STUDY ABOUT VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT IN ALBANIA

COUNSELING LINE FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS

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A study realized from:

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Opinions or points of view expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the Programme.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CDV Councils of Domestic violence
CLCI Center for Legal Civic Initiative
CLWG Counseling Line for Women and Girls Albania
DV Domestic violence
GADC Gender Alliance for Development Center
GDoSP General Department of State Police
INSTAT National Institute of Statistics
LMaDV Law on measures against domestic violence
M&E Monitoring & Evaluation
MoES Ministry of Education and Sciences
MoH Ministry of Health
MoI Ministry of Interior
MoJ Ministry of Justice
MoLSAEO Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities
NGVT Network on Gender Violence and Trafficking
NSoGE-DV National Strategy on Gender Equality and Domestic Violence
SACP Swedish – Albanian Support for Community Police
SIDA Swedish International Development Agency
SIPU Swedish Institute of Public Administration
SP State Police
UNDP United Nations Development Program
UNICEF United Nations Children’s Fund
UNTF United Nations Trust Fund to Eliminate Violence Against Women
Acknowledgements

The Study on victims of the crime of domestic violence and sexual assaults is a joint work of the staff of Hotline for Women and Girls in Albania, and the experts and consultants of our center. The study looks into the fact that data on domestic violence are important for the further steps in the context of the development of the action plan for interventions in cases of domestic violence.

We would like to acknowledge and appreciate the support we got from Swedish Support to Ministry of Interior and ASP on Community Policing Programme for financing the study and the project team. We appreciate, as well the work of all the experts engaged in the process. Without their continuous assistance, expert comments, advice, and suggestions, the completion of this report would have been extraordinarily difficult. We are grateful to: Ms. Znj. Alma Gjurgji – Head of sector for the Protection of Minors and Domestic Violence, Mr. Ilir Zhurka – Responsible for the Protection of Minors and Domestic Violence General Police Department, Mr. Besnik Ahmetaj and Eneo Gjergjani. The specialists of the Sector and Sections for the Protection of Minors and Domestic Violence in all of the country’s 12 districts provided significant assistance, especially Mrs. Elona Mezini – head of sector for the Protection of Minors and Domestic Violence in Fier Police, Mrs. Dashurie Hoxha - head of sector for the Protection of Minors and Domestic Violence in Kukës Police, Mr. Ziadin Cako - head of sector for the Protection of Minors and Domestic Violence in Gjirokastra Police, Mrs. Albana Hasani - head of sector for the Protection of Minors and Domestic Violence in Durrës Police as well as Mr. Flamur Azizi – head of coordination in Dibër Police.

A special thanks to all the organizations that facilitated our work during the period of data collection and contacting the victims of DV: Gender Alliance for Development Center, Refleksione, Center for Civic Legal Initiative, The Shelter for Abused Women, The National Shelter for the victims of DV, Women Independent Forum, Another Vision, Counseling Center Durres, Women to Women, Vatra Center, Counseling Center Kukes, Me – Woman, Counseling Center Berat, LGBT Alliance, ProLGBT and Roma Active Albania.
And last but not least our thanks go to all the women victims of domestic violence, to the representatives of LGBT and the Roma community, and to all citizens that gave their input to this study, for the time they took to respond to the questionnaires and for sharing with us their knowledge and experience.
CHAPTER I

CURRENT SITUATION AND THE PURPOSE BEHIND THE STUDY
The study context

Domestic Violence represents as yet the most recurrent abuse of human rights, while remaining the least acknowledged and accepted worldwide. At the same time, this type of abuse represents a health problem that could lead up to eventual death. It compromises the well-being of women and deprives them of their dignity and self-esteem. It is common knowledge that domestic violence knows no boundaries and is present in all cultures. Research on domestic violence indicates that abuse of women is a complex and multi-dimensional issue. Factors behind it include cultural, social, family and individual aspects that influence the probability for women to become victims of violence.

Given its levels, frequency, and social costs, gender based violence remains a major concern in Albania, as one of the most serious and recurrent types of human rights violation in the country. Studies conducted by national and international institutions affirm that violence against women is a widely spread phenomenon, both in geographical terms, as well as in terms of social groups. According to INSTAT\(^1\) measurements, with the support of UNICEF and UNDP, 56% of women in the age group 15 - 49 years old have experienced at least one form of domestic violence, be it physical, emotional or financial. Whereas, according to Data Centrum Research Institute\(^2\) seconded by the Swedish Government for the Ministry of Interior and the State Police, in the context of Community Policing project, more than 1 in 2 respondents report that they know somebody from among their friends and/or family, or in their neighborhood that has been victim of at least one form of domestic violence. Meanwhile, according to the study on Violence Against Children conducted by UNICEF\(^3\), 1 of 2 children stated that he/she had been a victim of violence at a given moment in his/her life.

These studies also indicate that domestic violence in Albania is seriously under reported and that measures to address it should be both sustainable and multi-

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\(^1\) The study, the first of a national scale, has collected statistics to document the degree of VaW, was realized during the period November – December 2007.

\(^2\) The study was conducted during 1 – 23 June 2012, with 570 respondents in 5 main cities of the country.

\(^3\) Study realized by UNICEF, 2006, with 4500 respondents in 8 of the country’s districts.
The Albanian society has a history of male dominance, this being a reflection of the strong patriarchal traditions in the Balkans. Women have long given up and are used to being subjected to submissive roles. During Communism a serious gap existed between the emancipation of women from a theoretical perspective, and the circumstances of daily life and living conditions. Since the fall of the communist regime in 1991, Albania is going through a period of radical and often times dramatic political, social and economic changes. These have substantially impacted the livelihoods of many Albanians. Gender equality is a newly introduced concept for the Albanian society, and it has not yet been embraced by a significant part of the population.

Victims of gender-based violence are women and girls of all ages, social groups, educational levels and professions. However, the most vulnerable groups remain: women coming from poor households, women who are heads of families and girls. This applies in particular, to girls who are part of internal migration communities, who have come from different areas to the outskirts of Tirana and Durrës. This also includes, students, and women living in the North of the country where the patriarchal traditions are even more dominant in the rural areas. In the majority of the cases the abusers are men, who the victim knows: family members, relatives, neighbors, and colleagues. Domestic violence remains one of the most common forms of violence in Albania, which accounts for most of lives lost among the survivors of violence against women.

Albanian media often report about cases of extreme violence against women and girls, most of which involving murder or death of the victims. This serious situation of violence against women and girls in Albania is not only an expression of the patriarchal mentality that views them as “second-hand citizens”, but also the result of insufficient efforts made by public institutions, civil society and private sector organizations, to prevent gender-based violence and to protect and support its victims.

In the course of the recent years, Important steps have been taken in Albania for completing the regulatory framework for the prevention and elimination of gender based violence at the local and national levels. This has included the active involvement of the NGOs community, with the Network against Gender Based Violence and Trafficking, as the main actor. Members of the network include: Counseling Line for Women and Girls (CLWG); and NGO called “Refleksione”; the Shelter for women and girls victims of violence (the Shelter); the Center for Legal Civic Initiatives; and the Center for Gender Alliance for
Development. The most important step was the adoption and effectiveness of the Law on Measures against domestic violence. This law became effective in June 2007. The law was drafted by a coalition of Albanian NGOs, and was submitted to the Parliament as part of a civic initiative, through a petition that was signed by 20,000 citizens. In addition, a year later, in July 2008 another law became effective, i.e. the law on gender equality. This law provides for equal treatment of men and women. Other important achievements included: the adoption of the National Strategy on Gender Equality and Domestic violence for 2007-2011 and later on the strategy for 2011-2015, together with a National Action Plan adopted by the Council of Ministers on December 19, 2007; the law on Free Legal Aid that became effective in April 2009, which provides for free legal aid for the victims of domestic violence; sublegal acts associated with the responsibility of state police and public health services in the implementation of the law on measures against domestic violence ratified by the Ministry of Interior (MoI) and Ministry of health (MoH), as well as other rules related to domestic violence and violence against women adopted by the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities (MoLSAEO), as the leading authority in the implementation of the domestic violence law. To this end, special sectors for addressing domestic violence have been established, such as the sector on measures against domestic violence in the MoLSAEO; the sector for the protection of minors and domestic violence in the General Department of State Police, as well as sections in each regional police department.

At the local level, with the initiative of the network against Gender based Violence and Trafficking, with the support of United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women (UNTF), there are efforts in place since 2008 to involve public institutions at the local level (municipalities) for the implementation of the Domestic Violence Law. A model community-based coordinated system was piloted with success through the councils working on domestic violence (DVC). This has served as a fruitful cooperation platform for the stability of the domestic violence victim referral system, and has identified concrete steps to address domestic violence/violence against women, as well as inform budgetary planning processes of domestic violence. Following the implementation by the Network (NGVT) of the project “Let us implement the law against Domestic violence” with the support of UNTF, the Network managed to impose one of the most important legal acts, in cooperation with MoLSAEO which is Decision of Council of Ministers no 334, 07.02.2011 On the Mechanism for the Coordination of Work for the Referral of Cases of Domestic Violence and its Methodology. This Decision defines the mechanism that was piloted by the Network in the first 5 municipalities (Berat, Vlora,
Shkodra, Pogradec and Rërshen) and is implemented now in five other municipalities (Elbasan, Lezhë, Manzë, Pukë and Tirana-District 6) to establish in every municipality:

a. **Steering committees** (former councils on domestic violence) composed of representatives of different institutions, such as: the municipality, the police, judicial district courts, district prosecutor’s offices, educational department, public health department, social services in the municipalities and communes, bailiff’s office, prefect’s office, chairman of the respective communes, employment offices, NGOs, centers/shelters for the victims of domestic violence, religious institutions that might be interested to provide services for the victims; the committees are chaired by the respective Mayors.

b. **Technical multi-disciplinary teams/groups** (former technical working groups) comprising technical representatives of the institutions represented in steering committee, representatives of Child Protection Units and local contact persons for gender equality issues, and freelance professionals, such as: counselors, lawyers, psychologists etc.

c. **Local coordinators** for the referral of cases of domestic violence, serving as representatives of social services office at the local units, and concomitantly working as team leaders of the multi-disciplinary technical team.

For several years the UNDP has also supported lobbying and strengthening capacities of partners in national, local and community level in Albania to forcefully address issues of domestic violence.

During this period it helped in formulating a National Strategy and Action Plan on Anti Domestic Violence through participatory policy processes of Government, non-governmental institutions and civil society organizations. This help has enhanced partnership building at national and local levels in order to ensure that the National Strategy and Action Plan were owned jointly by local governments, civil society and all partners contributing to the achievement of common goals.

In 2010 the CEDAW Committee reviewed Albania’s periodic report on implementation of the UN Convention and provided certain recommendations. In December 2011 Albania signed the European Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.
To support Albania’s international commitments for the implementation of international human rights standards, gender equality, environmental sustainability, and development of national capacities, the Government of Albania and the United Nations signed, in 2011, the Programme of Cooperation 2012-2016. While UN agencies will be required to mainstream gender in all their activities and projects, the Programme also envisages interventions focused entirely or considerably on gender equality issues described in outputs.

Law no 10.399, of 17.03.2011 On some amendments and changes to Law no 9355, of 10.3.2005 On social assistance and services sanction the right for entitlement to social assistance not only by the Head of the Household, but also by women victims of violence in the cases when they are equipped with Restraining Orders (RI) or Immediate Restraining Orders (IRO); as well as provide for eligibility to social assistance of the households while the spouses are in the process of divorce. Victims of domestic violence are entitled to social assistance during the validity of the restraining order or immediate restraining order.

Recently, the changes in the Criminal Code of March 2012 have provided for two specific articles on domestic violence.

Article 124/b which provides for protection of minors from parents, siblings, legal guardian, or any other person entitled to take care of them. This offence is punishable with imprisonment from three months up to two years.

Article 130/a of the Criminal Code defines domestic violence, while including: hitting or any other offence of violence; serious threat for murder or deep wounding; premeditated wounding by any of the ex-spouses; a live in partner, close relatives or in-laws, with the perpetrator of the criminal offense resulting in infringing the physical, psycho-social and economic integrity of the victim, as an offense punishable by up to five years of imprisonment.

With the changes to the Criminal Code, incidents of domestic violence are classified as a criminal offence (under article 130/a) Consequently the prosecutor’s office once informed about a case of domestic violence (from a source which could be the victim herself/ the police or any other source) may immediately start the appropriate procedures. This means that even if the plaintiff withdraws from the case, the case will continue. In addition, violating a protection order, or an immediate protection order constitutes a criminal offense (articles 320-321 of the amended Criminal Code); consequently, the abuser may be arrested in the presence of these circumstances. Punishment for violation of a
restraining order or an immediate restraining order is established with imprisonment up to 2 years (i.e. no penalty in terms of fines any more).

However, considering the size of the phenomenon of violence against women and girls in Albania, a tangible problem remains; the fact that the service capacities for victims of domestic violence are very limited compared to the needs for these services. In the absence of such services, women victims of domestic violence are obliged to continue to stay in their homes, at the risk of escalating violence, while others may be discouraged to seek help because they know that they cannot get it.

The objective of the program

The main objective of the study is enhancing capacities of the actors of domestic violence, including the State Police for the delivery of services aimed at reducing domestic violence incidence. This includes improving coordination between the State Police and other actors to ensure adequate treatment of cases of domestic violence.

Each program area should be looked at from the perspective of improving the current situation, in line with the established goals and purposes, but as well as a priority for building capacities of different stakeholder groups through the selected approach for the implementation of the program activities.

Conduct of this study is closely linked with the recognition of the following aspects of domestic violence:

- Citizens’ perception regarding domestic violence: what is maltreatment/abuse and what are the circumstances in which it occurs?
- Spread and main forms of domestic violence in Albania;
- Consequences of domestic violence;
- Citizens’ reaction: methods used by the citizens to stop violence or reduce the circumstances where it occurs;
- Social restrictions that deprive specific demographic groups both public
and private, and which potentially increase the possibility for domestic violence

The purpose of the study

This study is based on a comprehensive survey, with relatively elaborate interviews on the subject of domestic violence, as well as on focus group discussions, on the experience of the women victims of domestic violence, and on an advance social opinion on the topic.

The purpose of this study is to single out the household actors inclined to exercise domestic violence, their victims, the forms and consequence of this type of violence, to measure the levels of public information on the topic of domestic violence and knowledge about the legislation that seeks to prevent it, to look into the size and spread of domestic violence in different family contexts, its causes according to public perception and present public proposals on complementary/additional measures for its prevention.

As a step forward for enhancing and increasing knowledge in this area, this explanatory study of domestic violence in Albania has tried to: (i) identify the variety of forms of violence present in the Albanian households; (ii) shed light on the perceptions of women about what constitutes an abusive behavior, and under what circumstances; (iii) explore the strategies used by women to end violence or alternatively to minimize its consequences; (iv) document the consequences/impact of domestic violence on women, children and families and society as a whole; (v) identify the behavior of women vis-à-vis their abusers and abusive relationships; (vi) determine social restrictions that deprive many women from being equal to men in private life.

The Study focused on the victims of the crime of domestic and sexual assaults. We hope that the results of this study will be taken into account during the implementation of other activities under this program component, such as:

- Drafting of a manual for the persons responsible for addressing domestic violence, including ToRs for the roles and responsibilities of different agencies, that guarantee better coordination of the actors;
- Developing awareness raising materials on the topic of domestic violence, with the view to raising awareness about the respective roles
and responsibilities of different agencies;

- A study to determine the needs for improvements in the current reporting system of domestic violence.

The Study aims to gather reliable and comprehensive data on the actual spread and nature of the phenomenon, regarding all ethnic groups, minorities and marginalized groups, as well as on the LGBT community. In this aspect, particular attention shall be paid to the specific situation of LGBT community, whose experiences are related to their gender identity.

We hope that the results of the study will be taken into consideration by the State Police authorities and national partner agencies involved in the official response and reaction against incidents of domestic violence and sexual crimes. The findings of the study will help in improving organizational strategies and operational responses in the following areas: prevention, investigation, protection of victims and witnesses and rehabilitation of offenders of the law.

