



WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES IN ALBANIA: INCLUDED OR NEGLECTED?

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ii. LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DPEO	Department of Policies for Equal Opportunities
NPO	Not-for-profit Organization
UNO	United Nations Organization
CEDAW	Convention for the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of People with Disability
MoLSAEO	Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities
NSPD	National Strategy for People with Disability
NSGEEDV	National Strategy for Gender Equity and Eradication of Domestic Violence
NSSSED	National Strategy for Social and Economic Development
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Women in the Albanian society are still being subject to discrimination. Under these circumstances, being a disabled woman further aggravates the situation. Women and girls with disabilities represent one of the most marginalized groups of the society in which we live in, and subject to multiple discrimination. Unfortunately, little or almost nothing is said about the reality of women with disabilities in Albania. The country's policy framework so far has failed to include, treat or provide solutions to the elimination of multiple discrimination of women with disabilities.

It is now high time to enhance the awareness level of central and local institutions, not-for-profit organizations and all stakeholder groups, with the view to addressing multiple discrimination of women with disabilities at all levels, to improve their quality of life, their position in the society with all the rights inherent for a disabled woman and person.

The study "Women with disabilities in Albania- Included or Neglected?" represents an evaluation of the inclusion of the rights of women with disabilities in country's policy documents focused on achieving gender equality and disability rights. In addition, the study aims to make an assessment of the inclusion of women and girls with disabilities in the strategies, programs and activities of the organizations focused on gender equality and on disability organizations.

Study questions:

- *To what level are the rights of women with disability enshrined in the nation policy and legal framework that target disability or gender equality issues?*
- *To what extent are women and girls with disabilities included in the strategies, programs and services delivered by the national and international organizations, which focus on women, human rights and disability issues?*

Data for the conduct of this study were collected through interviews with four responsible departments for the formulation and monitoring of gender equality

and disability policy in the MoLSAEO. A qualitative detailed analyses was conducted for the main policy documents related to the scope of this study.

To assess whether or not the women with disabilities were included in the strategies, programs and concrete plans of national and international organizations who currently operate in the country in the area of women, and in the area of people with disability or human rights issues, 38 NPOs whose work focuses on women and gender equality expressed their willingness to participate in the study, along with 28 NPOs whose work focuses on disabled persons and 6 international organizations, which are engaged in developm programs in different areas.

The study demonstrated that despite achievements with regard to the improvement of the legal framework, which fosters gender equality and inclusion of disabled persons, women and girls with disabilities in Albania are still not properly represented in any of the policy documents of the Government of Albania in either of the areas. Women with disabilities are regarded as a non-active category, that should be eligible only to social services and disability payments and their issues are not specifically addressed in any of the areas, which aim to empower and to include them in decision-making process, to enable accessible health care services and employment or their economic empowerment. The results of the study provide evidence that women with disabilities have been deprived of access to universal services since they are not planned in compliance with and in response to their specific needs. National statistics are fragmented, not available for different finds of disabilities, thus not permitting to make a judgment about the total number of women and girls with disabilities, their current status, and needs.

From the analyses of the policy documents of the disability area, it resulted that the NSPD, as the country's most important and comprehensive policy, it resulted that it is utterly insensitive towards the concept of the gender perspective, and women with disabilities are invisible and missing in all text, as well as in the monitoring reports for its implementation. Another important finding of this study is that women with disabilities do not have a voice in the formulation of the government documents both in terms of gender equality, and disability issues.

The results of interviews with women NPOs indicate that women with disabilities do not get the necessary attention/focus to be integral part of their programs. There are no data about women with disabilities included or beneficiaries of women organizations programs. Women NPOs do not focus on women with disabilities, and are of the opinion that this is an issue which should be addressed by the disability organizations. Women organizations believe that women with disabilities can be indirect beneficiaries of all initiatives and changes for improving the overall

status of women. Another factor which should be taken into account is that of the absence/lack of information, appropriate capacities within the organization that would enable/ensure inclusion and treatment of women with disabilities. The centers (facilities) where women organizations are located do not provide access to accommodate women with disabilities, and this is perceived to be one of the main barriers behind their non-inclusion. Other barriers such as: low awareness regarding women with disabilities rights and concerns, lack of funds to address the disability issues, represent some of the elements that should be taken into consideration.

Furthermore, even among disability area organizations, women with disabilities are not regarded as a group, which deserves special considerations. The issues of women with disabilities are mainly addressed within the disability group, and only very seldomly have they been specifically addressed. Lack of accurate data regarding women with disabilities, low awareness levels regarding inclusion of the gender perspective in every stage of the development of the organization, or programs, absence of accessible building within their centers had an adverse impact in the inclusion of women and girls with disabilities in the strategies and programs of disability organizations. Empowering women with disabilities themselves, enhancing advocacy and lobbying for their rights, generation of support services and means such as accessible transportation, the introduction of the personal assistant service or ensuring accessible buildings are some of the priorities for increasing participation of women with disabilities.

Women and girls with disabilities did not make the focus of the programs of some of the international organizations currently operating in the country. No figures were made available about women and girls beneficiaries of their programs, and their specific weight in their strategies. Issues of women with disabilities were either not addressed in their programs, or were considered to make part of the generic disability category, or women's category, being considered as indirect beneficiaries of their concrete projects and plans. It was noted that there was no awareness regarding women and girls with disabilities and their rights, and no studies and specific data were available. These were considered as barriers which had prevented women with disabilities from being visible in the programs of these organizations.

This publication, the first of its kind in Albania is accompanied with recommendations, which will serve the purpose of inclusion and addressing of disability issues, and promotion and respect of the rights of women and girls with disabilities in the Albanian society. The study provides recommendations for all groups and participant institutions, which aim at enhancing the attention towards

women with disabilities, addressing their specific needs and concerns at all levels, and in all areas of life, such as: employment, education and vocational training, economic empowerment, health services, access to technology and information, support and accessible services.

This study is of particular importance since not only it is one of the few studies in the disability area, and one which specifically targets women with disabilities, but also for the spirit that it tries to promote towards inclusion of issues and concerns of disabled women in all vertical and horizontal policies, as well as in all stages of development and organizational action.

2. INTRODUCTION

According to official statistics¹, in Albania there are currently 44,852 registered labor invalids; 10,407 persons who are blind; 2,046 paraplegics and tetraplegics, 43,301 individuals with mental and physical disabilities who receive disability payment.

There are no official data regarding the total number of women with disabilities registered in the country. According to the statistics of MoLSAEO there are 18,880 women with disabilities who are beneficiaries of the labor invalids scheme. According to the National Observatory² for People with Disability, there are 16,924 children with disabilities who benefit from the disability payment, of whom 44% (n=7,365) are females. MoLSAEO provides data regarding the number of disabled children who are eligible for social care services. Thus, there are 325 beneficiaries from public services, of whom 154 are females. There are 660 individuals who benefit from non-public services of social care, of whom 377 are women and girls with disabilities. Even these few data regarding women with disabilities are fragmented, and are not specific results of a determined objective in the policies of the institutions that identify them.

There are gaps not only in terms of statistics regarding total number of women with disabilities in Albania. Lack of attention vis-à-vis the problems of women with disabilities is further demonstrated in the studies carried out by the institutions, whose scope of work should focus on this issue, such as MoLSAEO, which does not mention women with disabilities in one of its National Reports; also, the National Human Development Report in Albania (2005) even though focused on women, it fails to mention issues of women with disabilities.

There are even bigger gaps with regard to women with disabilities in the Albanian policies and legislation. Despite the fact there is no special document for women with disabilities, international documents progressively are focusing their attention on the problems of women with disabilities from the prospective of their rights. The Convention on the Rights of People with Disability, which is a document that for the

¹ www.mpcs.gov.al/statistika.

² Disability rights in Albania, Annual Report of the National Disability Rights Observatory, 2007-2008.

first time sanctions/guaranties the rights of disabled persons in every aspect of life on equal footing with the rest of the individuals, comprises a specific article regarding women with disabilities. According to this article, women and girls with disabilities are subject to multiple discrimination; it's Governments's responsibility to take measures to guarantee their rights. The Council of Europe Action Plan for disabled persons draws the attention on the specific needs of women with disabilities. Equality between disabled men and women is one of the founding principles of this document. This is not the case for the Albanian specific documents. Women with disabilities are mentioned *en passant*/in passing in the National Strategy on Gender Equality and Domestic Violence, as well as in the action plan for its implementation for 2007-2010; women and girls with disabilities are invisible in the "National Strategy for People with Disability" and in the respective action plan, a document which fails to specifically address the problems of girls and women with disabilities.

Almost the same situation applies with reference to the Albanian legislation. The rights of women and girls with disabilities are provided for in the Albanian legislation in as far as the disability term is used, while more specific support is provided under the general category of persons with disabilities. The legislation provides insufficient attention to lack of attention regarding the conditions and specifics of this particular category, and this has not been addressed through the by-laws either.

Meantime, women and girls with disabilities are little or not at all included in the strategies, programs and services delivered by national and international organizations, whose line of work is directly related to women concerns, human rights, and disability issues. Women with disabilities are either not at all addressed in their programs, or are perceived/regarded as part of the generic women concept or under the generic disability category, being considered as indirect beneficiaries of concrete projects and plans. Such is the situation for the women and girls with disabilities in Albania. When they are supposed to have equal rights like the rest of the population, but instead they are being faced everyday with discrimination, while trying to overcome the stigma, prejudice, and the many barriers facing them starting with their own families and the environment surrounding them, and moving to the society which has forgotten about them; women and girls with disabilities try to ensure for themselves access to education and employment in where the state fails to assist them; women with disabilities have their own dreams of a family life and motherhood, but that unfortunately has been lurking in the borders of the dreams. And so it comes as a normal reaction to the results of this survey for a question to pop up " Will the women with disabilities in Albania continue to remain neglected or will instead the society move in the direction of offering them equal opportunities for inclusion?"

3. LITERATURE

More and more, rights of women with disabilities are occupying a particular space in international human rights documents. Also, there is increasing attention vis-à-vis women with disabilities, and their concerns in various global studies.

Under the chapter of Literature there is a summary description of the main documents, which protect women with disabilities rights in the United Nations, and European Union. This chapter also dwells on some of the studies and reports that address the issue of disabled women in Albania, and worldwide.

3.1 Women with disabilities Rights – International documents

It should be pointed out that in the international level there are no specific acts or legal documents to define/determine the rights of women with disabilities, but there are rather international instruments, which refer to the disability issue, the rights of women or human rights and they have taken into consideration and directly or indirectly refer to the rights of women with disabilities. This chapter refers specifically to main international and European documents, which provide for the rights of women and girls with disabilities.

UN Standard Rules on Equal Opportunities for People with Disability envisage that Governments "... should take measures to change the negative attitudes, which still prevail in the societies regarding marriage, sex and the right to have a family for the disabled people, more so for women and girls with disabilities."

Article 45 of the *Disability World Program for Action* refers to the *specific situation of women with disabilities. The article refers to social, cultural and economic difficulties/constraints, which impact the women's health, and about their limited access to health care, vocational training and employment.*

The Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is undoubtedly the most powerful instrument/tool for promoting women's

rights, but which fails to make mention of, and include women with disabilities. Stemming from this gap, the Monitoring Committee of the Convention seconded a recommendation whose purpose was to remind all party Governments that CEDAW also applies to women with disabilities. Recommendation No.18 requires all countries/government to provide information regarding women with disabilities in their periodical reports, as well as about the specific measures in this direction. However, according to Quin & Degener (2002), women with disabilities still occupy very little space in the periodical implementation reports of CEDAW.

Up until the World Conference of Nairobi in 1995, women with disabilities were not considered as a particularly marginalized group, whose rights were being frequently violated. In this conference, not-for-profit organizations pushed for putting women with disabilities as part of the recommendations of working plans of this conference. Furthermore, Vienna Seminar for Women with disabilities (1990) focused on issues of double discrimination for disabled women in areas such as: education, training, health, employment etc.

The Declaration regarding elimination of violence against women (1993) reiterates that "...women with disabilities are exposed to violence...", and in its Article 3 it further points out to: "...equal protection and eligibility to all fundamental rights and freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, and civil areas.. " "...The right to be free from any form of discrimination..", "The right to accessible employment...", "The right to enjoy physical and mental health in compliance with the highest standards." Finally, the *Beijing Declaration, and the Platform for Action* provided a platform for women with disabilities, and came up with concrete recommendations to be implemented by the respective governments. This declaration also addressed the issue of violence against women with disabilities (paragraph116).

