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LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

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SEMI-ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT JUNE – DECEMBER 2019

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**Leave
No One
Behind**

United Nations Country Office

"Skenderbej" Street, Gurten Building, 2nd Floor, Tirana, Albania

Tel.: +355 (4) 2250 205, 2250 224, 2250 234

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 **1 June – 31 December 2019**.

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 and to have a voice in public decision-making affecting their lives*.

Chapter 1: - Brief context update:

The Government of Albania is committed to implement the legislative and institutional Social Care reforms. The economic growth rate of Albania has been steady over the last years, with a real projected GDP increase of 3% during 2019¹, which is lower than anticipated at the beginning of the year. The country is expected to gradually continue some acceleration reaching 4.5% in 2021, supported by improved macroeconomic fundamentals². The capacities for social protection programmes administration remain limited at all levels, both in terms of the number of staff as well as technical competency. Services provided through the non-public sector – mainly financed by international CSOs and charities have attempted to fill the gaps in public service provision³.

The Albanian government recently approved the extension of the National Protection Strategy 2015 – 2020 and its national action plan to 2022. The policy document sets the government vision for an integrated social protection system, and it provides the ground to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the poverty targeted cash assistance; improve the situation of persons with disability; and establish an integrated system of social care services at decentralized level. EU progress report for 2018⁴ commends what is done but makes a clear recommendation for the government to take further steps. The policy intent has also to be accompanied with adequate and effective budgetary allocations as the current investments in social protection remain low. According to MTBF data, the budget allocated for social protection is about 9% of the GDP, including contributory social insurance programmes which occupy about 80% of the allocations, and less than 1% of GDP are allocated as child and family allowance, which includes the cash transfers for poverty and disability. The social protection allocations should reach a threshold which is comparable with other countries in the region – the average investment on social protection for ECA region is about 16 % of the GDP. While the country faces challenges with fiscal space and is struggling to lower the level of public debt, the nominal budgetary increase is not possible, therefore better use of

¹ <https://www.imf.org/en/Countries/ALB>

² National Economic Reform Programme 2019 – 2021

³ Post Disaster Needs Assessment - PDNA for Social Protection Sector, 2019

⁴ EU Albania 2018 Report, pg 78

<https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20180417-albania-report.pdf>

the existing resources and strengthened coordination and integration between social protection entitlements are imperative.

The allocation of funds to resource Social Fund and support social care services at local level that started in 2019 initiative is to be commended: about 100 million ALL will reach 14 municipalities (Tirana, Durres, Vlora, Saranda, Maliq, Lezhe, Kurbin, Gjirokaster, Roskovec, Lushnje, Perrenjas, Librazhd, Elbasan, Peshkopi). The budgetary line is maintained in 2020, although the budget increase should be sufficient for the funds to support equitably the different LGUs. The budget planned for Social Fund for 2020 is now 200 million ALL⁵, therefore showing a gradual but steady increase in the investment for social care services, but the budget will be used also to support the LGUs to hire the proper human resources and establish structures in compliance with the Law on Social Care Services (121/2016). This is joint responsibility of LGUs, but MHSP should use the budgetary allocations to incentivize and to support LGUs filling the actual gaps.

Secondary legislation necessary for the enactment of the Law on Social Housing received continued attention in 2019 with 10 secondary legislation - DCM developed and approved using LNB technical expertise and in consultation with groups of interest. Public spending for social housing programmes is still too modest. The allocation of funds to resource Social Housing Programmes at local level in 2019 was 720,000,000 ALL or 1.3% more than in 2018.

The SILC data for 2017 and 2018 are published in December 2019 and UN Agencies are working with INSTAT and national partners to measure and report on the poverty and deprivation data.

On November 26th, 2019 a strong earthquake with a magnitude of 6.4 on the Richter scale hit Albania, resulting in significant damages in Durres, Lezha and Tirana regions in community infrastructures, disrupting many services, and straining the capacities of local governments to respond. Loss of shelter and loss of livelihoods and employment opportunities added to the post-traumatic stress and vulnerability, influencing negatively the ability of the individuals and communities to recover quickly after the earthquake. Families have been displaced from their area of residence because their settlements have been damaged and are assessed as unsafe. According to Post Disaster Needs Assessment - PDNA for Social Protection Sector, about 17,090 persons were accommodated in hotels (25%) and tents (75%). Other were either hosted at family and friends or rented accommodation⁶. The same report noted that, in general, those affected continued to receive services where they were provided, however, the displaced population have encountered difficulties in accessing some of the services that require documentation to be obtained from the relevant administrative unit. The earthquake highlighted the need for better social services and for a functional assessment and referral system, which is linked and interacts with the cash assistance programme.

⁵ Indicative amount reported by MHSP officials in the working group discussions.

