activities will be organized in the timeframe June-July in three target municipalities to address social re-integration, social inclusion and gender equality through the promotion of social enterprises.

## Chapter 6: Sustainability<sup>8</sup>

Sustainability of project results is a main concern for the project management which aims to bring durable improvements and changes in social services delivery and consequently in social inclusion in Albania. This was carefully addressed in the project design phase and is the focus of project implementation activities through the reinforcing use of a series of approaches and mechanisms to ensure a lasting improvement of social services delivery and social inclusion in Albania.

The Programme adopted a participatory approach also during implementation by involving, consulting and cooperating with all stakeholders (vulnerable group beneficiaries and their CSOs, municipal/public and non-public service providers, public authorities at central and local level and donors). The strengthening of public and non-public service providers through capacity building and learning by doing is the project's main approach. No parallel system of service provision will be set up by the project.

<sup>8</sup> This will be reported annually

Key to sustainability of the intervention is to ensure that capacity building of national and local government focuses into empowering them to understand and use the various legal and policy frameworks that gives them the responsibility to plan and deliver social care services for families and children. Also, the continuous improvement of service providers' technical capacity through formal training, job mentoring and exposure to good practices is part of institutional strengthening efforts at this level.

However, the willingness and commitment of the selected beneficiaries to collaborate in project activities and the cooperation with the local government stakeholders and other NGOs service providers in each project location remains a key element that contributes to sustainability of the Integrated Social Services. One way to do so is to guarantee the commitment of both beneficiaries and the municipalities themselves in jointly planning and implementing social care services starting with the formal adoption of local social care plans by the municipalities.

The adoption of the Decree on the establishment of the social fund is a good basis for increasing the sustainability of interventions. There is continuous communication with the municipalities to uphold their commitment for increased funding for recently established services. In parallel, boosting of the demand for services from the eligible beneficiaries through CSOs is a measure for increased sustainability.

## Chapter 7: Updated action/activity plan and Finances

Overall financial delivery (disbursed and committed) for year 1 is 63%

Year 1	Amount allocated in 2017 USD	Total minus 1% AA fee	Year 1 AWP Budget	Disbursed as of May 31st 2018	Commitments	Total Disbursed and Committed	Disbursed and Committed %
UNDP	1,137,811	1,126,433	1,076,433	561,027	265,153	826,180	76.8%
UNICEF	315,755	312,597	312,597	27,617	6,090	33,707	10.8%
UNW	125,373	124,119	124,119	38,188	21,350	59,538	48%
UNFPA	79,436	78,642	78,642	58,982	19,660	78,642	100%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1,658,375</b>	<b>1,641,791</b>	<b>1,591,791</b>	<b>705,474</b>	<b>292,593</b>	<b>998,067</b>	<b>63%</b>

### Abbreviations:

ADRF – Albanian Disability Rights Foundation

ANAD – Albanian National Association of the Deaf

ASRH – Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health

CSO – Civil Society Organisations

DCM - Decisions of the Council of Minister

DLDP - Decentralization and Local Development Programme

DPO – Disabled Peoples Organizations

GRB - Gender Responsive Budgeting

INSTAT – Albanian Institute of Statistics

LGU – Local Government Units

LNB – Leave No One Behind

MHSP – Ministry of Health and Social Protection

MoFE – Ministry of Finance and Economy

MoU – Memorandum of Understanding

NGO – Non-Governmental Organizations

PwD – Persons with Disabilities

R&E – Roma and Egyptians

SRH – Sexual and Reproductive Health

STAR 2 - Consolidation of Territorial and Administrative Reform

VG – Vulnerable Groups

#### List of annexes:

**Annex 1:** Performance Monitoring Framework (Programme log frame)

**Annex 2:** LNB Target Municipalities – Year 1

**Annex 3:** Communication and Visibility Guidelines

**Annex 4:** Visibility and Knowledge Sharing