Up until 2006, the rights of disabled persons were guaranteed only in general terms in these documents. Following a lengthy intensive process launched since 2003, the UN approved in December 13, 2006 the Convention on the Rights of People with Disability (CRPD), a document which for the first time sanctioned the rights of disabled people in every aspect of life in equal footing with all other individuals. The convention includes a special article regarding women with disabilities (article 6), according to which women and girls with disabilities are subject to multiple discrimination, and countries/governments should take measures for sanctioning their rights.

CEDAW and CRPD together constitute the basic instruments which spell out and endorse the rights of women with disabilities, and represent powerful tools

that address violation of their rights. They offer opportunities to serve as a model and guide for the legal framework, policies, programs, and services that impact the lives of women with disabilities.

During the last decade, at the European level a series of important documents have been drafted focusing on the rights and inclusion of women with disabilities concerns/problems. The European Disability Forum (1997) adopted a Manifest with detailed recommendations, which were aimed at improving the lives of women and girls with disabilities in Europe. This Manifest served as a base document for the inclusion of policies for women with disabilities in all European Union policies. While focusing on multiple discrimination of women with disabilities, the Manifest offers recommendations in priority areas for women and girls with disabilities in Europe. Under the perspective of inclusion of disability rights, the Manifest reiterates that all policies, legislation, and initiatives of the European Union regarding disability and gender equality should be drafted with due consideration of the specific situation/circumstances of women with disabilities.

The Malaga Declaration of 2003 spells out that women with disabilities should have more visibility and seek particular attention. The same Declaration points out that the approach of inclusion of the gender perspective should be spelled out in all disability area policies.

The Council of Europe Action Plan (2006) for disabled persons dedicates special attention to cross cutting disability issues, also focusing on women and girls with disabilities. This Action Plan comes up with recommendations for considering the specific circumstances of these women and girls while formulating gender based and disability rights policies. The Action Plan includes 15 concrete actions, which aim at promoting participation of disabled persons in the political, public, cultural life, in education, information, communications, employment and accessibility. The plan draws the attention to the specific needs of women with disabilities. Equity/Equality between men and women with disabilities is one of the fundamental principles of this document.

The European Commission (2004) in its Guidance on Disability and Development points to the mainstreaming and address of disability issues in all programs and services. A special space is dedicated to disabled women, who are perceived to be doubly exploited and discriminated since they are totally excluded from access to education, health services, employment, and family life and are highly potential victims to abuse and domestic violence or be exposed to HIV/AIDS. The guide provides guidance to all member states for the inclusion of women with disabilities in all projects and programs focusing on women and gender equality, but also in

the support of specific programs targeting women with disabilities.

The European Parliament (2007) adopted a resolution on the situation of women and girls with disabilities in Europe. Through this resolution the European Parliament seeks from the Commission and the Members States to ensure the elimination of all barriers from the perspective of the creation of equal opportunities for women with disabilities, so that they can play an active role in their families, as well as in the political, cultural, social and professional lives through the formulation and implementation of an inclusive legal framework of gender equality.

The above mentioned documents indicate the increasing attention and importance towards mainstreaming of women with disabilities issues in important international documents targeting women, disability and human rights, but also towards formulation of specific documents, which foster improvement of the role, image, and contribution of women with disabilities in the society.

3.2 Studies regarding women with disabilities in Albania

In Albania there are no studies which address specifically the concerns of women with disabilities. However, in different reports drafted by various organizations or institutions disabled women are seldomly made mention in their contents.

A national study of MoLSAEO regarding women and gender equality fails to make mention of women with disabilities. The only instance it does so, is when it speaks about elderly women with specific needs, by referring to the absence of alternative services for them. The study points to the lack of services for this category, and to the need for increasing services in favor of improving the living conditions of elderly women.

The Center for Gender Alliance and Development, in cooperation with MoLSAEO (2006) in a joint study state that women with disabilities represent one of the groups who are potentially on the high end of risk to be subject to domestic violence. The report though does not come up with figures which would help in the judgment of the prevalence and incidence of this phenomenon among women and girls with disabilities in Albania.

The National Human Development Report (2005) for the first time focused specifically on the policies for the poor and women. The report reiterates that women in Albania constitute one of the most significant components under the poor category, and that in the recent decades their status has changed very little. Despite the fact that one of the recommendations of this Report is about channeling the NNSD towards the most vulnerable groups and women, women with disabilities

do not receive the appropriate attention as a category which is subject to multiple discrimination and exclusion.

3.3 Studies and figures regarding women with disabilities in the world according to different reports

International literature defines women with disabilities as one of the most excluded, neglected, and isolated groups of the society. Still, to date women with disabilities have no visibility, no “voice”, and are ignored and forgotten by the legal and policy framework despite the fact that they are being subjected to multiple discrimination and faced with social exclusion (UNFPA 2005). Although, women with disabilities account for a large share of the population, there is little or no information about their characteristics, the obstacles that they face in their daily life, and the quality of life that they lead.

According to World Bank data³, there are approximately 600 million disabled persons in the world, and half of them are women. 240 million of these disabled persons live in developing countries. Despite, common issues/problems with disabled men, women with disabilities are subject to multiple discrimination, and are in more disfavorable position than disabled men.

According to World Disability Report (1999), $\frac{3}{4}$ of women with disabilities in the world, and 100% of women with disabilities in developing countries are not considered to be part of the labor market. Instead, they contribute in their households through cooking, cleaning chores and taking care of their children and relatives. According to the same study, in the European Community countries, women with disabilities are twice likely to find employment compared to disabled men. According to Rousso (2003), the majority of women with disabilities live in poverty. Groce (1997) reiterates that poverty generates more disabilities among women with disabilities, who have fewer resources and opportunities than disabled men. On the other hand, disability leads to aggravate poverty as a result of added expenditures and costs related to it. Main barriers are related to attitudes towards gender, reinforced by the disability prejudice, and absence/lack of accessible transport and infrastructure. A Council of Europe study (2003) shows that the level of training and vocational training more specifically is lower among women with disabilities as compared to disabled men.

According to Groce (1997), the level of educational among girls and women

³ www.worldbank.org/disability

with disabilities is lower compared with disabled men. The illiteracy rate at the global level of disabled men is 3% , while for women with disabilities is 1%.

There are no accurate data regarding women and girls with disabilities as a result of the of classification methodologies used, but also as a result of lack of sufficient attention. According to UNESCO there are about 120-150 million disabled children worldwide under 18 years old. Again according to Groce (1999), half of these disabled children are girls. According to UNESCO⁴, only 2% of disabled children attend school, whereas the enrollment rates for disabled girls are a lot worse. These are figures that attest to the double gender and disability based discrimination in all areas of life, mentioning employment, incomes, health care, family life etc. According to Rousso (2003) still to date there are no programs and policies for the education of disabled girls. Mutual gender and disability rights policies fail to include disabled girls.

According to Mekosha (1999), in the last decade women with disabilities have criticized the women's rights movement for having excluded them. Meanwhile, the disability movement is dominated by disabled men, leaving women with disabilities outside the focus of attention. According to a DPI report, in Italy (2007), the disability movement still todate does not recognize/acknowledge double discrimination of women with disabilities caused by the combination of being a woman, and a disabled one. This has led to lack of interest in the formulation of policies, programs, activities, concrete actions that aim at the accomplishment of specific needs of women with disabilities. Women rights movement continues to ignore and exclude women with disabilities. This movement has labeled women with disabilities to be of inferior political and intellectual skills. Women with disabilities are not regarded as strong, attractive, capable and powerful, but rather as vulnerable, dependent, in need, and passive, which does nothing but reinforce the traditional stereotype prevailing about women in general in society.

According to Fine&Asch (1998), in the disability context, women with disabilities represent a group which is subject to double or even multiple discrimination as a result of their characteristics and position. They suffer from the disappointment of a male dominated society, but on the other hand, the society regards the disability as a state of passiveness and lack of skills, and consequently women with disabilities have no real value in the social hierarchy. Oliver (1990) in one of his articles speaks about the existence of a category within the disability group which has little or no attention: women with disabilities. According to Oliver, the disability movement

⁴ www.unesco.org/wef/countryreports/usa/rapport_2_html.

is oriented towards male disability experiences. Oliver defines the roles of men and women within the disability group, roles that later on determine the degree of contribution, and their status in society. Again, according to Oliver, in order to fight the disability stigma, men try to strongly manhandle traditional social male roles in the society related to strength and power. Women with disabilities do not have that possibility; they are excluded from the productive roles which the majority of women with no disabilities have access to, but on the other hand they are regarded as incapable of playing the traditional reproductive roles of women, since they are deemed as incapable or unable to bring in life and rear children, and contribute in the families.

Previous studies about domestic violence (Mullender and Hague, 2001) point to the absence of studies which link disabilities with violence.

While according to Mogowan (2003), half of the women with disabilities have been subject of violence. Domestic violence services report that they are not prepared to take in women with disabilities and vice-versa women with disabilities lack information regarding domestic violence (Radford et al, 2006).

World literature indicates that women with disabilities represent one of the most discriminated, vulnerable groups, with limited access to education, employment and vocational training. They are more exposed to all forms of violence compared to women with no disabilities, and their access to services is limited and not accessible. Both the women movement and the disability movement are not inclusive with regard to the rights and specific concerns of women with disabilities.

4. METHODOLOGY

The methodology used for the conduct of this study is a combination of qualitative and quantitative data. In order to ensure the inclusion of women with disabilities in women related documents, and also in order to assess how sensitive these documents are to gender issues, a qualitative analyses of some of the main documents in both areas is done. To this end half-structured questionnaires were prepared, and interviews were conducted with directors of respective policy-making and monitoring departments of women and disability policies.

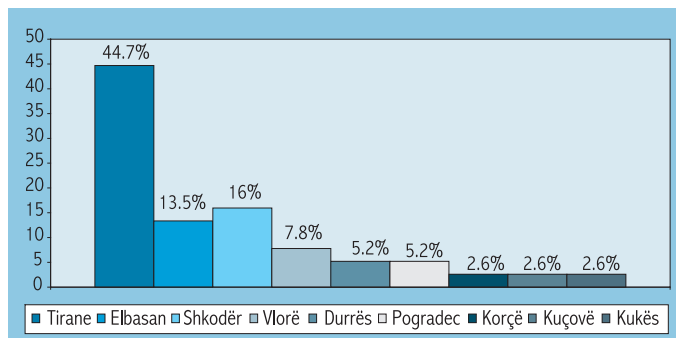
A quantitative methodology through structured and half-structured questionnaires were used to assess the position that women with disabilities occupied in the strategies, projects and programs developed by women organizations, disability organizations, and international organizations.

Participants/materials/instruments for the conduct of the study

4.1 Organizations that work with gender equality specific programs

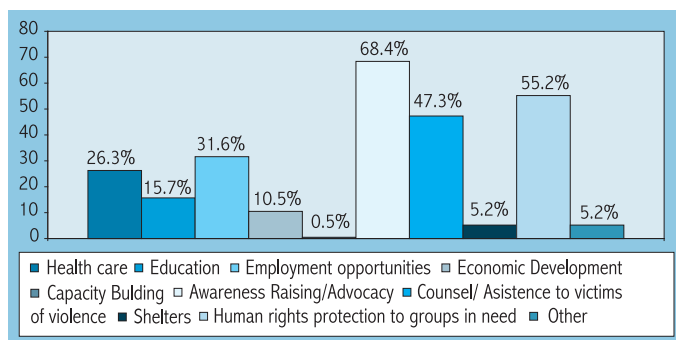
One of the participants groups in the study included 38 not-for-profit organizations active in the area of gender equality promotion. Graph no. 1 shows the regions where these organizations are currently active. Respectively, 44,7% of these organizations (n=17) exercise their activity in the region of Tirana;15,95% (n=6) in the region of Shkodra; 13,35% (n=5) in the region of Elbasan, and in the regions of Vlora, Durrës, Pogradec, Korça, Kuçova and Kukës.

Graph 1: **Regions where organizations focused on gender equality operate**



Graph 2 provides data regarding the areas of activity of the participant organizations in the survey. 68,4% of the interviewed organizations (n=26) focused their efforts on awareness raising regarding women’s rights and advocacy for the enforcement of these rights. 47.3% of these NPOs (n=18) focused in the delivery of different services for the victims of domestic violence and trafficking. 50% of these organizations work on women empowerment. As results from graph 2 as well, other areas of expertise of the organizations included: health, education, employment promotion and economic empowerment, reproductive health, shelter homes for victims of violence. 55.2% of the organizations (n=21) had been working also with programs for protecting the rights of other vulnerable categories.