The Study covered 12 regions of the country, and focused on the awareness raising aspect about the rights of victims of domestic violence and rates of reporting domestic violence crime. The respondents were asked questions about their recent experiences related to domestic violence.

**Definition of domestic violence**

In order to properly understand the results of this study, which was based on a broad survey, we need first and foremost to clarify that domestic violence for the purpose of this Study respects a given definition. First, domestic violence refers to a pattern of behavior which involves abuse of one partner with another in an intimate relationship. Second, domestic violence is not only about physical aggression, but also about exercise of psychic, sexual, economic and verbal abuse, etc, followed by consequences in all walks of life and human existence.

Without excluding other layers of the exercise of this type of abuse, we would like to reiterate that it is mainly studied in its most common forms, such as forms of parental violence against their children, and of children of a certain age against their parents, of spouses against each-other, in particular of husband against wife, abuse against persons with relatively low social status, the poor, the disabled, and the elderly.
According to the definition of the State Department Office on Violence against Women (USDOJ), through their main resources such as: the National Hotline on Domestic Violence and the National Center for Victims of the Crimes of Domestic Violence, domestic violence “… is a pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over another intimate partner. Domestic violence can be physical, sexual, emotional, economic, or psychological actions or threats of actions that influence another person. This includes any behaviors that intimidate, manipulate, humiliate, isolate, frighten, terrorize, coerce, threaten, blame, hurt, injure, or wound someone.”

In the last 20 years there has been more and more research about sexual abuse between intimate partners, but unfortunately this does not hold true in the case of Albania. Several studies indicate that women and men are likely to be equally victimized by their intimate partners, while others state that the likelihood of women being victimized is higher than it is for men.

Forms of domestic violence

In order to have a broadly accepted definition of domestic violence, we are quoting the study of INSTAT “On domestic violence in the society”

**Emotional abuse** is any treatment that may diminish the sense of identity, dignity and self-worth of an individual. This may include: continuous criticism, demeaning behavior, contempt about the abilities of a person, insults, degradation and damaging of the relationship with somebody’s children.

**Psychological abuse** refers to causing fear by intimidation; threatening physical harm, to self, partner, children, or partner’s family or friends; threatening with abandoning; destruction of pets and property; threatening about taking custody of children; forcing isolation from friends, or school or work and withholding money or financial support for a partner.

**Physical abuse** includes, but is not limited to: striking, punching, pushing, slapping, pinching, hitting, strangling, striking, kicking, biting, pulling of hairs,

4http://www.ovw.usdoj.gov/domviolence.htm
7 National Survey on domestic violence in Albania”, march 2009, INSTAT
twisting the arm, burning, slaughtering and drowning. Physical abuse may also constitute use of size and physical strength of a person, using guns, knives, or any other object to gain and retain control over another person. Physical abuse often leads to different forms of harm, while it could also lead to eventual death.

**Sexual abuse** is the forcing of unwanted sexual activity by one person on another, as by the use of threats of coercion. Sexual abuse includes but is not limited to: marital rape, assault on sexual body organs, forcing the partner to engage in sexual relationship following physical abuse, or treatment of a person in a sexually demeaning way. Sexual abuse is perpetrated by intimate partners and family members within the marriage context, love affair or household context.

**Official figures on domestic violence during the recent years**

The tables below present cases reported to the units for domestic violence at police stations in 12 districts of the country from 2008 (the year that implementation of the law “On measures against domestic violence” began until the end of 2012, as well as the number of cases requiring PO/IPO from police from 2008 until the end of 2012.

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<th>Durres</th>
<th>Vlore</th>
<th>Shkoder</th>
<th>Berat</th>
<th>Fier</th>
<th>Kukes</th>
<th>Diber</th>
<th>Elbasan</th>
<th>Gjirokaster</th>
<th>Korce</th>
<th>Lezhe</th>
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<tr>
<td>Identified</td>
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<td>539</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claim lawsuit for Protection Orders</td>
<td>1234</td>
<td>393</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>105</td>
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</table>
### 2011:

**Department of District Police**

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<th>Berat</th>
<th>Fier</th>
<th>Kukes</th>
<th>Diber</th>
<th>Elbasan</th>
<th>Gjirokaster</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Identified</strong></td>
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<td>53</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>93</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Claim lawsuit for Protection Orders</strong></td>
<td>1345</td>
<td>467</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>99</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>34</td>
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### 2012:

**Department of District Police**

<table>
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<th>Shkoder</th>
<th>Berat</th>
<th>Fier</th>
<th>Kukes</th>
<th>Diber</th>
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<th>Gjirokaster</th>
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<td>139</td>
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<td>135</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Claim lawsuit for Protection Orders</strong></td>
<td>1562</td>
<td>534</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>75</td>
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<td>60</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>61</td>
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</table>

"A Study about victims of domestic violence and sexual assault"
Tables below show cases of killings on a national scale from 2008 until 2012 and the relationship of the murderer with the victim.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Penal Offenses</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Killings in total</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>28</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Articles.76-83,85 PC)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Female Victims</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Victims</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family connections of the victims with the killer</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>Viti 2010</th>
<th>Viti 2011</th>
<th>Viti 2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The wife</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The husband</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sister</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brother</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
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</tr>
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</table>
CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY AND FINDINGS OF THE QUANTITATIVE STUDY
Survey methodology

The study includes quantitative research methods in the form of questionnaires, and qualitative research methods in the form of focus groups.

A quantitative approach was used for the identification of key areas of interest within the target groups. The qualitative methodology in the form of focus groups was also used in order to complement and add on the data collected from the questionnaire literature. The focus group methodology was selected to identify the perspectives of the following categories: LGBT community, women and girls from the Roma community, and victims of domestic violence.

Figure no 1. Study design

The target group of the study, which constitutes the party that has a direct stake, and the actors involved in the review of social issues in the Albanian households was represented by:

(1) The citizens
(2) Victims of domestic violence

For putting together this report, a working group was established comprising researchers, experts of domestic violence who work day in day out with issues of domestic violence, and experts of the domestic violence Units at the regional police stations. As a result of a series of meetings and discussions, the working group developed and adopted a data collection instrument. The instrument was tested in Tirana. Some of the questions benefited in terms of clarity, from the
feedback of the councils of working group members, as well as from the specialists representing the State Police.

Following the selection of the twelve interviewers (one for each Region), the interviewers became part of a training programme process, in order to get clear instructions about the methodology for the collection of the data in the field, and aspects of data confidentiality. This process ended in 500 completed questionnaires for the twelve regions, with Tirana getting the highest share of 150 respondents. To this number were added 60 questionnaires filled in with victims of domestic violence who called in the free confidential line 08002040 for victims of domestic violence.

The following is a chart that demonstrates the preparatory work and methodology used for this research and the end results of the study:

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Figure 2. Structure of the study
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A Study about victims of domestic violence and sexual assault

The instruments of the Interview Methodology included:

- *Face-to-Face* interviews with the survey target groups (500 questionnaires)
- Telephone interviews via the confidential free line (60 questionnaires)
- Computer assisted self interviews in the Webpage of the Hotline (54 questionnaires)

Interview units include:

- Administrative urban and rural units of 12 regions in the country.

Preliminary selection of these units was based on the following criteria:

- Nationwide coverage by the study
- Ensuring representation of survey target groups, in line with the data of the CLWG.
- Costs entailed in the conduct of such a survey.

The size of the selected sample included 614 respondents.

Selection of the representative population sample was based on the *purposive quota sampling* methodology.

The points for the selection of samples were pre-defined in 11 regions of the study, with almost thrice as much in terms of the size of the sample for the city of Tirana, while the designed sample coverage will be approximately 6% for each of the twelve regions.

Interviews were conducted in the respective urban and rural areas, while each interview lasted on average 22 minutes.

The study uses a number of methods for the study of the sociological aspects of the matter. The selection of the respondents sample includes the groups for the purpose of the study. All 12 regions of the country, namely: Tirana, Durrës, Vlora, Gjirokastra, Korca, Elbasan, Berat, Shkodra, Lezha, Kukës, Dibra and Fier were selected.

These are areas with quite sensitive social dynamics, and represent regions with
specific cultural models.

Despite it being quite difficult and complicated, the social composition of the respondents was selected to match the purpose of the study. It is important to point out that the respondents included both: citizens for whom there are no data as to them being exposed to violence, as well as persons who are victims of domestic violence. The latter constitute 27.7% of the respondents’ total. In addition, the persons were selected to represent an age where the phenomenon of domestic violence is more spread, and who were individuals with a mature opinion about their perceptions regarding domestic violence. The data from our statistical figures indicate that 80.7% of the respondents belong to three different age-groups, ranging from 20-45 years old. Focusing on domestic violence, we used a random selection sample.

71.6% of the respondents were married, while the rest were either single or widowed. Finally, we have focused on the most recurrent household structure of the recent years, comprising 4-5 members that represents 56.4% of the respondents households.

It is worth reiterating that the sampling allows us to look at the popular perceptions about the issue of domestic violence from different layers. This means that we have representatives from groups most exposed to domestic violence, as well as a broad public opinion on the topic.

However, given that the majority of the respondents in the survey were women and girls, and hence, the group mainly subjected to violence (83.2% of the respondents were females), we would like to point out that the perceptions illustrated in this study will definitely have a more feminine ring to them.

Regarding the topic of domestic violence according to the objectives, the public ideas and perceptions were measured as follows:

A. Citizens perception on domestic violence focused on the following topics:

> Intimate partners abuse
> Child abuse
> Perceived forms of violence against other groups
> Public approach against abusers and abusive relationships

B. the perceptions about the spread and main forms of domestic violence in
Albania through:

1. General overview on domestic violence
2. Isolation
3. Psychological abuse
4. Physical violence
5. Sexual violence
6. Economic abuse
7. Who are the victims? The demographic groups mostly affected by domestic violence are the following:
   - Child abuse
   - Abuse with the elderly
   - Abuse with persons because of their sexual orientation

8. Who are the abusers? Persons mostly inclined to be abusive at home

C. The other section of measurement objectives runs an analysis of the impacts of domestic violence, in 3 specific categories:

   - Implications/consequences for the victims of domestic violence;
   - Implications on the children and the rest of the family;
   - Implications on the society, including governmental institutions.

D. This section is about measuring civic reaction on domestic violence, as well as their means for stopping or reducing the circumstances in which it occurs.

   - How do citizens perceive violence and what do they know about help;
   - Reducing violence through prevention: Citizens perceptions about the factors that contribute to prevention of abuse and ways for treatment
E. In addition, the study takes into account social restrictions that prevent specific demographic groups from access to public and private aspects of life, and which potentially increase domestic violence

- Traditional structures of power within the households
- Gender-based abuse of children, based on traditions
- Lack of access to education
- Gender based discriminatory roles and employment practices
- Discrimination related to property and inheritance

**Sampling methodology**

This study was subjected to the selection of a broad sampling methodology due to the need for including in the sample two different target groups: on the one hand, the citizens and on the other, the victims of domestic violence.

a. Selection of the sample of victims or survivors of domestic violence, who at the moment of the conduct of this survey were using at least one of the possible/available services of support on domestic violence.

The survivors of domestic violence who were making use of at least one of the available support services on domestic violence were selected with the support of psychologists or social workers of the service providers and of the units on violence in the police stations. This was conducted based on considering the number of women and girls accommodated in these centers or institutions in order to receive services, during the timeline of the conduct of the survey (March - April 2013). About 4 - 7 survivors of domestic violence were interviewed in each of the service delivery centers. In total, 155 survivors of domestic violence were interviewed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents target group</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Citizen</td>
<td>405</td>
<td>72.3</td>
<td>72.3</td>
<td>72.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 1:

b. Selection of the citizens sample:

The citizens sample was developed based on the Household Taxpayers database for the 12 target regions, aiming at ensuring broad representation. The data base has geographical area information, as well as number of households for the target group.

For each of the target cities, five sampling groups were selected for conducting the interviews. In each of the sampling units, the interviewers conducted four interviews. Respondents were selected on the basis of the following criteria:

- 18 years old and above (including elderly persons);
- Had their first or last birthday in the household;
- The individual is permanent resident in the household even if he/she was registered as living elsewhere, from the administrative aspect; emigrants, soldiers or persons studying abroad were not entitled;
- Respondents were interviewed individually, without being bothered or receiving suggestions from someone else. Interviews were conducted at
the appropriate time for both parties (i.e. the respondent and the interviewer). If the person came to the interview accompanied by other people, the interview was conducted separately with the respondent.

- Respondents were chosen to represent a broad spectrum in terms of their educational achievements.

### Gender disaggregation of the sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td>Males</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>16.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Females</td>
<td>466</td>
<td>83.2</td>
<td>100.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>560</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
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</table>

![Figure 2](image_url)

City * Gender Cross-tabulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
At the national level, 83.2% of the interviewers were females. This ratio holds true for almost all regions, in terms of percentage. This is illustrated in figures no 2 and 3.
Sample/model of target city

As mentioned above, the survey covered the whole 12 regions of the country, namely: Tirana, Durrës, Vlora, Gjirokastra, Korca, Elbasan, Berat, Shkodra, Lezha, Kukës, Dibra and Fier. The total number of interviews for each region were approximately 32-34, with the exception of the region of Tirana with 194 interviews, with interviews totaling 560.

Preparation of field work

Data were gathered for all target regions along with a training session being conducted at the end of February 2013. The purpose of the training was to introduce twelve interviewers to the goal of the survey, to give them instructions about the sampling methodology, interview methodology; and to give them a step by step layout of the questionnaire. The trainer used interactive methods such as: reading out, questions and discussions, explaining the sampling methodology, and role playing with real interview situations. Each participant was given the opportunity to be involved in the process and participate actively.

On the day of the training, each interviewer was supplied with the field work package, which contained the following:

1. Copies of the questionnaire (including serial number of the interview);
2. A list of service providers (counseling centers and shelters) operating in the target cities, including necessary contact points.
3. A list of names of contact persons from the domestic violence units at the regional police stations.
4. Written instructions about sampling and the interview process.

The Control and verification
Once the ground work for each of the interviewer was complete, and the target number of interviews reached, the questionnaires were subjected to a verification process. The process in itself consisted of a random selection of questionnaires. On average, 25% of the questionnaires were cross checked by placing a phone call to the respondent. Two persons were involved in the process of logical control and verification of the questionnaires.

**Data entry**

Data entry was the next step following logical control. For the data entry, the operators used the SPSS Data Entry software. Following completion of the data entry process, discrepancies were identified in the data contained in the data base. Then, we went back to the questionnaire and verified the correct option for the responses. Following this procedure, the data base was converted into an SPSS file, and was then analyzed.

**What is the level of information on the issue of domestic violence in Albania**

![The level of information for DV](image)

Figure 4

A good share of the respondents were not familiar with the legislation that provides protection from abuse/violence. Many others were reluctant to believe that the legislation would provide protection for them. This trend was more
tangible in regions such as: Gjirokastra, Vlora, Korca and Lezha. They believed that they were alone in the fight against violence and female respondents declared that they too often feel guilty about this situation. The gathered data demonstrate that in general, and not just victims of rape, have almost no information about the legislation in effect. Even in the cases when they are informed there is a prevailing feeling of lack of trust/confidence. The majority of the victims of domestic violence appear before a court after having experienced at least once a violation of the law on protection from the abuser. When they understand that there is going to be no end to their violence, they usually address the court to file for the divorce. Many other victims have to face the high fees of attorneys and courts. Under these circumstances, they decide to back down on the divorce, and continue to succumb to violence and its consequences for the whole family.

Furthermore, data demonstrate that the Albanian society at large is very uninformed about ways to prevent domestic violence. And this is due to lack of information about the legal framework.

