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Resilient nations.*

# Nowhere to turn

**GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE  
AGAINST ROMA WOMEN**

**Report of a field study of Roma communities  
in Albania, Montenegro and the former  
Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**

2018

Roma Inclusion series





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# About this report

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This report analyses gender issues in Roma communities in three Western Balkans countries: Albania, Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, particularly gender-based violence against women and harmful practices such as child and forced marriages. For the purposes of this report, gender-based violence against women will refer primarily to domestic violence as defined by the Istanbul Convention. This is because there is little or no data available on other forms of violence against Roma women. Legal definitions of domestic violence and gender-based violence also vary in the legislation of the three countries.

The report is based on an analysis of quantitative data from the 2017 Regional Roma Survey conducted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank and the European Commission, findings from a field study organised in all three countries and a literature review. Field visits took place in two towns in each country: Tirana and Durrës in Albania, Podgorica and Nikšić in Montenegro, and Skopje and Kumanovo in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and consisted largely of group interviews with representatives of governmental institutions and civil society organisations (CSOs), including Roma CSOs. In addition, focus group discussions were conducted with Roma women married before the age of 18 and Roma women whose daughters were married before the age of 18. Roma activists in each country conducted individual interviews with Roma women who are survivors of domestic violence. Interviews were conducted in Romani, Albanian, Macedonian and Montenegrin.

# Terminology

The term **Roma** is used in this report to refer to a number of different groups (e.g. Roma, Sinti, Kale, Gypsies, Romanichals, Boyash, Ashkali, Egyptians, Yenish, Dom, Lom, Rom, Abdal) and includes travellers, without denying the specificities of these groups. All these groups are considered under the wider Roma umbrella term under the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies.

**Gender** refers to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, as well as the relations between women and those between men. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialisation processes. They are context/time-specific and changeable. Gender determines what is expected, allowed and valued in women or men in a given context. In most societies, there are differences and inequalities between women and men in responsibilities assigned, activities undertaken, access to and control over resources, as well as decision-making opportunities. Gender is part of the broader socio-cultural context. Other important criteria for socio-cultural analysis include class, race, poverty level, ethnic group and age.<sup>1</sup>

As defined in the Istanbul Convention, **violence against women** is understood as a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women and shall mean all acts of gender-based violence that result in, or are likely to result in, physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.<sup>2</sup>

As defined in the Istanbul Convention, **domestic violence** means all acts of physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence that occur within the family or domestic unit or between former or current spouses or partners, whether or not the perpetrator shares or has shared the same residence with the victim.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Source: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/conceptsanddefinitions.htm>, accessed April 6, 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Source: <https://rm.coe.int/168046031c>, accessed March 6, 2018.

<sup>3</sup> Source: <https://rm.coe.int/168046031c>, accessed March 6, 2018.

# Key findings

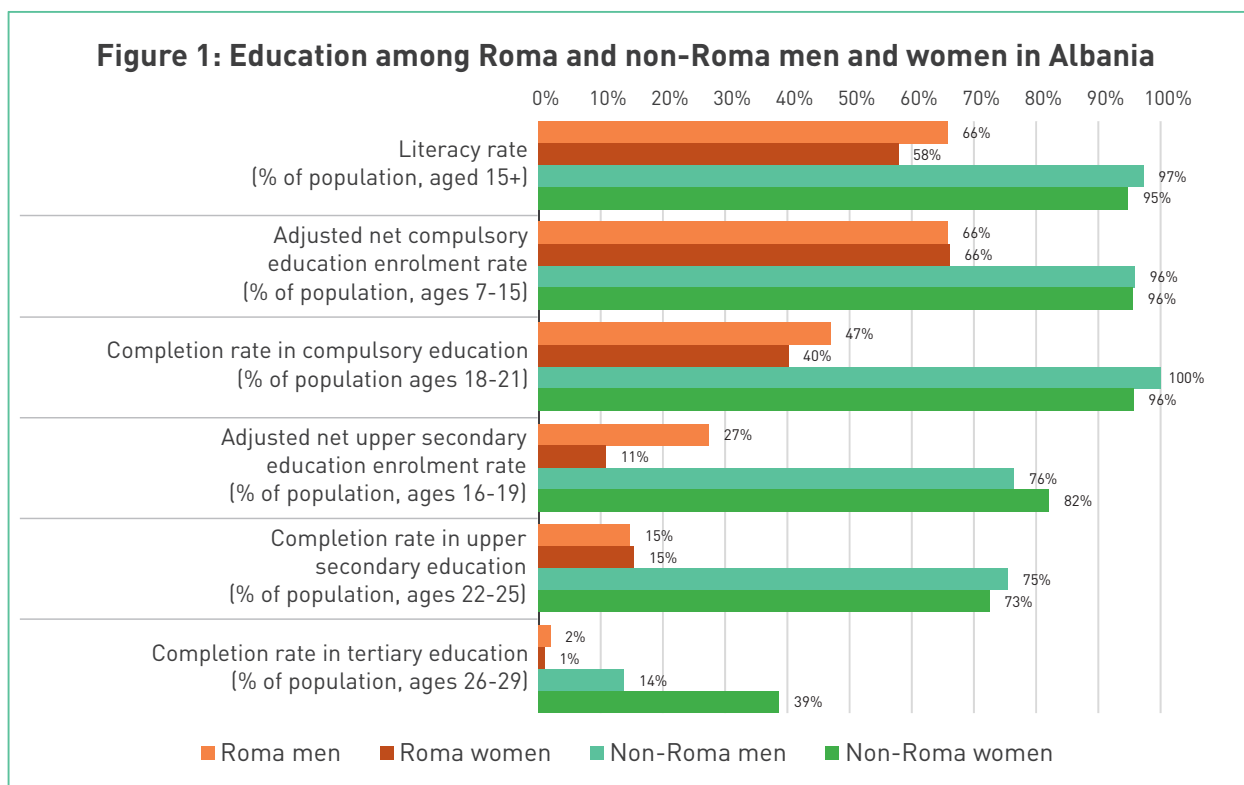
- Women and men in Roma communities in Albania, Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia often abide by traditional gender roles. Roma women are responsible for maintaining the home and taking care of the children, while Roma men are expected to earn and provide for the family.
- Roma women face discrimination and social exclusion on the grounds of ethnicity/race, gender, class and education. Most often, they face discrimination on multiple grounds, thus experiencing intersectional discrimination.
- No official data on gender-based violence against Roma women is available in any of the three countries. Only the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has some data about gender-based violence against Roma women from studies carried out by civil society.
- Roma women who experience domestic violence face more difficulties due to poverty, social exclusion and the lack of social services in the areas where they live.
- Roma women report violence with substantially less frequency than the overall population. Roma women who report their husbands or partners, but continue to share the same household with them, face even more violence.
- As opposed to reporting domestic violence to the responsible public institutions, Roma women work on resolving their problems with the help of their parents and their parents-in-law who act as mediators. This type of mediation is used to resolve domestic violence issues because Roma women tend to trust their family members much more than official institutions.
- Rates of convictions for perpetrators of domestic violence and gender-based violence are very low in all three countries.
- The existing legislation is poorly implemented, and coordinated community response teams still do not function properly in all three countries. When administrations change, the staff of institutions responsible for addressing domestic violence also changes, causing a breakdown in maintaining institutional memory about best practices.
- Roma women who reach out to institutions and shelters encounter difficulties in receiving any support or/and services that are usually available for domestic violence survivors. One of the reasons is the lack of personal identification documents.
- Civil society organisations are instrumental in securing services for Roma women from state institutions and in improving the quality of services.

# Social and economic background of Roma women

Roma women face discrimination and social exclusion on the grounds of ethnicity/race, gender, socio-economic status and education. Very often, they face discrimination on multiple grounds at the same time, thus experiencing intersectional discrimination. Most Roma women who participated in the field study in all three countries were either illiterate or had only completed a few years of elementary school. They lived in poverty in Roma communities on the outskirts of towns. Most of them were not employed.