⁶ Post Disaster Needs Assessment - PDNA for Social Protection Sector, 2019

Chapter 2: Programme implementation

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

LNB contributed to further empowerment of vulnerable people through advocacy, capacity building and consultation structures and facilitated access to inclusive social services:

- Vulnerable groups equipped with knowledge and information on (i) importance of children's education and procedures for vulnerable children's enrolment in the education system, (ii) their social rights and entitlement including their right to quality integrated Sexually Reproductive Health (SRH) services;
- Persons with disabilities supported with inclusive services models: i) independent living service model for adults with intellectual disabilities; ii) 7 community centers in 7 municipalities refurbished and staffed with trained professionals to work with children with disabilities; iii) 40 assistant teachers trained on inclusive education methodology for vulnerable children especially those with disabilities;
- Capacities of Roma and Egyptian health mediators strengthened in the monitoring of for the implementation of the Plan of Action of the Roma and Egyptian Strategy 2016-2020;
- Early Warning System (EWS) for school drop-out mainstreamed at national level through setting up 51 teachers' professional networks;
- Implementation of the Swiss model of integrated social services model through an inclusive package of social services for R&E implemented in three selected LGUs with the potential of scaling up in other LGUs;
- Vulnerable youth capacitated on monitoring the implementation of local social service policies using innovative methods as *peer to peer learning and field reporters*.

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

- 24 informative sessions⁷ during July – September 2019 were conducted with **400 Roma parents**⁸ on how to register children in school and on importance of education for breaking the cycle of poverty. A media spot⁹ was launched in two national Albanian televisions to raise awareness on children's registration in the 1st grade reaching out at least **400.000 people**.
- 31 info-days on rights and entitlements of persons with disabilities were organised in three project sites¹⁰ and attended by **587 PWDS**¹¹ and their family members. The participants raised the main concerns for this community related to i) accessibility of the built environment and transportation, ii) reimbursement of medicines and assistive devices, iii) access to inclusive education, employment,

⁷ 6 sessions in Durrës; 6 sessions in Korçë; 6 sessions in Lezhë; 6 sessions in Shkodër

⁸ 80 fathers and 320 mothers

⁹ The spot was aired 288 times

¹⁰ Diber, Permet Ure Vajgurore

¹¹ 184 women

social care services and social housing. The info-days concluded with a photo mobile exhibition and the broadcast of three local TV programs to raise the awareness of all relevant stakeholders and public at large to change discriminatory attitudes and promote inclusion.

- Seven awareness sessions promoted and expanded the community-based model to increase demand of the vulnerable groups for quality integrated Sexually Reproductive Health (SRH) services in the districts of Puke and Malesi e Madhe, and in the remote areas of Elbasan, Berat and Korça. 87¹² Roma community members in rural areas attended the awareness sessions.
- The thematic and operational capacities of two CSOs in three LGUs¹³ working with IDUs, MSM, SW, young people in prison settings, and other young vulnerable groups in the country were strengthened to advocate on their sexual and reproductive health rights.
- Six Municipalities¹⁴ were assisted to conduct participatory practices for gender responsive budgeting at local level by involving local civil society organizations to engage the community and vulnerable women. 22 awareness raising meetings were organized and it is expected to establish the participatory budgeting network in January 2020.
- A capacity building programme for Disabled People's Organizations (DPOs) and individuals with disabilities was designed¹⁵ and implemented during the second half of 2019 aiming to strengthen capacities of DPOs to better play their advocacy and lobbying roles in consultation and decision-making processes affecting the life of PWDs. **30 participants representing 13 DPOs** nationwide attended the four residential training workshops benefitting organizational, managerial and technical knowledge and skills along with networking opportunities for concerted advocacy and lobbying actions.
- LNB supported the research study¹⁶ *"Fostering the social inclusion of young people with disabilities in Albania"* in partnership with Worcester Polytechnic Institute WPI/USA focusing on gaps, quality and outreach of social services for youth with intellectual disabilities and other neurological or developmental disorders¹⁷ in Tirana, which highlighted the discrimination, insufficient services, and the mistreatment of this target group.
- A workshop to report on the challenges of the implementation of the mechanism for Early Warning System (EWS)¹⁸ as a tool to reduce school drop-out as well as to discuss jointly the next steps for its implementation was held in July 2019 attended by representatives of the local departments of education in 4 LGUs¹⁹ and Ministry of Education Sports and Youth.
- Early Warning System (EWS) for school dropout was mainstreamed at national level through establishing 51 teachers' professional networks²⁰ and strengthening their organizational capacities in designing and implementing networks' action plans as of November 2019 as well as strengthening

¹² 60% women

¹³ Tirane, Durres and Fier

¹⁴ Elbasan, Durres, Diber, Lushnje, Lezhe, Tirane

¹⁵ Based on 2018 survey on DPOs' training needs assessment

¹⁶ 31 interviews with persons with intellectual disabilities (aged 16 to 37 years old), their parents, service providers, and government officials in Tirana

¹⁷ intellectual disabilities and other neurological or developmental disorders

¹⁸ A documentation of the experience is attached the report, while a video showcasing the experience from the children point of view is also attached in the link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FbpbcdIJ9RY&feature=youtu.be>

¹⁹ Korca, Berat, Tirana and Durres

²⁰ Led by 51 appointed network leaders

network leader capacities on EWS. About **1,000 teachers**²¹ at national level received 2-day information sessions on EWS for school drop-out.