**Instruments for obtaining information on domestic violence in Albania**

Some of the most important channels for obtaining information about domestic violence are: Radio/TV (51%) and social networks (13.6%). The least utilized instruments for obtaining information about the cases, legislation, consequences and implications of domestic violence are: awareness raising campaigns and online Media. The majority of the respondents (78.7%) did not take part in activities focusing on issues of domestic violence, which might be explored in the future from service providers and women NGOs.
The data collected show that 30% of respondents from the group of citizens and 31.3% of respondents from the group of victims of domestic violence have "little" or "No" information about how to prevent and combat domestic violence. Also, 6.4% of respondents from the group of citizens and 7.3% of respondents from the group of victims of domestic violence claim to have "more" information "about this issue.

**Gender relations and family life – is the husband entitled to hit his wife?**

"The majority of Albanian men underestimate their spouses. They look upon them as slaves, who should take care of the children, tend to the house chores, look after the house. Fullstop."

* Djana, 22 years old, divorced, mother of one
Many women are bitter about their expectations and hopes about their marriages, and the way that they are in contradiction with the actual everyday life reality. Oriola, 40 years old divorced attorney says: “I expected marriage to be similar to what my parents have. Unfortunately I chose another model. He had his parents model to look up to. He had grown up in a violent household. His father had abused his mother all the time, and he was expecting to do the same to me”. Like in the case of all women coming from patriarchal mentality, Albanian women are used to being submissive, passive, dependent and obliging towards their men. If they do not obey their men, then it is quite acceptable for men to use violence to discipline them, and keep them on his leash. Here is how Afërdita (a farmer) perceives the issue: “When I got married, my mother gave me this piece of advice: “You need to be careful. Now he is your husband, and sometimes he might yell at you, or maybe even hit you”. My friends told me the same thing. In the beginning we got along well. I was 20 years old back then, and he always used to pay me compliments and say that I had beautiful eyes. But two years later, when I had failed to get pregnant, he started screaming at me: “Will you bear me any children? I did not marry you because of your eyes.” I used to feel very bad and wept continuously.” A 31 year old divorced teacher from Tirana had the same piece of advice from her mother: “From my mother, I learned that I should always oblige my husband. My father was the male model of stubbornness and hotbloodedness. My husband, in order to demonstrated to his father who was in command in our relationship began screaming at me, and abusing with me, to the point where he took every decision without ever asking me about it. In Albania, tradition has it, that problems are solved by screaming bloody hell.” Mentalities associated with submissiveness, prevailing tradition about the family and its norms reign over the rights of individuals. Here is what Liria, an employed teacher thinks about this: “My husband has a university degree, but the problem is that he comes from a so-called traditional household whereby the wife should submit to the husband, while the latter should be omnipotent and arrogant.” As part of this tradition, women have more responsibilities than rights. Brisida, a worker from Shkodra said that: “This is the tradition in Kosovo. The wife should wash the feet of her husband as soon as he gets home, and lay the table for him, while he lays on the couch and watches TV. The husband should not be bothered by the children. The wife should not ask her husband where he has been, what he did, and if he brought any money at home. To preserve the tradition, I had to submit to all these rules. I could not go anywhere, dress properly or wear make-up. If I had a shower before going to work, he would ask me: “Why did you have a shower?”
The table above is disaggregated according to respondents targets group

The majority of 47.2% of citizens interviewed and 42.6% of the victims interviewed think that this legislation does not apply. While only 1.7% of citizens interviewed and 7.7% of the victims interviewed believe that legislation to help victims of domestic violence apply.
Fragmented information on domestic violence

A number of questions in the survey were aimed at seeking understanding of latent forms of domestic violence, those that somehow are also partially accepted by the broad public, in particular the conservative one have been answered as follows by different individuals.

In answering the question: "Is it sometimes OK for a husband to hit his wife?", 79.1% of the respondents clearly responded that that is not at all OK. This response appears to be a very positive figure, and it partially is. But a careful analysis would indicate that approximately 18% of the respondents believe that the husband could also hit his wife, even though they answer as "agree", "agree up to a point", or even when they say that "they do not agree up to a point", they still leave leeway to the so-called "natural" violence of a husband against his wife in certain cases.

In other words, one in five respondents does not have a clear cut view against any form of violence, including psychical violence etc. exercised by the husband against his own wife. This implies physical abuse because for "less minor" forms of abuse it is obvious that the acceptance levels would be higher.

Interviewees in this study indicate an opinion on this issue, which is explained as follows:

![Figure 7](image-url)
Most of those who were interviewed did not agree with the fact that the husband should beat his wife. On the other hand, collected data indicate that, in some areas of Albania, it is still considered normal that a husband may beat his wife. This is evident even in Tirana, where the mentality persists although there have been numerous interventions to sensitize the broader public. The reason why it still persists in Tirana is due to the fact that Tirana is the product of internal migration and is mainly inhabited by a number of people who come from very remote and mountainous areas of the country. On the other hand, it is very clear that the law against domestic violence is not implemented the way it should in Albania.

Let us not forget that the majority of the respondents were women and girls, which constitutes a more critical public against domestic violence. Perhaps figure would have been higher if the number of male respondents would have been more significant. The problem lays with the fact that a part of the women also perceive of violence as a normal thing, which according to them is part of the logic and rules of married life.

Are these data accurate? They are, according to the survey. But, even if we start with a general reasoning, we are familiar with the patriarchal and cultural values and traditions from early on and which are still prevailing today. Men still are perceived as more powerful and guardians of the honor and proper conduct of the females in the household.

But, the problem should not be perceived as linked only with the social tradition of the past in terms of husband and wife relationships. Somehow, latent violence is also present in the tradition that discriminates the role and status of women in the households. The fact that women holds an unequal share of burden in the household and serves the rest of the household is often accepted as a normal thing for a part of the society. This is silent abuse which keeps women in the households in a submissive place.

It goes without saying that things have started to change as a result of many factors coming from the emancipation and liberalization of traditions, under the democratic processes, but tradition still continues to have its effects. Latent violence which goes unperceived by a part of the public is at the same time the most common.

In responding to the question: "Do you expect young brides to have more responsibility about cleaning the house and preparing food than the rest of the family members?", only 28% of the respondents reported "not to agree at all".
The considerable remainder is of the opinion that it is no surprise that young brides be more involved than the rest of the members of the household. This attitude which puts young brides in a submissive position is not only the take of the male, but also female side of the households.

The survey also is testimony to the “banality” of the phenomenon of violence in Albania, including domestic violence. And this has to do with the fact of the collective belief that violence is an unavoidable aspect of society. This comes from a society which was emerged in a regime of five decades based on the "war between classes" which often went through major social drama, often times violent, including the years of democratic transition. Acceptance of of violence in a society not only increases its presence in the families, but also leads to its serious public under-reporting and resistance against phenomena that accompany domestic violence.

In responding to the question: "Is violence a normal part of any social relationship?", only 21.6 % of the respondents firmly respond with a "No". The rest are not convinced otherwise. 34.1% of the respondents admit that violence is only a normal part of all social phenomena.

"Violence as being normal" is part of a collective belief coming out of the analyses of our survey.

The same goes for the idea that women are mere objects whose consent is not important, and she is there to please, even if against her will, the erotic requests of the husband.

In answering the Question: "Is sexual relation considered as abuse when it is entered into against the will of any one of the partners?", 49.8% of the respondents clearly stated that this is form of sexual abuse. The rest (15,4%) think just the opposite, while (11,1%) think that it is a violent act "up to a point", and (17%) hesitate to take a clear cut stand (17%).

The mentality issue with acceptance of latent violence it would seem is not only related to and linked with tradition. There are also other phenomena that foster it.

It is common knowledge that in today’s families, family roles and social functions of the partners are becoming a lot more flexible than they were in the past. This in turn leads to negotiation of functions and issues between partners. In a way, the family is becoming a forum for discussions which often times is
“too hot” to touch because it is about the rights and responsibilities of everybody in the daily life. This leads to verbal abuse, which often times degenerates into acts of physical violence. It is a part of a family dialogue culture, in particular among the relatively young couples who still do not possess strategies and psychological techniques for handling household dialogues.

In responding to the question: "Is physical abuse normal among couples when they debate?", 55.2% of the respondents believe that it is totally unacceptable and not normal. But others are hesitant and reluctant to give a clear cut answer, or consider it somewhat normal that debate can degenerate into physical violence (12.9%).

Another type of mentality is related with the fact that the elderly are considered as a burden for the urban families, in particular the newly established ones. This is also accompanied with neglect, abandonment, or episodes of verbal violence, and even physical maltreatment and abuse on the elderly.

In responding to the question: "Do you see the elderly as a burden for the family?", 11.1% of the respondents stated that the elderly are a burden to them up to a certain extent. This is a relatively new phenomenon for the Albanian families because in the context of the rural and clan households, the social status and position of the elderly was totally and safely enshrined.

**Gender gap in the family roles**

Another variable related to abuse among couples is connected to the traditional roles of individuals in their households of origin. The study shows that abuse in relations among partners has a higher likelihood of occurrence and continuation where the couples, in particular the men display a traditional behavior in the household roles (for instance the husband is the bread winner, the wife takes care of the children and looks after the house).

Typically, men are relatively given free rein in a patriarchal society because they are perceived as the bread winners for the family. Such conclusions are concurrent with our findings that demonstrate that each spouse or partner considers household chores as a responsibility for the women in the home. Here is how Altina, a civil servant from Lezha and mother of two children describes the way work at her home "is divided": “at home, I am responsible for everything that is going on. My husband’s duty is to go to work, go out every
“A Study about victims of domestic violence and sexual assault”

evening and lay on the couch the moment he comes home”.

Women are expected to clean and take care of the house, look after the children, and demonstrate respect and obedience to their husbands. Teuta, a 31 year old teacher from Tirana says: “My husband thinks that “real women” should know how to cook, look after the house, have good relations with the husband’s family, to accept other’s opinions without questioning them, to be sweet, kind, sexy, attractive and to fill her husband’s desires at all times”. Merita, a seamstress from Tirana, mother of two children is willing to accept her traditional roles at home, even though this means that she should do back breaking work to face the daily work: “I do everything a woman should do. I clean, I cook, and I take care of my children. My husband is unemployed, but he never does any work anyway. He never thought of working. I did not expect him to do any house work anyway, but at least after finishing the meal he could help clear away the dishes because I was so tired of the work and taking care of the children.” If a man perceives that that his wife in one way or another has failed in one of her roles, or alternatively has gone beyond the limit or challenged him in anyway, he then may react violently.

Figure 8

![Violence is happening only in poor and uneducated families](image-url)
Living with violence

“He began abusing with me following the first month of our marriage. He used to slap me, kick at me, hit me with his fists, and then bang my head against the wall. I can not begin to describe these episodes... he used to often hit me in the back. Once he hit me so hard I could hardly breathe. I was in pain for more than a week. I could not cough and could not breathe. Once he even tried to suffocate me, and he hit me with a hard object until I started to bleed. I could not bring myself to shout for fear of the children hearing us. The children got real scared so I took them with me, and fled the house. We spent the night in the open, and only returned home after he had gone to work. When he came back from work he started to curse me and asked what I was still doing there. He wanted me to leave the house, but I had nowhere to turn to. I thought things would improve, but he could not stand the sight of me. Even though I tried to oblige him about everything, he did not care.” (Bardha, 42 years old, technician from Tirana, married, mother of five children).

The phenomenon of abuse of men on women is usually characterized by privacy, which means that it usually does not happening the presence of an external observer. Women testimonies prove that abuse is a complex phenomenon because it entails different forms, starting with shame up isolation, forced prostitution, violent sexual relations and slapping and hitting. Abuse among intimate partners is usually part of an abusive behavior and control pattern rather than of an isolated act of physical aggression. Stela, a teacher from Tirana says: “He used to threaten me by taking away my kids. Once I told him I wanted a divorce. He took away my daughter for a week. You cannot even begin to imagine how I felt during that week? I was really scared and sleep deprived, as any other mother would have felt in my shoes. I did not know where my daughter was. I used to take to the street at the crack of dawn. My brother helped me. We went to the police. Perhaps the police scared him so he brought our daughter home.” Evelina, an unemployed mother of three children reminisces: “Once, when I was 8 months pregnant he came home very late at night. I was feeling very tired due to the pregnancy. We fought about something very minor. I had not ironed his shirt and he got very angry with me about that. While we were fighting he slapped me. That slap changed my life. He continued to slap me for the next 15 years. He kept calling me names, and ignoring me, and then he used to take me in his room to hit me. The children were often present. His mother was used to take them out so that they would not see me cry.”
Psychological abuse

“We had been married for two years, and one day I thought was finally pregnant. But the other morning I learned that that had not happened. He started threatening me: If you cannot get pregnant I will send you away to your father’s. I started weeping incontrollably....He did not return home that day. I was very scared and was waiting up for him. When he finally came home very late at night, I was laying at the edge of the bed. He cam close to me and started caressing me. So, we made up. When I got pregnant he stopped hitting me. Artur used to go out every day. When I used to ask him where had he been, he used to reply angrily: Do not question me. It is none of your business. You are an egyptian. So shut up. I will have you packing soon” (Suela, 32 years old, worker from Berat.)
“There are many reasons behind violence: first lack of psychical space for living. We used to live in an apartment with two rooms and a kitchen, with both
my brothers-in-law, my father-in-law and our three kids. Second, the economic situation, the transition, and no jobs. When I lost my job, my husband took to drinking and gambling. Then he began abusing with me and the children. I believe that poverty is the main driver of violence. When there is no money the husband becomes violent and hits his wife. This is followed by unemployment and jealousy.” (Jonida, 40 years old, married with three children, worker from Shkodra.)

Usually, an important step in taking the decision for leaving a violent abusive partner is related to the process of understanding the causes of the abuse. Women attribute domestic violence to a number of factors: individual factors (psychological problems, frequent drinking or jealousy); family context (male control over financial resources/income, lack of finances, generation conflicts); community (isolation of women and lack of social support); cultural norms/mentality (male model linked with being tough, questions of male honor or dominance making violence and abuse of men on women legitimate, traditional gender roles defined very narrowly, acceptance of violence as a means for settling intra-personal disagreements, and the perception that men "own" their women); social factors (social stress, poverty and unemployment). Even though respondents identify a series of causes behind domestic violence, while also reporting that they are inter-related, they have the tendency to explain abuse in the context of the discourse that focuses on rapid social changes that have taken place in Albania since 1991. Forty six women(83%) perceive violence as a social problem stemming from a society lacking in equilibrium, and stuck between the traditional and the modern. Some men failed to accept and embrace the new social changes and pressures. For many of the respondents, this means that the responsibility about violence is turning into an external factor. Suzana, a 34 years old woman, married and mother of a child, worker from Tirana, goes on to explain: “The root of all this is unemployment. Even if you are working the salaries are so low, while prices are really high and it only makes sense that this could create problems among spouses. There is just so much stress in this last decade. Half of the couples in Tirana have divorced.”

Living in poverty generates stress and frustration, and creates a bad feeling among men which they perceive as failing to live up to their models of the "bread winner" culture.

Albanian men stuck between two worlds and overwhelmed by stress have lost their sense of identity and self-esteem. They look at their homes as the last bastion of male authority. Instead, they vent their frustration at home where the
women and children usually ending up being the victims.

Evis, a 40 years old woman and mother of three children, a worker from Shkodra says: “I believe that economic factors are what are causing domestic violence. Good finances prevent violence. Violence is totally unavoidable when there is no financial security.” As mentioned by many of the women, men simply let off steam on their wives and family. A married woman, mother of five children living in Tirana adds: “Unsure economic situation cause a lot of problems and leads to a lot stress. Men taking to drinking, and cause major rows at home.” Another often mentioned cause for domestic violence is the following. “I really believe that the first thing Albanian men think of when they wake up in the morning is to drink. I believe that there should be a law in place banning bars and restaurants from serving alcohol early in the morning. Alcohol is destroying the lives of many people. I have live for 12 years with an alcoholic and I can tell you that there is no limit to what they can do.”

