

SITUATION ANALYSIS

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH RIGHTS OF ADOLESCENTS IN ALBANIA



The report "Sexual and reproductive health rights of adolescents in Albania" was prepared by the association "Together for Life", within the project "We cannot advance health without advancing rights", supported by the French Embassy in Tirana.

The purpose of this report is to provide updated data and recommendations to improve the approach of public institutions and civil society to the sexual and reproductive health activities of young people in Albania.

The content of this report is the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily reflect the views of the organization "Together for Life" or the French Embassy in Albania

Contributing Authors:

Prof. Dr. Elizana Zaimi Petrela
Arlinda Shehu

Autor: © TOGETHER FOR LIFE

Rr. Brigada VIII, Pallati Jeshil –Tekno Projekt, Shk.2, Ap.13

Tiranë, Shqipëri

Email: info@togetherforlife.org.al

Web: www.togetherforlife.org.al

April, 2022

Contents

Definitions.....	5
FOREWARD	10
I. THE SITUATION IN ALBANIA	11
1. Sexually Transmitted Infections	11
2. HIV/AIDS	11
3. Unwanted pregnancies and abortion	12
4. Adolescent births	13
5. Gender-based violence.....	14
• Violence in the family.....	14
• Violence and sexual harassment	15
• Gender discrimination.....	16
6. Bullying.....	16
• Bullying in school.....	16
• Cyberbullying	17
• Obesity	18
7. Discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity	19
II. REASONS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THE SITUATION	20
1. Lack of information	20
2. Lack of faith in the physician/psychologist.....	21
3. Lack of communication in the family	21
4. Lack of knowledge/usage of contraceptives	22
5. Lack of supporting environment for the youth	22
6. Lack of education and the role of the school	23
7. Societal norms.....	24
8. Internet usage.....	24
9. The role of media	25
III. LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND POLICIES.....	27
• The Albanian legal framework.....	27
• National plans and strategy	30
• Adopted conventions and resolutions	32

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS 35
REFERENCES 37

DEFINITIONS

Adolescence: The World Health Organization defines the population between the ages of 10-19 as adolescents. Adolescence is a key stage of life that affects health and developmental opportunities for the rest of life. This period encompasses a series of physical, mental, social, and emotional changes that determine an individual's sexual identity and social status. Managing these changes well and as carefully as possible to achieve optimal personal well-being and development is one of the biggest challenges and is deeply influenced by social experiences.

Sexuality is a central aspect of being human throughout life and includes sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy, and reproduction. Sexuality is experienced and expressed in thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviors, practices, roles, and relationships. While sexuality may involve all of these dimensions, not all of them are always experienced or expressed. Sexuality is influenced by the interaction of biological, psychological, social, economic, political, cultural, ethical, legal, historical, religious, and spiritual factors.

Sexual and reproductive health rights refer to a wide range of issues that support the right of every person to enjoy his or her sexuality and reproductive ability within the framework of equality, mutual respect, and equal rights. This term includes sexual health, sexual rights, reproductive health, and reproductive rights.

Sexual health is a state of physical, emotional, and mental well-being associated with sexuality, not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction, or disability¹. Sexual health requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual intercourse, as well as the possibility of having satisfying and safe sexual experiences, without being subjected to coercion, discrimination and violence. For sexual health to be achieved and maintained, the sexual rights of all persons must be respected, protected and fulfilled².

Sexual rights include human rights already recognized in national law, international human rights instruments, and other declarations of consensus. They include the right of every individual, without coercion, discrimination and violence, to:

the highest attainable standard of sexual health, including access to sexual and reproductive health care services;

- seek, receive and provide information about sexuality;
- sex education;

¹ World Health Organization: sexual health (2008). www.who.int/reproductive-health/gender/sexual_health.html

² <https://www.who.int/nwews/item/11-02-2022-redefining-sexual-health-for-benefits-throughout-life>

- respect for bodily integrity;
- choose their partner;
- determined to be sexually active or not;
- consensual sexual intercourse;
- consensual marriage;
- decide whether or not to have children, and when; AND
- pursue a satisfying, safe and enjoyable sex life.