Graph 2: **Work line of organizations focused on gender equality**

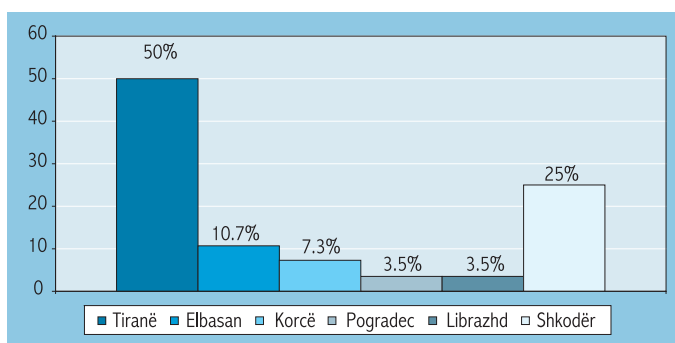


Half structured questionnaires were used to assess whether or not women with disabilities made part of the strategies, programs of the organizations focused on promotion of gender equality⁵. The answers to these questionnaires aimed at gathering of information on the fact whether women with disabilities made part of the strategic objectives; were there disabled women included and benefited from their programs; what were the reasons for lack of visibility of the girls and women with disability, and what the main barriers that prevented their inclusion. The questionnaire contained four questions related to respective training of the gender perspective and its linkage with disability, accessibility of centers and services to receive/ accommodate women with disabilities, and the preparedness of staff to respond to their specific needs.

4.2 Organizations that operate with specific programs in the disability area

28 organizations operating in the disability area participated in the study. Graph no. 3 provides information regarding the territorial spread where NPOs conduct their activity. 50% of these NPOs (n=14) exercised their activity in the region of Tirana, 25% (n=7) in the region of Shkodra, 10.7% (n=3) in the region of Elbasan, 7.3% (n=2) in the region of Korça, and 3.5% (n=1) in the regions of Pogradec and Librazhd.

Graph 3: **Geographic spread of disability organizations**

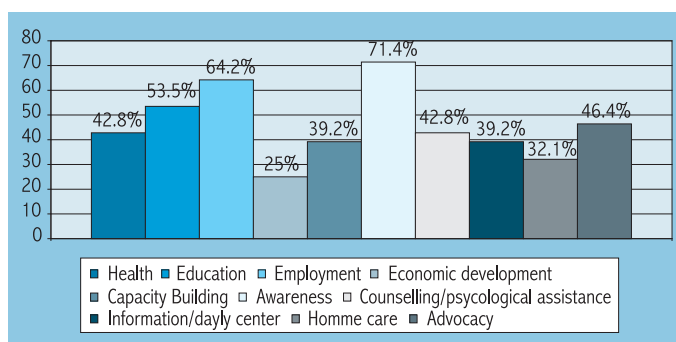


Main directions of work of the interviewed organizations are described in graph no. 4. The scope of work of 71.4% of these organizations (n=20) focused

⁵ www.mpcs.gov.al/dshb/organizatat

on awareness raising regarding the disability rights and concerns/problems; 64.2% of these organizations (n=18) worked on employment promotion and vocational training of disabled persons; 53.5% of these organizations (n=15) had programs focused on promotion of inclusive education for disabled children; 42.8% of these organizations were focused on health care services, as well as counseling and psycho-social assistance for disabled individuals and their families; 46.4% of these organizations (n=5) deal with advocacy for disability rights; 39.2% (n=11) work on capacity building; 32.1% (n=9) offer assistance to the families of disabled persons, and 25% aim at the economic enhancement/development of disabled individuals through employment and vocational training promotion.

Graph 4: **Line of work of disability organizations**



In order to assess whether their strategies, programs and concrete actions were sensitive towards disabled women issues, half structured questionnaires were prepared and filled in. These questionnaires were disseminated⁶ to the disability NPOs database. The questionnaire contained questions which aimed at gathering information about available data for included women with disabilities, the space they were devoted to in these programs and the strategic plans of the disability NPOs, what were the reasons why these women were not included in all concrete measures, and in all the stages, what were some of the barriers preventing the organizations from being more active towards the inclusion and treatment of disability issues. The questionnaire included questions focused on awareness raising training regarding gender equality and

⁶ www.adrf.org.al/database

disability issues, involvement of women with disabilities in consultation processes during formulation of policies regarding women and disabled persons, accessibility of centers and services to accommodate women with disabilities.

4.3 Central institutions responsible for the formulation and monitoring of the implementation of women and disability policies

Four interviews were conducted with representatives of central institutions responsible for women and disability issues. The interviews were conducted in the MoLSAEO, and respectively with the Department of Policies for Equal Opportunities, Department for Monitoring Strategies for Groups in Need, Department for the Formulation of Social Policies, and the Department for the Formulation of Employment Policies.

a) Department of Policies for Equal Opportunities

The interview with the Director of this Department was aimed at obtaining information regarding the degree of inclusion of women with disabilities in the strategies, reports, and programs that this Department prepares and implements for Albanian women. The interview was also meant to obtain data regarding women with disabilities in specific areas, to assess the future trends of women inclusion or lack of it, to assess the level of knowledge regarding women with disabilities issues and concerns, and to be informed about how and to what extent the Albanian government implemented its obligation stemming from the international documents that it has ratified. Questions were also guided about the fact whether the opinion of women with disabilities was accounted for in the process of formulation of gender policies. Also, a separate section was devoted to main obstacles in the inclusion of women with disabilities in policies and programs for women in general.

b) Department of Monitoring of Strategies for Groups in Need

The questionnaire section prepared for this Department contained half-structured questions, which were aimed at coming to conclusions whether the women with disabilities made part of the reporting about the implementation of action plans of the National Disability Strategy. The purpose of the questionnaire was also to gather information about the number of girls and women with disabilities at the central and local levels, according to the NSPD areas.

Another purpose of the questionnaire was to assess whether the disabled girls and women were an integral part of all strategies for groups in need that this Department was supposed to monitor.

c) Department for the formulation of social policies

The purpose of the interviews was to collect information regarding the space occupied by disabled women and girls throughout all phases/stages of the formulation of strategies and legislation in the social area. The questionnaire was filled by experts of this Department.

d) Department for Promotion of Employment Policies

The purpose of the interviews was to collect information regarding the space occupied by disabled women and girls throughout all phases/stages of the formulation of strategies and legislation in the employment area. The Director of this Department was involved in the provision of the information.

4.4 International organizations that implement development programs

Six development organizations were interviewed during the study. The questionnaire used was in the same line with the two questionnaires used for the above mentioned participants. The purpose of this questionnaire was to gather information, and judge whether women with disabilities were part of the programs, strategies, and services delivered by these organizations, and the perspective for the inclusion therein of the women with disabilities.

The collected data were processed, and their results are made available under the RESULTS Chapter.

5. RESULTS

5.1 Analyses of gender equality and disability policy documents

At a time when Albania has made remarkable steps forward towards the improvement of the legal and policy framework for promoting gender equality, and elimination of any form of discrimination against girls and women, women with disabilities have already starting asking questions such as: Are disabled girls and women beneficiaries of the strategies and laws developed for promoting gender equality, and elimination of any form of violence? Is the Albanian gender equality legislation inclusive for women with disabilities as well?

Women with disabilities are subject to a double discrimination as a result of being women, and also disabled. Issues of double discrimination of disabled girls and women have not been addressed, and still have found no answer in the Albanian society. Consequently, there is still no answer for the above mentioned question.

Since 1993, the country has drafted main and secondary legislation related to disability issues, which regulate the commissioning, disability payments, the right to education, employment, and social services. The legal framework for the improvement of the social and economic status, which is meant for granting equal opportunities for disabled persons in the Albanian society is being gradually improved. This is the result of the influence exercised by the disabled persons themselves, of the pressure exercised by the community groups and organizations that defend and represent their rights and interests. However, the analyses of the current situation indicates that the legislation is fragmented, which conditions full knowledge among state representatives, as well as among the disabled persons themselves.

In line with the scope of this study, below is an analyses of the existing legal and policy framework in the disability area, and in terms of gender perspective. This analyses will help point out what is the protection that the

law envisaged for women and girls with disabilities in Albania, and how enforceable are those rights.

5.1.1 Gender perspective in the context of strategic documents in the disability and gender equality areas

The Gender Equality and Eradication of Domestic Violence National Strategy (NSGEEDV), together with its action plan for enforcement, 2007-2010 (COM decision no.913 of 19.12.2007) represents a policy document of the Government of Albania, which reflects the main directions to achieve gender equality, and for an effective fight against domestic violence.

The goal of this strategy is to present the ways and institutional mechanisms for the inclusion of gender issues in the public policies for the mitigation of gender discrimination and prevention of domestic violence.⁷

The Introduction of the Strategy points to the spread of the phenomenon of violence in the Albanian society, and the among most at risk groups is that of the women and girls with disabilities. Page 8 of this Strategy reiterates the participation in its formulation of all stakeholder groups in gender related issues. If we refer to the groups of contributive organizations, it is evident that there is no participant that could have represented in this strategy the interests of women with disabilities.

In the analyses of the educational attainment of girls and women in Albania, there is no reference to the educational attainment of women and girls with disabilities, who represent a category that is totally left out of the education system as a result of the prejudice and stigma of the education system, lack of trained teachers, lack of accessible transportation and total lack of accessibility of the Albanian schools⁸.

Social protection

In the course of this analyses, women with disabilities are referred to only once in terms of monetary benefits in the context of the disability payment, as beneficiaries of the latter.

In the recommendations, women with disabilities are not mentioned as a priority group eligible to payments for poverty alleviation and social services (women who have many children, and women who are heads of households have been given

⁷ National Strategy about Gender Equity and Domestic Violence 2007-2010.

⁸ ADRF (2008). Implementation of the NSDR: Monitoring Report. ADRF: Tirana, Albania.

more priority in this aspect).

Also, there are no projections for establishing any missing specific service to come to the assistance of women and girls with disabilities.

Health care

In the area of health care as well, the analyses does not refer to women with disabilities. They are still not part of the analyses made for the reflection of gender policies in health both in terms of gender policies in health, as well as in terms of acquiring health information, and delivery of health care at all levels. The analysis fails to take into consideration recommendation No.24, in line with article 12 of the CEDAW, which stipulates that women with disabilities, in all ages, have difficulties and limited access to health services.

Domestic violence

Even though the introduction of the strategy quotes girls and women with disabilities as one of the groups more at risk, in the analyses made about the current situation regarding domestic violence, this fact is not mentioned at all throughout the text. There are no specific figures about women with disabilities victims of violence, and no measure is mentioned that could have a specific impact on the prevention and elimination of violence against women with disabilities. Among the initiatives for social services for victims of violence nothing is mentioned about the fact that all counseling, information and protection services should be easily accessible for all categories of women with disabilities. The analysis also fails to mention the training of the staff of these centers for the work and methods of addressing the concerns of women with disabilities. With regard to information and prevention there is no envisaged delivery of this information in formats accessible for all categories of women with disabilities.

The Action Plan of the National Strategy on Gender Equality and Domestic Violence

Under Goal 1 related to strengthening of the legal and institutional mechanisms for ensuring gender equality, no mention is made of women with disabilities, who should benefit from the legal changes entitled to women as a generic category, and beneficiaries of the campaigns envisaged for the implementation of this action plan.

Under objective 3.1, which is related to promotion of employment and vocational training for girls and women, women with disabilities are not mentioned in the aspect of cross national studies which will be used to judge the real place that they

should have in the labor market (measure 3.1.1), as well as in the formulation of part time policies for women in need, where women with disabilities have not been regarded as part of the group of women in need (3.1.3). the same objective fails to try and ensure access of women and girls with disabilities to public information about the employment right. This information should be accessible in all formats appropriate for women with disabilities (3.1.4). Under measure 3.1.5, women with disabilities are mentioned as potential beneficiaries of payment subsidy programs, alongside with women of other groups in need. Women with disabilities are not considered to be eligible to benefit from the schemes for facilitation of credits and entrepreneurial initiatives.

If we continue with the measures envisaged for education, women and girls with disabilities do not make part in the programs and campaigns for promotion of education. Neither are they included in the study part, nor in the awareness raising campaigns for promoting the values of education beyond primary education. Under measure 5.2.1, which is related to the expansion of the network of community services, women and girls with disabilities even though a marginalized group with almost no access to community services is still left out. Measure 6.1.1, which aims at improving health policies does not envisage the specific needs of women with disabilities in terms of drugs and mobility and rehabilitation means. Measure 6.3.1 envisages collection of data from the utilization of health services according to gender. Women and men with disabilities are permanent users of the health service schemes, and consequently data should be more detailed for disabled men and women. Measure 6.3.2, “readily accessible health services” is more about the time schedules of health centers, rather than with the real access that the disabled girls and women should have at these centers.