According to 16 respondents, abuser’s jealousy can also provoke violent behavior. “He was very jealous. He was ready to fight any moment. He threatened me by amputating body limbs” says a 28 years old woman and mother of two children. Another married woman, and mother of three children said: “He used to get violent when he became jealous, if I wore a nice dress or if I wore make up when went out together. Now, I never try doing something to my face because that could cause a lot of problems. There were instances when he used to get physical with me for the least of misunderstandings.” Another woman living in Tirana reminisces about a similar experience: “In the beginning we had a normal relation like all couples, but very soon after the quarrels and fight violence picked up. He was jealous and because of that I had to give up my work. He used to lock me home all day. He then took to drinking and then became an alcoholic. In my view, drinking and jealousy are all that is behind our fights.” Three women attribute the violence of their partners to psychological factors.

In this regard, domestic violence is built as a product of non-functional emotions, such as: depression and low level of self-esteem. The focus on the causes of violence at an individual level is a justification for violent acts, which go beyond the control of the abuser. Abusers as such are believed to be in a state of despair, and are acting in tandem with their emotional health problems. Acts of violence are perceived as a result of outpouring feelings of anxiety, frustration and anger.

Elona, a 40 year old woman, and mother of three children says that: “My poor
“A Study about victims of domestic violence and sexual assault”

husband is not like this all the time. He is sometimes driven by despair. The majority of men beat their wives as a result of their aggravated state of depression, exactly like my husband.”

Another argument for explaining violent behavior as brought forward by one of the respondents was typical "macho behavior", which for some of the women simply means that men are violent because they are men. This is how a 42 year old woman puts it: “Men are violent because this is part of their nature and there is nothing one can do to change it. For seven years I tried to do something to help my husband, but he only got worse.” A divorced 22 years old says: “Violence is written in his DNA.”

Another woman who works as a pharmacist commented: “I believe that the main reason that drives violence is masculine ego and lack of tolerance.” This way of violence is based on psychological and biological arguments, according to which men are by nature aggressive. A 20 year old unemployed girl from Tirana said: “Men like to fight about the smallest of things. They want to act and think as they please and want to demonstrate that they are a superior race vis-à-vis their women.” Another unemployed woman from Berat goes on to explain: “I believe men were born to be violent. Violence is not explained with arguments of the economic or financial factors, because when he had money his behavior was even wilder.”

Some other respondents report that pressure from other people, such as the mother-in-law, could lead to a situation of violence.

Three women who had been victims of continuous denigration blamed themselves about the abuse and failure of their relationship. They believed that they had failed their husbands; Silvana, a school teacher felt that she was responsible for the abuse: “I often considered myself that I was the one to blame. I never complained and always begged his pardon. I was to cry a lot at night. Then I understood that it was not only my fault.”

Other women failed to understand what caused domestic violence. The example of Milva, a married woman and mother of two children explains this: “I am sorry because I do not know what brings violence; I know that it just happens, but I am not able to understand why.” Manjola, a 46 years old technician from Tirana says: “Often times I ask myself why he abuses with me because he is never short of reasons for doing so.” Etleva, a 23 year old unemployed from Shkodra is equally confused: “I have often asked myself this question, but I have failed to find an answer. I believe it has more to with his nature. He is a violent
person. Full stop. We live with our two children and nobody intervenes with our lives. We make normal money. He has a job...but he is violent nonetheless.”

When women try to reflect on violence and provide arguments within the Albanian context, the majority of them bring social factors as an argument. Women understand violence as a product of non-functional social relations instead of as a result of actions of dysfunctional individuals. They refer to poverty, high levels of social stress, lack of equilibrium in the society, polarization between the rich and the poor, between tradition and modernism. Men abusing with women is perceived by many as a type of social disease. The assumption linking the abuse of men with women to the stress describes them as real victims of social changes. For this reason, the gender nature of violence is not consistently reflected. The fact that domestic violence has not been perceived as gender-related phenomenon carries serious implications for all violence prevention programs.

To fight against women abuse it is necessary to change the concept of socialization between men and women so that they can become more aware of the gender related discrimination prevailing in Albania.

![Violence is a normal part of any relationship, and society in general recognizes that violence is happening time after time](image)
Asked about the most common form of violence that they (interviewees) know, most mention physical abuse, followed by emotional, sexual, and economic abuse. Nevertheless, this table shows that all interviewees clearly know all the forms of domestic violence; in fact, they can even identify the forms that prevail the most according to their opinion (Figure 13).

**Figure 13**

Breaking the silence

Keeping silent about domestic violence is an efficient way for strengthening the relations between partners. Keeping silent is not just a sign of victimization, but also a sign of submissiveness. Violence, submissiveness and silence are all part of an effort for retaining dominance and control.

During the communist regime, domestic violence was almost invisible. Women victims of abuse could not come out in the open about it. There were no shelters, no counseling centers, no media coverage, and no help from the police or other governmental institutions. Coming out into the open about issues of domestic violence is still a complicated process, carrying considerable stigma. Many victims of domestic violence do not come out in the open about the fact that they are being abused. Talking to another human being about what is going on with you, and your body is an important instrument for breaking the myth around
domestic violence.

Revealing secret events of domestic violence represents a strong catalyst for change. By changing their history of abuse, participants in this study break their silence. Despite recent important changes in Albania in this aspect, the country has as yet failed to uproot deeply rooted behaviors regarding the status of women dependence. Here are the words of 34 years old married woman, mother of three children: “Elsewhere, people speak about human rights. But, I fail to understand why women in Albania are regarded as “a property” of men?” Stela, a 31 years old school teacher adds: “Women should raise their voice from the first incidence of violence. No woman should accept and succumb to violence because if she forgives it once there will always be other instances of abuse. Women should be able to affirm their personalities and not consider themselves as good for nothing, but looking after the children and the housework.”

Figure 14

In Albania the prevailing opinion is still one that penalizes the victims of domestic violence. The majority of the respondents agree that the victims of domestic violence are the ones that should leave the house and seek accommodation in a shelter or at the family of origin, while the men should stay at home until things get settled (Figure 14).
The majority of respondents from both groups: citizens (40.5%) and victims (54.2%) think that if there is violence in a family, then the woman should go to a special shelter or to her family of origin while the husband (the perpetrator) should stay at home until the issue is resolved (Figure 15). This comes partly from the fact that in most cases women - victims of domestic violence if they don’t leave the house, they have to live with the husband's family.

It is disturbing that 10% of the respondents have heard family members yell at one another every day. This indicates a very high percentage of violence that is constantly present, right there, every day. 18% hear family members yell at one another almost every week, while 27.5% do so every month (Figure 16).
Family, as a closed environment

A recent phenomenon of the transition period is that which considers the family from the moral and legal perspective as a private, autonomous, untouchable space, whose intimacy is guaranteed by the law. This is part of individual’s democratic rights since it ensures the individual’s family privacy and intimacy. This value was neglected during the totalitarian era when the Party in power or the so-called mass organizations intervened in questions which were purely issues of one’s household in an arbitrary fashion.

As pointed out in today’s sociology and psychology literature, these new democratic circumstances also include adverse aspects related to the risk of making the family a somewhat closed space, where the eye of the public opinion and institutions that are the warrantors of civic rights could not penetrate. In this case the assumption is that men at home often have the upper hand on the women, in the absence of law enforcement acts that ensure equality of statuses and rights.

Is the perception about the Albanian families as being closed true? The survey brings a series of data that prove this aspect to be true, and which in turn makes acts of violence to be under-reported or not reported, and away from the eye of the public opinion, and make the victims fail to find the necessary support in
Families are very secretive about the phenomena of violence because they consider it shameful for the neighbors and the relatives to hear of these pieces of information. For 78.6% of the respondents it is quite shameful that others learn about acts of violence in their households.

Here are the responses to question: "What are some of the reasons for the victims failing to denounce violence?" 30.7% of the respondents declared to fear retaliation. The abuser can get more violent, if he learns that the victim has been telling on him. The element of shame is another factor that leads to shutting down on domestic violence reporting. 25% of the respondents believe that this is the factor that makes the victims not tell. 21.4% of the respondents believe that the victim does not believe that her talking to service providers about her situation could lead to an eventual positive change for her (Figure 17).

One should take into account the fact that Albanian family shutting in it not only increases chances for domestic violence, but also that the reported statistics of domestic violence doesn’t show the real level of domestic violence. The number of victims should be considered as being several times higher than the current reporting, taking into consideration all the above reasons (Figure 18) that the respondents were giving for not reporting violence.

Although a lot of awareness work has been carried out in recent years to change the incorrect perception that domestic violence is a private matter and not a
human rights and public health issue, a lot of work is still needed. Responding to the question, “Do you consider domestic violence a private matter or an issue of human rights and public health?” 54.4% of the respondents said they consider it a private matter (Figure 18).

The structure of domestic violence

The survey provides data about the structure of domestic violence, i.e. its forms of occurrence, its consequences, orientation of acts of violence, (Figure 13) etc.

Spread of violence among household members also is depicted by a certain structure. 41.6% of the respondents stated that they know more women victims of violence, than the respondents who stated (3.6%) that they know male victims of violence. Most of the respondents (37.4%) admit that the people that they know, who victims of domestic violence, belong to the age group from 19 - 50 years old. A little more than one fourth of the respondents report that people whom they know to be victims of domestic violence are high school graduates.

This piece of information makes another DV myth quite relative, and that is the opinion that one of the main causes of violence and abuse is related to the very low educational levels of the said households, and where violence and abuse are frequently present. It also confirms that violence is happening everywhere and it doesn’t matter about the level of education and culture.

Meanwhile, 39.8% of the respondents stated that victims of domestic violence
are individuals who are jobless. But these data cannot be interpreted as if unemployment is a linear cause of violence. This is because many in the spectrum of the society are unemployed, but they don’t have a DV story in their life. An unemployed woman is not subjected to violence and abuse because she is unemployed, but because the family relations are such that generate violence.

Respondents have different takes on the consequences of violence. 43.2% of the respondents believe that the main consequences are physical, for 14.3% of the respondents the consequences are psychological, leaving little space for the rest of the factors.

Sexual violence

Sexual abuse/violence is one of the severely under-reported aspects of domestic violence in Albania. Sexual abuse for the first time in this study is presented as a reported form by the respondents. It is significant that it is ranked as the third most common form of domestic violence (15.2%) by the respondents.

US Department of State Bureau of Justice Statistics is in charge of generating annual data about sexual assaults on men and women. According to the most recent report of NIJCDC, the ratio of sexual assaults by one intimate partner was 1 to 1 thousand for females over 12 over 12 years old.8

Figure 19

In the context of this report, sexual violence applies to all circumstances and

8https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/181867.pdf
situations whereby a woman is obliged or forced to engage in unwanted or unsafe sexual activity (this includes forced sexual intercourse by the husband/intimate partner with whom the wife/partner also has consensual sex). Stemming from this fact, almost one third of the respondents do not believe that engaging in a sexual act among married couples or intimate partners when one of them does not want to does not classify as violence. This is a very high figure and should be regarded seriously in order to be addressed in the future for the purpose of awareness raising about this important fact. It is important to reiterate that sexual violence in a marriage or an intimate relationship should be considered as a serious and an increasing form of domestic violence against women (31.4% of the respondents).

Other international studies in this field demonstrate that sexual violence by marital or intimate partners in most of the cases has severe consequences on the women. Unfortunately these consequences last for a long time. 31.4% of the respondents reported to have been subjected to sexual violence or unwanted sex with husband/partner. This is a clear expression that sexual violence is often justified within the marriage context through a mentality that defines women as a property of men, while looking at sex as part of marital duties of a female spouse. The survey indicates that in 29.5% of the cases it affects women and girls and only in 1.4% does it affect men (Figure 20).

The data indicates that two are the main target age groups as being victims of
sexual violence, respectively girls and women from 25 years old up to 34 years old by 12.7 %, and women and girls of 18 – 24 years old by 9.1% (Figure 21). Of these, 15.8% of the respondents are either married or have a live-in relationship, while 15.2% are divorced.

From the perspective of the respondents educational achievements and employment there are no major changes based on the educational level of respondents. Those with no education or little education were as likely to experience unwanted sexual intercourse as respondents with secondary and university degrees. As regards the employment status, respondents who had been working were equally likely to experience sexual violence/abuse by the spouse, intimate partner, as those who had never/not been working.

Studies show that in addition to potential risks and danger of severe physical problems and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), women and girls victims of sexual abuse are more likely to also suffer severe emotional and psychological consequences, because in this case they are being abused by a person who is a dear person to them, and the one that they have decided to share their life with.
Profile of victims of domestic violence

Figure 22

The person whom you know and who has been a victim of DV...

- Above 45 years: 18%
- Refuse: 3%
- 14-18 years: 6%
- 18-24 years: 27%
- 25-34 years: 32%

Figure 23

The person whom you know and who has been a victim of DV...

- Elementary: 200
- 9 years education: 100
- High School: 300
- University: 300
- I don't know/Refuse: 100
Based on data of figures no 22, 23 and 24 it seems that the majority of victims of domestic violence belong to the group with the following characteristics:

Women and girls of the age group from 19-50 years old, who have only completed secondary education, and are unemployed.

**Where to get help- for victims of domestic violence and abuse?**

Those surveyed think that: the most important institution with regard to domestic violence is the Police (38.2% of those surveyed); NPOs offering services for violated persons (23.2 % of those surveyed); followed by the Court (18% of those surveyed) and 15.4% think that health care centers are most important. It is disappointing that only 1.1% of respondents consider the local government an important institution in this aspect although the law “On measures against domestic violence” grants it the largest and most important role (Figure 25).
Figure 25

Divided by district, interviewees in Tirana represent most of the respondents who trust the police (10% of those surveyed), followed by Korçë city police (4% of those surveyed), while 3% of those surveyed trust the police in Fier, Gjirokastër, Kukës, and Vlorë.

In the table above reflects the credibility that citizens and victims of domestic violence have for institutions. It is noticeable that the community of citizens has
a great trust in the police and the group of abused women have more trusts at the NGOs that provide services and then the police.

Figure 26

Following the same logic to the previous question, most of the group of interviewed citizens (50.1%) think that if a person is victim of domestic violence then he/she should seek help from the police, while (67.1%) of victims think that they should seek help from an NGO specialized in this work.
In the majority of cases when the phenomenon of domestic violence is reported, the Police have been the first to respond at an incident. Data also indicates that the next supporting institution the case is referred to is the court. 21-27% of respondents say the violator was arrested or convicted (Figure 27).

![Figure 27](image)

The survey has come up with a series of findings on this issue. 72.7% of the respondents report that they would have addressed the law, if they would have felt in anyway threatened by acts of violence or abuse, or otherwise been submitted to them.

Respondents displayed the tendency of trusting the police more than any other of the institutions. 30.3% of the respondents emphasise to having contacted the police that has intervened in the cases of domestic violence. Very few are the respondents that report that local government is of any help to the victims. Only 2.4% of the respondents feel that way. The number of respondents that do not trust the police is relatively small, at 8.4%.
Implications of domestic violence

One of the greatest consequences of domestic violence is the long-term harm which it causes. After recovering from physical injuries, the victim continues to deal with psychological problems, according to many interviewees.

Violence against children and the elderly

The opinion of the majority of respondents is that “The elderly are not a burden for the family” (62.9%).
Meanwhile, graphics below indicate that the elderly (age group above 65 years old) have “no” or “some” information regarding issues or domestic violence and ways to prevent it (Figure 30). Furthermore, this same age group thinks that the phenomenon of domestic violence takes place more in poor and uneducated families. They think that the most widespread form of domestic violence is the physical one, followed by emotional, and sexual. The police and health care centers, in their opinion, are the most important institutions regarding domestic violence issues.

![Figure 30](image-url)

2.1% of those interviewed state that the person who was a victim of domestic violence was an elderly, while 3.4% of those interviewed state that the person who was a victim of domestic violence was a child (0-12 vjec).

Furthermore, 14.5% of those surveyed state that parents slap their children every month and 26.8% of them think that this happens every day. Meanwhile, the father and the brother are the two family members who most violate children. Opinions then indicate the fact that some of the abused children stop going to
school as a result.