- Deconcentrated offices of health in 4 target regions²² were supported to strengthen regulatory frameworks and to enforce mechanisms for sustainable application of family outreach and home visiting techniques by health care front-liners, in close alignment with existing and newly developed social care and child protection outreach approaches. **1,223 home visits**²³ were conducted by trained staff of the 20 health centers in 4 target regions using the new model and standards acquired during training. A review of the results of the implementation of the new standards for home visits carried out
- showed that the overall work performance of the trained personnel has significantly improved in identifying families suffering from social problems.²⁴

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

- In compliance with the newly approved Local Social Care Plans, and in close cooperation and coordination with the respective municipalities and service providers of Kruja, Lezha and Fier municipalities, the programme continued to support implementation of integrated inclusive social services through a set of services provided for **300 R&E families** with complex long-term needs.
 - **Access to quality and inclusive education: 300 school age children from R&E communities**, are continuously supported to access quality education.
 - **Social inclusion: 205 R&E children** participated in 3 summer camps together with 95 other children from the community;
 - **100 teachers and school directors** are capacitated on inclusive classrooms module accredited by the Ministry of Education, and about **2,500** children are benefiting from the improved techniques on inclusive learning;
 - **Referral & Facilitation to access social services at local level** – this included access to social services provided for **218 R&E families**²⁵;
 - **Access to employment opportunities: 22 R&E** are provided with counselling for employment and have been employed; **4 R&E** supported with start-ups business activities; **19** project beneficiaries have been supported to enroll at a suitable professional course, and **13** others to access local business for an internship;

²¹ 20 teacher in each professional network

²² Elbasan, Korça, Tirana and Vlora

²³ 360 in Elbasan, 349 in Korça, 110 in Tirana and 404 in Vlora

²⁴ 370 families were identified as having problems ranging from poor and inadequate living conditions (around 14%), low income (9.2%), parents' abuse with tobacco, alcohol, etc. (6.7%), families having faced traumatic situations - including divorce, prisoning or death of one parent, or other issues (4.7%), environmental pollution (4.7%) in Vlora to poor living conditions (10.3%), families having faced traumatic situations (5.8%), environmental pollution (4.4%) and higher number of children with health issues (2.8%), in Elbasan, and poor living conditions (9%), and low income (4%), in Korça.

²⁵ 78 in Fier, 73 in Lezha & 67 in Kruja

- **Economic empowerment: 50 R&E families** are supported with income generation schemes. Beneficiaries are households and parents of children supported through the project;
 - **Community awareness: 75 R&E parents** raised awareness on the importance of education; **25 R&E parents** were informed about the school enrolment process; **145 R&E community members** are informed about safe and long-term employment, migration among R&E community members, heart diseases and risk factors, early marriages and bullism;
 - **Post disaster emergency response in Lezha, Kruja and Tirana municipalities – 240 families**, affected by the earthquake of November 2019, are supported with packages of supplies for emergency situation.
- Following a series of awareness raising activities and meetings with Education Regional Directories and schools in Pogradec and Fier municipalities, **40 Roma and Egyptians adults**²⁶ above 16 years old, who haven't completed low secondary education, enrolled and are attending the school program.
 - Independent living for **10 adults with intellectual disabilities**²⁷ over 21 years old is piloted with support from a specialized NGO/DPO in Tirana. A manual comprising the service model description, the staff job description, and the training modules for the staff and beneficiaries is prepared. Three professionals²⁸ are trained and the service model will be disseminated (early February) in a conference with relevant stakeholders including municipal social care service units and local public and non-public service providers.
 - Following the local elections in end of June 2019, meetings with the new mayors were organised in 4 municipalities²⁹ to discuss the functioning of the rehabilitated community centres and provision of social services, which are furnished and staffed. The center in Ura Vajgurore already hired 4 professional staff and provides services to 17 children with disabilities, while in Diber and Permet the municipality is recruiting the professional staff and identifying the beneficiaries. Rehabilitation works are ongoing in the other three centres in the municipalities of Korce, Maliq and Vlore.
 - A methodology to train the assistant teachers on inclusive education concepts, principles and approaches was developed in supporting vulnerable children, especially those with disabilities. **40 assistant teachers** were trained in a TOT in September 2019 and will serve as a core group to train 983 assistant teachers in the next two years on the rights-based approach on inclusive education, the roles and responsibilities of assistant teachers, the child-centred pedagogy and planning on inclusive education. As a follow up, the Ministry of Education Sport and Youth has approved the new guideline No. 26 date 25.11.2019³⁰ on the role of the Assistant Teacher in the Pre-University Education Institutions.

²⁶ 41% females

²⁷ 3 girls

²⁸ A psychologist, a social worker and a development educator

²⁹ Diber, Permet, Ure Vajgurore and Kruja municipalities

³⁰ The guideline describes the selection criteria, education requirements, the duties and the responsibilities of the assistant teacher. It highlights the importance of collaboration with the subject teacher, school psychologist, social worker and parents for developing the Individual Education Plan to guarantee full intellectual, social-emotional and physical potential and inclusion for all children.