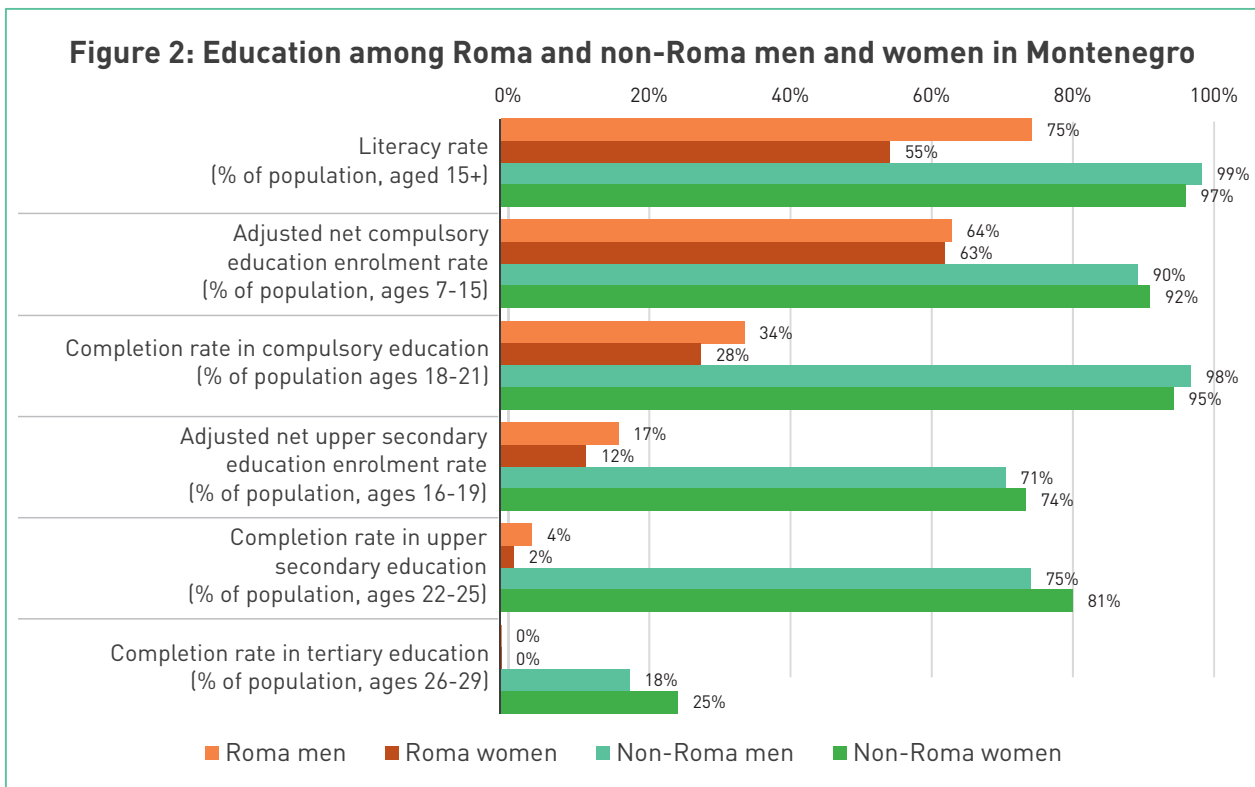
Poverty in Roma communities is both a consequence and a determinant of a lack of access to education. In all three countries, there are significant ethnic and gender gaps in education between marginalised Roma women, Roma men and neighbouring non-Roma women. On average, neighbouring non-Roma girls attend school three years longer than Roma girls, who average around seven years of schooling, and two years longer than Roma boys, who

average eight years of schooling.<sup>4</sup> Only 63 percent of marginalised Roma women in Montenegro are enrolled in compulsory education, as opposed to 92 percent of neighbouring non-Roma women. Moreover, only around a quarter of marginalised Roma women manage to complete compulsory education (28 percent), compared with almost all of non-Roma women living nearby (95 percent). The gap becomes even wider in upper secondary education (15 years and older), where both the enrolment and completion rates are extremely low for marginalised Roma women. In Albania, only 11 percent of marginalised Roma women enrol in secondary education in comparison with 27 percent of Roma men and 82 percent of neighbouring non-Roma women. In Montenegro, only two percent of marginalised Roma women complete secondary education in comparison with four percent of Roma men and 81 percent of neighbouring non-Roma women.



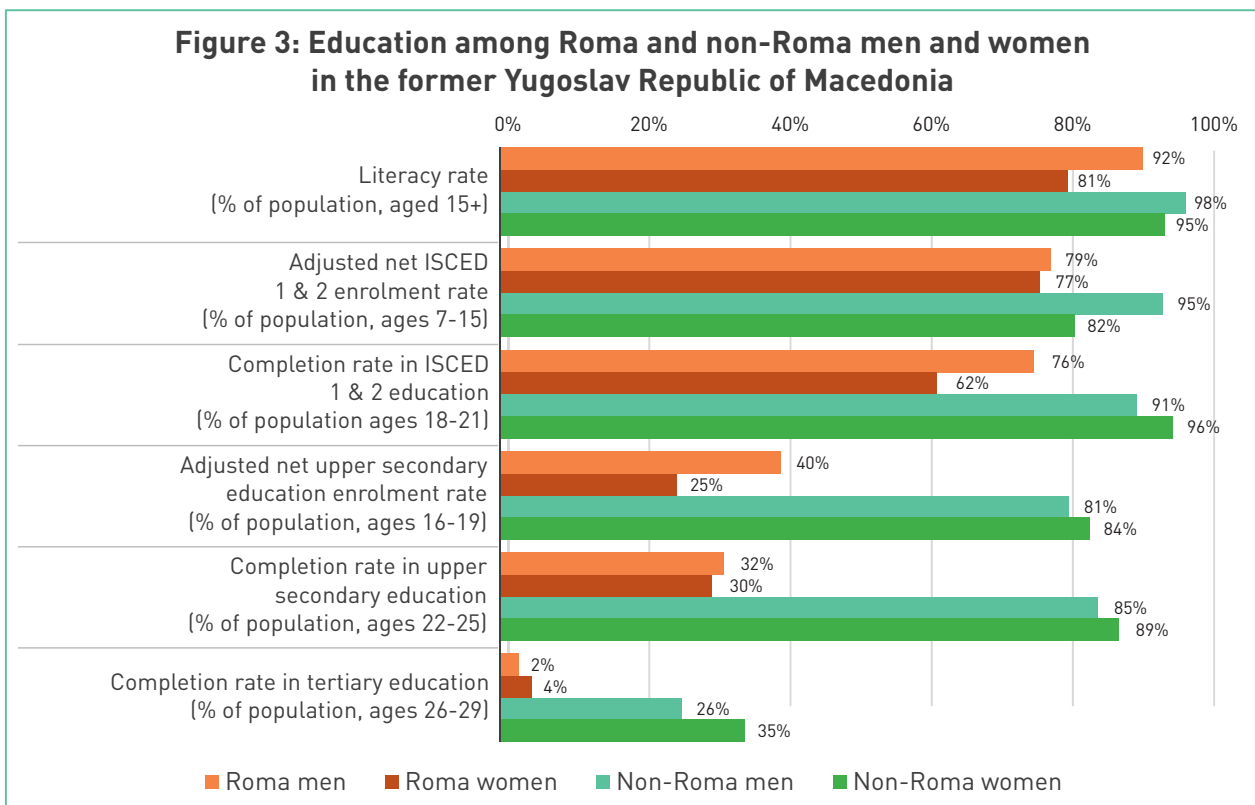
Source: WB and UNDP estimates based on unweighted 2017 UNDP-WB-EC Regional Roma Survey data

<sup>4</sup> Source: Author's calculations based on UNDP-WB-EC Regional Roma Survey data



Source: WB and UNDP estimates based on unweighted 2017 UNDP-WB-EC Regional Roma Survey data

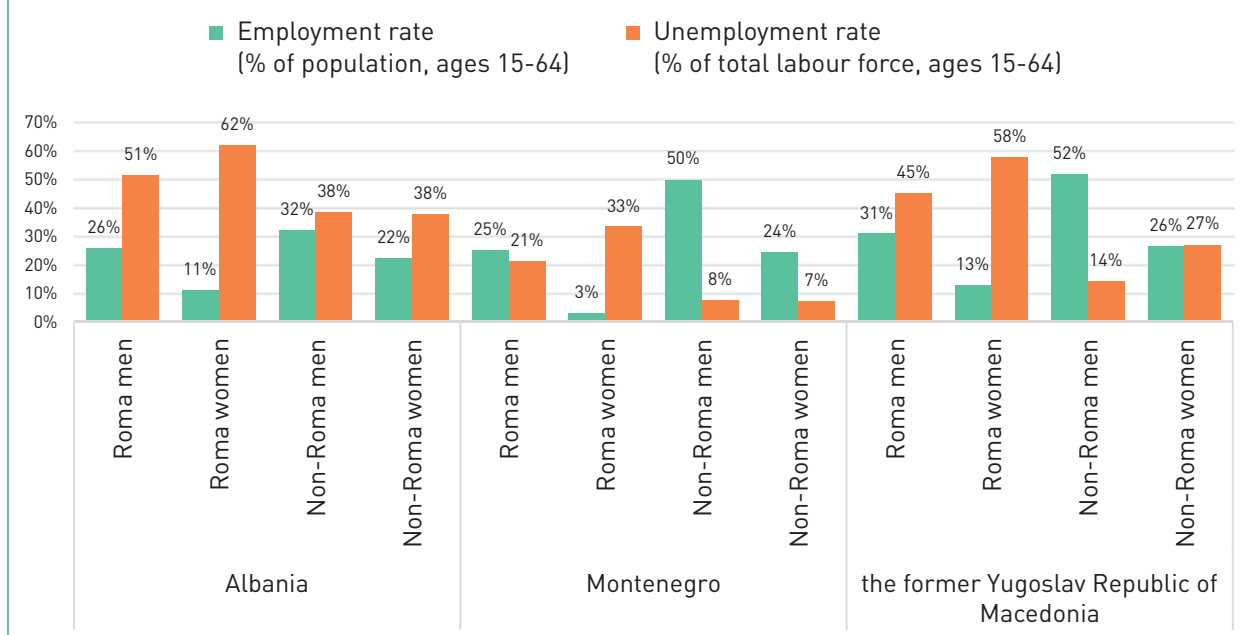
► Figures 1, 2 and 3 outline ethnic and gender gaps in literacy, enrolment and completion of compulsory, secondary and tertiary education between Roma women, Roma men, non-Roma men and non-Roma women.<sup>5</sup>



Source: WB and UNDP estimates based on unweighted 2017 UNDP-WB-EC Regional Roma Survey data

<sup>5</sup> Data is extracted from unweighted 2017 Regional Roma Survey developed by the United Nations Development Programme, the World Bank, and the European Commission.

