



QENDRA PËR NISMA LIGJORE QYTETARE  
Regjistruar me vendimin nr.8/1, dt.14.12.2004 të Gjykatës së Rrethit Tiranë  
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## DECLARATION

### *Strengthening of the sustainability of Civil Society Organizations in Albania during COVID-19 situation*

Center for Legal Civic Initiative, a Civil Society Organization conducted a “Research Paper”, on the “Impact of COVID-19 on the sustainability of Civil Society Organizations in Albania”.

The situation created from COVID 19 presented many challenges to the civil society organizations working on addressing gender-based violence in Albania. CSOs faced challenges in providing services for cases of GBV and DV and in managing the cases effectively. Even in a situation like this, most of them generated new tools aiming to reach the survivors and supporting them.

The methodology combined questionnaires, desk study, available reports and studies. The questionnaire contained 29 questions and it was filled by 19 CSOs, members of the Monitoring Network against Gender-Based Violence<sup>1</sup> working in the field of gender-based violence and domestic violence, in several districts of the country. The answers of CSOs have been the main sources of analysis in this research paper.

It results that the situation of COVID-19 has impacted the activity of CSOs working in this field. Implications are evident, implications for the beneficiaries and the staff.

100% of CSOs that filled the questionnaire have confirmed that the pandemic situation of COVID-19 has impacted the number of survivors of GBV and DV and the way of fulfilling their needs. The number of cases of domestic violence increased especially due to people losing their jobs, living in the same house with the perpetrator, restricted services even by the public institutions, children attending the school online and having a limited social life, etc.

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<sup>1</sup> The Centre for Legal Civic Initiatives is coordinating the Monitoring Network against Gender-Based Violence<sup>1</sup> in Albania since November 2017.



Providing direct services for the victims of DV is a challenge that many NGOs in Albania are facing<sup>2</sup>. Regardless of this pandemic situation, CSOs have continued to provide services for the victims of gender-based violence and domestic violence. CSOs have adjusted their way of working to the changed circumstances. Some of the main services for the victims of gender-based violence are psychological support, and primary and secondary legal aid, which are provided mostly online or via telephone and social media channels. However, this process was difficult especially for some of the CSOs, which faced challenges in organizing activities on the field and providing services online.

Regarding *the access of CSOs in funds during the pandemic*, 10 of the CSOs responded that their access to funds has been lower, 8 of them responded that it has been the same and one of them did not respond. None of the participants responded that access to funds was higher during the pandemic situation.

One of the main effects of the pandemic is the impact on civil society organizations regarding sustainability. CSO sector during the crisis continued to face financial difficulties to cover salaries and regular administrative costs, risking the continuity of the organizations' work and existence.

The consultation of CSOs with the local authorities has been weak during this process, according to the respondents CSOs. The consultation mechanisms during the COVID-19 situation have been limited and need to be increased. The government has not continuously received CSOs' opinions on the impact of the pandemic situation on the beneficiaries and the available opportunities in fulfilling their needs during this situation. Nevertheless, there are good examples of consultation in both levels. Some of the good examples regarding the consultation of CSOs with the government and local power are: the consultation of CSOs under the frame of the improvement of the law no.9669, dated 18.12.2006, "On measures against violence in family relations", changed envisaging protection measures for victims of domestic violence in extraordinary situations, drafting the protocols of the functioning of the residential centers for the victims of trafficking in human beings and victims of domestic violence during COVID-19, protocols of the managing of cases of domestic violence through the Coordinated Referral Mechanism in normal and in COVID-19 situation(in municipality level).

Regarding donors, it was assessed by CSOs that the adjusting of the programs with the emergency and the identification of the critical needs of the beneficiaries is crucial;

## CONCLUSIONS:

- **For the government**

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<sup>2</sup> GADC, Overview of the situation in Albania created due to COVID-19,  
[https://www.gadc.org.al/media/files/upload/Albania\\_Covid%2019\\_Overview\\_EN.pdf](https://www.gadc.org.al/media/files/upload/Albania_Covid%2019_Overview_EN.pdf)



-The drafting of the Protocols for the management of cases of domestic violence through the Coordinated Referral Mechanism during COVID-19 and its approval by the Leading Committee of the Coordinated Referral Mechanism was welcomed by CSOs.

-The strengthening of the government support for CSOs working in this field is necessary and especially during the pandemic situation, which put violated women and girls at an increased risk. It includes not only financial support but also other kinds of support.

- **For donors**

The performance of CSOs has to be monitored continuously aiming to measure the progress during the pandemic situation compared to the plan, and if gaps between the plan and the results achieved are identified;

Using technology, social media channels, telephone, networking, capacity building are some of the main tools used during the pandemic situation of COVID 19, which need financial support for CSOs and their staff capacity building.

The mechanisms of consultation of the donors with CSOs have to be expanded, aiming to support them in fulfilling the needs of the beneficiaries in pandemic situations;

The support provided for the network of CSOs that work in the field, especially of CSOs providing services for the beneficiaries needs to be strengthened based in progressive monitoring.