If we refer to measures against domestic violence sanctioned under measure 8.1.1.4, women with disabilities have not been considered as part of the measurement studies of the incidence and prevalence of domestic violence. Also, the entire information and referral system in favor of the victims of domestic violence is not accessible for women with disabilities, starting with information materials that will be published, counseling centers, support and shelter set in facilities which are not accessible and whose staff has not been trained to receive and serve women with disabilities. Furthermore, the part about the budget of the counseling and hosting services does not refer to any element related to budget projections for creating infrastructure facilities and access for women and girls with disabilities.

Measure 8.2.2.4 (f) acknowledges that disabled persons represent a

group which is subject to domestic violence within their households, and that studies “related to specific instances of violence to disabled family members ...” should increase.

Another policy document which specifically promotes disability rights is the “*National Strategy on People with Disability*” (COM decision no. 7 of 8.01.2005). NSPD is a document which specifically points out the problems of women and girls with disabilities. Women and girls with disabilities have no visibility throughout the document, and the respective action plan.

Women and girls with disabilities are mentioned only a couple of times specifically in the whole of the document. Thus, in the chapter **Founding Principles of the Strategy**, the paragraph about the Principle of Self-determination reiterates that “ ... This principle also envisages that any measure related to rehabilitation should be taken in cooperation with the disabled persons. He/ she should not be treated without their consent. In the chapter of “**Analysis of the Disability Situation in Albania- Statistical data**, under the respective recommendations is included “ ... concrete measures should be taken for the collection of credible data related to the number and typology of disabilities in Albania. *These data should be gender based.*”

The conclusion of the above mentioned analysis is that the main strategic documents regarding women and regarding people with disability are not inclusive of young girls and women with disabilities.

Women with disabilities in these documents are not treated in the context of potentials they possess, contributions, and equal obligations with those of other women in all areas of life.

5.1.2 Gender perspective in the context of disability and gender equality legislation

The political, civil, social, economic and cultural rights of girls and women are sanctioned in the Constitution of the Republic of Albania, and in a series of specific laws, which have been significantly improved in the recent years. The rights of women and girls with disabilities are provided for in the Albanian legal framework in the generic term of women and girls, while in terms of specific support for the disability category there are a number of main and secondary laws in the area of social protection and support.

“The Constitution of the Republic of Albania” sanctions protection against discrimination based on Article 18 whereby

“1.All are equal before the law. 2. Nobody shall be discriminated because of gender, race, religion, ethnicity, language, political, religious or philosophical beliefs, education, economic, social status” The Constitution protects from discrimination women and girls with disabilities under the terms of gender and social status, without specifically providing for protection of this category under the disability term.

Law “On gender equality in society”, no. 9970 of 24.07.2008 aims at guarantying equal opportunities among men and women, elimination of gender based discrimination or any other form of discrimination, and the establishment of local and national authorities for promoting gender equality in society. To this end was approved the “Regulation for the operation of Gender Equality National Council” (decision no.122, of 2.2.2009) as a counseling entity for the definition and guidance of government polices in this area. In difference from the other legal acts under review, the Law on Gender Equality in society guaranties several protective elements for disabled persons or their family members. Article 9 under “Special measures” envisages that “It is not considered gender discrimination when the state takes special measures, including legal provisons, which aim at: b)facilitation of assistance for persons with special responsbiltiies in their households due to daily care for incapable family members due to age, physical or mental disability, or other disabilities.”

This law envisages protective measures in the work relations due to disabilities, in concrete terms under Article 17 *“Discrimination actions of the employee”* 1.*Actions of an employee in the public or private sector shall be deemed to be discriminatory if because of one’s gender: a)the employee uses differentiated standards (double standards) or/and procedures vis-à-vis the employers in terms of hiring, training, and re-training, promotion, management and distribution of work load, duration and terms of probation, social insurance and benefits in the cases of retirement, unemployment, illness, invalidity, inability to work...”*

Law on measures against acts of domestic violence” nr. 9669 of 18.02.2006 (amended by law no. 9914 of 12.05.2008) was drafted in the context of the initiatives of the Government of Albania for the approximization of legislation with international standards, while since January 2003 there was a direct recommendation for Albania from the United Nations Committee for the Elimination of Domestic Violence against Women “Convention for the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women” (CEDAW) for the elimination of violence against

women. The objective of this law is to protect, prevent and minimize domestic violence, and to guarantee the necessary legal protection to all members of a family which are victims of violence, with special attention in terms of protection being devoted to persons with disabilities. Article 1 “The objective”, “The purpose of this law is: ... (2) to guarantee protection through legal measures of the members of the family who are victims of domestic violence, with special emphasis on children, elderly, and persons with disabilities.” Despite the fact that in the law there is no explicit reference to women with disabilities, including them under the generic term of persons with disabilities, the legislator with this formulation has tried to affirm the standards of gender equality, with reference to the particular specifics of women with disabilities who are victims of domestic violence. On the other hand, the law envisages introduction of measures for the protection, as well as rehabilitation of victims of domestic violence, which requires the commitment and coordinated actions of state structures and not for profit organizations in the delivery of social services. With regard to this aspect, the legal framework should dedicate particular attention to protective and rehabilitation measures for women with disabilities as a category which represents a particular specific. Such a fact is not explicitly provided for in the provisions of this law, while special attention should be paid to this category also during the formulation of by-laws for its implementation. In addition, this law has introduced another novelty in the procedural aspect of the protective measures against domestic violence, and that is making available a 24 hours green line for complaints, and other protective measures from the court in the shape of *immediate orders for protection of victims of domestic violence*. These court measures are aimed at prevention of further detrimental aggravating acts in the future as a result of domestic violence (described in more detail in article 10 of this law), which *inter alia* include forcing the violator out of the house for a given period. These court measures are presented in the form of alternative measures for avoiding violence and other detrimental forms, without being necessary to be subjected to measures provided for in the criminal procedure code, leaving broader space for amicable settlement of conflicts through reconciliation, and rehabilitation of subjects involved in it. From this perspective, the legislator should pay particular attention to women with disabilities in the course of the formulation of by-laws both in terms of the protection, as well as in terms of their rehabilitation, particularly reiterating the need for support means and services for this category.

The law On assistance and social services, no. 9355, of 10.03.2005 envisages the terms and conditions for eligibility to social assistance, and social services. The

law in its article 5 envisages as beneficiaries of social assistance households with no income or with insufficient income, the orphans above 25 years old who are unemployed, and do not live in institutions or in custodianship, and parents with more than two children born consecutively who belong to families in need. Meanwhile, beneficiaries of social services (article 6) according to this law are: children, youth up to 25 years old, the elderly, disabled persons, and *girls and women in need*. Meantime, women and girls with disabilities are included within the generic terminology of disability. Also, this law (article 7) envisages that disabled persons enjoy the right for a monthly disability payment or alternatively the right for a custodian for the first group of disability. This right is also guaranteed for girls and women with disabilities.

Standards of social services (COM decision no. 658 of 17.10.2005) have been approved in keeping with the obligations of law no. 9355. This decision determines the general principles of standards that will be delivered in Albania both from public and private operators, as well as in day care and residential centers. To this end also have been approved *Standards of social services for disabled persons in day care and residential centers*” (COM decision no. 822 of 06.12.2006), which in fact represent a break down of the general standards of services focusing on persons with disabilities, in respect of their rights and for fulfilling their needs. These standards enable measurement and improvement of the quality of services that will be delivered at the regional/communal/municipal level. Standards include indicators in 5 areas: participation in local decision-making, individual evaluation and plan, independence, inclusion and self-determination, procedures of services, equal treatment and complaints. In all document areas, the measurement indicators refer in general to persons with disabilities, failing to focus in particular to women and girls with disabilities, in line with their in terms of services that will be delivered in public and private day care and residential centers.

Standards of social services in residential centers for victims of trafficking or at risk of trafficking (COM decision No.195 of 11.4.2007). Standards envisage the obligation of the state for social support, accommodation, information, medical and psychological assistance, education, training, employment and social protection, addressing them in ten important areas for the life of trafficked victims.

Standards determined in this by-legal act envisage delivery of a full-fledged package of services, in compliance with the needs of the beneficiaries, while specifically addressing them in specific terms according to the needs related to

age, gender, special needs of persons. Standard 2 envisages the establishment of a multi-discipline task group for the treatment of individuals in compliance with the evaluation criteria, according to an individual plan where the beneficiary is part, and the rights (standard 3) and responsibilities of beneficiaries, service providers promote and practice tolerance, understanding and respect without discrimination of gender, mental and physical abilities. In more specific terms, standard 8 determines that the service provider should create appropriate conditions and environment for the beneficiary and the staff, in compliance with the capacity, needs of beneficiaries, including persons with disabilities. Physical facilities of the centers should be accessible to accommodate and deliver services to disabled persons.

The law On the status of the Labor Invalid, No. 7889, (14.12.1994), (amended) provides support in all areas for persons with disabilities, who had suffered accidents at work, or who have become disabled from a general diseases, but in the course of the work relations, and which based on this law fall under the term “labor invalids”. This law determines taking under the wing of labor invalids so that they could participate in the social life same like the rest of the individuals, but in none of its provisions does the law address specifically women and girls with disabilities given their specific nature.

The law On the status of the paraplegic and tetraplegic persons, No. 8626 of 22.6.2000 (amended) provides support in all areas for disabled persons who are paraplegics and tetraplegics. The law On the status of the Blind Persons, No.8098 of 28.03.1996, amended version, provides support in all areas for blind persons. The above mentioned legal acts such as: the status of labor invalids, treat under the general term of disability, women and girls with disabilities, without specifically dwelling on the issues posed by this group, which is subject to discrimination within the disability group.

The law On employment promotion, No. 7995 of 29.9.1995 (amended version) aims at defining the general policies for supporting and ensuring full-fledged productive and freely chosen employment by each individual. Articles 15 and 16 of this law specifically refer to promotion of employment of the category of disabled persons, while defining sanctions in case of non employment for every 24 employees, one should be a disabled person. Same like in the other legal and by legal acts mentioned above, this law should dedicate special attention in its provisions to

women and girls with disabilities, to promote their employment as an important factor in their inclusion in the society.

The law *On education and vocational training in the Republic of Albania* No. 8872, of 29.03.2002 spells out and defends the rights of citizens for education and vocational training, irrelevant from their social or health status. Article 5/c of this law establishes that beneficiaries of education and vocational training are *also special groups who seek vocational rehabilitation such as persons with disabilities, mothers with many children, persons under 18 years old, long-term unemployed etc.* also, in the by-legal acts issued in the implementation of this law, special attention has been dedicated to provision of vocational training courses at reduced prices or free of charge for groups in need, including persons with disabilities, despite the fact that in most of the instances lack of accessible infrastructure makes it difficult for this category to attend the courses. Meanwhile, there are no special by-laws for promoting vocational training of girls and women with disabilities, with the view to the establishment of their professional and intellectual capacities.

The Albanian legal framework guaranties the rights of girls and women with disabilities under the general term of “women and girls” or alternatively has included them under vulnerable groups. There is insufficient lack of attention by the legislator regarding the conditions and specifics of this category, and their regulation through by-legal acts. Consequently, legal and by-legal acts should envisage concrete interventions that address social services in order to ensure standardization of services for women and girls with disabilities, focusing on the specifics and support services for their integration in the society. This would be of particular assistance in terms of change of the already established stereotype that disabled persons are simply beneficiaries of disability payment/pension, without stressing their skills and needs for inclusion in the society. Also, legal and by-legal acts in the area of health care, education, vocational training and employment should include and pay particular attention to the disability issues and guarantying of the rights of girls and women with disabilities on equal footing with all the rest of the Albanian society.

National Progress Reports regarding implementation of CEDAW

National progress reports regarding implementation of CEDAW are mandatory periodical reports through which the Government of Albania reports regarding the implementation of CEDAW. So far, Albania has prepared three progress reports regarding progress for the implementation of the CEDAW.

In the content of the first and second report with regard to the implementation of CEDAW (2002), women with disabilities are mentioned only once under the chapter reporting on the rights to social insurance benefits. The chapter points out that every woman is eligible for benefits in case of permanent or temporary illnesses, accidents etc.

The report makes no mention about the situation of women with disabilities.

The third national progress report (2008) contains information regarding the measures that the Government of Albania has launched/introduced during 2003-2007 for the implementation of the CEDAW. In 137 pages of this report women with disabilities, even though they are claimed to be one of the most marginalized and most at stake groups in terms of being subjected to all forms of violence are mentioned only five times (pg. 29 of the report, secondary source).

There is mention of women with disabilities in terms of positive changes in the criminal procedure code regarding trafficking of women and girls. In article 114/b there is a special provision that envisages punishments in case of recruitment, transport, ...forcing, cheating or profiting from the social, physical, and psychic status, and article 110/a of the criminal procedure code under the title of "Trafficking of human beings" according to which recruitment, transportation, transfer... and profiting from the social, physical or psychical state are punishable by law.