**Figure 4: Employment and Unemployment Rates for Roma and non-Roma men and women in Albania, Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**



Source: Author's calculations based on 2017 UNDP-WB-EC Regional Roma Survey data

Lack of access to education translates into severely diminished employment opportunities. Formal employment rates among marginalised Roma women are very low; three percent in Montenegro, 11 percent in Albania and 13 percent in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. In all three countries, marginalised Roma men have low employment

rates, but nevertheless higher employment than both Roma women and non-Roma women, from 25 percent in Montenegro to 31 percent in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Figure 4 illustrates the significant ethnic and gender gaps between Roma men and women and their non-Roma neighbours in regard to employment and unemployment.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.



Some Roma women make a living by working informally, in the grey economy, mostly collecting cans or other recyclable materials, selling products in bazaars and open-air markets, or cleaning people's homes. This type of work is possible only for those women who can rely on someone (usually another woman in the family, the mother-in-law or the eldest daughter) to take care of young children. Divorced and widowed Roma women have to work as there is nobody who can provide for them and their children.

The Roma community and the Roma family ensure the stability and the protection of the individual. Most Roma men and women in all three countries tend to abide by traditional gender norms in their community. Men are more involved in the public sphere, while women are more responsible for the private sphere. Roma women are responsible for maintaining the home and taking care of the children, while Roma men are expected to earn and provide for the family. Roma communities living in settlements are usually multi-generational families in which elder women hold significant power and ensure that the traditional model is passed on and properly maintained (e.g., they decide about roles given to girls and boys). Together with the elderly, men are also key decision makers in the family and the community. These power dynamics leave younger women in vulnerable positions.

Traditional gender roles in Roma communities give more freedom, rights and power to Roma men than to Roma women. Two Roma women shared stories that shed light on these dynamics:

*"It happens sometimes in the Roma community that when a woman cannot have children, she gives permission to her husband to marry another woman and both wives stay in the same family. That is not judged by the community. The first wife is taking care of the children that the second wife delivered."*

*"If a Roma woman who is not married gets pregnant and delivers a child, her family gives the child up for adoption because they will not accept raising a child who is somebody else's blood. The bloodline comes from the father, not the mother."*

Gender roles usually come along with strict rules and expected behaviours. Interviews conducted with Roma women who live in Roma settlements show that most of them want better education, good jobs and fewer children. However, Roma girls are brought up being told that their most important role is to become wives, mothers and housewives, considerably narrowing down their chances of improving their socio-economic status. Roma girls who live in Roma settlements are not expected to complete their education or to find jobs because neither improve their chances of becoming wives and mothers. Instead, they are expected to get married as virgins and to bear children, and thus gain status within the community. Fulfilling these gender roles and expectations offers community membership and protection to those who respect them and helps maintain and defend the family name and honour.

While boys are usually allowed to finish their compulsory education, girls are often pulled out of school. This situation is encountered in all three countries. A Roma activist shared her story:

*"If my parents hadn't forced me to leave school, I would not have gotten married at such a young age, and maybe now I would be in university. My father allowed my brothers to continue with secondary education, but my sister and I were only allowed to attend the first five years of elementary school."*

For some Roma women, gender roles are starting to shift. Some have more education, are employed and live in mixed communities. Even though few Roma women live this way, they serve as role models for others. Another group of Roma women that has challenged traditional gender roles are those who live or used to live abroad, mostly in EU countries. These Roma women are usually employed as well.

# Gender-based violence against Roma women

In all three countries, women experience multiple types of violence: physical, psychological, sexual, economic, among others. Physical violence (often severe physical violence) is the most frequently reported. However, violence against Roma women is still severely under-reported. What domestic violence survivors fear the most is that abusive partners/husbands will take their children away. Roma women who are survivors of domestic violence face more difficulties than other domestic violence survivors due to poverty, social exclusion and the lack of social services in the areas where they live. Social stigma and shame are the main reasons why Roma women rarely talk publicly about their experiences and why they don't report incidents of domestic violence. Usually, they cannot rely on family support and they do not trust that anybody will help them. In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Roma CSOs report that some women were beaten by their husbands after attending their meetings or workshops, making it harder for them to seek help.

A Roma woman who survived domestic violence in Montenegro details her experience:

*"In 2015, my husband tried to kill me with a screwdriver, and I did not report him. Last year, it happened again. First, he attacked me with a knife, and I still did not report him. A while after that, he hit me in the head with a hammer and he broke my leg. I managed to escape to the neighbours' house, and they called the police and I finally reported him."*

## DATA AVAILABILITY ON GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

In Montenegro and Albania, there are no reports or data available on gender-based violence against Roma women specifically. In Albania, a report

published by the Council of Europe's Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) points out that policies targeting certain vulnerable groups, such as the National Action Plan for Integration of Roma and Egyptians in the Republic of Albania 2015-2020, do not sufficiently mainstream measures to prevent and combat violence against women.<sup>7</sup> In Montenegro, statistical data about violence against women is being tracked differently by various public institutions, making any comparison impossible. Most institutions do not segregate their data based on gender or ethnicity, and the data on the number of Roma women who experience gender-based violence is not available.<sup>8</sup>

Only the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has some data about gender-based violence against Roma women. In 2000 and 2007, national studies on domestic violence conducted by the Association for Emancipation, Solidarity, and Equality of Women (Association ESE)<sup>9</sup> covered Roma women. Association ESE collected data on domestic violence and some aspects of gender-based violence. In 2005, the civil society Shadow Report on the Situation of Romani Women in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was published.<sup>10</sup> The most comprehensive data about violence against Roma women can be found in the study entitled Partner Violence amongst the Roma in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the Public-Sector Response by Association Sumnal in Skopje in 2010.<sup>11</sup>

## PERCEPTIONS ON GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

The data collected through the 2017 Regional Roma Survey indicates that attitudes towards gender-based violence vary in the three countries.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>7</sup> GREVIO Baseline Evaluation Report Albania, 2017, Council of Europe.

<sup>8</sup> Study about Domestic Violence and Violence against Women in Montenegro, 2012, CEED Consulting and SOS Hotline Niksic, UNDP Montenegro.

<sup>9</sup> Life in the Shadow – Study about Domestic Violence, 2007, Association ESE; and Report on the Implemented Field Research – Domestic Violence, 2000, Association ESE. Source: <http://www.esem.org.mk/en/index.php/library.html>, accessed March 13, 2018.

<sup>10</sup> The Shadow Report was written by following CSOs: the Roma Centre of Skopje, the European Roma Rights Centre and the Network Women's Program. Source: [http://www.errc.org/uploads/upload\\_en/file/01/97/m00000197.pdf](http://www.errc.org/uploads/upload_en/file/01/97/m00000197.pdf), accessed January 17, 2018.

<sup>11</sup> Partner Violence amongst the Roma in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the Public Sector Response, 2010, Association of Citizens Sumnal. Source: <http://romainfo.mk/Education/DownloadDocument?uploadedDocumentPath=Analiza%20za%20semejno%20nasilstvo%20%283%29.pdf>, accessed December 28, 2017.

<sup>12</sup> Data is extracted from unweighted 2017 Regional Roma Survey developed by the United Nations Development Programme, the World Bank, and the European Commission.