- **8 proposals for innovative social services** at local level in line with the grant scheme's regulations are approved by the SC. Letters of Agreements with 8 selected municipalities³¹ are signed and funds are disbursed in November 2019.

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.*

- Capacities of Roma and Egyptian health mediators are strengthened with knowledge and information on Sexual and Reproductive Health. A training toolkit is designed and tailored on the specifics of R&E community is developed and 7 meetings were organized with health mediators, R&E community representatives, activists and other stakeholders in Korça, Berat, Elbasan and Shkodra. Three advocacy meetings with representatives of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection served as a forum for discussion on the recognition of the role of health mediator in health system as an important element for the implementation of the Plan of Action of the Roma and Egyptian Strategy 2016-2020.

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.*

- **60 marginalised/vulnerable youth** in three municipalities³² are capacitated on monitoring the implementation of local social service policies, using innovative methods such as *peer to peer learning and field reporters*. As a result, **1,135 youth**³³ benefited knowledge and shared experience on social service policies at local level through 59 peer to peer learning sessions, and 23 issues have been raised by the young reporters on social services using social media and other formats.
- Two LGUs³⁴ are supported to *monitor the implementation of the Child Rights and Protection Agenda with the participation of the vulnerable and marginalized groups*. In July 2019, each LGU published cross-sector data on child-focused indicators for years 2017 and 2018 providing information on child health, education, protection, and other related demographics improving the administrative data availability and their utilization for informed decisions. (Annex 2)
- The monitoring model for the implementation of SRH & Youth policies and strategies on the most vulnerable and marginalized is established in 3 LGUs³⁵. The capacities of youth advocates are strengthened by periodically monitoring the municipalities and their commitment progress to the youth agenda. "Youth Voice" network prepared the monitoring progress report on Tirana municipality work on youth, based on the Declaration of Engagements compiled by Youth Voice and signed with the Mayor of Tirana since November 9th, 2015. The findings of the report were shared with the Tirana Municipality and made available on youth voice portal.

³¹ Roskovec, Shkodra, Prrrenjas, Vlora, Kamza, Permet, Dibra, Puka.

³² Pogradec, Korca and Kruja

³³ 59% females

³⁴ Korca and Shkodra

³⁵ Kruje, Ure Vajgurore, Shijak

- “Youth voice” advocacy platform was established in 3 additional LGUs³⁶ and the capacities of the municipality staff were strengthened in advocacy on SRH/ ICPD/ SDGs. Two training sessions on EU Financial Instruments for Civil Society were organised³⁷. Work is on-going for the standardization of the SRHR training manuals for youth workers at non-formal education settings based on youth peer methodology, which will be later accredited by the respective institutions.

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

LNB contributed in further strengthening the capacities of municipalities in implementing social inclusion policies at local level and providing inclusive services:

- 5 new municipalities, in addition to 16 others in the previous period, developed municipal social Care Plans and 11 budget briefs³⁸ on social care services and capacitated to implement the social care plans;
- 31 professionals in 9 community centers in 9 municipalities trained on advanced methods to work with children with disabilities, in particular those with autism spectrum disorders;
- 15 representatives from 5 municipalities trained in implementation of the integrated social services model through study visits in Switzerland;
- 8 municipalities selected and 7 already supported through the grant scheme/the Social Fund to introduce innovative social care services at local level³⁹.
- EMIS/SMS system for identifying out of school children is operational countrywide and out of school children reintegration mechanisms (intersectoral groups) established at local level (4 municipalities).

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

- LNB supported INSTAT to conduct a vulnerability mapping study in 16 municipalities to assess social exclusion, vulnerabilities and gender-based discrimination at local level by using as a base the EU-SILC survey and updating it with some additional variables needed for the analysis. The study investigated three elements of the measurement of at-risk-of poverty and social exclusion (AROPE): material deprivation, income poverty and low work intensity (LWI). **A gross sample of 6, 816 households was selected** for this EU-SILC survey.

³⁶ Krujë, Urë Vajgurore, Shijak

³⁷ 25 representatives of the organizations, members of “Youth Voice” network, in each of the trainings.

³⁸ Budget Briefs have examined trends of budget spending and allocation in all 11 municipalities, so as capacity to raise own resources. These were used as evidence to influence budget allocations for the social care plans.

³⁹ The grant with Vloera Municipality has not yet been disbursed due to the non-availability of facilities to be turned into an emergency center.