Figure 31

Most of the interviewees, 28.6%, think that children should be slapped for the mistakes they make, while 7.7% say they beat them with a belt or hard objects, which takes to 36.3% the number of respondents who use violence on their children. 26% think that they should be punished more throught house work and almost 35% use alternative punishments, such as forbidding play with mates, or making the child stay in his/her room. However, only a small part of respondents, 6.9% do not think that slapping, beating with a belt or stick of children cannot be considered domestic violence.

Figure 32
On the other hand, 30% of respondents state that punishment is different for boys and girls. 40.3% think that boys should have harsher discipline than girls as that makes them stronger, while 55.2% think that girls need more discipline than boys so that they can be morally correct.

**What do respondents propose in terms of preventive measures?**

Generation of employment comes first in terms of preventive measures. 16.4% of the respondents consider this measure as a first step towards making the individuals less aggressive and introducing equilibrium in the family relations, making them more social and giving the victims a more dignifying social status.

15.7% of the respondents believe that the second preventive measure would be launching of powerful awareness raising campaigns on the fight against domestic violence, as important, efficient, prevention instruments. 14.5% of the respondents ask for stronger laws, and for more of law enforcement. For 10.3% of the respondents, establishment of reception centers for victims of domestic violence is a priority. 9.1% of the respondents want stronger punishment for the abusers. 6.4% of the respondents opt for increasing the size of social assistance as part of the help for the victims of domestic violence etc.

**On line questionnaire at** [WWW.HOTLINEALBANIA.ORG](http://WWW.HOTLINEALBANIA.ORG)

A total of 54 questionnaires was the result of all persons that checked the webpage of Counseling Line for Women and Girls during the publicity campaign in the Media through the TV spot and posters distributed in 12 regions of the country. The answers to all the questions are given below in the form of percentages and tables.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Results</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total registrations in the survey:</td>
<td>54</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total in terms of %:</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
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1. Are you informed about the issue of domestic violence in Albania?

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Answer</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
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<td>89.36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No (A2)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Are you familiar with ways for preventing and fighting domestic violence?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes (A1)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>57.45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No (A2)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>40.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Are you familiar with the domestic violence legislation?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yes (A1)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>36.17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat (A2)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>36.17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No (A3)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>25.53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no answer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Is it Ok sometimes, for the husband to hit his wife?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes (A1)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat (A2)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13.95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No (A3)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>86.05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. Is violence phenomenon relating only to poor uneducated households?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yes (A1)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat (A2)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>30.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no (A3)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>65.12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no answer</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Is physical violence normal among couples who have a heated debate?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes (A1)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat (A2)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20.93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no (A3)</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>72.09%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no answer</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A Study about victims of domestic violence and sexual assault

7. Is it normal for an episode of domestic violence to occur after someone has had to drink?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yes (A1)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat (A2)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>32.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no (A3)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>55.81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no answer</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. Sexual relations cannot be considered as violent even if they are entered into against the will of one of the partners?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yes (A1)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16.28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat (A2)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13.95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no (A3)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>69.77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no answer</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9. Young brides to take on more responsibilities about cleaning the house and preparing the food than the rest of the members of the family

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yes (A1)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13.95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat (A2)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>23.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no (A3)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>62.79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no answer</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. In your view, what is the most common form of domestic violence?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical abuse (A1)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>45.95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual abuse (A2)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional abuse (A3)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>37.84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic abuse (A4)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no answer</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
11. Domestic violence is an issue of Public Health and human rights or private matter:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public health and human rights (A1)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>81.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private family life(A2)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18.92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no answer</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12. Do you think that engaging in sexual relations when one of the spouses or intimate partners is unwilling can be considered as a form of violence?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yes (A1)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>91.89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no (A2)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no answer</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
13. Have you or someone you know been subjected to an unwanted sexual relationship with his/her spouse or intimate partner?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yes (A1)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>32.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no (A2)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>67.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no answer</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

14. Do you know anyone who has reported an episode of violence?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yes (A1)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>64.86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no (A2)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>35.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no answer</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
15. if you were to be subjected to an episode of domestic violence, do you think you would address the law to seek help?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yes (A1)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>70.27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no (A2)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>29.73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents reacted differently while answering the open question online about what are some of the causes of domestic violence, mentioning inter alia: poverty and social and economic factors, lack of law enforcement by the responsible authorities in terms of law enforcement, mentality, childhood trauma, mental diseases that are becoming an increasing phenomenon, old mentality of men having right on their women, and considering them as properties that they get married to, drinking and drugs, jealousy, etc.

Some of the persons that completed the questionnaire on Domestic Violence have given the following answers with regard to the causes that they believe promote this phenomenon in our society.

- “the Mentality of a cliché feminine role figure, any deviation from which would be judged and consequently penalized, which is definitely very wrong, followed by economic problems, ignorance and poor dialogue culture”.
- “Ignorance of Albanian males, and the fact that their past has shaped their characters. Nothing is good enough to justify use of domestic violence”.
“A Study about victims of domestic violence and sexual assault”

“Mentality and intra-personal relations that justify domestic violence, mainly on women and children, considering abuse and violence as proper instruments for teaching them a lesson.”

Whereas in responding to the question: In your view what are the main problems of the Albanian society that cause domestic violence, many of the respondents answered as follows:

Mentality and social factors, poor finances, jealousy, unemployment, gender stereotypes, absence of structures that would protect persons who are victims of violence and penalize the abusers, women fear about public opinion’s reaction to telling about episodes of violence, a general collective tolerance about episodes of violence, etc.

“Abuse is a common phenomenon in these households where women and girls are treated like slaves who are only supposed to work and who are constantly beaten by their partners. I have witnessed a concrete case where the husband a 25 year old who had been brought up and educated somewhere in Europe used to beat with his trouser belt his wife who was pregnant at the time, just for satisfying his whim and showing his friends what he could do, and who was in control. His wife is also a degree holder, but she sees no way out for the moment. For fear of things getting worse, and that her husband could hurt her family she endures, while waiting for better days to come.”

In responding to the last question in the questionnaire about what can the organizations, institutions and the government do to prevent domestic violence, the respondents answered as follows:

Helping women victims of violence and abuse; more should be done in terms of raising awareness; more work should go for the identification of the perpetrators and abusers and for their penalization; there is need for improving the justice system; preventive policies; awareness raising activities for the society about the major consequences and implications of domestic violence/abuse; stronger penalization for the abusers and perpetrators; strengthening confidence in the institutions, and increasing the number of centers for the rehabilitation of the victims and abusers.
Other findings

- Domestic violence is present in the Albanian society and according to public perceptions it represents a painful social phenomenon for its victims. The research shows that this domestic violence, first of all, has to do with what is called “culture of violence,” which is identified with the collective mentality, spread among some strata, according to which domestic violence, even in small, transitory, or even irregular dimensions, is also a tool to keep the society structured, establish authority, educate, or correct mistakes or vices of various individuals. This context particularly justifies, within the context of a certain culture, even violence against children by different parents, which extends not only to childhood, but also teen years.

- The “culture of violence” emerging from the study is built on some vertical social hierarchies that operate powerfully within the Albanian family and is often an instrument for the power and rule of a category that considers his power on others legitimate, in contravention of principles of equality. These traditional hierarchies are related to the rule of the husband over the wife, of the brother over the sister, of the economically stronger over the economically weaker, of the younger over the elderly in their older years, of the healthy over the weak, of the husband’s relatives over the house’s daughter in law, of parents over children even when these are not in their minor years, etc.

- Acts of domestic violence are of different kinds and occur at different frequency in the places where they are exercised. There are displays of physical violence, sexual violence, psychological violence, violence related to economic exploitation, etc.

- Violence is exercised in isolated environments, away from the collective eye of public opinion, while it is also found by the latter through direct testimonies, knowledge of facts through reporting by victims of violence, the engagement in social structures against domestic violence, etc. From this standpoint, the study proves that the family is indeed a relatively isolated social micro-environment, a private space, but not absolutely so. The family is not an agency that is entirely closed and isolated from the society. Based on that, it may be said that public opinion knows about domestic violence; however, the problem is not with lack of knowledge rather than lack of reaction due to various factors.
- Domestic violence in a rule of law state, when it is unreported, unpunished, and tolerated, represents an area of society where violence, not the law, becomes the ‘regulator’ of social life. In these cases, the family becomes an extralegal space. Thus, victims of domestic violence or persons threatened by it live in two contradictory realities that become the cause for schizophrenic situations. As citizens, they live in a society where, to a certain extent, the law and what is right operate; however, as members of a family, they live without individual rights, unprotected against arbitrary violence, self judgment, and under the burden of violent threats that are not based on legal norms and are against them. The main findings of the study also include the administration of public perception that part of Albanian families are or live in an unregulated legal realm.

- The study proves that in the public perception, there are many more domestic violence cases than reported in the media, known in the public, or reported to institutions. There are many more acts of violence than those reported by public order bodies. There are many more acts of violence involving police intervention than cases of these going to court. There are many more cases of violence tried in court than those ending in the punishment of the perpetrator of violence. Understandably, the difference between these data will exist naturally, but in the public perception, such difference is considerable and gives rise to the spread of violence and public opinion mobilizing very weakly against it.

- The study showed that domestic violence is a social phenomenon that is also the result of the survival of conservative and traditional factors in the Albanian society, such as patriarchy, maschilism, sexism, consideration of the body and honor of the woman as a property of her parents or spouse, as well as a result of the waning of some sound values of Albanian tradition, such as respect for the elderly, etc.

- This domestic violence is also a consequence of the current model of the society, which experiences two types of values contradicting one another – on the one hand, individual rights guaranteed by a liberal juridical and social system and the preservation of conservative morals in certain social and family micro-environments. Often, conservative family morals try to preserve its prevalence in families through violent attitudes toward the freedom that younger generations seek to experience. Such violence comes also as a result of the increase in the number of divorces due to the upsetting of relations between family partners in the conditions of emigration, starting
a new life in new urban centers, jealousy in the context of an open society, etc.

- Victims of violence are in a doubly frustrated position. On the one hand, they suffer the consequences of violence; but, on the other, although they know they have the right to report this violence, they often cannot do so due to various social and psychological factors and because the authorities supposed to protect this individual from violence in narrow family environments are not capable of intervening in the way and to the extent they should. This is influenced also by the fact that the intervention of the law and public order protection forces in the family is very delicate in the case of families. Psychologically, the research explained this through the concept of “double psychological frustration.”

- Seen from this angle, victims of domestic violence turn to this or that social factor that protects or receives their messages depending on numerous circumstances. In terms of the orientation of victims of violence, first come friends and acquaintances, members of the family network, and in the circumstances of serious violence, the public order forces. The study proves that it is easier for victims of violence to be referred to service providing organizations, but these do not cover the entire country, especially the rural areas.

- Research data compared to cases of harsh and extreme domestic violence (murders, intentional injury, etc.) give the perception that there is “vertical domestic violence,” i.e. starting from the man, husband, or the physically stronger toward the more vulnerable persons, just as there is also “horizontal violence” among family or kinship males on issues of property and economic conflicts, whereby the consequences are more brutal, immediate, and serious in terms of penal classification. In general, economic conflicts, those for property reasons, or even “weak motives,” jealousy, honor, etc., and related to more powerful interests and committed in circumstances of psychological turbulence lead to immediate and crueler acts of violence. Other factors create the conditions for latent violence, but extended in time and psychologically grave for the victims of violence or those threatened by violence.

- According to the survey, the Albanian society has information about domestic violence, but it faces various obstacles for the problem to become an issue of public debate. This starts from the idea to consider it a private
issue to fear of information, or shame among victimized persons.

- In a way, the so-called “law of silence” also operates, whereby everyone knows something, but nobody expresses it. The research shows that sources of information for domestic violence are first the media, then face to face communication of victims with groups or circles of friends and acquaintances. Meanwhile, communication and debate about these issues in specialized consultations, organized by specialized associations or institutions, is scarce.

- Meanwhile, between information and collective reaction against acts of domestic violence, there is also a disproportion that the research clearly indicates. Respondents are almost unanimous in their response that they have not participated in collective manifestations against this negative social phenomenon.

- It is clear that in the circumstances of dismantled old social relations and in the conditions of massive emigration from one settlement to the other, the Albanian society suffers the lack of cohesion of values and social opinion toward displays that go against some basic moral values in daily lives, such as non-violation of relatives.

- One feels the fact that religious morals in its regulatory principles on tolerance and understanding is relatively weak in its actions in some family micro-environments where violence is encountered.

- Of course, violence in general is a phenomenon that characterizes lack of knowledge, lack of emancipation, low level of education, etc. In principle, there is a repetition of the Balzac formula that a prison is closed where a school is opened. However, the research study shows that this generally proven truth needs to assume a relative and not absolute meaning. Respondents, in considerable numbers, state they have happened to be witnesses of scenes where the violated person may also have high-school or university education. Violence doesn’t exclude families of a certain level, even when this level is that of poverty. So, the survey shows that social micro-environments where violence is present may be and are even those that are educated and with sustainable and even good economic conditions. This is understandable since we are in the conditions of massive education, in conditions of property conflicts affecting various society strata, and whereby family conflicts between generations know no differences between
society categories with or without a certain level of education, etc.

- The study also tells us that part of domestic violence that takes a special place is sexual violence both in spousal relations and among divorced partners, or even in the form of incestual relations in those cases presented symbolically by the media. This is seen not only in direct responses, but also in the fact that the object of sexual violence is the age in which male sexual attraction is greater.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY AND FINDINGS OF THE QUALITATIVE STUDY
Focus groups methodology

Four focus groups were organized during April 2013, with different target groups regarding the study on victims of domestic violence and sexual assaults.

Methodological considerations

Review of mixed methods research design

Creswell\(^9\) (2009) identifies four factors of mixed methods approaches research, and establishes that the mixed method approaches are the best form of questioning in a social sciences research project. The next step is to select the best composition to be used for the project. In this study we have used a mixed methods approach research composition. This section will go into the discussion of the definition and the rationale behind the methodology and its role on the design and conduct of the study.

Creswell and Clark (2007) define mixed methods approach research as a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches that help in a better understanding of the research issues. According to Johnson and Onwuegbuzie\(^10\) (2004), mixed methods research gives researchers the freedom to select and choose what they perceive as the most suitable approach on questions of research, without any premeditated assumption associated to the superiority of any given method of research. Consequently, mixed methods research could represent both qualitative and quantitative approaches.

From a philosophical perspective, the paradigm of mixed methods research is associated with pragmatism, where the prime concern is the method that ensures a practical solution to a certain question in the research. The focus on the results sets it free from the traditional debate of choosing between qualitative versus quantitative methods, and their unification into a single study creates the possibility to compensate for their respective weaknesses.


In practice, the mixed method approach research is characterized by the use of triangulation and multiple methods design. Triangulation reiterates the validity of research results, by the use of multiple methods to investigate on the same problem, by compensating for the biasness. The multiple methods design supports triangulation, while using as many data sources as possible.

**Mixed methods composition**

Following our choice of the mixed method approach as the research strategy, we opted for the selection of a composition that would best represent the gathered data for the study. After taking into consideration, four factors of mixed research approach and after taking the decision that mixed methods are the best form to be used in a social science research project, the next step would be to select the best composition to be used for the project. To this end, we took decisions about the type of data to be used (qualitative or quantitative), in terms of priority of which data would be collected first; and how would the data be mixed (Rauscher & Greenfield\(^{11}\), 2009). As above mentioned, it is important to take into account 4 factors, while selecting from the composition of mixed methods for a research study. To this end, we identified the following factors:

1. time
2. weighting
3. mixture
4. theorization

**Application of mixed method research in this study**

The Study makes a comparison and triangulation of the quantitative data of the questionnaires, and of the qualitative data derived from the focus group interviews.

“A Study about victims of domestic violence and sexual assault”

Figure no 1. Study Triangulation Design

Research Design

As mentioned above, this study adopts a mixed method approach research composition composed of quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. Methods for the collection of qualitative data comprise discussions in 4 focus groups with women from Roma community, women victims of domestic violence, and 2 groups of LGBT community (Table no. 4).