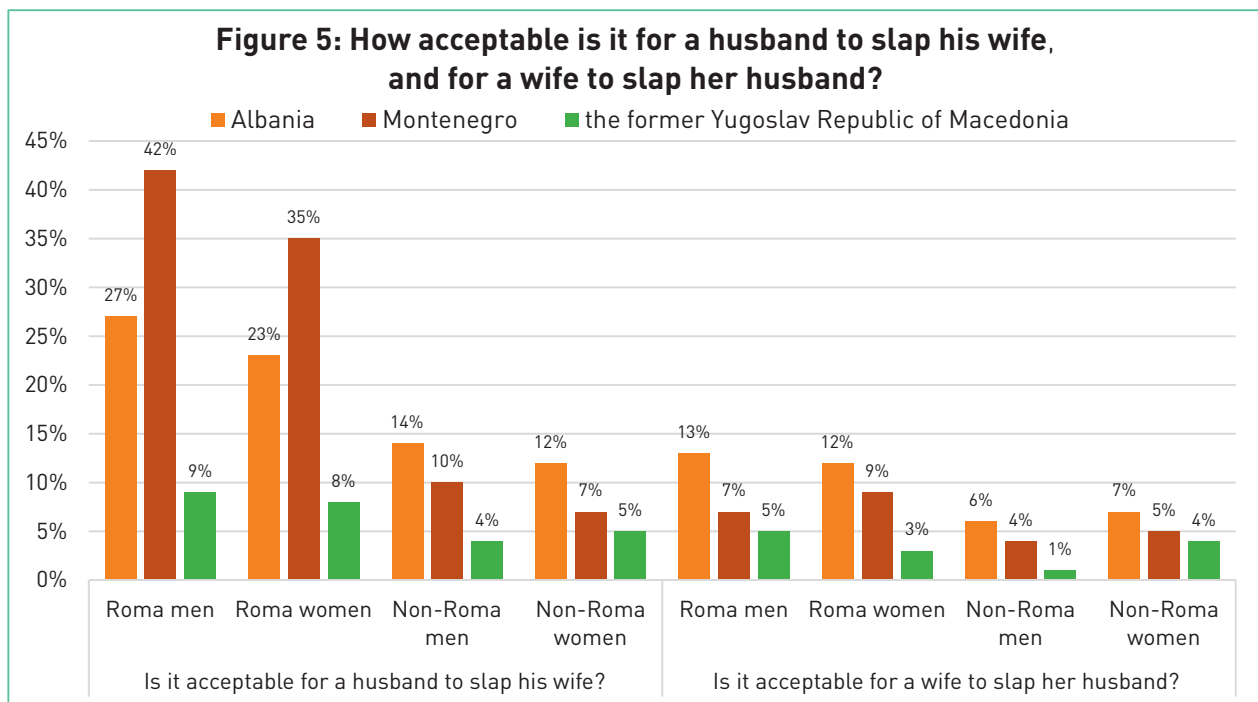
Fewer Roma people find it acceptable for a husband to slap his wife in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia than in Albania and Montenegro. Only nine percent of Roma men find this behaviour acceptable in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, compared with 42 percent of Roma men in Montenegro and 27 percent of Roma men in Albania. In all three countries, fewer Roma women than Roma men find this behaviour acceptable. On the other hand, fewer men and women find it acceptable for a wife to slap her husband. The lowest acceptance rate is in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, where only three percent of Roma women and four percent of non-Roma women find this behaviour acceptable. The highest acceptance rate is in Albania, where 12 percent of Roma women and seven percent of non-Roma women condone this behaviour.

One of the behaviours seen as acceptable by 44 percent of Roma men and 42 percent of Roma women in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is bride kidnapping, when a boy steals a girl to force her parents to agree to the marriage. In Albania, this behaviour is even more acceptable: 73 percent of both Roma men and women agree with it. In Montenegro, there is a gender gap in acceptance, with 52 percent of Roma men and only 42 percent of Roma women condoning it.

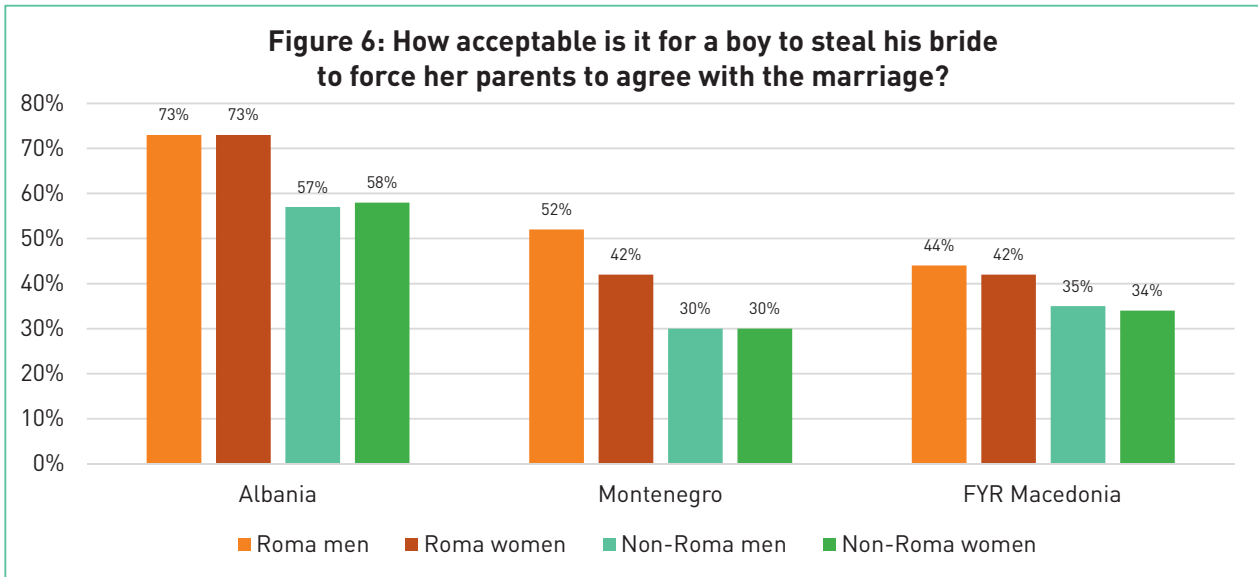
In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the study carried out by Association Sumnal confirmed the findings of previous studies about domestic violence against Roma women:

*“The study’s findings indicate that 71 percent of Romani women, at some time in their lives, experienced psychological, physical, or sexual abuse at the hands of an intimate partner. Psychological violence, including controlling behavior by a man who is an intimate partner, was reported by 58 percent of women. In concordance with previous studies, controlling behaviors were correlated with both physical and sexual abuse. Physical and sexual abuse prevalence rates were 56.5 percent and 10 percent, respectively. 30 percent of respondents had experienced at least one form of physical violence which is considered severe (e.g. punching, burning, kicking, or the use of a weapon). A significant overlap was noticed between psychological, physical, and emotional violence, indicating that most women experience more than one type of abuse.”*

*Source: Partner Violence amongst the Roma in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the Public-Sector Response, 2010, Association of Citizens Sumnal, Skopje.*



Source: Author’s calculations based on 2017 UNDP-WB-EC Regional Roma Survey data



Source: Author's calculations based on 2017 UNDP-WB-EC Regional Roma Survey data

## ACCESS TO SERVICES RELATED TO GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

In the past 20 years, laws on preventing domestic violence and relevant protocols were adopted in all three countries. But implementation is weak and coordinated community response teams are still not functioning properly. Even active teams intervene very slowly in life-threatening situations. CSO representatives who offer support to domestic violence survivors state that the police, courts and health clinics frequently raise challenging obstacles in processing domestic violence cases. There is also a general lack of financial resources reserved for providing full service support to survivors of domestic violence. As administrations change, employees in institutions dealing with domestic violence change as well, causing a breakdown in maintaining institutional standardised service provision. Improvements in legislation and better media coverage have driven an increase in the number of domestic violence cases reported by the general population. However, it is not known whether this trend applies to Roma women or other women who experience intersectional discrimination. Given the experience of CSO representatives, it is fair to assume that Roma women rarely report domestic violence incidents due to multiple disadvantages and discrimination. For example, none of the Roma women who participated in the field study in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia had reported domestic violence to anybody.

A representative from a Roma CSO in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia explains why it is difficult for Roma women to challenge gender roles:

*“Roma women have nowhere to go if they leave the Roma community. There is a vicious cycle: she leaves school, gets married early, has children, does not have a job or any money. Roma women need to be economically independent to get out of this vicious cycle.”*

Poverty greatly influences the ability to report domestic violence. Roma women who experience domestic violence are very frequently living in poverty. Most often, they do not have access to a phone or enough money for transportation to a health centre, the police or the Centre for Social Work. Very few Roma women who participated in the field study and had experienced domestic violence had a cell phone or access to a landline. Even when Roma women report their husbands or partners to the police, they end up withdrawing their statements due to concerns about being unable to provide for their families and ending up in extreme poverty.



*“Service providers should try harder to get in contact with Roma women. They should visit Roma communities using street activities and provide more information about the services available to women who experience domestic violence. This will build trust with Roma women as they need to know that someone really cares for them.”*

– Roma rights activist in Albania

The other important aspect influencing whether or not Roma women report domestic violence incidents is the lack of information about domestic violence laws and institutional mechanisms. Roma women who are survivors of domestic violence approach Roma activists or Roma health mediators when they meet them in Roma settlements, but this is sporadic and varies from individual to individual. The Centre for Roma Initiative (Montenegro) and Roma SOS Prilep (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) are the only two CSOs that support Roma women who are domestic violence survivors and/or were forced to enter into child and forced marriages. When approached for help and assistance by Roma women, they provide information and/or accompany them to different relevant institutions. Given that, in Albania, there is no Roma women’s CSO that works on domestic violence, and some Roma women are referred to women’s CSOs that provide psycho-social and legal support. Most of the time, Roma women who reach out to institutions and shelters find it difficult to receive support or services that are generally available for all survivors of domestic violence. However, if CSO representatives accompany Roma women, they receive support and tend to have better outcomes.

A survivor of domestic violence in Albania explains why she withdrew her complaint against her abusive husband:

*“I regretted denouncing my husband. It brought me more problems. Nobody helped me. I paid for a lawyer to get him out of prison. I had to do that because I need him. We have three children, and I cannot provide enough for them by myself.”*

Due to multi-layered intersectional discrimination, Roma women need full service support to break away from the vicious cycle of domestic violence. Full service support means living in proximity to essential services, having access to a shelter where they can live with their children as long as needed, receiving relevant training followed by employment, financial support (unemployment benefits), schooling for children, psycho-social support and free legal aid if they decide to get a divorce.