- The capacities of three selected LGUs⁴⁰ are strengthened to include and operationalize their SRH & Youth functions. A survey was conducted with 300 young people from urban and rural areas in the three selected LGUs to measure the perceptions and knowledge of young people on SDGs, SRH and health services offered by municipalities. Three Factsheets (one for each municipality) were designed, published and distributed to respective municipality officials and broader audiences through the youth voice portal⁴¹ and social media. Two local action plan documents⁴² were developed in compliance with the Law on Local Governance and National Action Plan for Young People 2015 – 2020 including initiatives and programs for young people supported respectively by two municipalities⁴³. Several youth issues are included in municipal annual budget and plans as a result of systematic advocacy: i) promotion of young people’s participation in democratic processes and decision-making at local level, through establishment of youth councils, ii) promotion of youth employment at local level, iii) promotion of young people’s participation in environment protection and cultural activities in the city/town, iv) promotion of young people’s participation and crucial role on sexual and reproductive health education through peer education and youth friendly services, v) real engagement of young people on the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- Four intersectoral groups in 4 LGUs⁴⁴ involving representatives of policymakers and practitioners at local level are established and convened under coordination of the Prefect’s office, focusing on identification of cases of out of school children and finding local solutions for their reintegration. 4 technical level events were conducted on the out of school children mechanisms attended by 80 representatives⁴⁵ of intersectoral groups to discuss about the children education as a multi-sectorial issue. 76 representatives⁴⁶ of education institutions⁴⁷ attended 4 training sessions conducted in 4 LGUs⁴⁸ Durres, Korce, Lezhe and Shkoder on the procedure to request the additional funding for children in need to increase in their school enrolment and education.
- At national level, the representatives from MoESY, Mol and MoHSP were trained to implement jointly the process of cross-checking the lists of children at compulsory school age based on the Trilateral Joint Order⁴⁹. While the process is continuing, the necessity of an efficient EMIS system has emerged as a priority in identifying out of school children (OSC).

⁴⁰ Kruje, Ure Vajgurore, Shijak

⁴¹ www.jotabu.al and the Jotabu apps, provide information on sexual and reproductive health through interactive windows and rubrics with around 95,000 visits per month and 2300 followers on Facebook.

⁴² The Budget Analysis and Youth Local Action Plan for Maliq Municipality “Budgeting for young people with young people”: - Maliq Municipality” at : <https://observator.org.al/sq/publikime/>

Budgeting for young people with young people - Pogradec Municipality’ <https://observator.org.al/sq/publikime/>

⁴³ Maliq and Pogradec

⁴⁴ Durres, Korce, Lezhe and Shkoder

⁴⁵ MoESY, Institution of Prefecture, Regional Education Directory (RED), Regional Health Services Directory, Health Centers, Municipalities, Child Protect Units, Police Commissariats, civil society, teachers

⁴⁶ directors, teachers and school staff

⁴⁷ Local Education Office and schools

⁴⁸ Durres, Korce, Lezhe and Shkoder

⁴⁹ published in the Official Gazette nr 105, date 19 July 2019, pg 7775 at <https://qbz.gov.al/eli/fz/2019/105/24f2afc2-1a5c-4bb1-b036-44818dff0836>

- The system of SMS alert⁵⁰ has reached more than **2,000 service providers**⁵¹ representing various institutions⁵² with **5,797 text messages**, with 8 various SMS content, during the period July 2019 December 2019. Informative leaflets in Albanian and Romani for the registration of children at the first grade were produced⁵³.
- LNB supported MoHSP to build capacities of the local government units and the regional offices of state social services to use effectively the Social Care Services as part of the Social Protection MIS and in particular to enter the data according to the case management practices and the system protocols. Workflows and standard operating procedures are in place and the social care component of MIS is adequately connected to the various e-data platforms. Training on the use of MIS will be provided to all interested service providers in 42 LGUs starting from January 2020. While MoHSP is committed to start piloting the platform and start building the capacities of government structures and service providers on how to use the system, there is a need to update and validate the set of indicators that will be collected, inputted and processed in the system according to the existing legislation and practices around case management practices and social care services delivery.
- As of September 2019, LNB partnered with the Department of Social Work at Faculty of Social Sciences to align the social work curriculum with the new legislation and the new requirements of the social protection system and enrich it with best practices of research in dealing with children and families in vulnerable situation. This will contribute in developing the capacities of the pre-service and in-service of social workers and other social protection staff involved with administering aspects of social protection. Work has already started to review the existing curricula⁵⁴ of Social Work education in three public universities⁵⁵. Department of Social Work has established a team and has led two major consultations: one consultation with about 100 students of bachelor degrees and one consultation with about 50 representatives of different services providers to discuss on the challenges faced by the social workers and how the curricula can be updated to prepare the social workers for the new system of social care services in the country.
- Capacity strengthening of the duty bearers and service providers at local level for the implementation of the integrated social service model as provided in their social care plans was in the focus of LNB during this period. 15 representatives from 5 municipalities⁵⁶ participated in an exchange visit in Zurich, Switzerland, which focused more the practical learning of Swiss social services model such as access to social services for vulnerable persons, networking and the referral system, service delivery mechanisms; the role of social workers and their ongoing qualification on planning and budgeting for social care, the provision of social services and the role of NGOs as providers of services within the

⁵⁰ Used by service providers at national and local level as per the Trilateral Joint Order

⁵¹ Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Health and Social Protection, Local Education Office, Institution of Prefecture, Municipality, Police Commissariats, Schools.

⁵²

⁵³ Informative Leaflets for parents can be found at: Albanian language - <https://observator.org.al/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Kartolina-OOSC-shqip-2020.pdf>; Romani language - <https://observator.org.al/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Kartolina-OOSC-romisht-2020.pdf>

⁵⁴ The first outline of 7 modules for in-service training of social workers is prepared on needs assessment, planning, case management, case evaluation, staff burn-out, group supervision and final evaluation.