In Article 114/a a sentence has been added that reads "exploitation of prostitution ... while profiting from the physical or mental disability of a person is punished by 7-15 years of prison."

Women with disabilities are also referred to while reporting on Law no.8872 of 29.03.2002 On education and vocational training, as beneficiaries from the education and vocational training services. In line with this law, Order 394 of 23.02.2004 on the fees of vocational training system, points to vulnerable groups such as: roma community, victims of trafficking, while leaving outside attention young girls and women with disabilities and labeling them under "etc" category.

Again in terms of education, the Ministry of Education and Sciences is monitoring the NSPD, which aims at fostering the participation of women and girls with disabilities in the education system (no concrete measures are however reported to this end). In line with increasing the number of girls with disabilities who have access to education, the Ministry of Education and Sciences has been organizing training sessions for about 500 teachers annually who will work with children from marginalized groups, and for ensuring accessible transportation for children with disabilities. Page 94 of the report spells out that persons with disabilities are regarded as passive beneficiaries of cash support.

In terms of reporting about social assistance programs, it is envisaged as an obligation of NSGEEDV the spread throughout the country of the community services of which are supposed to benefit women with disabilities specifically or services should be accessible and inclusive for women with disabilities as well.

Recommendation 18 of the CEDAW stipulates that countries should offer information for women with disabilities, and should take measures in line with their specific situation in terms of ensuring access to education, employment, health services, and social insurance, and all areas of social and cultural life. This recommendation has not been taken into consideration, and women with disabilities have been totally left outside the attention in all areas reported under this national report.

5.2 Interviews with directors of central institutions responsible for women and disability issues

■ *Women with disabilities and policies for equal opportunities*

Special attention in this study is devoted to guarantying the rights of women with disabilities in the policies and programs of the Department of Policies for Equal Opportunities. The mission of this department is formulation of policies and programs that serve of the purpose of eradication of gender inequalities in different areas.

The interview with the director of this department indicated that women and girls with disabilities do not occupy a special place in the mission and strategies of this Department as a special category. Women and girls with disabilities are considered to be included in general gender polices and programs.

When asked about the areas in which women with disabilities are specifically addresses, senior officials of this department responded that their rights are reflected in the NSGEEDV, and addressed in the context of women rights in general. According to them, this is a cross-sector strategy, and is accompanied with an action plan detailed in specific actions for the period of 2007-2010, according to 8 directions specified in it. The Action Plan of this strategy determines a whole range of measures, which in most of the cases are addressed to vulnerable groups. In this context, this document has an *indirect* focus for women with disabilities, as one of these vulnerable groups.

Senior officials of this Department responded that they have not identified quantitative or statistical indicators regarding the share that women with disabilities

occupy in its policies, projects, and publications. Again with regard to this question, senior officials of this Department reiterated that NSGEEDV is the first policy document that addresses concrete measures for achieving gender equality, and in the fight against domestic violence. This document is an endeavor to address the issues of women in general, without fragmenting them in specific groups. In addition, the law On gender Equality in society provides for protection of women rights in general, and there are also included the rights of women with disabilities, stressing in particular protection against discrimination.

As regards recommendation no.18 of the CEDAW, which obliges countries to report about the statistics for the women with disabilities in all areas, the Department of Policies for Equal Opportunities responded that they were aware about this recommendation, but stated however the recommendation has not yet been implemented. According to this Department, CEDAW sanctions women rights in general, but fails to address specific measures for given categories, such as women with disabilities.

With regard to the space that women with disabilities occupy in the state progress reports regarding achievement of gender equality, reports which are submitted to the relevant UN Committee, the Department of Policies for Equal Opportunities reports that Albania has currently prepared its third progress report of CEDAW, and that this report reflects all measures and achievements in the area of gender equality in general. Women with disabilities are again regarded to be integral parts of the women group, and that there are no specific reports about them in any of the areas.

Senior officials of the Department of Policies for Equal Opportunities responded that currently the only statistics that are collected for women with disabilities in the areas of NSGEEDV belong to the social protection area. Women with disabilities are specifically identified only in the cash benefit schemes (even here not for all the schemes), and in the cases when they are beneficiaries of public and non-public delivered social services. The Department of Policies for Equal Opportunities did not report any data regarding women with disabilities employment, education, vocational training, health care, violence, and decision-making.

DPEO staff responded that they have began efforts for including women with disabilities in the horizontal policies that aim at the promotion of gender equality, and that DPEO shall continuously try to address concerns of women with disabilities in order to incorporate their issues and concerns in horizontal policies of gender Equality such as in terms of: employment, social protection, health care, elimination

of violence, microfinance, education and vocational training, decision-making etc. According to DPEO, such an initiative will be first sanctioned in the principle of non-discrimination and inclusion of women with disabilities in all these policies.

According to DPEO not always are women with disabilities part of different activities that this Department organizes in the context of the implementation of its mission. Their participation is not direct, but it is reported to be a derivate of their membership in different NPOs invited in these activities.

With regard to the inclusion of women with disabilities in the processes of formulation of policies promoting gender equality in all areas, the staff of the DPEO responded that disabled have not been directly involved in the process, but rather through consultation processes with women organizations or those that work with disability issues.

DPEO reports that women and girls with disabilities represent one of the social groups faced with many barriers of real discrimination in terms of materialization of their rights. According to the representatives of this Department, some of the main causes behind these barriers are: the absence of a comprehensive legal and strategic framework for women with disabilities; low awareness regarding the concerns and specific needs of women with disabilities; lack of specific programs to address issues of women with disabilities.

■ *Women with disabilities and Social Policies*

The Director of the Department of Social Policies stated that women with disabilities occupy an important space in terms of the mission and policies for which this Department is in charge of. But, this is in the context of the disability group in general, and not in particular for women and girls with disabilities. Given the specifics of this Department which is the formulation of the social policies, attention to disability issues is evident. This issue is addressed in the general framework of all strategies and programs formulated by this Department, meaning the social assistance payment program, disability payments, social services etc. however, despite the spectrum for the overall treatment of disability issues there is no specific treatment for women with disabilities. The problems of women and girls with disabilities are addressed in these policies and programs in the context of disability issues in general. Particular emphasis is placed on the statistical component, i.e. the number of registered women and girls with disabilities, who are beneficiaries of several of the schemes, and disability payment services. According to this Department there are no measurable indicators to assess what is the space devoted to addressing the problems of women and girls with disabilities

in the policies, programs and publications of this Department, and also that currently there are no specific policies or programs targeting women with disabilities.

The participant in this study from this Department reiterated that there are a number of legal and by-legal acts which try to improve the social status of disabled persons. Women with disabilities are direct beneficiaries of this legal framework, but always as an integral category under the general disability category, and not specifically targeted. According to the Department for Social Policies there are statistical data regarding disabled women at the national and local level. These data are related only to its target area, which is Social Protection. Even though this Department is in charge of collecting statistical data regarding the number of women with disabilities at the national and local level, in its practice of periodical reports no special reporting about women with disabilities stands out. Respondents justify this situation with the fact that none of the policies formulated by them in the area of social inclusion includes a gender component. Stemming from this fact, the view of this Department is that because women with disabilities are not specifically targeted in different strategies, this department is not under the obligation to report specifically about women with disabilities.

The Department for Social Policies stated that it is making efforts to make the concerns of persons with disabilities part of the policies and programs that it formulates, and in this context to address the concerns of women with disabilities in specific terms. Representatives of disabled persons often participate as consultants in round tables for the formulation of the policy framework of this Department. Meanwhile, in the current practice of promotional and media activities so far organized by the Department for social policies there has been no participation from women with disabilities.

■ *Women with disabilities and employment policies*

According to the participant in the study from the Department of Employment Policies in the MoLSAEO, women with disabilities occupy a special place in terms of employment and state vocational training. Women with disabilities constitute one of the special groups of priority in terms of employment promotion programs, or who are eligible for free vocational training in the public centers of vocational training. According to the same department, even though the issues of women with disabilities occupy an important space in the policies and programs of this department there is an obvious lack of interest by the women with disabilities themselves to register themselves with the Employment Departments and vocational training centers, and an aversion by the businesses to employ these women and

girls. These reasons do not translate these policies into concrete results.

The Department of Employment Policies has identified 1217 women with disabilities registered with the regional and local employment departments. This piece of national statistic is a product of local data of regional departments. This Department periodically reports about the number of registered women with disabilities in the employment departments, the number of employed women with disabilities, and the number of women with disabilities who receive unemployment benefit, as well as about the women with disabilities who have received training in public centers of vocational training.

The concerns of this category as described above make part of the formulation of particular policies and programs for vulnerable groups. Consequently, women with disabilities are part of the horizontal employment and vocational training policies, which are the mission of the Department of Employment Policies.

Same like for the other two departments, for this Department as well the status of involvement of women with disabilities in the process of the formulation of programs and policies has been at the consultancy level, under the umbrella of the disability organizations.

Main barriers identified by the Department of Employment Policies as obstacles for the elimination of discrimination against women with disabilities in the area of employment and vocational training are: lack of specific programs for women with disabilities; accessibility of work and training premises; and low awareness among women with disabilities themselves for their rights, opportunities, and capacities. In the activities organized by this Department, the presence of women with disabilities has been negligible. This is due to several reasons, among of the most obvious of which are: absence of their organization in NPOs, and no accessibility to premises where these activities are organized.

■ *Women with disabilities under the focus of NSPD*

The main objectives and goals of the National Strategy for People with Disability are in line with the main objectives and goals of the Government of Albania, and other stakeholders interested in the area of accessibility of premises, services, education, employment, vocational training, legislation, and research for persons with disabilities. The question arising in line with the purpose of this study is whether the problems of women and girls with disabilities are included specifically in this policy document. From the interview with this Department resulted that the concerns of women and girls with disabilities are very narrowly addressed in the NSPD. The reason why this strategy does not specifically include women with disabilities is

that in its formulation has not been considered the inclusion of the gender component, different problems and needs for both genders.

The technical secretariat for disabled persons monitors every year the implementation of the objectives of the NSPD. These monitoring reports currently include statistical data about women and girls with disabilities only in the area of services, and more restrictively for the employment area. In other areas of the NSPD there are as yet no data for the disabled persons in general, and for women more specifically. The reasons behind the absence of data according to this Department include lack of a detailed indicators system for every area of the NSPD. The efforts of the Department for Monitoring of Strategies to include the concerns of women and girls with disabilities in the other strategies or documents consist in provision of recommendations of other policy-making departments, since the mission of this department is only monitoring of strategies, and not formulation of new ones. The same also applies to the efforts to include specifically the issues of women and girls with disabilities in the strategies or programs for disabilities. According to the senior officials of this Department there are specific barriers which hamper/prevent women with disabilities from being visible and included in all areas of the NSPD. Some of these barriers include accessibility of premises, low awareness, lack of trust/confidence and self-esteem of women with disabilities, absence of special programs etc.

5.3 Interviews with organizations focusing on women and women empowerment

The survey included 38 women organizations promoting gender issues.

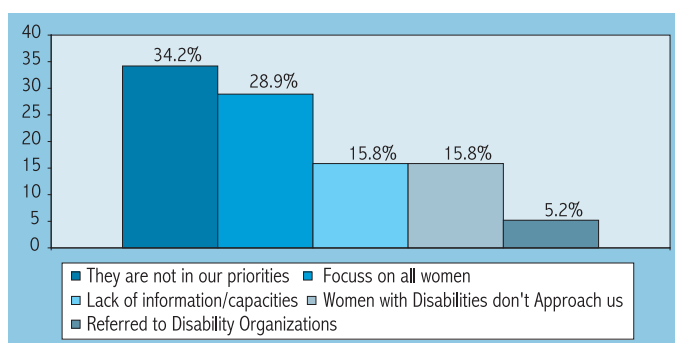
In responding to the question about the periodical collection of data about women with disabilities benefiting from the programs implemented by the respective organizations, 76,4% of these organizations (n=29) responded that they had no specific data about women with disabilities.

Graph 5 explains the reasons that women organizations list about absence of data regarding women with disabilities in their programs. 34,2% of these organizations (n=13) list as one of the reasons for lack of data the fact that women with disabilities are not one of the priorities of their organization. 28,9% of these organizations (n=11) state that “their line of work includes all categories of women with no distinction”.

15,85% of the organizations list as one of the barriers lack of data, lack of

information and capacities for addressing the issues of women and girls with disabilities. 15,85% of these organizations (n=6) link the lack of data with the isolation of these concerns by the women with disabilities themselves, who try not to make public their problems, by “not approaching” or seeking membership in women organizations. 5,2% of the respondents (n=2) reiterate that usually they channel women with disabilities to disability organizations for addressing their problems.