A small number of women’s organisations provide psycho-social support and free legal aid to Roma survivors of domestic violence. Roma women, both survivors of domestic violence and activists, point to a pressing need for shelters due to the high incidence of extreme physical violence. Unfortunately, there are only a few shelters in each of the three countries with capacities far below what is required to serve the number of domestic violence survivors who require such services. It is no surprise then that very few Roma women are found in shelters (as is the case in Montenegro). Roma activists indicate that besides ethnic discrimination, the other reason why Roma women are not accepted in shelters is the number of children they have. Roma women who are survivors of domestic violence have, on average, five to seven children.

The Centre for Social Work (CSW) is one of the state services that survivors of domestic violence can approach. During field visits for this study, it became obvious that the CSWs most involved with Roma women who are survivors of domestic violence were in Skopje (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) and in Niksic (Montenegro). Roma women, on their own or with help from the police or CSO representatives, reach out to CSWs and receive assistance, despite the fact that they still report feeling unwelcome or not receiving adequate support. One of the reasons for the difficulties encountered by Roma women when reaching out to public institutions, including CSWs, is often the lack of identification documents.

While the annual gynaecological check-up is free of charge in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, if a Roma woman goes to a health clinic by herself, she will be asked to pay for it. Shockingly, if a Roma woman is pregnant and has no personal ID and/or health insurance, she will likely not be admitted for regular medical pregnancy monitoring check-ups and tests or for delivery. This is common practice in both the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and in Montenegro, where the mortality rate of Roma babies has recently increased. However, when Roma women are accompanied by a Roma CSO representative or Roma health mediator, they usually get medical assistance.

Health clinics are another service for domestic violence survivors. However, very few Roma women who are survivors of domestic violence and participated in the field study had visited health clinics after being assaulted by their husbands. Inadequate services and ethnic stereotypes are in great part responsible for this situation. Social scientists refer to historical discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, gender, class, language and poverty as “structural violence,” because it is embedded in social and state systems of power and law. Roma women who are subjected to partner violence experience further structural violence that prevents them from seeking or even knowing about available assistance.

*“I am afraid to go to the Centre for Social Work. They did not welcome me. Nor help me.”* Roma survivor of domestic violence in Albania

“I have to approach the Centre for Social Work, because I do not have basic food. My husband beats me every day. At the Centre, they tell me they cannot give me anything and that they don’t know what to do with me anymore.” Roma survivor of domestic violence in Montenegro

In all three countries, women’s CSOs that provide psycho-social and legal support occasionally serve Roma women.

In Montenegro, the SOS Hotline Niksic is operating a national SOS Hotline for domestic violence survivors. It recently recruited volunteers who speak Albanian as most Roma women in the country use Albanian as their native language. The SOS Hotline Podgorica, the Montenegrin Women’s Lobby and shelters for survivors of domestic violence in Niksic and Podgorica are other women’s CSOs in Montenegro that support Roma women who are survivors of domestic violence.

In Albania, the Counselling Line for Women and Girls and Today for the Future are supporting Roma women who are survivors of domestic violence.

In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, most CSOs that support Roma women who are survivors of domestic violence are based in Skopje. The CSO Hera works in Sutka, the biggest Roma settlement. Crisis Centre Hope operates a national SOS Hotline and a shelter for survivors of domestic violence. Association ESE provides legal aid to survivors of domestic violence.

A lawyer that works for a CSO in Durrës (Albania) and represents Roma women who are survivors of domestic violence explains the difficulties Roma women encounter when reporting domestic violence to the police:

*“When Roma women go alone to the police station to report domestic violence, they don’t get the regular service. Only when we, as an organisation, call the police to report the aggressor, do they take it seriously.”*

A representative of a CSO that provides psycho-social support and shelters to survivors of domestic violence in Tirana (Albania) has encountered similar situations:

*“Based on the cases of six Roma women that we supported, we know that police officers do not always take them seriously. Roma women are referred to us by other CSOs and never by public service providers.”*

Of 34 cases in which Roma women reportedly informed the police of domestic violence, 20 women (or 59 percent) stated that the police subjected them to racial prejudice and degrading treatment. Only in five out of 34 cases (or 15 percent) did the police actually intervene.

In the 15 percent of cases in which the police actually intervened when Roma women reported instances of domestic violence, the strongest action the police reportedly undertook was to issue a warning to the perpetrator or place them in custody for one night in the police station.

Source: *Shadow Report on the Situation of Romani Women in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, 2005.*

Experiencing intersectional discrimination is directly connected with having less trust in institutions. In all three countries, Roma women who are survivors of domestic violence tend to opt for traditional approaches in dealing with abusive partners or husbands. As opposed to reporting domestic violence to the responsible public institutions (the police, the Centre for Social Work, CSOs, health clinics, courts), they try to resolve their problems with the help of their parents and their parents-in-law who act as mediators. This type of mediation is used to resolve domestic violence issues because Roma women tend to trust their family members much more than official institutions.

*“Because it is considered shameful to report one’s husband, the police themselves will judge you.”* Roma survivor of domestic violence in Albania

*“In the Roma community, there is a perception that we should not go further than filing a complaint with the police, because Roma women will later reconcile with their husbands anyway.”* Roma rights activist in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Studies on gender-based violence against Roma women in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the field visits show that Roma women distrust

state institutions, especially the police and the courts.<sup>13</sup> Some domestic violence mechanisms, such as protection orders, do not necessarily help Roma women as they would have to be removed from their homes and moved to a shelter. Roma women who can’t leave their homes face even more violence after reporting their husbands/partners as they continue to share the same household with them.

Focus groups carried out in all three countries for this study included Roma women who were asylum seekers in EU countries, most frequently Germany. All of them were very aware of legal procedures on domestic violence in Germany. The major difference they noticed between Germany and their countries of origin was the full service support they received in Germany as survivors of domestic violence. Having such assistance enabled them to report domestic violence and leave abusive partners or husbands. Those experiences were a great learning opportunity for Roma women and taught them that it is possible to leave abusive husbands if they have full service support.

Roma women who are survivors of domestic violence and receive free legal aid and assistance from local CSOs tend to reach out to public prosecutors more often and fare better when engaging with the judicial system. However, the lack of personal identification documents makes it difficult to work on their behalf. For example, in Niksic (Montenegro), the public prosecutor stated she could not verify the age of a young Roma man and thus process the case as child marriage due to the lack of personal identification documents. In some cases, Roma people do not have a state-given ID number (Unique Master Citizen Number) or any other personal document necessary to open a case.

*“We need at least one Roma man who is a perpetrator of domestic violence to be prosecuted for domestic violence. That information will be the best warning to all other abusive Roma men, and it will be shared in Roma communities quickly. Other Roma men might hesitate or even be afraid to continue with domestic violence.”* Roma CSO activist in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

<sup>13</sup> The only exception is the local police in Niksic, because of the police inspector’s commitment to eliminate gender-based violence and uphold and protect children’s rights.



Romani women report violence with substantially less frequency than the overall population. While the general domestic violence reporting rates in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia are 20.7 percent for police and 18.7 for shelters, the corresponding figures for Romani women are 6.1 percent and 3.5 percent. The police is the institution that most women said they would seek help from, if they faced domestic violence. However, actual circumstances differ significantly. While most domestic violence survivors state that they want to report their husbands to the police rather than any other institution, few of them do. The ratio between the wish to report and actual reporting was lowest for law enforcement – only 15.2 percent of those who wanted to report did so. Women also reported experiencing significant discomfort with the thought of seeking assistance from services for domestic violence survivors. Between 50.5 percent and 71 percent of women reported feeling extremely uncomfortable, depending on the institution they considered accessing.

Source: *Partner Violence amongst the Roma in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the Public-Sector Response, 2010*, Association of Citizens Sumnal, Skopje.

CSO representatives in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia note that even when the police and prosecutors do their job well and arrest and prosecute the aggressor, the court might decide to set him free. In Montenegro, the husband of a Roma woman who tried to murder their son was sentenced to only two months in prison.

In Albania, the practice regarding domestic violence cases has been recently changed. In 2017, a judge who was a mother of two was murdered in Tirana by her ex-husband despite having two protection orders. This case triggered a change in services regarding domestic violence cases, and the police are now offering better protection to domestic violence survivors.

## TRADITIONAL PRACTICES HARMFUL TO WOMEN AND GIRLS: CHILD AND FORCED MARRIAGES

A child marriage or a forced marriage is a union, whether official or not, of two persons, of whom at least one is under 18 years of age. From a human

rights perspective, and as defined by the Istanbul Convention, child and forced marriages are violations of children's rights. Worldwide, the number of boys in child marriages is significantly lower than that of girls.<sup>14</sup>

Roma SOS Prilep is a leading Roma CSO that works on child and forced marriages among Roma communities in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. In 2016 they published *The Grey Area Between Tradition and Children's Rights*, a publication based on research about child and forced marriages. Following this publication, they implemented a project on combating child and forced marriages, together with 11 other Roma CSOs. Currently, they are looking to implement an initiative to harmonise legislation in ways that will reduce the incidence of child marriages in the country.