⁵⁵ University of Tirana, University of Shkodra and University of Elbasan

⁵⁶ Fier, Lezha, Kruja, Permet, and Korça

system. In addition, 30 social workers, head of social departments and practitioners from Kruja and Fier exchanged experience and learned from each other's practice, discussed challenges and analyzed the most effective approaches on social services provision for vulnerable people.

- During this reporting period, LNB supported 5 municipalities⁵⁷ to develop the municipal Social Care Plans by providing technical assistance and capacity building to the municipal staff and other relevant stakeholders to conduct participatory planning, budgeting and monitoring social care services. **105 municipal staff** were trained on the new legislation on social care services and their tasks and duties as per the same law.
- LNB partnered with the University of Lucerne to design and deliver a tailored capacity building programme⁵⁸ for **31 professional staff of 9 public community centres**⁵⁹ to provide specialized quality services, enhance their technical and management capacities and prevent burn-out. In Addition, training of trainers (TOT) workshop for 16 professionals was delivered to provide cascade training on methods⁶⁰ considered worldwide effective for working with children with disabilities, in particular those with autism spectrum disorders.
- LNB supported MoFE to draft the bylaws for the implementation of the Law on Social Housing and organize two rounds of consultation workshops attended by 140 local government officials from 45 municipalities to discuss, share experience and provide inputs. To date 19⁶¹ bylaws are consulted with national and local government institutions through round tables and/or GoA's electronic platform of consultations.
- LGUs' social care department staff of 21⁶² municipalities have been supported during this period on issues related to the Social Care Plan implementation aiming to strengthen the municipal capacities to implement the Social Care Plans.
- LNB provided technical assistance to develop budget briefs for 11 municipalities to analyze the funding of social care services at central and local level, indicating that albeit delays, there is progress in financing the reform on social care service. Budget briefs were designed through a participatory process, which encouraged a functional dialogue between budget directories and social care directories at municipalities accompanied with capacity building of municipal staff into budgeting social care services. In the 6 municipalities where LSDG have been established, the budget briefs have been discussed within this forum aiming to increase the transparency of budget processes, but also to ensure that decisions about donors funding can be influenced by the budget brief data. All budget briefs will be published online, which will be available for the annual reporting.
- Support for structures of local administration in monitoring and inspecting social care services started with the mapping exercise which is crucial for strengthening the capacities of LGUs to plan, implement and monitor the delivery of social care services in terms of types of services, human and financial

⁵⁷ Divjaka, Blesh, Patos, Kocove and Tropoja

⁵⁸ Three residential workshops of 3-day each on specific work methods with children with disabilities was proposed and conducted for all 31 professionals from 9 community centres.

⁵⁹ Dibra, Ura Vajgurore, Permet, Kruja, Lushnje, Pogradec, Sarande, Shijak and Bulqize

⁶⁰ TEACH (Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communication handicapped Children); AAC (Augmentative and Alternative Communication).and other connected methods

⁶¹ 10 are approved by the council of ministers in 2019

⁶² Tirane, Durres, Korce, Shkoder, Vlore, Mallakaster, Sarande, Shijak, Malesia e Madhe, Librazhd, Maliq, Permet, Ura vajgurore, Fier, Pogradec, Bulqize, Patos, Belsh, Kucove, Tropoje, Divjake

resources. As the delivery of social care services is now grounded at LGU level, the regular mapping will serve the Directories of Social Care Services to retain updated knowledge on the availability of services in their respective territory, on the quality of services in terms of number and professional qualifications of the staff providing the services; and ultimately on the sustainability of these services. Such structured knowledge enables the LGUs to take measures to fill in the gaps that might arise in each of the three components, with the aim of ensuring that children and other vulnerable groups are being properly provided with the social care services to which they are entitled.

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

- Documentation of the best practices across the country in social care services provision for vulnerable population is underway and is expected to be completed by early spring 2020. Work started with the definition of a set of criteria on best practices and the call for expression of interest was launched in December 2019. 4 information sessions were organized in four locations⁶³ attended by 112 representatives of public and non-public social service providers from 24 municipalities. The emergency situation following the earthquake of 26 November 2019 has delayed this process to resume in January 2020.

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

- In close coordination with MoHSP, and in line with the grant scheme's regulations for new social care services at local level, LNB allocated funds to resource Social Fund and support social care services at local level: about 15,505,264 ALL will be provided to 8 municipalities⁶⁴. Cooperation agreements are signed, and the first tranche of funds is already disbursed to 7 LGUs. A two-day training on Project Cycle Management and Financial Reporting equipped 16 employees from winning municipalities with the appropriate skills and useful tools in managing the implementation of the new innovative services.