Responsible exercise of human rights requires that all persons respect the rights of others.

Reproductive health means the general physical and mental well-being, as a whole, with the absence of diseases and problematic disabilities, as well as any other basic conditioning needed by the reproductive system for its functions, processes, and the ability to have a satisfying and safe sex life. It means the ability of people to reproduce and their freedom to decide on the manner and time of reproduction, as well as to be informed where they can do so and where they can find such services.³⁴

Reproductive rights encompass the rights of individuals and/or couples to decide freely and responsibly whether they want to have children, how many children they want to have and when to have them, and to have the information, education and means to be able to make this decision. They also include the right to enjoy a high level of sexual and reproductive health, as well as the right to free decision-making without discrimination, persuasion, coercion or violence on matters relating to reproduction.⁵

Comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) is the acquisition of knowledge and skills that enable the development and practice of habits, attitudes, qualities, values and behaviors for healthy growth and development. He sees 'sexuality' holistically and within the context of emotional and social development. CSE includes scientifically accurate information on human development, anatomy, and reproductive health, as well as information on contraception, childbirth, and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV.⁶

Sex refers to the biological characteristics that define people as female or male. While these sets of biological characteristics are not mutually exclusive, as there are individuals who possess both, they tend to distinguish humans as male and female. In general usage in many languages, the term sex is often used to mean "sexual activity", but for technical purposes in the context of discussions of

³<http://www.ishp.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2015/ligjet/Per-shendetin-riprodhues.pdf>

⁴ https://shendetesia.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/STRATEGJIA_E_SHENDETIT_RIPRODHUES_2017-2021_Final_5_dhjetor_2016-1.pdf

⁵

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/313478562_Factsheet_Sexual_and_reproductive_health_and_rights_of_young_people_in_Cyprus

⁶ <https://masht.rks.gov.net/uploads/2021/04/unfpa-brochure-per-prinder-23022021.pdf>

sexuality and sexual health, the above definition is preferred.

Gender refers to the characteristics of women, men, girls and boys built by society. This includes the norms, behaviors, and roles associated with being a woman, man, girl, or boy, as well as relationships with each other. As a social construct, gender varies from society to society and can change over time.

Gender-based violence refers to harmful acts directed at an individual because of gender. It has its roots in gender inequality, abuse of power and harmful norms. Gender-based violence (GBV) is a serious violation of human rights and a life-threatening issue for health and protection.⁷

Domestic violence⁸ is any act of physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence that occurs within the family or household or between spouses or partners or between ex-spouses or ex-partners, regardless of whether the abuser shares or has shared the same apartment with the victim.

Physical violence is defined as the use of physical force against someone in a way that hurts, harms or endangers that person. Physical violence includes a wide range of behaviors such as scratching, pushing, throwing, grabbing, biting, putting your hand on your throat, biting, piercing, pulling your hair, twisting your arm, slapping, forcing, punching, beating, punching with kicks, burns, stab wounds, strangulation/choking. Physical violence may also include the use of bodily size and force, means of restraint and/or weapons by a person (eg, firearm, knife or other object) to gain and maintain control over another person.”

Psychological violence encompasses a range of behaviors that are intended to criticize, humiliate, control, isolate, intimidate, cause fear, and attack an individual's character, thus destroying his or her sense of self-worth, self-confidence, and security. Insults, humiliation, speaking in a way that attacks the character of the individual, causing fear through threats to physically hurt an individual and/or other persons close to him/her and/or to destroy something important to him/her, are some of the forms of verbal violence, psychological assault and emotional violence that are included as part of psychological violence.

Economic violence is defined as the keeping of money by an individual, whether or not it is earned by him, the exercise of control and monitoring of an individual's action against another individual over the use and distribution of money, including that earned by the work of the latter, the misuse for personal gain purposes by an individual, of the money necessary to provide the basic living conditions of family members, the constant threat to cut off economic resources, the compulsion of

⁷ <https://www.unhcr.org/gender-based-violence.html>

⁸ <https://shendetesia.gov.al/ep-content/uploads/2020/06/Broshura-Dhuna-seksuale-per-profesionistetr.pdf>

an individual to meet all needs family basis for a certain period (eg monthly), with a quota below the minimum amount of money needed for this purpose, etc.