Traditional gender roles, values, beliefs and attitudes in Roma communities stand in strong support of child and forced marriages. Roma girls are encouraged by parents and extended families to leave school and marry early. Due to social and economic exclusion and high rates of poverty, Roma women who live in Roma settlements have no other choice than to rely on their community and follow very restrictive traditional rules and roles. In the focus groups organised for the field study, most of the participants had been married before they turned 18. About 33 percent of Roma women in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, 40 percent of Roma women in Montenegro and 50 percent of Roma women in Albania were married before they turned 18.<sup>15</sup>

The Centre for Roma Initiative (CRI) in Niksic, Montenegro supports Roma women through its work. They have a daily presence in Roma communities in several towns in Montenegro and act as advocates for Roma rights. CRI uses theater of the oppressed performances to engage Roma audiences with the issue of child marriages. They also develop publications in local languages to disseminate information on domestic violence and arranged marriages.

Due to the trust they have built in the communities they serve, Roma women frequently come to their offices. In 2017, seven women came to report domestic violence and six to report child marriages.

<sup>14</sup> Child Marriage in Albania (Overview), 2016, UNFPA Albania. <http://albania.unfpa.org/en/publications/child-marriage-albania>, accessed March 14, 2018.

<sup>15</sup> Data is extracted from unweighted 2017 Regional Roma Survey developed by the United Nations Development Programme, the World Bank, and the European Commission.



Roma women who participated in the field study were able to envisage getting better education, postponing marriage and having better job opportunities, but they could not envisage losing their virginity before getting married. Not giving importance to virginity and marriage could cause a Roma woman to lose the status and protection that the Roma community provides for its members. Because of these intersectional forms of discrimination, Roma women generally have few alternatives to abiding by their community's values, beliefs and attitudes.

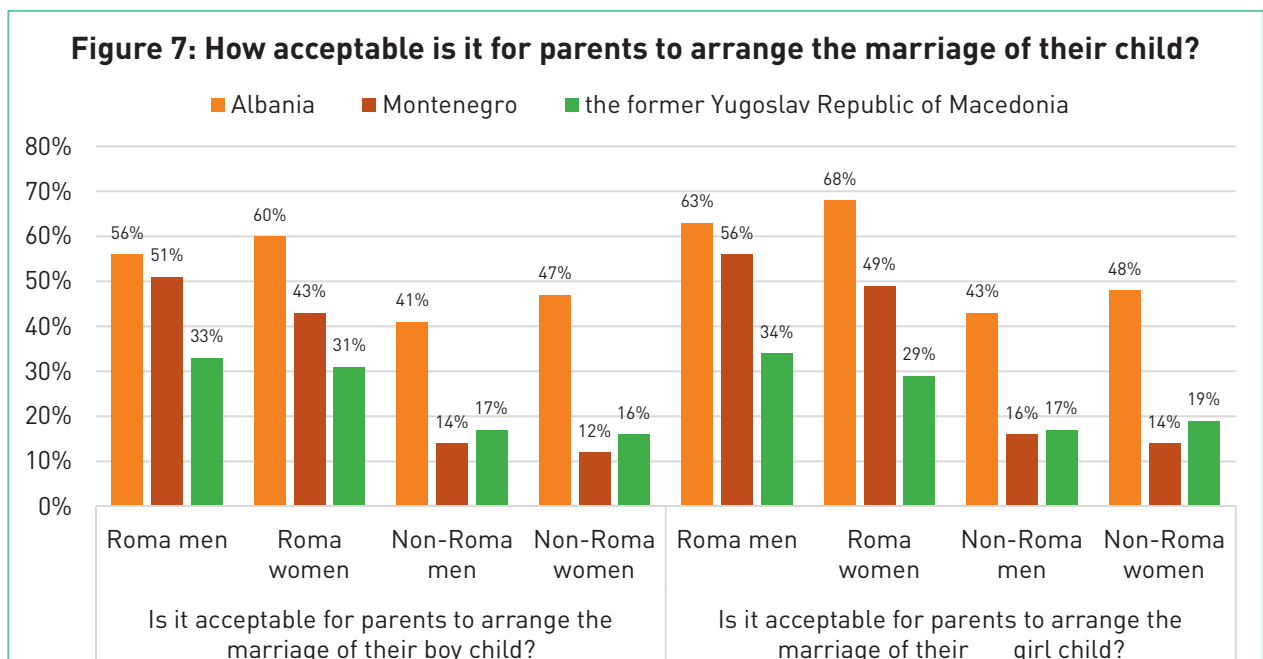
Different sources confirm high rates of child and forced marriages in Roma communities in all three countries. Across the western Balkans, the United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and local CSOs have researched and reported mainly child and forced marriage. Therefore, data about child and forced marriages is much more available than data about gender-based violence against Roma women.

In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, 22 percent of Roma girls aged 15-19 are married or cohabitate, compared with a national rate of four percent. The rate of young women aged 15-19 years

who have given birth or are currently pregnant is three percent at the national level, but 18 percent in Roma communities. For the poorest households, that national average rises to five percent, while it reaches 25 percent among Roma women.<sup>16</sup>

In 2011, 31 percent of Roma girls aged 13 to 17 In Albania were married or in a union.<sup>17</sup>

In Montenegro, Roma and Egyptian children are married at an early age. Twenty percent of mothers in Roma and Egyptian families were married before the age of 15, in contrast to only one percent of women with children in the general population.<sup>18</sup> According to the Montenegro NGO Shadow Report on the Implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), a new survey by the Centre for Roma Initiatives in four municipalities (Niksic, Podgorica, Berane and Ulcinj), found that 72 percent of respondents were married before they were 18, in most cases between 12 and 17 years of age from a sample of 643 members in the Roma and Egyptian communities.<sup>19</sup> This data indicates that child marriages are an established practice in Roma and Egyptian communities, with a chain of far-reaching consequences, especially for girls and women.



Source: Author's calculations based on 2017 UNDP-WB-EC Regional Roma Survey data

<sup>16</sup> *The Grey Area Between Tradition and Children's Rights, 2016*, Roma SOS Prilep – Organization for Multicultural Affirmation. [http://romasosprilep.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Roma-SOS\\_Sivata-zona\\_ANG\\_002.pdf](http://romasosprilep.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Roma-SOS_Sivata-zona_ANG_002.pdf), accessed March 15, 2018.

<sup>17</sup> *Child Marriage in Albania (Overview), 2016*, UNFPA Albania. <http://albania.unfpa.org/en/publications/child-marriage-albania>, accessed March 14, 2018.

During focus groups in all three countries, Roma participants expressed support for arranged marriages because they are considered safer. Since Roma children are being married young, parents see arranging their marriage as a parental duty.

As in other parts of the world, arranged marriages are considered acceptable by many Roma communities in all three countries, particularly for women and girls. In Albania, 56 percent of Roma men and 60 percent of Roma women consider it is acceptable to arrange the marriage of their son. Even more, 63 percent of Roma men and 68 percent of Roma women in Albania consider it is acceptable to arrange the marriage of their daughter. In Montenegro and the former Yugoslav

Republic of Macedonia, the acceptability for this practice drops, but it is higher than in non-Roma communities. Figure 7 showcases the varying degrees of acceptability for arranged marriages encountered in all three countries.

Field visits have shown that most arranged marriages or unions do not last long. Researchers came across Roma women as young as 22 years old who were in their third arranged marriage. Child and forced marriages can have harmful consequences for girls and women, including higher levels of violence and often serious complications arising from childbearing at young ages. Roma women have very limited access to reproductive health services.

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<sup>18</sup> [http://www.unicef.org/montenegro/Studija\\_UNICEF-za-web-cg.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/montenegro/Studija_UNICEF-za-web-cg.pdf), accessed March 8, 2018.

<sup>19</sup> *NGO Shadow Report on the Implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), 2017.* <http://womensrightscenter.org/files/documents/1516629806-NGO%20CEDAW%20SHADOW%20REPORT%202017%20final.pdf>, accessed March 9, 2018

# Conclusions

This report presents and analyses the intersectional inequalities based on gender, class, education and race/ethnicity experienced by Roma women in Albania, Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. One issue that particularly affects Roma women is gender-based violence. Roma women who are survivors of domestic violence face more difficulties due to the lack of social services in the areas where they live, high rates of poverty and social exclusion.

None of the three countries covered in this report has legislation on gender-based violence that addresses intersectional discrimination. There are no legal or policy measures that support education and employment for survivors of domestic violence,

or any protocols that are specifically tailored to meet the needs of women who experience intersectional discrimination like Roma women do. Moreover, Roma women encounter racial bias and prejudice when engaging with public service providers such as social workers, police officers, judges and public prosecutors, preventing them from receiving the proper assistance they need.

To fully combat gender-based violence, especially intersectional discrimination, full service support must be provided and made widely available. This includes special supportive measures that the state and the local institutions need to create and support financially.