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

During this reporting period, LNB has made substantial progress in supporting national institutions in advancing the policy framework for the provision of adequate social services. Delivery of planned activities and outputs has contributed mainly to:

- development and implementation of policy framework on inclusive policies (*review of Action Plan of the Social Protection Strategy 2015 – 2020 and its Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, four draft bylaws of the Law 93/2014 on Inclusion of and Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities, draft*

⁶³ Tirana, Shkodra, Korça and Vlora

⁶⁴ Permet, Vlora, Roskovec, Shkoder, Kamez, Prrenjas, Puke and Diber

guidelines for the universal progressive home visiting for the health care professionals, 40 draft legal acts/ by-laws on social housing, endorsement of the Youth Law by Parliament, guide for LGUs on financial mechanism to support children at risk of dropping out)

- establishing standardized data collection system on monitoring of social inclusion policies and strategies implemented (*SILC, child-targeted indicators*).

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*

- LNB supported MoHSP to undertake multi-stakeholder consultations to review the Action Plan of the Social Protection Strategy 2015 – 2020, which is expanded and costed until 2022⁶⁵ along with updated Monitoring and Evaluation Framework in line with to the new guidelines of the PM's office, the EU Action document for IPA 2019/2020 Programmes which will provide budget support to advance the social care agenda reflecting the policy reforms of the government of Albania in economic aid, disability and social care reform. The draft is discussed and approved by the IPMG on social inclusion and employment.
- LNB provided technical expertise to MoHSP and the ad-hoc inter-ministerial working group to draft four by-laws of the Law 93/2014 on Inclusion of and Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities. The draft by-law on *"The modality of provision of personal assistance and the criteria for the selection of the personal assistant"* was approved by DCM in December 2019, whereas two other DCM drafts and a Minister's instruction will be consulted with the concerned institutions/stakeholders.
- LNB engaged three senior national legal experts to lead a working group composed of MoFE housing and legal experts and other non-governmental and inter-governmental advisors tasked with the preparation of secondary legislation (by-laws) for the enactment of Law 22/2018. Around **40 pieces of legal acts / by-laws** are being drafted⁶⁶ and expected to be finalised within May 2020 following multi-stakeholders' consultations. Until December 2019, **19 by-laws/DCMs** were designed and consulted and **10 of them are approved by the CoM** and 9 priority by-laws are drafted and submitted to the PMO for further internal processing.
- In September 2019, the National Council for Child Rights approved and published the Mid-Term Monitoring Report for National Child Rights Agenda till 2020. The report provides an overview on the progress of implementation in terms of results, actions and budgets and challenges. A special hearing session was called by the Speaker of the Parliament requesting the government to commit and take measures for the implementation of actions and priorities until 2020.
- Support continues to INSTAT to identify and report on a list of child-targeted indicators through a publication expected to be released in the first quarter 2020. The publication will contain a comprehensive menu of indicators and figures for at least three consecutive years to track the progress and

⁶⁵ The support consisted mainly in reviewing and expanding the action plan envisaged under policy objective 3: social care services for all families and children in vulnerable situations.

⁶⁶ At least 33 of them are decisions of the Council of Ministers (DCMs), while the rest are various ordinances and guidelines, desk studies, and analyses.

trends along with a dedicated chapter on SDG-indicators relevant for children. Almost 80% of indicators are new and all represent official statistics (calculations per child populations).

- LNB supported the development of the guidelines⁶⁷ for the universal progressive home visiting focusing on the holistic care of the most vulnerable including child needs prioritizing. Health personnel were trained on the implementation on the guidelines to ensure sustainable change in work practices. The supportive supervision guideline was developed⁶⁸ along with personalized address booklets for each health center⁶⁹.
- LNB supported the review of the national Pre-university Education policy document which will feed the development of the new policy document in line with the international benchmarks and national commitments of Albania.
- LNB technical support contributed in finalization of the Youth Law, which was approved by the Parliament in December 2019. Due to earthquake emergency situation, the review process of the Youth Action Plan 2015-2020 and development of the new Youth Action plan is postponed in 2020.
- Registration of social enterprises has initiated, and MoHSP is supported for guiding start-ups through business plans and registration process.

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

- LNB supported the design of the financial mechanisms at local level to support vulnerable children at risk of dropping out of school. The piloting of the experience on OOSC in Durrës and financial analysis⁷⁰-developed as part of the multisectoral efforts on OOSC led to the Council of Ministers' decision⁷¹ on awarding financial support for children who are out of school or at risk of dropping out along with the guide⁷² for its practical implementation by the LGUs in coordination with Local Education Office, Schools and Child Protection Unit. As a result, **600 children benefited** in 2019-2020 academic year.

Chapter 3: Internal Monitoring

LNB staff conducted regular monitoring of programme activities to observe progress, to ensure quality of activities and inter-agency coordination and to identify bottlenecks and challenges to improve programme implementation. The monitoring methodology includes field visits of LNB staff, joint field visits with UN

⁶⁷ The guideline includes the principles, approach, standards, as well as the role of the health system and the health personnel in the shift

⁶⁸ Key issues included principles, approach, required skills for supervision, models and tools to use the supportive supervision of the health personnel trained in home visiting

⁶⁹ detailed contacts of key stakeholders (local government, police, child protection units, social services) where each HC's personnel may refer the identified problems/issues related to children in the respective catchment areas in the 4 target regions.