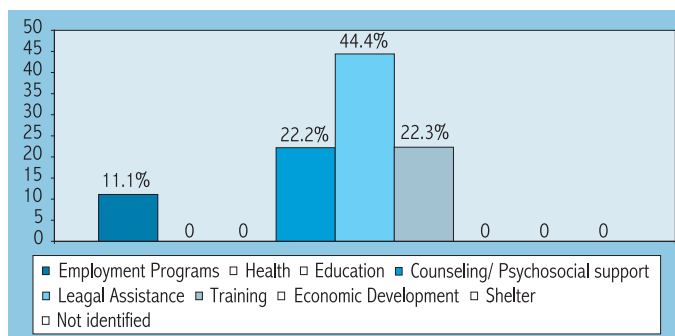
Graph 5: **Reasons behind lack of data regarding women with disabilities**



Those few organizations which report to have data, these data usually are in areas such as: employment or legal assistance.

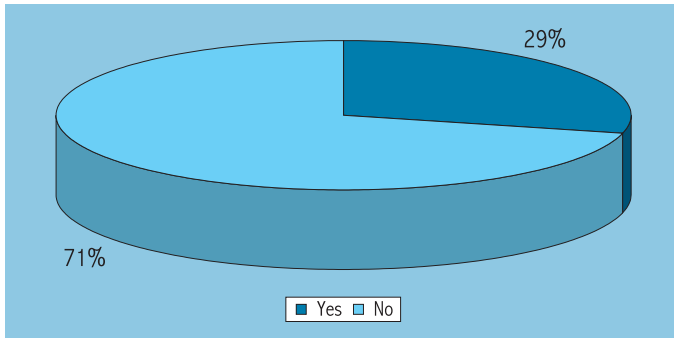
As indicated in graph 6, only two organizations report to have women with disabilities who are beneficiaries of counseling services, and psycho-social assistance, while three organizations have included in their training sessions women with disabilities.

Graph 6: **Statistics regarding women and girls with disabilities who are program and service beneficiaries**



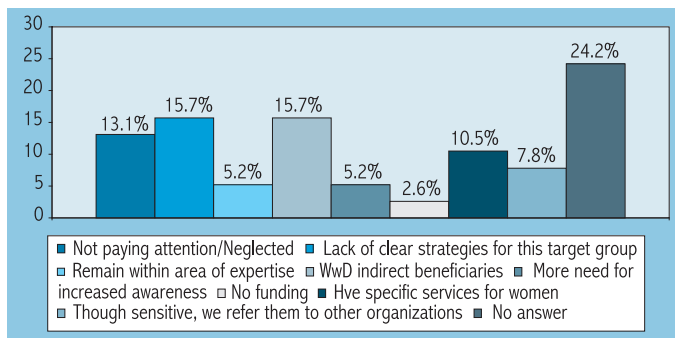
71,1% of the respondents (n=27) answered No (see Graph 7) to the question whether women with disabilities made part of the strategic objectives of their organization.

Graph 7: **Reference in the strategic objectives of the organization**



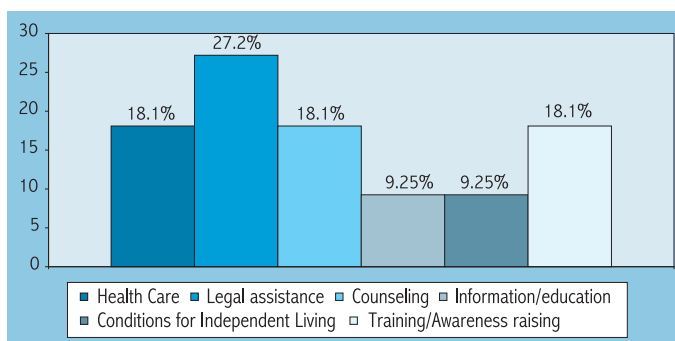
The organizations which had not included women and girls with disabilities in their strategies came up with a list of some of the reasons for lack of their inclusion. As results from graph no. 8, 15,7% of the organizations (n=6) believe that women with disabilities are indirect beneficiaries of their programs; 15,7% of these organizations (n=6) state that they do not have a clear strategy for this vulnerable category; 13,1% of these organizations (n=5) are of the opinion that they have not paid attention, and have neglected the issues of women with disabilities; 10,5% of the organizations (n=4) report that they provide specific services for non women with disabilities; 5,2% of the organizations reiterate that there is need for more awareness raising about the situation of women and girls with disabilities, while the same number of organizations state that they have not included women with disabilities, since they have kept to their specific areas of expertise; 7,8% (n=3) of these organizations stated that they were sensitive towards the issues of this category, but however referred them to other organizations.

Graph 8: **Reasons for lack of inclusion of women with disabilities in the strategic objectives**



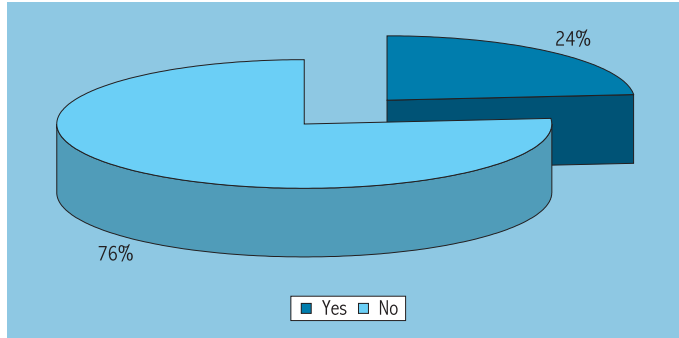
Graph 9 reflects the directions listed by the 11 organizations that referred women with disabilities in their strategies. 27,2% of the organizations (n=3) had included women with disabilities in programs of legal assistance; 18,1 % are referred as potential group for counseling. The same number reiterates that they have referred women with disabilities to programs of health care, and training programs.

Graph 9: **Directions where women and girls with disabilities are referred to in the strategic objectives**



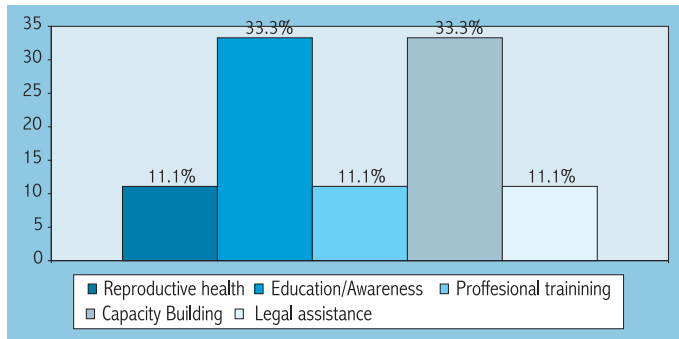
only 23,6% of the organizations (n=9) respond that they will change their strategies to make them more inclusive/comprehensive for women with disabilities (see graph 10).

Graph 10: **Formulation of strategies including women with disabilities**



Directions in which these organizations will focus to make them more inclusive are education and awareness raising (33,3%); strengthening of capacities (33,3%); legal assistance, vocational training and reproductive health (see graph 11).

Graph 11: **Areas where women with disabilities shall be included in future strategies**

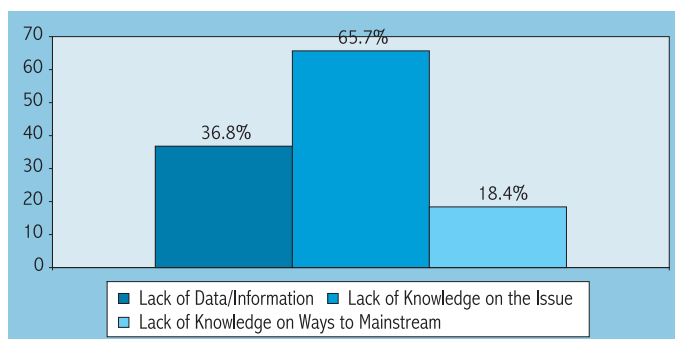


Organizations which in their near future plans did not envisage changes in their strategies in favor of inclusion of issues of women with disabilities listed some of the main reasons which restricted such as change. Graph 12 reflects some of the reasons of failure to include women with disabilities in the strategies and programs of the women organizations. Lack of knowledge about disability issues and the specific needs of this group make up the main cause which prevents women organizations to come out of their current frame. 65,7% of the organizations (n=25) said that they do not have the necessary knowledge to confront the problems of women with disabilities. 36,8% of the organizations

(n=14) reiterated that there are no data and appropriate information for women with disabilities, and consequently this limits their treatment and their inclusion in women organizations.

Seven of the interviewed organizations said that they do not have the capacities to ensure inclusion of the concerns of women with disabilities in their programs and strategies.

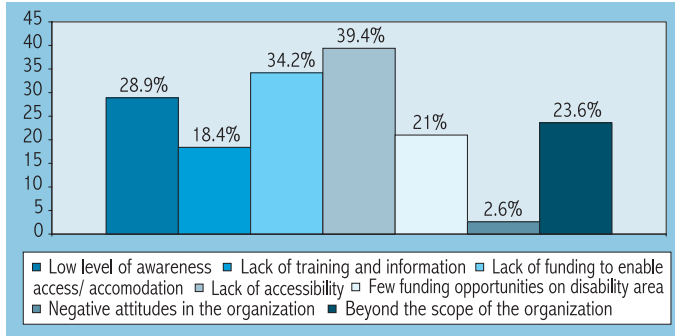
Graph 12. **Reasons behind lack of inclusion of women with disabilities in future strategies**



Graph 13 reflects some of the main barriers that prevent inclusion of women and girls with disabilities in the programs for women in general of gender perspective organizations.

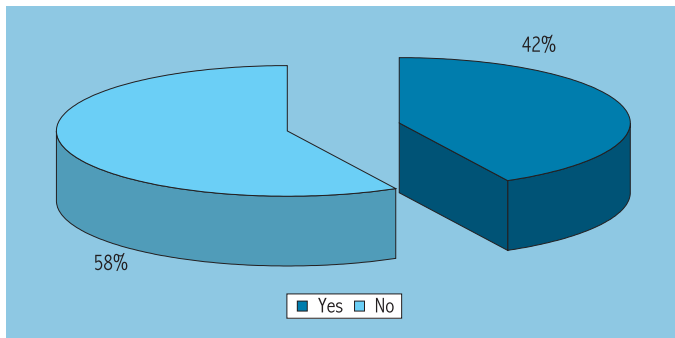
39,4% of the organizations (n=15) regard as barrier lack of accessible premises, which prevent access of women with disabilities in their programs. 34,2% of these organizations (n=13) state that there are no funds to ensure accommodation of each program, in line with the specific needs of women with disabilities. 28,9% of the organizations (n=11) perceive as an impediment the low level of awareness regarding women with disabilities and their rights. 21 % of the organizations (n=8) perceive as a reason for failing to address the problem of women with disabilities limited funds in the disability area. 18,4% of these organizations (n=7) regard as a barrier lack of training and information about this category within their organizations. Only one of these organizations stated that there were negative attitudes within the organization vis-à-vis women with disabilities.

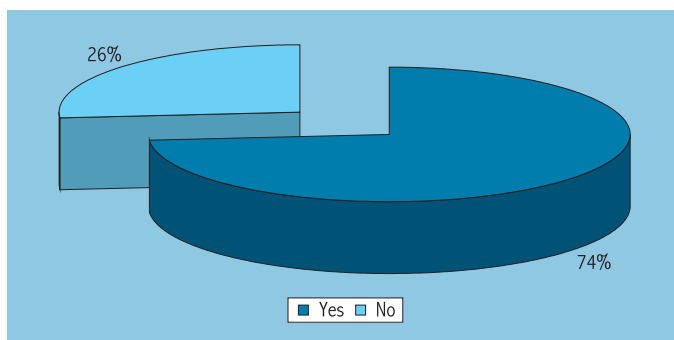
Graph 13: **Barriers preventing NPOs from including women with disabilities**



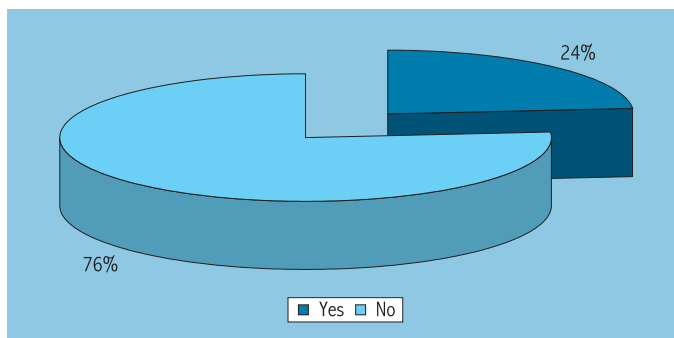
Graph 14 shows that 57,8% of the organizations (n=22) have failed to include disability issues in the training sessions about the gender perspective. While 26,4% of the organizations believe that women with disabilities are not included, and that their opinion does not count when it comes to decisions made in their interest.