Table no 1
Summary of Data Collection Methodology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualitative methodology</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus group discussions</td>
<td>1. Roma community women and girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Women victims of violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Pro LGBT Albania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. LGBT Alliance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quantitative Methodology</th>
<th>Questionnaires</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. 500 respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. 60 victims telephone calls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. 54 questionnaires filled in the webpage</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Instructions for focus group discussions
Focus group questions are defined by the identification of working group topics. Each discussion session is conducted in the same spirit. The same discussions instruction was used for all focus groups, ensuring consistency. Several topics were chosen for discussions in the focus group sessions. (See topics in Attachment no 1)

Ethical aspects

Information leaflets were put together in Albanian language for participants together with acknowledgment letters. They were disseminated before the data collection process was complete. Participants information leaflets provided information about the nature of the research, including its objectives and goals, benefits and methodologies. The information also covered the rights of participants and possibilities for suggestions or improvements. The letter of acknowledgment is a brief thank you note for the participation, motivation and honesty. The process of data collection started following the completion of the ethical consent process.

Data collection

The participating groups in the study acknowledged the researchers as professionals in the field of domestic violence.
The majority of the participants appreciated the role of the researcher and seemed to respond to the deadline for the interview for the questionnaire, or engaged in open discussions in the focus groups (with certain exceptions in the group of women from the Roma community). Lastly, the participants expressed their difficulties in the daily life, and also spoke about the need for information about domestic violence, and expressed their willingness to receive the materials and documents that would be generated by this study.

Timeline
Data collection was divided into two main periods.
Used Methodology and Materials

The study used questionnaires and focus group discussions as the methodology for the data collection.

**Methodology and Materials used for the data collection (focus groups).**

Focus groups discussions represent the secondary methodology for completing the information acquired from the questionnaires. Focus groups materials included: discussion instructions and tape recorders.

The discussion instructions were developed to obtain information from 4 focus groups. Participants were selected by the LGBT and Roma communities, with assistance from PRO LGBT and LGBT Alliance NGOs, and Roma Active Albania NGO. As mentioned above, the qualitative part which is represented by the focus groups is complimentary. 74 topics were put forward for discussion. The tape recorder was regarded as an important work material for focus groups.
and was treated within the rules of maintaining the materials.

Focus groups procedure

Focus group sessions were conducted with two members: a moderator and an assistant moderator. The role of the facilitator was to chair each session, by using the session agenda, and facilitating the discussions by inciting further comments, and by making a summary of the key points during and at the end of each interview. Participants were often asked to comment if the summary of the key points was representative of his/her discussion. The role of the assistant moderator was to keep notes during and immediately after each interview, to take care of the tapes, and to keep the time. During the five minute break and at the end of each session, moderators discussed field trip notes, focusing on the key points raised by the participants and the general nature of the interview.

Sessions lasted up to 2 hours. Each session discussed all topics defined for the discussions. The conversations were recorded. The role of the researcher was to moderate and only rarely to lead the discussions of the topic, by asking questions about it.

Group discussions extended in a timeframe of two weeks. Each week two sessions were conducted.

**Analysis of qualitative data**

**Phases of Qualitative Data Analysis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualitative</th>
<th>Phases of qualitative data analyses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transcribing Text</td>
<td>Phase 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparing data for computer analysis, MAXQUADA</td>
<td>Preparing data for the analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data reading</td>
<td>Phase 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memo writing</td>
<td>Data research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coding Data</td>
<td>Phase 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classifying codes in categories</td>
<td>Data analysis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“A Study about victims of domestic violence and sexual assault”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Representing findings in category discussions</th>
<th>Phase 4</th>
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<td>Submission of visual models</td>
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<td>Theory generation</td>
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<td>Triangulation</td>
<td>Phase 5</td>
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<td>Peer review</td>
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<td>Results of analysis</td>
<td>Phase 6</td>
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Table no 2: Scheme of the process of transformation from the data towards the theoretical model
The qualitative data generated in this study were analyzed through grounded theory approach.

**Grounded Theory Approach**

Grounded theory offers the secondary methodology used in this study. Glaser defines Grounded theory as a “specific methodology on the method for moving from systematic data collection to the generation of multi-variety conceptual theory (Glaser, 1999, f. 836). Grounded theory methodology aims at generating theories through a process of constant comparison and reinforces the need to start with a project without any preconceived theory.

In the analysis of Grounded Theory, theory and data are part of a continuous conversation, whereby the direction is determined by the data instead of being driven by the theory.

Interviews play a central role in the collection of data for a review of the grounded theory. Then, the theory guides the data analysis methodology towards a constant comparison of data within a repetitive, inductive and deductive cycle, allowing for theory to be directly borne from the data. It begins with the basic description, it grows into conceptual thinking and is developed into theory (Patton, 2002).
Use of Grounded Theory in the Study

The study makes use of theoretical data collection sampling for individuals who can contribute to the development theory. Qualitative data were collected by using focus groups sessions as a methodology. The data were analyzed in Albanian. The next session explain the process, by illustrating it with examples from the participants.

Phase 1 – Preparation of Qualitative Data. Qualitative data were part of focus group sessions. 4 audio tapes were produced with a total of 8 recording hours. Recorded material was transcribed verbatim. Transcriptions were imported to MAXQUDA.

Phase 2 – Exploring Qualitative Data. Data exploring was part of a reading process and memo creation, for developing an initial understanding of the data base. Data exploration was in addition used for checking the accuracy of transcribed interviews.

Phase 3 – Qualitative Data Analysis. Data analysis began with the codification process, which transforms gross data into theoretical construction. Coding aims at generating a group of categories. Coding was assisted by the use of MAXQDA qualitative data analysis software. Focus group sessions generated more than 360 codes and 10 memos. This repetitive process applies to data case by case, looking for the purpose of any specific data. The answers from Roma women community were not accurate in many instances probably because of the size of the focus group and culture for not telling to foreigners the truth, but they were properly transcribed and coded verbatim.

Upon the definition of codes, they were classified for similarities and differences. Codes were grouped into categories, and categories were further developed into hierarchies.

Memos

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<th>Women from Roma community displayed difficulties in understanding the questions</th>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Answers to the questions often are not in the right context</td>
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There is a sense of reluctance or hesitation in answering the questions with frankness because of people in the group knowing each other.

LGBT community shows interest on the discussion of this issue.

They seem quite open to express their views.

They are educated, and express their thoughts clearly.

They feel very frustrated and display emotional problems.

In the focus group with women victims of violence: They are hesitant to speak at first.

Then they began to speak up.

Different levels of educational achievements.

**Findings**

**Understanding/mentality/tradition:**

Participants in the focus groups pointed out that the concept of abuse is ramified by many factors, among which the *mentality* of the individuals, *their family traditions* are quite outstanding. The influence of mentality and traditions came up in the discussions of 4 focus groups.

A participant from the LGBT community said: “*Mentality is a big issue, and I can give you an example to illustrate that because some time ago when a man killed his daughter, the court gave him only 2 years in prison on the grounds that he had killed her to save the face of his family as a matter of honor*.” In addition, living in extended households where different generations live together this is associated with a change in terms of perception of phenomena, which often time is cause for conflicts escalating up to psychological abuse. Often time families coming from the rural areas to the cities try to preserve the tradition of the place where they come from. Another LGBT community member said: “*Girls are the ones that suffer the most as a result of these traditions. We have had many instances when despite the fact that a boy and a girl where very much in love with each other they could not be together because their families would not let them*”.

A participant from the Roma community said: “*Loss of virginity for girls is still a taboo, in particular for the remote areas in the North of the country*”. Another
participant from the Roma community stated: “Violence leads to more violence. A child has his parent as a role model. A son looks up to his father, and grandfather who used to be abusive.”

Children who are present during acts of abuse are likely to suffer from psychological trauma since what they witness in terms of abuse with the mother, grandmother, siblings etc. is really scary for them. Sometimes there are instances when the abusers could be: the father-in-law, the mother in law, or brothers in law etc.

Another participant (a women victim of abuse) believes that: “In the rural areas things are hushed up and nobody knows about it, but it is different in urban areas where the situation is different”.

Another participant from the LGBT community said that: “To preserve their pride such people do not denounce violence, even though the whole family could be perfectly aware of what is going on.”

Another participant said: “Women could also choose to be victims. They do not want to denounce violence.”

“Our is a macho society “says Ela, one of the participants from the LGBT community. “It will take many generations to ensure equality between men and women. It will take a lot of time for people to be respectful to each-other. Men want to be in control. They can say and do whatever they please and nobody should contradict them. These people are quite wrong.”

In cities the likelihood of violence is higher. Different mindsets and characters breed violence. In the rural areas violence also is an issue because of the absence of the appropriate institutions.

Someone from the focus group of women victims of violence reported: “Tradition is really an element of the past that is keeping the society hanging”.

Marjana a representative from the LGBT community said: “It is also a question of mentality because even though the husband may be a very good cook, he would still expect his wife to do the cooking and if he does not the meal ready this could be the beginning of a fight”.

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Domestic violence and the influence of psycho-social factors

Participants admit to being subjected to their parents psychological pressure. The parents continue to use the old teaching methods for their children, while concepts have changed. One of the participants from the LGBT community said: “We were more open to the western world than our parents, and this makes us more open in return, but at the same time puts us under more psychological press than it does them.”

Discrimination. It often happens that women themselves try to justify domestic violence, and more specifically their husbands. A woman from the Roma community said: “Women consider this as something normal. Furthermore, they think it is normal that the husband after having accumulated a lot of tension he needs “to let out steam” by beating his wife.

Another issue that came up in the discussions was that of stigma. In the Albanian society, people care more about others think of them than they do about their own problems. One of the LGBT community representatives said: “Mothers are always trying to lessen the tension, while for the fathers is always more difficult to accept things, in particular when their child is homosexual”.

“Violence is a sign of weakness” said one of the women victims of violence. “It is a sign of weakness for a man who fails to live up to the argument, and even though he knows it is wrong the only way to keep his wife submissive is to subject her to abuse and keep her isolated.”

Someone else from the same group said that: “The husband could abuse with his money. He could even lead a double life, but when his wife confronts him he resorts to violence”.

Unemployment is another risk factor for the males who can become violent with their women due to accumulated stress. On the other hand, an unemployed woman is financially dependent on her husband. Even though she might be subjected to continuous violence and abuse she is hesitant to take a decision about the divorce. A participant from the Roma community said: “When couples are economically dependent there is a fear that divorce would ruin one party or both.”
The focus group of women victims of domestic violence, the majority perceive break-up as a solution, but this would depend on the type of relationship. If it is a mother daughter or sister-brother relationship the solution could not be the break-up. But sometimes because of the mentality where the woman should not be the one to ask for the divorce, before the husband does so, it has so happened that after the woman has asked for the divorce, the couple has made up and then the husband has filed the divorce. One of the participants said: “that the psychologist should help mend the situation. But if it cannot be fixed, then one should look at the break-up as a solution.”

Women in the focus groups said that they often feel judged and this has often been a barrier for them to take decisions.

Another phenomenon that was discussed in the focus groups was related to the reasons that force a woman into prostitution. A number of reasons were listed including: financial reasons, use of violence by the abuser, fear of the abuser, lack of support systems, individual personality traits etc.

In many cases, violence is not reported and reasons for not reporting violence vary greatly.

According to respondents, one of the reasons is fear. They are overwhelmed by this feeling and often cannot think beyond it. They fear that violence may increase; they fear the consequences of reporting it; they are afraid and insecure about their future. Women have a lack of confidence that someone may help them, mainly connected with structures such as the courts, which in many cases, in their opinion, are corrupt. In cases of extreme violence, says one of the participants, nobody can help but the police. The role of the police should be boosted. She says, the police are becoming more aware, but the problem is with courts as judges release perpetrators even after police arrest them.

The feeling of shame was often voiced. (violated women). They feel ashamed for losing dignity and reputation. Often, they consider a bad relationship to be part of their fate and should not report the violence and stay in a violent relationship due to bad luck, which should be put up with as a life rule. There was one woman who said that there are even cases when women, although their husbands violate them, have a feeling of love toward them and don’t wish to report them due to fear that the husband may be physically injured or tortured. Women fear that if they report the violator, he may abandon them and they will
not have the economic possibility to live independently. “I don’t see any possibility that I can make it,” Ela says.

Part of the women think about their children and if they report the violence, the family will go toward separation and the future of the children is insecure. Some women say, “In general, this is a violent world,” thus generalizing the problem. There are also those who say that this is a transitory act and if they endure a bit, it will pass. Yet another way of reasoning was: she and nobody else should resolve her problem.

Someone “sees things in their complexity, but thinks a lot about the children, although she understands that continued violence harms children greatly.”

Someone else: “Has no confidence in herself that she can make it through this battle, that she can take it to the end.

Someone thinks of not reporting violence “due to her upbringing,” says a participant from the LGBT community.

**In cases when violence has been reported, participants in focus groups express different views.**

In some cases, women have found support in the institutions they’ve turned to, mainly those of the police, courts, and NGOs, but in other cases, they found no support from these institutions. In some cases, although their allegation was accepted, it only remained on paper and no measures were taken to protect the victim or summon the violator. For the LGBT community, the reporting part is a bit difficult as there is prejudice toward them among the police. Police officers in such cases say, “serves you right.”

**Domestic violence and its individual characteristics.**

According to the participants abusers carry certain individual traits associated with their personality. One of these traits is selfishness. A participant from the focus group of women victims of domestic violence said: They are so focused on their ego. They have a big ego”, while she goes on to list other factors such as: “external models, media, and many other social factors”. The participants say that in most of the cases when there is violence there is always verbal confrontation between the parties.
Both external and internal factors influence domestic violence. One of the LGBT community participants said: "I believe that from the inside things can be solved, but it is more the external factors that have a higher weight. When my family learned about me being a homosexual they did not worry about how I felt, but rather what would the others think about me. I knew that they would hurt because of the insults that they would hear about me. “for them it is a double pain. They are insulted because we are insulted, but also they hurt because of our inclination”.

Participants believe that abusers often display violent behavior. They are abusive at times when they have a stress overload. Oftentimes they cannot control themselves. On the other hand, women victims of domestic violence, as a result of being frequently subjected to violence they display every now and then signs of irritability, anxiety and other depression symptoms. A participant from the Roma community said: “There are times when I lose my temper because I am so stressed from my husband who abuses me physically.”

Betrayal is another phenomenon which is a common cause for divorce. The participants stated that this is the most negative feeling for an individual when he or she learns that his spouse is betraying her/him. One of the women participants in the focus group of women victims of violence said that: “She feels humiliated and insulted when her partner betrays her.”

One of the participants said that cases of betrayal can be somehow justified by the society if as a punishment against this act one of the partner’s abuses with the other.

The feeling of jealousy in many cases is a cause for psychological and physical abuse. One of the participants from the LGBT community said: “We all get a bit rough when we become jealous. The secret is in exercising self-control.” “Even though jealousy seems to be a secondary cause for violence there could be families that are well off, and still there could be violence in them because of the phenomenon of jealousy”.

Other causes of domestic violence listed by the participants in the focus groups are: the desire of keeping their children under check, in particular with girls, brother’s authority on the sisters, economic exploitation of the victims, old conservative traditions, the mentality for correcting the behavior of the aggressor, drinking, sadistic psychological feelings and loss of psychological control, loss of feeling of love, imitation of acts of political verbal violence, influence of verbal political acts, the state granting no protection for the victims, economic conflicts within the household.
“Working is very important because it does away with three things: boredom, vice and needs. Therefore it is very good to be able to work, the contrary is bad”, says Ana from the LGBT community.

Unemployment is another factor that leads to violence. The social assistance is Lek 2.000 and it does not help in any way, so quarrels and fights can start at any point. When nothing suffices to keep your family, the tension increases.

Another member of LGBT community admits the following: “Society is weaker as long as there is domestic violence.”

Abusers often are alcohol or drug abusers, or gamblers etc. One of the women from focus group of women victims of domestic violence said: “Losing money gambling makes men take it out on their wives”.

“Sometimes the children could be the cause, since the child could have a vice that one of the parents does not like, for e.g. he could be gay and this could be the start of a conflict”, says a LGBT community member.