# Recommendations

The following recommendations include actions that UNDP can undertake to work with governments in the Western Balkans to combat gender-based violence among Roma and other marginalised groups:

- Conduct research on the needs of Roma girls and women who are survivors of gender-based violence and who face intersectional discrimination to create a tailored model for assistance.
- Assist Centres for Social Work in creating and implementing models which support the healing of the entire family when assisting Roma women who are survivors of gender-based violence. When Roma women escape an abusive marriage or relationship, the children will frequently remain behind with their father's family and could witness the cycle of violence anew if their father remarries and repeat abusive behaviour.
- Assist civil society organisations and CSWs that operate shelters with improved admission criteria that fully include disadvantaged and vulnerable groups (e.g., devise criteria that would allow Roma women who do not have personal documents and/or are not citizens to use shelters).
- Support institutions that have a mandate to assist survivors of gender-based violence to improve service delivery to marginalised groups by training their staff (including police officers, judges, public prosecutors, medical doctors and health care professionals, social workers, teachers, etc.) and adopting and implementing safeguard measures (including codes of conduct and job performance reviews).
- Increase support to Roma organisations and women's civil society organisations working on gender-based violence that serve as intermediaries between Roma survivors of gender-based violence and public institutions:
  - Develop their capacities to address gender-based violence and intersectional discrimination as structural phenomena.
  - If no Roma women's organisations exist, support Roma CSOs whose leadership fully understands issues of gender-based violence and child and forced marriages.
  - Support organisations that provide services to survivors of domestic violence, empower Roma girls and their families to keep them in school, prevent child and forced marriages and juvenile pregnancies, support young mothers and provide advice on irregular migration, human trafficking and prevention of prostitution.
- Encourage Roma organisations and women's CSOs to write CEDAW shadow reports and GREVIO reports and to monitor results achieved in the implementation of measures to prevent gender-based violence in Roma communities, including the availability of shelters.
- Support state and civil society actors to engage in awareness-raising campaigns tailored for Roma women and girls on human rights and protection mechanisms and specialised services to address gender-based violence.
- Encourage service providers to organise events and activities in Roma settlements, rather than expecting Roma women to come to their offices or access information through media channels that may not be accessible to them.
- Assist state and civil society actors in developing specialised support services that would provide accessible and unhindered support in cases of sexual assault, in accordance with the Istanbul Convention.



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# ANNEX 1. RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

## A. Examples of questions about domestic violence to be asked in group interviews with representatives from state institutions, NGOs, Roma NGOs and Roma activists:

1. Do Roma women who are victims of domestic violence have financial means to pay public transportation and come to your institution/organization (having in mind that significant number of Roma people live in absolute poverty)? How do you reach out to Roma women and girls that might be potential domestic violence victims or are domestic violence victims? What can be improved in this regard by your institution/NGO?
2. Please tell me, do Roma women know that domestic violence is regulated by law? Do Roma women report domestic violence to you? Do you have cases of Roma women who are in early marriages (younger than 18 years) that report domestic violence? To your knowledge where do Roma women and girls report most domestic violence cases?
3. What type of domestic violence (physical, economic, psychological, sexual, stalking, etc.) Roma women who are victims report to you?
4. Do you have cases of Roma women withdrawing their statements after initially reporting violence? At what stage the prosecution is stopped (police reporting, public prosecution process or during Court proceedings)? If Roma woman withdraws the statement, what are the reasons for that? What happens, if Roma woman, who comes to report violence, does not have personal ID or updated health ID? Can you still work with her?
5. According to your opinion, do Roma women who are victims of domestic violence need particular help that will match their specific needs? What you as institution/NGO would need in order to improve your support to Roma women who are victims of domestic violence? What and how would you suggest to other institutions/NGOs to improve their support to Roma women who are victims of domestic violence?
6. Did you have or do you have now Roma women who were/are victims of domestic violence and who asked to be accommodated in the Shelter? If young Roma woman is victim of domestic violence and she is below 18 years, can she be accommodated in the Shelter?
7. Do you provide psycho-social support, legal aid, filling forms etc. to victims of domestic violence? Do you accompany victims when they have to go to the police, social services or court? How often Roma women who are victims of domestic violence and/or in early marriage (younger than 18 years) call or come to NGO you are working at?
8. You work on domestic violence for years, where do you see the biggest achievements? What are still the biggest weaknesses in the implementation of laws and measures that exist in the country? Did you and in which way include specific needs of women who experience multiple oppressions: Roma women, disabled women, etc. in your assistance to victims of domestic violence?

## **B. Examples of questions about early marriages to be asked in group interviews with Roma NGOs and Roma activists and focus groups with Roma girls who married before they turned 18 or parents of Roma girls who got married before they turned 18:**

- 1.** How education and education interruption is influencing early marriages? Do parents make difference in education of boys and girls in Roma communities? Has this been changing over time?
- 2.** How do schools and teachers treat Roma girls that got pregnant?
- 3.** Do Roma girls and Roma parents know what compulsory education period is in the country where they live?
- 4.** What if a girl in your community doesn't get married? What are the advantages and disadvantages? What are her alternative options? Has this been changing over time? What happens if girls don't follow arranged marriages?
- 5.** What if girl/woman can't have a child? What if she gets a child when she is not married? How are these views/expectations different between young generations who just got married and their parents?
- 6.** What do girls do when they get pregnant before being 18 years? Who do they turn to? Where do they go? What are some of the problems and/or challenges adolescent girls face when pregnant, when giving birth and after giving birth? Do they have access to reproductive health services in your community (counseling, contraception; safe deliveries)? How juvenile pregnancy is regulated by law in the country where you live?
- 7.** Do Roma girls and Roma parents know legal regulations about juvenile marriage in the country where they live? Which state institution has to approve juvenile marriage?
- 8.** What do you see as a way out and what are good 'role models' in the Roma communities that you know?

## **I. Group interview about domestic violence and early marriages that Roma women experience with representatives from state institutions and NGOs:**

- 1.** You work both with women who belong to majority population and Roma women who are ethnic minority group and who are victims of domestic violence. According to your working experience, do Roma women experience differently domestic violence to non-Roma women? If yes, what are differences? Do Roma women who are victims of domestic violence have financial means to pay public transportation and come to your institution/organization (having in mind that significant number of Roma people live in absolute poverty)?
- 2.** Please tell me, do Roma women know that domestic violence is regulated by law? Do Roma women report domestic violence to you? If yes, what is number or % of Roma vs. non-Roma women who report that they are victims of violence? Do you have cases of Roma women who are in early marriages (younger than 18 years) that report domestic violence?
- 3.** What type of domestic violence (physical, psychological, sexual, etc.) Roma women who are victims report to you?
- 4.** Do you have cases of Roma women withdrawing their statements after initially reporting violence? At what stage the prosecution is stopped (police reporting, public prosecution process or during Court proceedings)? If Roma woman withdraws the statement, what are the reasons for that? What happens, if Roma woman, who comes to report violence, does not have personal ID or updated health ID? Can you still work with her?
- 5.** According to your opinion, do Roma women who are victims of domestic violence need particular help that will match their specific needs?
- 6.** For Shelters staff: what are criteria to receive somebody in Shelter (age, gender, employed/unemployed etc.)? Do you have enough places? If the Shelter is full, where do you accommodate victims? What kind of support do you offer to victims in the Shelter? Do you offer any trainings or courses so that they can find jobs more easily? Did you have or do you have now Roma women who were/are victims of domestic violence and who asked to be accommodated in the Shelter? If young Roma woman is victim of domestic violence and she is below 18 years, can she be accommodated in the Shelter?
- 7.** For NGOs: Do you provide psycho-social support, legal aid, filling forms etc. to victims of domestic violence? Do you accompany victims when they have to go to court? How often Roma women who are victims of domestic violence and/or in early marriage (younger than 18 years) call or come to NGO you are working at? Do you have among staff/volunteers Roma people (if it is not Roma NGO)?
- 8.** For NGOs that conducted national survey on domestic violence or worked on advocacy campaigns and lobbying for laws and measures for domestic violence (ESE in Macedonia and SOS Hotline Niksic in Montenegro): what is the biggest difference in the prevalence of domestic violence that Roma women experience vs. non Roma women? You work on domestic violence for years, where do you see the biggest achievements? What are still the biggest weaknesses in the implementation of laws and measures that exist in the country? Did you and in which way include specific needs of women who experience multiple oppressions: Roma women, disabled women, etc. in the research and different policy changes regarding domestic violence?

## **II. Group interview about domestic violence and early marriages with representatives of Roma NGOs and Roma activists:**

- 1.** Can you please tell me, does NGO (in which you are/were engaged), have projects related to domestic violence and early marriages that Roma women experience?
- 2.** Do you work in Roma communities and do Roma women who are victims of domestic violence/or should enter into early marriage come to NGO you are engaged with?
- 3.** Are Roma women you worked with aware about laws on domestic violence? Do Roma women face obstacles when they report domestic violence and ask for help from institutions (police, health centres, centre for social work, shelter, etc.)? What are the major obstacles that they are facing? Do Roma women who are victims have financial means to commute and visit health centres, police, Centre for Social Work, etc?
- 4.** How do you reach out to Roma women and girls that might be potential domestic violence victims or are domestic violence victims? What can be improved in this regard by your NGO?
- 5.** Please tell me, do Roma women know that domestic violence is regulated by law? Do Roma women report domestic violence to you? Do you have cases of Roma women who are in early marriages (younger than 18 years) that report domestic violence? To your knowledge where do Roma women and girls report most domestic violence cases?
- 6.** What type of domestic violence (physical, economic, psychological, sexual, stalking, etc.) Roma women who are victims report to you?
- 7.** Do you have cases of Roma women withdrawing their statements after initially reporting violence? At what stage the prosecution is stopped (police reporting, public prosecution process or during Court proceedings)? If Roma woman withdraws the statement, what are the reasons for that? What happens, if Roma woman, who comes to report violence, does not have personal ID or updated health ID? Can you still work with her?
- 8.** According to your opinion, do Roma women who are victims of domestic violence need particular help that will match their specific needs? What you as NGO would need in order to improve your support to Roma women who are victims of domestic violence? What and how would you suggest to other institutions/ NGOs to improve their support to Roma women who are victims of domestic violence?
- 9.** Did you have or do you have now Roma women who were/are victims of domestic violence and who asked to be accommodated in the Shelter? If young Roma woman is victim of domestic violence and she is below 18 years, can she be accommodated in the Shelter?
- 10.** Do you provide psycho-social support, legal aid, filling forms etc. to victims of domestic violence? Do you accompany victims when they have to go to the police, social services or court? How often Roma women who are victims of domestic violence and/or in early marriage (younger than 18 years) call or come to NGO you are working at?
- 11.** You work on domestic violence for years, where do you see the biggest achievements? What are still the biggest weaknesses in the implementation of laws and measures that exist in the country?