Sexual violence includes any sexual act, attempt to commit a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or any other act against the sexuality of a person using coercion by any person regardless of their relationship with the victim, in any setting, including but without limitation, at home and work. Tightening can cover a whole spectrum of degrees of force. In addition to physical strength, it may include psychological threats, pressure or other threats. Sexual violence can include other forms of assault on a sexual organ, including forced contact between the mouth and the penis, vulva, or anus. The terms sexual assault, rape, sexual abuse and sexual violence are often used interchangeably.

Violence against women: It is understood as a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women and means all acts of gender-based violence that lead to or may lead to physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering to women, including threats of committing these acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether it occurs in public or private life. Violence against women includes various types of violence experienced by women, young women and girls, such as domestic violence, intimate partner violence, sexual violence by an intimate partner, sexual harassment, forced marriage, forced abortion and sterilization, persecution, crimes in the name of honor, trafficking and harmful practices, such as female genital mutilation.

Sexual harassment is defined as any unwanted form of verbal, nonverbal or physical behavior of a sexual nature, with the intent or effect of violating a person's dignity, especially when a threatening, hostile, degrading, humiliating or insulting environment is created.

Persecution: Threatening or harassing a person through repeated actions, with the intent to cause a persistent and serious state of anxiety or fear for personal safety, to a relative or to a person with whom he or she has a spiritual connection or to force him to change his lifestyle.

Intimate Partner Violence: Any behavior in an intimate relationship that causes physical, psychological, or sexual injury to persons in a relationship, including acts of physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse, and controlled behavior.

Sexual Assault: A sexual act with or without physical contact, committed by an individual without the consent of the victim or, in some cases, and especially when children are involved, through emotional manipulation or blackmail. It is an action that forces one person to submit to another person's wishes through abuse of power, use of force, coercion or threats. Sexual assault violates the fundamental rights of the victim, including the right to physical and psychological integrity and the safety of the person.

Child sexual abuse is defined as any sexual activity between a child and a close family member (incest) or between a child and an adult, or a child and an older child, not a family member. It includes cases of use of force or coercion, as well as cases where the victim can not give consent due to his/her age.

Sexual Exploitation: Any actual abuse or attempted sexual abuse from an unfavorable position, change of power or belief, including, but not limited to, monetary gain, socially or politically, from the sexual exploitation of another.

Bullying⁹ is a recurring aggressive behavior where a person (or group of people) in a position of power intentionally intimidates, abuses, or coerces an individual with the intent to hurt that person physically or emotionally. Acts of harassment can be physical or verbal. Many young people can be rude to each other during adolescence, as they improve social skills and grow into adults.

Cyberbullying is bullying with the use of digital technologies. It can be developed on social media, messaging platforms, gaming platforms and mobile phones. It is repetitive behavior that aims to intimidate, anger or embarrass those who are targeted.

Cyberstalking is harassing behavior using one or more platforms in the online environment. May include frequent and intrusive threats, covert messages, and sexual connotations. Its usual purpose is to create a sense of dread in the recipient based on control and intimidation. Some adults pretend, creating fake profiles with age and fake identities that they are a teenager to make friends and gain the trust of young people online.

Masquerading is when someone (often an adult) befriends a child online and builds an emotional connection to the future goals of sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, or trafficking. The main purposes of cyber fraud are: to gain the trust of the child, to obtain intimate and personal data from the child (often of a sexual nature, such as: sexual conversations, photos or videos) in order to threaten and blackmail further inappropriate material.¹⁰

⁹ <http://preventingbullying.promoteprevent.org/what-bullying>

¹⁰ <https://www.childsafenet.org/>

FOREWARD

Prof. Susan Sawyer describes adolescence as a stage of life that stretches between childhood and adulthood, and its definition has long created a conundrum. Adolescence includes elements of biological growth and transitions of key social roles, both of which have changed over the last century. Early puberty has accelerated the onset of adolescence in almost all populations, while understanding of continued growth has increased its final age up to the 20s. In parallel, delayed role transition times, including completion of education, marriage, and parenting, continue to change popular perceptions of when adulthood begins. Perhaps, the period of transition from childhood to adulthood now occupies a larger part of life than ever before, as unprecedented social forces, including marketing and digital media, are impacting health and well-being in these years.