**Domestic violence and the forms it is manifested.** Threatening to evict the elderly from the house, threatening to send them away to shelters for the elderly represent other problems for the society.

Manushaqja a woman from the focus group of women victims of domestic violence said: “We have grown up in a place where traditionally there was respect for the grandparents, and parents and we cannot accept the new ways of life”. Ana from the LGBT community says: “Pressure methods are many: threatening them with taking the pension from them, abandoning the elderly, giving them no medicine etc.”.

Another new phenomenon for the Albanian society is emigration which separates the families. Ela one of the women victims of domestic violence says: “They forget they have parents. They do not care about them. Businessmen have to take care about their business but they should not forget at all to look after their parents”. Another participant from the LGBT community said: “Violence towards the elderly is mainly verbal because the abusers know that physical violence could be fatal for them. There are instances when people lock up their parents and won’t let them go out. They make them feel unwanted and redundant. That’s a form of violence too”.

Psychological violence is a most common form of abuse in our households. A women victim of violence says: “When you physically abuse your wife in the presence of the children, you have also abused her psychologically. Sexual
abuse is graver.

**Sexual abuse.** Participants admit that sexual abuse is present among couples. Eliverta, a woman victim of domestic violence says: “that is difficult to say. I am not talking about doing my duty, but when there is understanding in a couple that too is possible.”.

Someone from the LGBT community said: “You can also call it a duty. But I cannot compare it to having sexual relations with the person you love. It is not normal. Sexual relations are about creating a pleasurable experience for the individual and express the love for the partner”.

Mimoza from the Roma community said: “it is not a duty, but the husband forces you to have sex, and it has happened to us. These things are not done by force, they are supposed to give you pleasure.”

There are instances when the wife even though sick is forced by the husband to have sexual intercourse. Nadirja one of the women victims of domestic violence said: “It is not pleasurable to have intercourse when you are running a high fever, or when you have been sleep deprived because you have been awake all night long looking after the children. While the husband does not care because he has just returned from dinner or lunch out with his friends”. “Even though I do not agree, such things happen in the Albanian society”. “No way! It is a relationship based on the free will. I am not doing it if I don’t like. Otherwise it is rape” says Mirela from the LGBT community. “The criminal code includes an article on conduct of forced sexual relations in a couple, and it also provides for imprisonment up to 7 years, says another participant.

When responding to this question, women from Roma community were hesitant and reluctant at first. But, then they also say that women should not always “make themselves available”. Women might not want to engage in sexual intercourse or they might be sick.

**Physical abuse** is one of the most common forms of abuse in the Roma community, as admitted by the participants as well. Men abuse with them not only physically but also emotionally and sexually under pressure from many factors. According to Nadire: “My husband comes home drunk, and so what do you expect him to do?.” “Sometimes a slap is considered as something normal. Men are men and they have more rights than we do”, - say some others.

Women from the focus groups of victims of domestic violence and from the Roma community report **difficult economic and financial circumstances**, with the focus on unemployment and economic dependence on their husbands as
some of the main factors that generate violence.

**Inheritance and family role model.** All of the four focus groups discussed the family role model and the role of inheritance in the manifestation of domestic violence. The majority admitted that inheritance and in particular the family role model are important factors that influence the exercise of violence. “If your father was abusive you are very likely to become like him” says one of the women from roma community. According to the participants, in many instances the level of educational attainment does not play role in the exercise of violence since according to them “today violence is present at all levels and it has nothing to do with education”. According to Ela: “that is true because there are persons who are holders of two or three degrees and who are abusive at home. This can also happen when the wife is more educated than the husband and he makes up for his inferiority by using violence”.

**Experience** is a very important element in alleviating the phenomenon of domestic violence. This concept was raised by the participants throughout the discussions. Living together is according to them an experience. Living with people with quite significant age difference is another experience, whereby you seek to understand and soften many conflicts. This issue was discussed at length with participants from LGBT community.

**Raising awareness of the society about domestic violence** is one of the most important elements. It is an ongoing lengthy process which requires commitment and involvement by all stakeholders. Discussions focused on the awareness raising methods, including information about the phenomenon, denouncement and case management. Discussions also focused on prevention, where all participants agreed that it is easier to prevent than treat, even though it is a process and as such it is time and energy consuming. But, once the violence is present, it is particularly important to ensure early intervention. The earlier the intervention the better in terms of its consequences.

**Services in the fight against domestic violence and Professional Rules of Conduct.** In Albania there are gaps in terms of services in the fight against domestic violence. Even though in the main cities either in the police or in the judiciary there are support structures in place, they are not sufficient. In some instances even if the structures exists there is no professionalism. “In rural and remote areas of the country, such as the village I live in, - says one of the violated women, “services are nonexistent and nobody comes to help, neither the police, nor the commune; rather, they treat you as if you’ve done something shameful in reporting your husband although they may know that he has been beating you for a long time.” Participants point out the importance of treatment by professionals of incidences of domestic violence. A woman victim of domestic
violence said: “the thing is to lead the person to psychotherapy. If that would be possible, then there is hope that the person will understand that life is not about abuse only.”

For the Roma community, the concept of the psychologist is not yet clearly understood. But, they do admit that they feel the need of having someone that they can talk to about their problems.

In addition to the part where participants spoke about the need for services and professionals, they also spoke about **ethics**, as an important element during treatment of incidents of domestic violence. According to one of the participants of the women victims of violence focus group: “Each profession has its own rules of conduct, and if we associate with the gender that’s where the problem starts. However, there are women who are more comfortable in sharing their problems with a woman than they are with a man.” If a boy from the LBGT community falls victim of abuse, it could be easier for him to talk to a female police officer rather than the opposite. But it would all depend from the point of view.”

In addition to services in the field of domestic violence that are delivered by the state, **Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)** play an important role in the prevention of violence, raising awareness and treatment and referral of cases. On this issue, participants were split. Some of them said that that would depend on the NGOs, because some of them are serious and committed to what they do, and what they represent, others are not. One of the participants said: “In theory, NGOs are supposed to play a positive role, but in practice it depends on the credibility of the association.”

The majority of them responded favorably. Some of the respondents from the Roma community stated that there are NGOs that have provided assistance to them, as well as there others that have not done anything to help.

**The role of the Media and the political model.** Media play a very important role in raising awareness of public opinion, and in the identification of problematic. But according to Ervin, a member of LGBT community: “in some cases they have had a negative influence because by always referring to domestic violence they make it into a model for the young generation. It is more about statements rather than punishments for the perpetrators and abusers. This does not stop violence.”

**Politics** represents another model. One of the participants said:“Of course they set a model. When they use foul language in the Parliament, both men and women, when they use bad language in higher circles, what can you expect from the lower ones”?
L.T from the LGBT community admits that: “When senior officials exercise violence and are abusive that is a model for the public. And it is perfectly normal that the public then uses the same ways for communicating.”

**Law on domestic violence** is an important weapon in the fight against domestic violence. Thanks to this law there is more entitlement to protection for the women, and the abusers get penalized. But the law is not applied as it should. One of the participants from the focus groups of women victims of domestic violence said that: “The law has not carried its effects as it should have. The fact that they have moved to protection order indicates that the other chains have not functioned properly. I speak from personal experience and it always has led to interventions, corruption of all forms.”

**The role of the police** is very important in the process of identification, denouncement and referral of cases of violence. The government is committed to this issue and the responsible structures are in place. A woman victim of abuse said: “More recently there is more awareness. May be this is also due to new blood joining the rank and files of the state police, with the introduction of special structures on combating domestic violence. These all are very positive elements.”

One of the participants said: “In case of extreme violence no one but the police can help. There is need to enhance the role of the police. Police are becoming more aware about their role in the domestic violence aspects, but the problems lays with the justice system. Because the police may apprehend the abuser, but then the courts set him free. “There are also cases when the information we give to the police is leaked to the Media, and I speak from experience because I have had to change telephone numbers because of my denouncements in the police.

One of the women from the Roma community said that after reporting her husband to the police for systematically abusing with her, and after confronting him in person, she managed to solve her problem and her husband’s abusive behavior has stopped, and according to her words he is a changed person.

Even in the case of sexual violence, women report that police can help and save women victims, but they are afraid that could be teased from the police if they affirm that have been sexually abused from their husband.

But the women also speak about lack of trust in the state structures. One of them said that the police have not done their duty in several instances. Women state that in some cases when they have called the police, the response was that they: “do not want to mingle in their affairs.”
CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
Conclusions

The study looks into a research design of mixed methods, into the philosophical and methodological structures for the collection, development and analyzing data, both from the qualitative and quantitative angles that might respond to the research questions. The quantitative part was the main part, while the qualitative one was complementary to the main part. These quantitative data were generated from a questionnaire and they were complemented by the input of the focus group discussions. Both techniques were subjected to triangulation. The methodological approaches led the process of data analysis. Descriptive statistics were used, and the grounded theory analysis offered means for analyzing the qualitative data collected in the focus groups. Both data groups, quantitative and qualitative, were explored, analyzed and compared.

Conclusions on the quantitative part

This is a qualitative study for the review of perceptions, beliefs and behaviors of Albanian citizens and women victims of violence, the implications of violence and the way domestic violence is managed. The main focus of this initiative was “To give voice” to women victims of abuse, in order for them to express their problems in their own words. Given that this qualitative evaluation is not statistically representative for the whole of Albania, its conclusions are limited and linked only with the target group. Qualitative data shed light on the meaning of violence from the perspective of battered women that were part of the interviews. Detailed interviews were conducted in 12 different places around Albania, with 155 women victims of domestic violence, and with 405 citizens of different age groups, different social economic and historical backgrounds. One of the strong points of this narrative/descriptive analysis is related to the access of the cultural context in which abuse occurs. The research suggests that is a very complicated mix of a multitude array of cultural, social, economic and intra-personal factors that may expose Albanian women to a high risk situation to become subjects of violence. The findings do away with the myth that domestic violence is in general a problem for the poor and uneducated people,
and they go on to demonstrate that abuse goes beyond social and economic boundaries. Evidence suggests that traditional gender relations have imposed high costs on women. Despite major recent changes in Albania, the country has failed to uproot old-fashioned mentalities associated with the statuses of dependence of women. Interviews identified long-term tragedies of the lives of women, some of which have left deep emotional scars in their lives, but also brought forth examples of resistance of many other women. Traditional values have instilled in many women the perception of marriage as one of the most important principles in their lives. It is through marriage that women expect to achieve desirable social status and a life worth living. Women look at being married as an important element of a woman’s identity. Patriarchal marriage traditions are still mentioned by many of the women. In addition, marriage is perceived as a way out, from a poor and/or abusive household. The dreams of many women regarding their marriages often conflict with the daily life reality, and their status of dependence within the marriage. Research indicates that abuse with types of relations among partners are more likely to happen in those couples, where the husband plays a traditional family role. Findings prove that abusive husbands seem to dominate the decision-making processes in the families, while women are expected to have responsibilities about the house chores and to take care of the children.

Despite the fact that women could be working in senior positions or be engaged with a high social profile, this does not exclude them from the whole work load at home. Women are supposed to be complete in their roles as spouses and mothers and stand prepared to sacrifices their lives for the sake of their marriages. Partnership of men and women in handling family problems is not very well known in the Albanian households. Women still have to act according to rules put by the males. Violations of the traditional gender roles and expectations lead to physical and psychological abuse. Abuse with an intimate partner is usually a model of abusive control and behavior rather than an isolated act of physical aggression. Women indicate that domestic violence is a complex phenomenon because it entails different forms of abuse, such as: verbal, emotional, physical, sexual or economic abuse. Physical violence ranges from a slap to lethal assaults by weapons. The study demonstrates that the possibility for lethal violence against women in Albania could occur throughout their lives. Women speak of broken arms, cigarette burned parts of body, arms being aimed at them, and threats with knives etc. many women live fear not just of their lives, but for the lives of their children, family and friends as well.

Experiences of women related to sexual abuse vary from rape to physical
threats, verbal abuse, and other non-physical forms of pressure to engage in sexual intercourse against one’s will. The fact that some women give in to unwanted sexual intercourse is perceived by many women as a way to react on the anger of the husband and a way to avoid further abuse. Other women see sexual intercourse as “part of their marital duties” in serving their husbands, so their feelings do not count. Forced sexual intercourse is proven to be a way of leaving the wife with no “voice” and putting her in a dependence relationship. Women frequently report of being humiliated and emotionally manipulated. In addition, social isolation has also been used as a strategy by abusive partners to increase their control and to live women with no escape from abusive relationships. Some of the abusive men have stopped their women from participating in decision-making related to spending of the money for basic household needs.

The fact that women contribute financially at home does not reduce or influence in any way the position of the husbands in the households. The experience of domestic violence exposes women against higher risks of broader range, including physical and mental health problems, wounding, depression, anxiety, post-trauma stress, mental disorders, sleep disorders, low self-esteem and suicidal thoughts. Wounds are not the sole physical implication of violence: physical disorders, abortions, early births, unwanted pregnancy are some of the most important physical abuse implications that they need to face. The implications of violence also include the inability to tend to the daily life activity or other social activities. Women think of the psychological implications of the abuse as more serious than the physical ones. Women also turn to medication as a protective perceived filter against traumatic events. Findings illustrate the process through which women give up and are subjected to rape in abusive relationships. The process of abuse varies from the way women think of themselves, and their relations and place in the world. Domestic violence has a major negative impact on children, irrelevant from the fact whether or not they are victims of abuse. Children of women interviewed for the study have developed many cognitive, emotional, somatic and behavioral problems. Among them, women rank low levels of social or school competence, anxiety, irritation, aggressive behavior, headaches, bed wetting and sleep disorders. Women also expressed their concern about the impact of the role model of the father in the child development.

An important step in managing violence is understanding the causes behind the abuse. Despite the fact that all respondents identify different causes behind domestic violence, the most dominant social problem is associated with a
society with no equilibrium and which is stuck between its traditional and modern aspects. The main cause of domestic abuse is perceived as linked to poverty, which generates stress and a feeling of failure among men who have failed in the traditional role of “bread winner.” Others often reported causes behind domestic violence are drinking and jealousy. Domestic violence is also built as a product of emotional dysfunction of men, depression or low self-esteem. The focus on the emotional causes of violence at the individual level justifies violent acts which go beyond the control of the abuser. Other women’s perception of men as aggressive human beings by nature is another approach. Some women blame themselves for the abuse, because they believe that they have failed their husbands in their roles as wives and as mothers to their children. The reflections of participant women indicated that they have socially engaged themselves to accept the main responsibility for the success of their marriages, and taking care of their children. They believe in sacrificing their rights as individuals for the sake of their children. This kind of behavior has entrapped many women into abusive relations for wanting to keep their families intact “by hook or by crook”. Women referred to hope, avoidance, and compromise as strategies that help them endure violence.

An important strategy for eliminating violence is raising their awareness about the fact that the situation that they are living in is wrong, and that there are steps that they can take to improve their lives. Divorce is one of the active strategies that women refer to. Despite many difficulties, women who go through with a divorce refuse to be passive victims of domestic violence. Participants feel that they regain their feeling of dignity, self-esteem and control over their lives. Women fight hard to empower themselves to find new ways to live and re-think their place in the world. The stories of women point to obvious cultural and social tolerance against domestic violence. Breaking the silence about this sensitive issue confirms its presence in the Albanian households and the depth of its consequences. The findings of the research also point out to a strong will of empowering other victims of violence by telling. Women stated that they hoped that their protest against domestic violence would lead to changes in the cultural, legal and social policy aspects for the protection of women rights. However, women in Albania should not wait for the state to take the imitative in addressing these critical issues. It should be women themselves, who at the levels of the civil society, should take their fate in their hands and fight for their rights. The approaches of women in this study shed light about the way how violence has deprived them of their emotional and physical capacities because they continuously try to protect their essential part of identity as being women. bused women need professional counseling to be able to overcome these
negative feelings, and to re-think their way of life. The findings of this study seek to introduce changes in gender polices, both in public and private aspects of life.