12. Do you have any knowledge about Roma women accommodated in the Shelter? If yes, how many Roma women got that support according to your experience?
13. How does the belief to preserve honour in Roma culture impact early marriages?
14. Did you work on the issue of early marriages/child marriages in Roma communities? If you did, what is your experience? What were biggest challenges and what changes you were able to make?
15. How education and education interruption is influencing early marriages? Do parents make difference in education of boys and girls in Roma communities that you worked in?
16. Is there a link between multi-generational poverty and early marriages?
17. What if a girl in your community doesn't get married? What are the advantages and disadvantages? What are her alternative options? Has this been changing over time? What happens if girls don't follow arranged marriages?
18. What if girl/woman can't have a child? What if she gets a child when she is not married? How are these views/expectations different between young generations who just got married and their parents?
19. What do you see as a way out and what are good 'role models' in the Roma communities that you know?

### **III. Focus group with Roma women who were married before they turned 18 (aged 18 to 25):**

1. Did you go to school? If so, how long did your education last? Did you make the decision whether or not you would go to school or decision was made by your parents? Do your parents make difference in education of girls and boys? Has this been changing over time?
2. Is it common for girls to be withdrawn from school for marriage? At what age? If your education was interrupted, what were the reasons for that? Did you want to continue education after getting married? Do you know what compulsory education period is in the country where you live?
3. Are you employed? Were you ever employed? Do you think that you would find a job/better job if you finished school? (if the school was interrupted)
4. What do you think is a good age for girls to be married? When did you get married? How old were you? Who decided about your marriage, you or your parents? What is your opinion about arranged marriages? Do you know legal regulations about juvenile marriage in the country where you live? Which state institution has to approve juvenile marriage?
5. Did you know your husband before the wedding? How long did you know him? Did you have any love relationships before the marriage?
6. Did you have wedding? Who organized it?
7. What was your marriage like at the beginning? What was good and were there any difficulties relating to your marriage? If so, what were/are difficulties that you were/are facing? What happens if there are problems in the couple? Who can you turn to? How do they help you?

8. What is the usual size of the family in the community you live in? How many children would you want? What about the gender of the child?
9. What do girls do when they get pregnant before being 18 years? Who do you turn to? Where do you go? What are some of the problems and/or challenges adolescent girls face when pregnant, when giving birth and after giving birth? Do you have access to reproductive health services in your community (counseling, contraception; safe deliveries)? How juvenile pregnancy is regulated by law in the country where you live? How do schools and teachers treat Roma girls that got pregnant?
10. What if a girl in your community doesn't get married? What are the advantages and disadvantages? What are her alternative options? Has this been changing over time? What happens if girls don't follow arranged marriages?
11. What if girl/woman can't have a child? What if she gets a child when she is not married? How are these views/expectations different between your generation who just got married and your parents?
12. If you would have possibility to decide again, would you again marry at the same age, in the same way or you would do something differently? What you would like to change? What are good 'role models' for you in the Roma community where you live?

#### **IV. Focus group with parents of Roma women who got married before they turned 18 (aged 30 to 45):**

1. What do you think is a good age for girls and boys to be married? When did you get married? How old were you? Who decided about your marriage, you or your parents? What is your opinion about arranged marriages? Do you know legal regulations about juvenile marriage in the country where you live? Which state institution has to approve juvenile marriage?
2. What do you think good parents are expected to do in order to prepare their children for marriage (help find partner; save money/assets and prepare dowry to provide to daughter/son when they get married; etc.)? Do you prepare/help your sons and your daughters in the same way regarding marriage?
3. Where does this social expectation/tradition come from (e.g. 'Roma elderly council', better-off families, based on own experience)? Who advocates/articulates/gives voice to this ideal or how is this ideal transmitted to families?
4. Is this social expectation/tradition possible to attain? Why/why not? What happens if you can't attain this? Have these ideals/values been changing over time? Is migration changing these ideals about marriage at all?
5. What happens if your daughter expresses dislike about your proposed husband for her? How do you react? Why? Just because she disagrees with you or also because of concerns about societal reactions?
6. Are there/were there any difficulties in your daughter's marriage? If so, what were/are difficulties that she is facing?
7. What if a girl in your community doesn't get married? What are the advantages and disadvantages? What are her alternative options? Has this been changing over time? What happens if girls don't follow arranged marriages?

8. What if girl/woman can't have a child? What if she gets a child when she is not married? How are these views/expectations different between young generations who just got married and you as their parents?
9. What do girls do when they get pregnant before being 18 years? Who do they turn to? Where do they go? What are some of the problems and/or challenges adolescent girls face when pregnant, when giving birth and after giving birth? Do they have access to reproductive health services in your community (counseling, contraception; safe deliveries)? How juvenile pregnancy is regulated by law in the country where you live?
10. What are your views on education? Do you think it is valuable? Do you support education during and after a juvenile pregnancy? How do schools and teachers treat Roma girls that got pregnant?
11. Until what age do you ideally think children should be educated? Why? Is it different for boys and girls? Is your ideal level of education realistic given other constraints (income; time; distance)? Do you think it is feasible for a child of a poor family to reach the highest level of education? Does country where you live offer support to Roma children to get better education? Do you know what compulsory education period is in the country where you live?
12. What do children gain if anything from being well educated (e.g. different type of occupation; better jobs/ more job opportunities, higher income)? What are the risks (e.g. children leave locality; disagree with parents; get into trouble without parental supervision; break family ties because parents do not want to support them as they do not follow expectations and social norms of their Roma community)? Have attitudes toward education been changing over time in your Roma community?
13. Do men find girls more/less marriageable if they have a higher level of education? Would you support your son to marry Roma woman who has University degree?
14. Are there good role models for girls in your Roma community in terms of girls' education?
15. Girls' income-generating options? Successful marriages? Migration abroad?

#### **V. Individual interview with Roma women who have experienced domestic violence:**

1. Are you employed?
2. Are you married/divorced or live with a partner?
3. Do you still live with your partner/husband?
4. Do you have children?
5. Are you afraid of your husband/partner? Do you feel you are in danger?
6. You mentioned your partner's/husband's problem with temper/stress/drinking. When that happens, has he ever threatened or hurt you?
7. Every couple fights at times – what are your fights like at home? Do the fights ever become physical?
8. Have you been hit or scared?

9. Has anyone at home hit you or tried to injure you in any way?
10. What kinds of experiences with violence have you had in your life?
11. Do you feel controlled or isolated by your partner/husband?
12. Does your partner/husband ever try to control you by threatening to hurt you or your family?
13. Who administers the family money? Do you have to ask your husband/partner all the time to get money when you need for yourself or for your children if any? Does your partner/husband ever try to control your access to finances?
14. Has anyone close to you ever threatened or hurt you?
15. Does your partner/husband ever hit, kick, hurt or threaten you?
16. Have you ever been slapped, pushed or kicked by your partner/husband?
17. Have you ever been touched in a way that made you feel uncomfortable?
18. Has your partner/husband ever made you to do something sexual when you did not want to?
19. Has your partner/husband ever refused to practice safe sex?
20. Are you still abused by your partner/husband?
21. Do your parents/siblings know about it?
22. Do you know that country where you are citizen has special laws and regulations about domestic violence?
23. Have you ever asked for help? If not, what was the reason for not asking for help?
24. Who did you ask help from?
25. Have you ever reported any domestic incidents to the police or to the local domestic violence coordinator at the municipality or to the family doctor or to your family/friends? If not, what was the reason for that? If yes, how police reacted to your call/visit? Did they listen to you? Did they offer help and if so what kind of help? Did they register your case?
26. Did you contact Center for Social Work (CSW) or the local Domestic Violence coordinator at the Municipality? If not what was the reason for not contacting them? If yes what kind of help did they offer to you? How staff in the CSW treated you? Was their support useful? Did they offer to you accommodation in Women's Shelter/Safe House? Were you offered psychological and/or legal support in the CSW?
27. If you did not get support from relevant institutions, what do you think was reason for that? Apart from reporting the case what were your immediate needs as domestic violence victim? Did you need a lawyer? Could you get the services of a free of charge lawyer?






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