Graph 14: **Inclusion of disability in training courses**



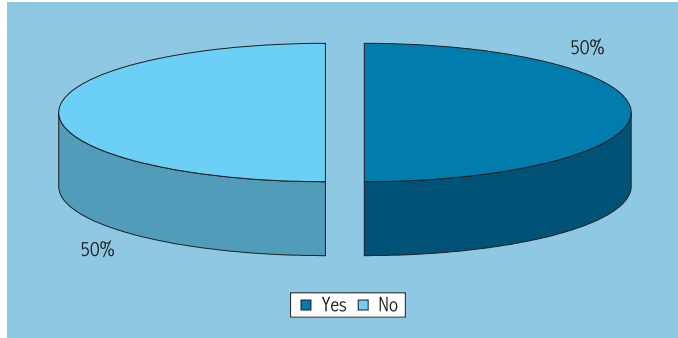
Graph 15: **Inclusion in decision-making**

For 76,3% of the organizations (n=29) it is impossible to provide services for girls and women with disabilities since the premises where these services are delivered and the support and information materials are not accessible for them, and not in line with the standards and needs of women with disabilities (see graph 16)

Graph 16: **Accessible facilities and materials for accommodating services for women with disabilities**

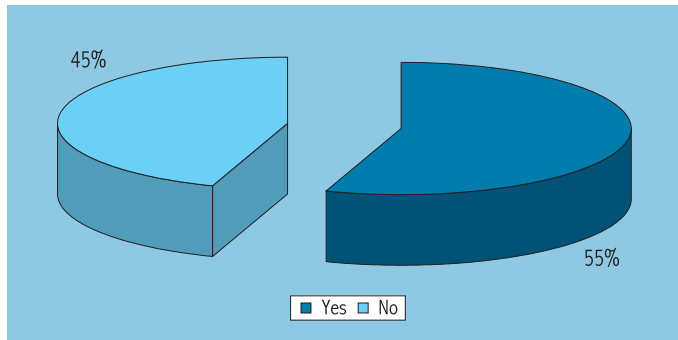
50% of the organizations (n=19) reiterated lack of capacities within the staff to host, accommodate, and meet the specific needs of women with disabilities with their programs, and in the context of the services that they are responsible for delivering.

Graph 17: **Capacities of staff to respond to the needs of women with disabilities**



44,8% of the organizations (n=17) had never before been involved in training focused on disability issues.

Graph 18: **Participation in training courses in the disability area**

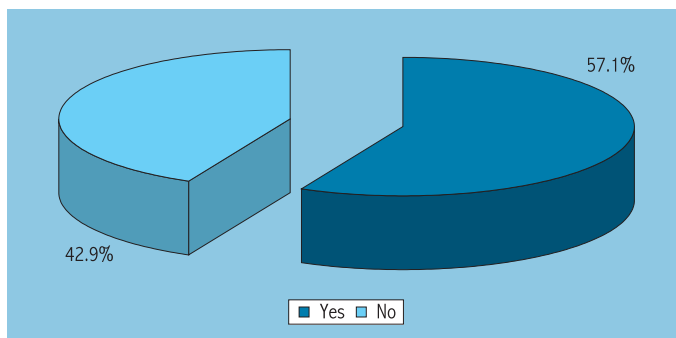


5.4 Interviews with disability organizations

28 disability organizations were involved in the interviews conducted for the purposes of this study.

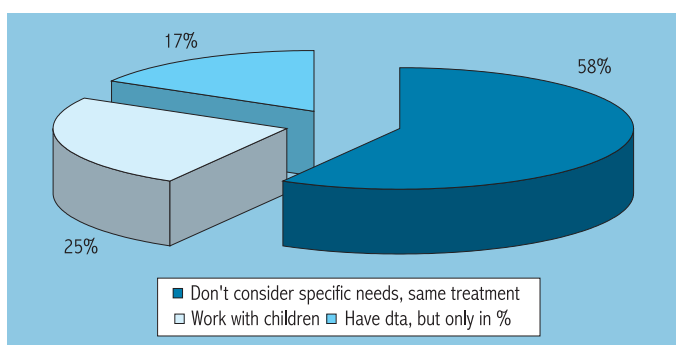
In response to the question about the availability of data regarding women and girls with disabilities included in all the stages of the programs implemented by them, 57,1% of the organizations (n=16) responded Yes and 42,9% (n=12) said that they did not have specific data about women with disabilities (see graph 19).

Graph 19: **Periodical data regarding women and girls with disabilities throughout all stages of the program**



Graph 20 provides the reasons used by the disability organizations to justify the lack of data. The graph shows that 58,3% of the disability organizations “fail to take into consideration the specific needs, and treat all disabilities equally”. 25% of these organizations reiterate that “their line of work focuses on children with disabilities.” The data of 16,7% of these organizations are not provided in detail about specific programs, but in percentages.

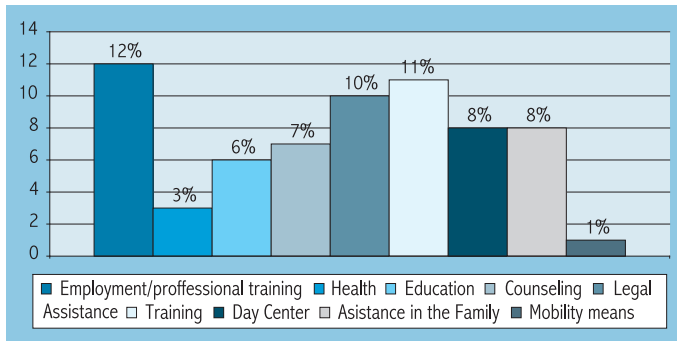
Graph 20: **Reasons for lack of specific data**



Graph 21 shows 12 organizations that provide concrete figures about girls and women included in employment and vocational training programs; 10 organizations provide figures about legal assistance offered to women with disabilities and their families; 11 organizations provide figures about women who have participated in training courses organized by them; 8 organizations report figures about women

and girls who attend day care centers, and who receive assistance in their households; 7 organizations report data about inclusion of women and girls in counseling programs; 6 organizations report about disabled girls who are able to attend inclusive education; and 3 organizations provide figures about women with disabilities benefiting from the programs focused in the area of health.

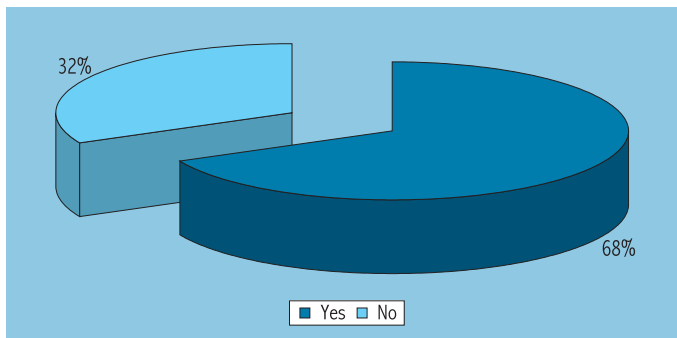
Graph 21: **Data regarding beneficiary women and girls**



Girls and women with disabilities are mentioned as part of the strategic objectives of 67,8% of the respondent organizations (n=19). Graph 22 indicates that in 32,2% of the disability organizations, women are not included in the strategic objectives.

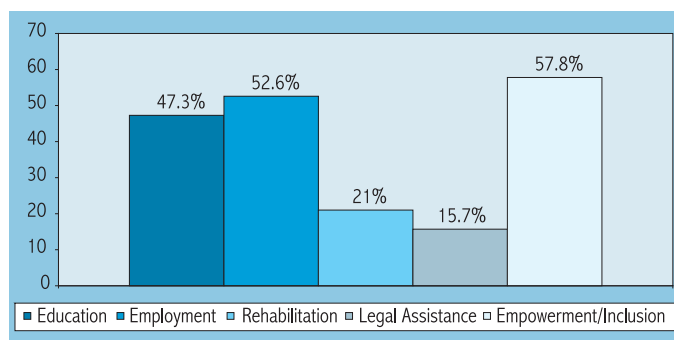
All organizations that do not mention women with disabilities in their strategic plans (n=9) state that they are organizations in whose line of work all are equal, with no specific treatment for women only.

Graph 22: **Reference of women with disabilities in the strategic objectives of the organization**



Graph 23 shows the specific areas where women with disabilities issues are specifically addressed by different organizations. 57,8% of the organizations (n= 11) have programs which are sensitive towards the concerns of women with disabilities in the area of strengthening their capacities and leadership; 52,6% (n=10) of these organizations have adopted their employment promotion programs to the needs of women with disabilities, 47,3% of the organizations (n=9) are sensitive to women issues in the area of education, and 15,7% (n=3) of these organizations are involved in terms of provision of legal assistance.

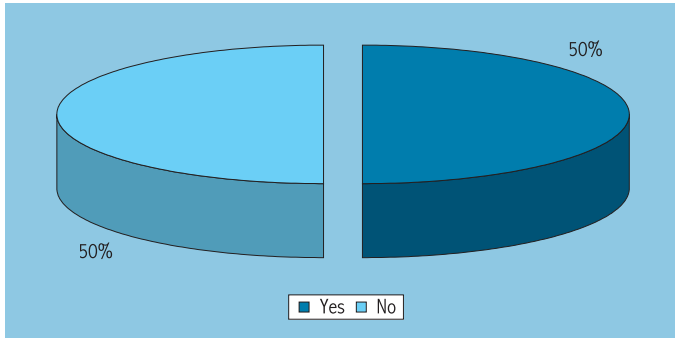
Graph 23: **Directions of involvement of women and girls with disabilities by disability organizations**



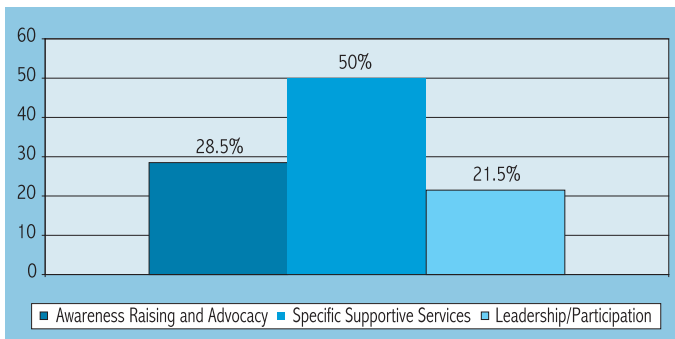
When asked about the possibility of reviewing their strategic plans in order to tailor them also to the specific problems of women with disabilities, 50% (n=14) of the organizations responded that they were willing to review them with the view to increasing the number of girls and women with disabilities in all phases (graph 24).

The areas where their strategic changes would be intensified in terms of inclusion of the gender perspective includes specific services for girls and women with disabilities (50%; n=7), awareness raising and advocacy for the rights of women with disabilities (28,5%; n=4), empowerment of women with disabilities (21,5%; n=3).

Graph 24: **New strategies to increase the number of included women and girls with disabilities**



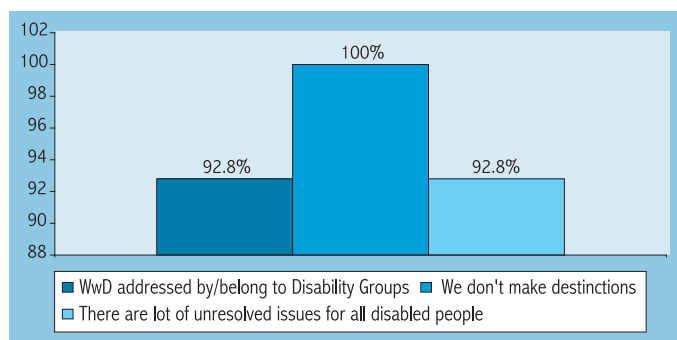
Graph 25: **Areas in which the strategy for the inclusion of women with disabilities shall focus**



Some of the arguments which 50% of the interviewed organizations provide for the non-inclusion of the gender perspective in their strategies are listed in graph 26.