- **For the local government**

The financial support for CSOs providing services for the victims of GBV and DV during the pandemic situation was low;

The cooperation among municipalities and local CSOs in applying under the frame of the project proposals to receive support for social services for the victims of GBV and DV is weak;

## **Recommendations:**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CSOs**

- *To strengthen their financial sustainability not only with foreign resources but also with resources from internal donors; It is necessary to finance services from the central and local government, as well as to provide facilities to perform these services.*
- *To invest in the sustainability of CSOs staff and their qualifications;*
- *To draft protocols on the organization functioning during the pandemic caused by COVID-19, earthquakes, or other situations;*
- *To expand their work with fundraising strategies aiming to secure funds beyond the projects.*



- Strengthening the capacities of the organizations' staff on how to work during the pandemic situation is recommended.
- Networking between organizations is crucial in ensuring their sustainability.
- Diversification of financial resources and an emergency fund for the Organization is needed;
- *CSOs have to use the recommendations of CEDAW and GREVIO report, to strengthen the financial support of CSOs by the government and donors, for successful advocacy.*
- Cooperation of civil society organizations with governmental institutions seeks to re-dimension progressively. Good practices have to be shared and promoted.
- Improving the quality of training and exchange experiences on sustainability for CSO representatives.
- Increasing the number and improving the qualities of the studies on the impact of COVID -19 on the sustainability of Civil Society Organizations in Albania;
- CSOs should state in all their reports, for national and international mechanisms, the way they have addressed the need of their beneficiaries during the pandemic of COVID-19 or another crisis.
- *Sharing the achievement, good practices, and lessons learned is important at the national and regional level;*
- *The policies of the government, donors, and local authorities have to consider the sustainability of CSOs in a crisis and how important it is to fill the needs of the survivors of domestic violence;*
- *To be more oriented in providing services for the beneficiaries;*
- *To use communication as a tool to reach the victims of gender based violence and domestic violence during the pandemic situations;*

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DONORS

- There should be specific programs in case of an emergency, especially for NGOs that work with marginalized groups, such as violated women; an Emergency fund to support victims of GBV and DV is needed.
- The support for CSOs' projects have to be in long term, aiming to properly support the beneficiaries and to produce sustainability of CSOs;
- To be flexible regarding the management of funds and programs during the pandemic situation;
- To be flexible regarding the time and type of activities, the number of participants, the timeline of the project, and the way of communication;
- To assess in continuity, the effectiveness of the CSOs activity, in response to the needs of the victims of GBV and DV;
- The calls for proposals issued by the donors should geographically cover the whole country;
- To be supportive to the network of the CSOs working on prevention and combatting GBV and DV, understanding the strong points for CSOs working together. It is necessary to orient CSOs towards partnerships and invest more in creating networks of organizations working in this field in the whole country.
- Extension of projects throughout the country, covering especially rural areas.
- Monitor progressively and continue to support NGOs that successfully implement projects, to increase their sustainability.
- Flexibility in organizing activities during pandemic situation;
- Adaptation of other types of activities depending on real needs;
- Support for alternative forms of communication.



- Adapting programs according to the needs of the situation and prioritizing emergencies.
- *Donors have to consider how important is their plan on supporting and strengthening the sustainability of CSOs aiming to provide aid to the survivors of domestic violence;*
- Creating a reserve / unpredictable fund for organizations, to make it possible to have flexible budgets according to different situations;
- To support CSOs with hygienic packages during the pandemic situations for the staff and beneficiaries;

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE GOVERNMENT**

- To cooperate in continuity with civil society organizations during the pandemic situation;
- To financially support CSOs aiming to provide specialized services in an extraordinary situation for the survivors of violence;
- To work with CSOs without a political difference, because the cooperation with CSOs based on political support harms their activity;
- To establish supportive plans for CSOs, prioritizing them in the same way as the private sector. Equal treatment, as the CSO sector was affected by the pandemic, and lack of funds. CSOs should be included in economic assistance packages and a more appropriate environment should be provided for their functioning, by improving legislation and reducing the financial obligations of CSOs.
- Involvement of CSOs in the assessment of the situation and finding proper mechanisms for the consultation of needs from the organizations and the beneficiaries.
- Direct support for the sector of CSOs dedicated to the pandemic situation.
- The Agency for the support of Civil Society has to become a real partner and supporter for CSOs, calling for projects that consider priority the needs of the victims of gender based violence and domestic violence during the crisis of COVID-19 or other pandemic situations and being transparent;
- The Strategy of Gender Equality has to provide for measures to address the needs of the survivors of DV and GBV in the situation of crisis, including support for CSOs working in this field. Action Plan and budget have to reflect these needs.
- New approaches to court applications for the survivors of domestic violence are recommended, supported by the state.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES**

- To increase cooperation with CSOs regarding the management of the situation and providing support for the survivors of GBV and DV;
- To financially support Civil Society Organizations that provide services in their territory during emergencies and to consider them an important partner;
- To provide premises for local CSOs aiming to offer specialized services for the victims of GBV and DV.
- To provide for financial support for CSOs that provide specialized services for the victims of domestic violence in the yearly budget;
- To address legal and other obstacles in contracting CSOs, which provide services for the victims of GBV and DV;
- To co-apply with CSOs for funds to support victims of DV and GBV with social services;



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- To increase the space of engagement for CSOs in the implementation of the social plans;
- In cases of pandemics, CSOs should be considered partners of local government to respond to the emergency needs of the population.
- To orient and monitor social plans through the engagement and support of local CSOs.
- To provide a special fund to support organizations in such situations.
- Involvement of CSOs in the assessment of the situation; Needs consultation; Fund allocations and direct support for services.
- The municipalities have to consider widening their support for CSOs providing services at the local level for the survivors of GBV and DV and thus expanding the map of services at the local level, making the management of cases more effective.