This report is a step forward in respect of giving voice to Albanian women and empowering them. We believe that this process of understanding the local context of domestic violence and individual perceptions and behaviors and finding answers to it can be used as a meaningful basis for the development of appropriate interventions for reducing the incidence of violence and its prevention in Albania.

a. Displays of violence are excessively fed by a collective mentality which is still present, according to which violence is fatal in society and that often times in families it helps put certain social relations into perspective.

b. During transition, a number of other phenomena come into place that foster domestic violence, such as: less social relations, economic and property conflicts, and loss of respect and feeling of duty towards the elderly.

c. Awareness raising and information campaigns are still weak, and do not as yet have the desired impact. Other important tools for fighting domestic violence are strengthening of social services and social solidarity aspects, strengthening of centers on violence, of reception centers for victims of violence.

d. Isolation of the families increases the possibility for violence and aggressiveness, in particular of the husband against the wife. Therefore, socialization through work would open the family towards the society and broader public opinion.

e. In addition to the police that intervene in the cases of flagrant violence, it is also important to have a number of agencies focusing in the fight against domestic violence. In this aspect a bigger role can be played by the local government, the schools, psychologists, and the courts.
Conclusions on the qualitative part

General conclusions from 4 focus groups

1. Raising further awareness of the Albanian society, and women in particular about domestic violence and its consequences is very important.

2. Tradition and mentality continue to prevail in terms of manner of perception of violence.

3. Domestic violence is a result of both intrinsic and external factors.
   a- Among the external factors we can mention: the society, unemployment, economic status
   b- Among the internal factors, we can mention: family and family models, relations within the family, individual personality traits.

4. Besides the positive role of the media in the identification and denouncement of violence, it can also have a negative influence by presenting violence models.

5. Sexual abuse is present even though it is not often reported.

6. NGOs in the area of domestic violence play a very positive role, and the government should look up at them as partners in the fight against domestic violence.

Specific conclusions

For the Roma community focus group

1. Women and girls continue to be discriminated in the Albanian households.

2. Women in many cases are considered as property of the husbands, and the husbands have full rights and can do as they please.

3. In mountainous, rural areas and among Roma community reporting
violence continues to be a taboo.

4. The Law needs to be applied by the appropriate institutions because in many cases it is not applied. Presently victims have no hope that the law will help address the problem of the domestic violence.

5. Victims do not have an understanding about the concept of the psychologist, but feel the need of sharing the problem of violence with someone.

6. Roma community representatives believe that women are subjected to violence because of unemployment, the husband’s problems of drinking, and extra-marital relations of the husbands.

7. Women often shy away from reporting violence because they are forced to stay in their marriages for financial reasons.

8. They normally report violence first with a parent (the mother) and then to the police.

9. Fixed marriages are more likely to lead to violence.

10. They don’t believe the police may help them in the case of domestic sexual violence, but they think the police may help and save these women from violence, especially rape.

11. Sexual violence is considered as a shameful act, and as such if possible it should be settled within the family.

12. Women of Roma community find it easier to approach a female rather than a male police officer.

13. Physical and emotional violence, in some cases, is present in this community even among elderly couples.

14. Some of the causes for the use of violence among elderly couples include: use of alcohol, communication problems, and poor economic conditions.

15. Little children are abused physically by their parents, mainly by fathers, but also by their mothers.
LGBT community focus group

1. It is easier to prevent, than to treat.

2. Family models of education should be considered as very important for the process of domestic violence prevention.

3. Albanian youngsters of LGBT community feel under psychological pressure from family and society because of their sexual orientation.

4. Divorce rates, as the “grand finale” of a failed relationship have increased.

5. There is increased access to services delivered by the state, and the quality of domestic violence services has improved.

6. Albanian politics in some cases have generated models of violence.

7. In some cases state structures are corrupt, and/or lack the professionalism and this leads to the law on domestic violence not to be implemented properly.

8. The LGBT community considers sexual abuse as a very intimate problem, and one which should be resolved between partners.

9. Parents often exercise psychological violence on their children when they learn about their child’s sexual orientation.

10. They are confused because they are stuck between their sexual orientation and their parents objection and refusal accompanied with the desire not to abandon the parents.

11. Parents blame themselves for their child’s sexual orientation.

12. Representatives from the LGBT community believe that the most appropriate persons to address to in case of violence are: the social worker and then the police.

13. If individuals are forced into sexual intercourse against their will this is considered as rape.
Parents of children of the LGBT community feel violated by public opinion which is very judgmental toward this category.

Women victims of violence

1. Stigma has a negative impact on the initiatives for fight against violence.

2. As a result of greater awareness there is an increased number of reports of violence made to the police.

3. In mountainous and rural areas reporting of violence continues to be a taboo.

4. The Law needs to be applied by the appropriate institutions because in many cases it is not applied. The main responsibility according to the law is for local government where in many of it it hasn’t been implemented the referral mechanism system and the coordination of local actors.

5. There has been no reports, as it has been foreseen by the law, from family doctors across the country for cases of domestic violence and have been reported major problems of law enforcement by bayliffs, especially after its privatization.

6. The wife in many cases is considered as the property of the husband, and he thinks he has full rights on her, and can do as he pleases.

7. In some cases the governmental structures lack the professionalism and this leads to inappropriate enforcement of the law on domestic violence.

8. It is very important to establish psychological services for the victims of domestic violence.

9. Violence knows no boundaries. Education levels are not a factor.

10. For the cases of physical and sexual violence women victims say that they can talk to their sisters, to the priest during confession or to a counseling service.

11. Reporting incidents of violence at the police is not always confidential.
12. Anonymous reports of acts of domestic violence by the neighbors, friends who have been present during such acts are a way of civilization of the society.

13. A wife should and cannot always be willing to please her husband in his sexual pleasures, but in the Albanian society women have to oblige a husband at all times.

14. Physical and emotional violence is present even among the elderly and few cases are reported by them.

15. In many cases, services provided by the state for children and the elderly with regard to domestic violence are not accessible for this age group.

16. Employees of violence offices at police stations are transferred frequently and it is difficult to create the necessary connection and trust with them.
Recommandations

For the roma community

1- Developing awareness raising programs on domestic violence, in particular about physical violence, for the rural areas, vulnerable communities such as the Roma community, and areas with migrants.

2- Enforcement of law on domestic violence by all actors.

3- Introduction of psychological services close to the communities, for counseling of women form the Roma community.

4- Introducing the facilitating chains for reporting cases to the police.

5- Introduction of employment opportunities for Roma women, so that they feel financially independent from their husbands.

6- Increased numbers of police women working with the domestic violence sector at the police stations in order to facilitate communication of women from Roma community.

For the LGBT community

1- Introduction of psychological services for counseling of these individuals who feel very frustrated.

2- Inclusion in the domestic violence strategies of programs for communities such as the LGBT community.

3- Sensitize professionals and the police about helping this community.

4- Sensitize this community about problems of domestic violence.
**Women victims of violence**

1- Programs for the prevention of violence and the sensitization of women and girls.

2- Early intervention programs.

3- Establishment of psychological services for counseling them.

4- Empowerment of the referral system for cases with a detailed plan of where the victim goes when moving from one service to the other.

5- Training police structures with advanced and contemporary knowledge on domestic violence and avoiding frequent transfers of employees in units against domestic violence.

6- Training of judges with knowledge on domestic violence.

7- Better coordination among responsible state and local structures with civil society actors in the fight against domestic violence.

8- With regard to violent sexual relations, more sexual education is needed for a longer period as well as information in different forms and from various sources. Sexual education in schools needs to be reviewed as it often halts on physiological aspects. Above all, there should be counseling practices for women and men in groups or through personalized telephone communications, etc.

9- Domestic Violence occurs in both private spaces and in public ones. It assumes very different forms, from domestic violence to rape, psychological torture, trafficking, sexual exploitation, and harmful practices, among others. Acts of violence take place in different environments (home, street, school, workplace, conflict situations) and affect very various groups (including rural/urban, rich/poor, youth/adults, emigrants, displaced persons, indigenous persons, disabled persons, and women with HIV). Efficient reaction requires that the laws, rules, services, and particularly data collection can distinguish and touch upon the various displays of violence on the basis of specific contexts that they occur in.

10- The drafting of policies, programs, and practical reactions depends on credible data. This includes information about the spread, causes, survivors, and persons using domestic violence; the impact of
interventions and their results in the public sector in terms of, let’s say, opportunities to turn to health services and reactions by the police and the judiciary; attitudes, behaviors, and experiences of men, women, and youth from different population groups and how they perceive of this issue in their society; as well as the social and economic costs of domestic violence toward women and girls. Such data are essential for measuring the progress of initiatives against violence, for drafting efficient strategies, and for allocating budgets.

11- Addressing domestic violence toward women and girls requires a multi-dimensional reaction that involves government bodies, non-profit organizations, and other subjects from different sectors and disciplines. Aside from institutions involved in these efforts from the start (such as the health sector, public security, legal bodies, ministries handling women issues), it is important to involve other key actors, such as educational institutions, employers, trade unions, the media, the Ministry of Finance, and the private sector in the context of social responsibility. Interventions should come both from service and referral systems for violence survivors/victims, and from broader prevention efforts that focus on mobilizing the society and the community for “zero tolerance” and gender equality. Overall support means addressing the diversity of needs and rights of women and girls, which include safety, health, legal, and justice services, and economic security for themselves, children, or other dependants.

12- Survivors of domestic violence need “frontline” support from the police and also from other actors that law gives a special role such as local government, health and legal bodies. While creating opportunities for broader scale and more long-term assistance, all institutions should ensure standards to meet immediate needs. Depending on the national context, they need to include: providing necessary security and protection for survivors/victims; the universal right to have at least one 24-hour free hotline to report abuse and other life-threatening situations, and experienced and professional counselors that could refer callers to relevant services; a shelter for every 10,000 inhabitants, offering safe shelter in case of emergencies both for IPO cases and longer time periods, qualified counseling and other necessary assistance; an advocacy and counseling center for every 50,000 women to offer assistance to survivors/victims; one center for cases of rape for every 200,000 women; and opportunities to receive quality health treatment after rape (including pregnancy tests,
emergency contraceptives, post-fact profilactics to prevent HIV, and treatment for sexually transmitted infections, treatment for injuries, and psycho-social counseling). These services should not be conditioned by the violence that the survivor/victim reports to the police and should be followed by long-term health, legal, psycho-social, educational, and economic support.

13- Laws and their enforcement are essential for ending impunity. They define the limits for norms and public behavior. They guarantee the rights that all people should enjoy and determine the responsibilities and obligations of certain people for their protection. Laws for stopping violence should be comprehensive and should help prevent, react to, and punish all forms of violence against women and girls. The rights of women and girls should be considered the greatest concern of all laws, policies, and programs – including their rights for personal safety, intimacy and privacy, informed and independent decision making, health and social services, and justice. This also implies legal provisions that envision the rights that can determine whether a woman has the possibility to leave an abusive situation, namely, the rights of the woman for assistance and child custody; economic, property, land, and inheritance rights; as well as citizenship and emigrant status. Independently from the fact whether formal or common law systems prevail, they should support the rights of women and girls. Laws and their enforcement should be in accordance with international and regional human rights, as provided for in various conventions, agreements, or mechanisms.

14- Some of the women cannot begin divorce or asset division procedures as the law does not envision any financial facilitation even when the court has proven that the woman is a victim of domestic violence and the reduction or avoidance of tariffs in such situations would be strongly recommended.

15- Clear standards should be determined for the implementation and monitoring of laws, policies, and programs through various instruments and procedures that strengthen and institutionalize them. For instance, decrees of the president or decisions of the council of ministers could encourage implementation by assigning specific roles and responsibilities to specific ministries. Protocols, both inside the sector and cross-sector ones, could provide important instructions for employees and establish working and functioning standards. These standards may also serve as indicators to measure progress or responsibilities and to include...
improvements. Protocols and procedures should be in accordance with rights recommended and approved on the international scale as well as with service provision standards.

16- National action plans devoted to addressing domestic violence toward women and girls could be valuable instruments to determine institutional, technical, and financial resources necessary for coordinated and cross-sector reactions. They may outline accountability mechanisms and clarify institutional responsibilities. They could also be used to monitor progress toward specific objectives. Ministries tasked with coordination (Ministry of Labor) needs political support at the highest levels of government and necessary institutional and financial support to carry out this complex task. Guaranteeing that actions to address violence toward women and girls are streamlined into other leading policies and financing frameworks could also offer the strategic ways to enhance efforts and ensure budgets. Examples include national strategies and plans to reduce poverty and development, as well as sector reforms regarding education, health, justice, HIV/AIDS, etc.

17- Very often, policies and laws are approved without having the funds for their implementation. There should be a budget assessment to ensure they meet population needs, properly serve poor geographic areas and guarantee equality, as well as bring benefits for the women and girls they are drafted for. Financial considerations should be based on costs and should include seemingly peripheral aspects that are in fact essential, such as free medical and legal assistance, or transport so that women and girls may use other legal services, as well as assistance for their social-economic reintegration. Financial assistance for survivors/victims may be ensured through innovational schemes, such as trust funds that may collect contributions from the state as well as from other actors (individuals, organizations, or private donors). Resources are necessary to ensure the development of skills of various sectors and professionals that have a responsibility to implement the laws and programs. Adequate public funds should be allocated for non-profit organizations and women’s groups as well as for services for survivors/victims for their work and contributions.

18- Very often, there is a tendency to “provide” policies and services without involving the public through empowering approaches that enable people to “seek” and use these services and hold institutions accountable. Real lasting changes to end domestic violence toward women and girls should focus at the local and community level, which is where acts of abuse
happen and where, very often, they are tolerated. Strategies should empower women and girls to demand their rights for justice, protection, and help; they should provide them with knowledge about their rights and duties of the government; and ensure cooperation with women’s centers and advocacy groups, as well as youth, men, or other organizations devoted to gender equality. Massive public education and awareness campaigns on these issues, also through local and national media, are important elements. Community mobilization for gender equality and non-violence is essential for interrupting domestic violence toward women and girls, especially among men, youth, and other strategic groups.

For children

1- Establish services for the identification of maltreated children.

2- Draft awareness programs in order to denounce violence used toward them.

3- Draft programs for early intervention.

4- Draft intervention programs in the education process for the purpose of prevention and minimization of the consequences of domestic violence.

5- Train health personnel for the identification and treatment of emergency cases of children victims of domestic violence.

6- Train education personnel (teachers, kindergarten and day care center teachers) with contemporary knowledge about domestic violence.

7- Draft training programs for judges and psychologists in the courts on civil and family issues, in cases when children are part of the maltreatment.

8- Effective coordination of child protection units in order to not only refer cases, but also treat them as successfully as possible.

For the elderly

1. Include in public awareness campaigns on domestic violence also programs for the elderly in order to denounce violence used on them.
2. Encourage and lobby support to improve legislation having to do with easy access of the elderly and the sick to urban and rural spaces, institutions, etc.

For a better communication strategy with the victims and the broader public

1. It is appropriate to encourage audio-visual publicity spots against domestic violence and forms of victim protection.

2. Competitions and prizes for the best publications devoted to the Albanian family, women’s status in society, youth education and particularly boys on women’s rights in the society.

3. Encourage through information and various subsidies the broadcast of foreign movies in Albanian movie theaters and TVs addressing domestic violence issues, human treatment of the elderly, the sick, etc.

4. Encourage talks on TV and radio shows on issues of human relations in the contemporary family and family solidarity.

5. Cooperate with religious communities to propagate and better understand the values of peace and opposing and refusing violence in the society and the family, within the context of Albanian religious pluralism.

6. Review by groups of individuals and active citizens, specialists, parents, teachers, etc., of the quality and contents of civic and sexual education textbooks in schools, at all levels of education, regarding the family and the opposition of domestic violence.

7. Study opportunities to allow the profession of “controlled sexual services” (controlled prostitution) with the advantages and disadvantages it presents.

8. Statistical analysis of data obtained from judicial and public order bodies regarding domestic crime and violence and their periodical publication in official statistics.
“A Study about victims of domestic violence and sexual assault”

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