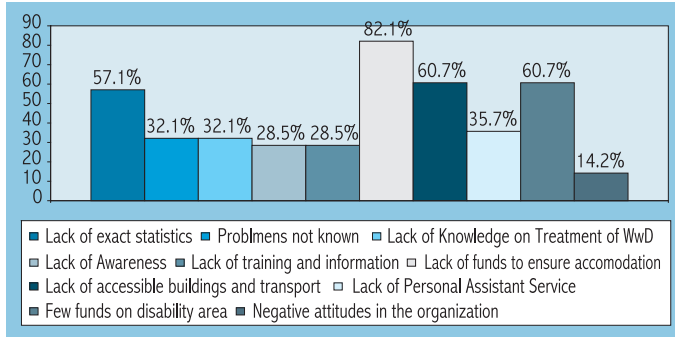
According to its results, organizations (n=14) reiterate that they do not want to change since “they can not discriminate between categories within the disability area.” 92,8% of these organizations (n=13) quote that “women with disabilities are part of the overall disability group” and that “there are many pending issues remaining to be solved/addressed for the overall disability group.”

Graph 26: **Reasons behind failure to draft new strategies which would be sensitive towards women with disabilities**



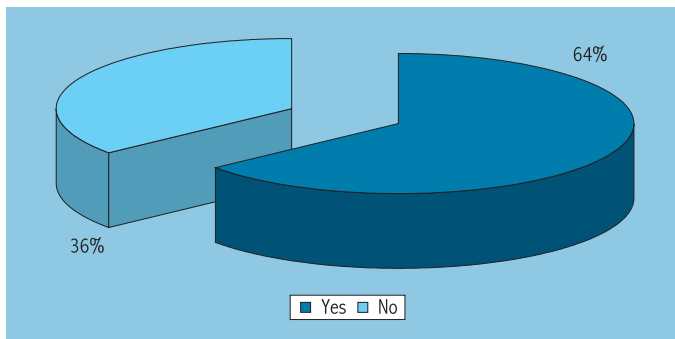
Graph 27 provides some of the opinions of the disability organizations regarding key barriers that make women and girls with disabilities invisible and left out even from the disability targeted/ tailored programs. 82,1% of the organizations (n=23) say that they do not have sufficient funds for making all types of services accessible by all categories of women with disabilities; 60,7% of these organizations (n=17) reiterate that absence of accessible premises/ facilities and transportation have a negative impact and adversely influence the isolation of women with disabilities in terms of potential benefits from broader programs of the organizations; 57,1% of the organizations (n=16) indicate lack of accurate data regarding women with disabilities as a factor which influences non-inclusion and failure to address their issues; 35,7% of the organizations (n=10) perceive the personal assistant service as an important pre-requisite for increasing the level of participation of women with disabilities; 32,1% of the organizations (n=9) say that the concerns/problems of women with disabilities are rather specific and not common knowledge. This leads to further difficulties in addressing and solving these issues. 28,5% of the respondents (n=8) point to the low level of awareness and lack of knowledge about inclusion of gender perspective in their programs and projects.

Graph 27: **Barriers that prevent disability organization to be more sensitive and inclusive vis-à-vis women with disabilities**



39.3 % of these organizations have not attended any training courses on gender issues. 32,2% of these organizations (n=9) believe that women with disabilities should be part of consultative round tables which focus on policies in their favor. 35,8% of the participant organizations admit that their centers and the services that they deliver are not accessible to host women with disabilities (graph 28)

Graph 28: **Accessibility of centers and services to accommodate for the needs of women with disabilities**



5.5 International organizations

Six international organizations which operate with different development programs in the country were involved in interviews for the purpose of this study.

Only one of these organizations had available specific data, which were periodically collected about women with disabilities who were program beneficiaries. Some of the reasons listed in response to the question why did they not have available data about women with disabilities included: “They are not in the focus of our program”, “Disability issues are treated as an overall issue, and not in gender specific terms”, “We are currently involved with the implementation of women projects, but they do not specifically target women with disabilities”, “Our programs help in establishing state capacities for data collection.”

None of the organizations provided data about women and girls with disabilities who were beneficiaries of their programs. Half of the organizations refer to women with disabilities in their strategic plans, but under the disability group. The main areas which reflect the concerns of disability issues are: education, social services, and health care. Other quote include: “Girls and women with disabilities are indirect beneficiaries of our programs” and “Recently there have been efforts and developments aimed at the inclusion of disability issues in different programs.”

Four out of six participant organizations said that they do not have near plans to change their strategies in order to make them sensitive to the inclusion of women with disabilities. In order to judge about the barriers that influence low level of inclusion of women and girls in development programs implemented by international organizations, four of the organizations (66%) said that “they are outside the focus of our organizations work.” One of the organizations pointed to the low awareness regarding this category. Also, another organization put as a main barrier lack of statistics about disabled girls and women, and lack of training about their specific needs. Some of the other barriers which prevent the development organizations from being focused on the concerns of women and girls with disabilities include: low levels of awareness, insufficient funds for the disability area from donations for the treatment and accommodation of women with disabilities, lack of accessible infrastructure and transportation. Only one of the organizations responded to have accessible premises for people with disabilities.

6. DISCUSSION/CONCLUSIONS/RECOMANDATIONS

Despite the achievements in terms of improving the legal framework which promotes gender equality, and inclusion of persons with disabilities, women and girls with disabilities in Albania do not as yet have an appropriate place in any of the policy documents of the Government of Albania in the gender equality and disability areas.

Strategies and laws that promote gender equality treat women with disabilities not as equal with other women. Women with disabilities are regarded as a non-active category, which should benefit solely from social services and disability payments. Women with disabilities are not specifically targeted in any of the areas that foster their decision-making, their access to accessible health care services and employment, and which ensures their economic empowerment. Women with disabilities have been left out of services that benefite all women since they are not planned to be in compliance with their specific needs.

There are no statistics for women with disabilities in areas such as: employment, education and vocational training, inclusion in community and services. National statistics are fragmented, not available for all forms of disabilities, thus not permitting to make a judgment about the total number of girls and women with disabilities, their current statues, and needs.

Women with disabilities do not make part of the national reports obligatory for reporting in the context of the implementation of the Convention for the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, thus failing to enforce one of the recommendations of this convention.

The NSPD is totally insensitive towards the gender perspective concept; women with disabilities are invisible not only there, but also in the monitoring reports for its implementation. The strategy does not yet constitute a working document for the responsible institutions, accompanied by concrete measures for action. Such a situation consequently leads to gaps in the reporting process, leaving no further space to reporting about the gender aspect.

All laws and strategies about people with disabilities fail to include the gender perspective component. There are no efforts to incorporate the issues of women with disabilities in the horizontal policies, where instead there are efforts for the inclusion of gender equality. This identification should serve as a recommendation for the formulation of other future documents, or alternatively the review of the existing ones.

Women with disabilities do not have a voice in the formulation of government documents both in terms of gender equality, as well as in terms of disability issues. They are indirectly represented by either disability or gender equality organizations.

Some of the factors that have influenced non-inclusion of women with disabilities issues in the policies of the Government of Albania regarding women and disabilities are: the low level of awareness at the local and central level about their rights as women, and disabled ones, lack of accessible premises, lack of basic support services, insufficient self-esteem and lack of organization of women with disabilities themselves.

Recommendations

Some of the recommendations for the institutions responsible for promoting gender equality and the disability rights would be:

- To increase their awareness and capacities regarding the rights and needs of young girls and women with disabilities, as one of the most discriminated categories so far receiving the least attention.
- To review the existing strategies and laws, with the view to include the gender aspect components in them.
- To promote inclusion of the gender equality component in all horizontal and multi-dimensional policies, according to which disability should be addressed (employment, education, health, services, transportation, children, youth, elderly etc.)
- To establish a gender and disability based indicators system in order to monitor implementation of all disability and gender equality strategies.
- To foster statistics regarding women with disabilities in every area of the respective strategies, both at the central and local level.
- To make sure that women with disabilities are part of every round table where decision are made about them.
- To promote national studies for the needs assessment of women with disabilities.

- To include reporting about women with disabilities in all mandatory reports through which the Government of Albania reports about women, and disability rights in general.

Organizations which work on promoting gender equality

The analysis of the results of the interviews with women NPOs indicates that women with disabilities did not receive the right attention to be integral parts of their programs. There are no available data about women with disabilities included or being beneficiaries of the programs of women organizations. Women NPOs do not focus on women with disabilities, and believe that this is an issue which should be addressed by the disability organizations. Women organizations are of the opinion that women with disabilities may be indirect beneficiaries of all initiatives and changes for the improvement of the women status as a general/broad concept. Another factor which should be taken into consideration is lack of information, and the necessary capacities within the organization with the view to including and addressing the problems of women with disabilities. The centers of women organizations are not accessible for women with disabilities, and this is perceived to be one of the main barriers to their non-inclusion. Some of the other elements that should be taken into consideration in terms of other barriers are: low awareness about the problems of women with disabilities, and lack of funds to address disability issues.

Recommendations

Some of the recommendations for the organizations that work on promoting gender equality could include:

- Gender Equality organizations should be more aware and included in trainings about the rights and specific needs of women with disabilities.
- They should improve their plans and strategies in order to reflect inclusion of women with disabilities in all stages, and in all areas of their work.
- Whenever possible launch specific programs for women with disabilities.
- They should envisage specific budgets in every project in order to create appropriate provisions/ conditions for women with disabilities.
- They should be aware and foster inclusion of women with disabilities not simply as passive beneficiaries from their programs of social assistance, but to ensure their inclusion in all programs for promoting employment, ensuring economic empowerment; strengthening leadership and decision-making; ensuring access to health services and reproductive health.

Organizations that work on disability issues

Even organizations that work on disability issues fail to regard women with disabilities as a group which deserves special consideration.

Women with disabilities are mainly considered under the disability group, and only very rarely are they addressed in specific terms. However, the disability organizations have available data about women and girls beneficiaries from their programs in: education, legal assistance, health care, community services, employment, and vocational training.

Disability NPOs resisted the idea of re-formulation of their strategies from the gender perspective since their disability issues are too many to be replicated to the entire group.

Absence of accurate data about women with disabilities, low awareness regarding inclusion of gender aspects in every stage of development of the organization or programs, absence of accessible premises in their centers have a negative impact on the inclusion of women and girls with disabilities in the strategies and programs of the disability organizations.

Empowering women with disabilities, increasing advocacy and lobbying for their rights, introduction of support services and means such as accessible transportation, personal assistant or accessible premises are some of the important priorities for increasing the participation of women with disabilities

Recommendations

Some of the recommendations for the disability organizations could be:

- To review their strategies, programs, and action plans from the perspective of including in them women and girls with disabilities;
- To promote inclusion of disabled girls and women in all their concrete programs and projects;
- To promote specific statistics about women and girls with disabilities within their programs;
- To participate in training courses about the gender perspective and its relations/linkages with disability issues;
- To strengthen capacities of their staff to respond to the specific needs of women with disabilities;
- To take concrete actions for raising the awareness of the general public regarding the rights of women and girls with disabilities;
- To launch initiatives, which aim at strengthening the capacities of women with disabilities themselves in terms of leadership and decision-making;

- To promote self-organization and unions of women with disabilities, and to raise their level of representation in the gender related and disability areas.

International organizations

Women and girls with disabilities were not part of the focus of some of the programs of several international organizations that currently operate in the country. No data were made available about the number of girls and women with disabilities beneficiaries of their programs, and their specific place in their strategies. Women with disabilities issues were either not addressed in their programs, or regarded as part of the overall women category or disability category, being considered as indirect beneficiaries of the concrete projects and plans.

It was noted that there was no awareness about women and girls with disabilities and their rights; the absence of studies and specific data were considered as barriers which prevented women with disabilities from being visible in the programs of these organizations.

Recommendations

Some of the recommendations for the international organization could include:

- Increased attention towards women and girls with disabilities in their strategies and development programs in the country.
- Promotion of collection of gender based statistics in the disability programs, and those regarding women with disabilities within women focused programs
- Undertaking initiatives for specific studies focusing on women with disabilities
- Supporting specific programs for women with disabilities, and promoting their rights.
- Programs focusing on women, and those focusing on disabled persons should include indicators for the assessment of the inclusion of disabled women and girls in them.

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30. Refleksione/Shkodër (reflections)
31. The Door
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33. Gruaja tek Gruaja (Women To Women)
34. Vatra (The hearth/home)
35. Reflections /Vlorë
36. Aulona Center/Vlorë
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41. UNDP
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43. GTZ
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45. Albanian Association of Labor Invalids
46. National Associationfor People with Mental Handicap
47. Associaiton of the Blind Persons/Elbasan
48. Miq e Paqe (Friend and Peace)
49. Ndihamoni Jetën (Help the Life)
50. Community Center for Mental Health /Korce
51. “Kenedi” out-patient clinic
52. ANAD
53. Shtëpia e Kuqe (Red House)
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