⁷⁰ [The financial analysis for education of out of school children can be found at: https://observator.org.al/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Raport-teknik-Mbeshtetja-financiare-per-regjistrimin-ne-shkollte-femijeve-iashte-shkollte.pdf](https://observator.org.al/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Raport-teknik-Mbeshtetja-financiare-per-regjistrimin-ne-shkollte-femijeve-iashte-shkollte.pdf)

⁷¹ [The Council of Minister's Decision no. 666 can be found at: https://observator.org.al/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/VKM-nr.-666-dt.-10.10.2019.pdf](https://observator.org.al/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/VKM-nr.-666-dt.-10.10.2019.pdf)

⁷² [The Guide for practical implementation of the Council of Minister's Decision no. 666, can be found at: https://observator.org.al/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Udhezues-Miratimi-Bursave-Financiare-OOSC_2019-2020.pdf](https://observator.org.al/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Udhezues-Miratimi-Bursave-Financiare-OOSC_2019-2020.pdf)

agencies and implementing partners, meetings with the representatives of LGUs and/or discussion with social services municipal staff, meetings with beneficiaries and internal quarterly reports of UN agencies.

The Annual Work Plan and the M&E Plan were the key tools to support programme monitoring along with internal quarterly reports.

An external evaluation took place in January 2019 with the aim to identify the project's successes and challenges, and to contribute to the planning of the next project phase.

Chapter 4: Major challenges and mitigation strategy

LNB has faced several challenges related mainly to political factors as well external factors such as the earthquake that hit Albania on 26 November 2019.

The political crisis in 2019 led to one-party local elections in June 2019 lacking competitive political and social program offers and advocacy for social issues with running mayors and councilors' candidates. The local elections brought political changes in the municipal administration at leadership and senior management level posing risks with regard to i) retention of (trained) social services staff and their motivation, ii) maintaining the commitment of previous municipal leadership to LNB planned activities. LNB staff has established contacts with the newly elected mayors to gain their political support for smooth implementation of the program at municipal level.

The 6.4 magnitude earthquake that hit Albania on 26th November 2019 strained the capacities of local governments to respond to affected population and keep up with planned activities. All human and other resources from the government partners were focused into emergency response in the last couple of months delaying to some extent the work at municipal level in those municipalities affected by the earthquake, but with no major impact to the result. Several planned activities were re-scheduled to accommodate solidarity interventions.

The capacities and resources of public administration in charge of social protection and social services remain limited at all levels, both in terms of the number of staff, technical capacity and financial allocations, affected as well by the Territorial Administrative Reform which did not manage to match the increased size of new municipalities with larger resources. Social issues are not on the priority agenda of the government and continuous advocacy is needed with the government to increase the public investment for social protection and social services.

Chapter 5: Communication and Visibility

Please see Annex 2

Chapter 6: Updated action/activity plan and Finances

Overall financial delivery (disbursed and committed) till December 2019 is 86.2%

	Funds allocated in USD	Disbursed	Commitments	Total Disbursed and Committed USD	Total Disbursed and Committed USD in %
UNDP	4,203,155	3,329,256	420,000	3,749,255	89.2
UNICEF	1,166,419	798,340	87,744	886,084	76
UNW	463,137	267,267	92,897	360,164	77.7
UNFPA	293,443	285,243	0	285,243	97.2
Totals	6,126,154	4,680,106	600,641	5,280,746	86.2

* Disbursed till December 2019 (cumulative)

* Committed till December 2019

Abbreviations:

CSO – Civil Society Organizations

DCM - Decisions of the Council of Minister

DPO – Disabled Peoples Organizations

ECA - Eastern Europe and Central Asia

EMIS – Education Management Info System

EU – European Union

EU SILC – Statistics on income and living conditions

EWS - Early Warning System

GDP – Gross Domestic Product

GoA – Government of Albania

IDU – Injecting Drug User

ICPD – International Conference on Population and Development

INSTAT – Albanian Institute of Statistics

IPA – Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance

IPMG – Integrated Planning and Management Group

LGU – Local Government Units

LNB – Leave No One Behind

LSDG – Local Social Dialogue Groups

M&E – Monitoring and Evaluation

MIS – Management of Information Systems

MoESY – Ministry of Education Science and Youth

MoFE – Ministry of Finance and Economy

MoHSP – Ministry of Health and Social Protection

Mol – Ministry of Internal Affairs

MSM – Men who have sex with Men

MTBF – Mid Term Budget Framework

NGO – Non-Governmental Organizations

OOSC – Out of School Children

PDNA – Post Disaster Needs Assessment

PMO – Prime Minister Office

PwD – Persons with Disabilities

R&E – Roma and Egyptians

RED – Regional Education Directory

SC – Steering Committee

SCS – Social Care Services

SDC – Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation

SDG - Sustainable Development Goals

SRHR – Sexual Reproductive Health Response

SIIG – Statistical Indicator and Integrity Group

SILC – Statistics on Income and Living Condition

SIPD - Social Inclusion Policy Document

SRH – Sexual and Reproductive Health

SW – Sex Worker

UN – United Nations

UNDP – United Nations Development Programme

WB-World Bank

WPI – Worcester Polytechnic Institute

List of annexes:

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

Annex 2: Communication and Visibility

Annex 3: Risk Analysis