A broader and more comprehensive definition of adolescence is essential for defining appropriate development laws, social policies, and service systems. Instead of being between the ages of 10 and 19, a definition of 10-24 corresponds more closely to adolescent growth and popular understanding of this stage of life and would facilitate a wider investment in a wider range of contexts.¹¹

In Albania, access and use by the population of modern family planning methods is still low and abortion is still used as a method of family planning. The incidence of Sexually Transmitted Infections is increasing especially at young ages. The incidence of breast and cervical cancer is also increasing. While mortality from infectious diseases has decreased significantly in Albania, the risk of sexually transmitted infections has been steadily increasing¹².

Adolescents' rights to educational skills for lifestyle and reproductive health services are not fully provided. The consequences of domestic violence and gender inequalities affect the health of women and children.¹³

The report "Adolescents and Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights in Albania" has conducted an analysis of reports, studies, existing documents related to sexual and reproductive health of adolescents in Albania being divided in two main parts: current situation and factors that affect the situation. A further section summarizes the Albanian legal framework related to children's rights, also mentioning national strategies and plans for improving the health and quality of life of children. The purpose of this report is to provide updated data and recommendations to improve the approach of public institutions and civil society to adolescent sexual and reproductive health activities in Albania, as well as to raise community awareness and public debate on sexual and reproductive health. as a human right, essential to human development.

¹¹ Susan M Sawyer ¹, Peter S Azzopardi ², Dakshitha Wickremarathne ³, George C Patton ⁴ Lancet Child Adolesc Health . 2018 Mar;2(3):223-228.doi: 10.1016/S2352-4642(18)30022-1. Epub 2018 Jan 30.

¹² http://www.ishp.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/PLANI-VEPRIMIT-PROM-SHEND_2017-2021.pdf, pg.8

¹³ https://shendetesia.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/STRATEGJIA_E_SHENDETIT_RIPRODHUES_2017-2021_Final_5_dhjetor_2016-1.pdf, pg.11

I. THE SITUATION IN ALBANIA

1. Sexually Transmitted Infections

STIs are identified as one of the leading global risks to mortality and rank second for the severity of morbidity as well as years of disability caused¹⁴. The risk of STIs increases potentially when it is known that their presence greatly facilitates the spread of HIV infection. The 2017-2018 ADHS demographic and health study states that 10% of women and 2% of men aged 15-49 report having had an STI or STI-related symptoms in the last 12 months.

On the other hand, less than half of women 44% and 28% of men who had STIs or STI-associated symptoms sought advice or treatment from a clinic, hospital, private doctor or any other health professional. Official data show that girls/women in the 15-19 age group make up 16% of those who report having STIs or STI-related symptoms. In men aged 15-19 this percentage is much lower and goes around 1.5%. However, it should be noted that many sexually transmitted infections develop without obvious signs in both men and women, but they lead to the development of serious complications¹⁵.

In Albania, it does not appear that detailed data of STIs for adolescents have been published, however, public health experts have publicly stated that sexually transmitted infections are in higher numbers than those reported, taking into account the number of people who do not declare that they are ill. Experts say that STIs are also encountered at a young age, given that in our country there are also girls or boys who have sex before the age of 15¹⁶.

2. HIV/AIDS

Albania is yet considered a country with low HIV prevalence, and existing data show that there is no generalized or concentrated epidemic of HIV infection in Albania. The prevalence of HIV infection in our country is about 0.05% (based on the population according to the 2011 Census). In 2020 alone (as of the end of November) the number of cases diagnosed with HIV infection was 81 new cases.¹⁷ Of these, 8 cases are in the 16-24 age group, bringing to 129 the total number of young people (of this age group) diagnosed with HIV. However, clinical data suggest that there is an increasing trend in the number of newly diagnosed cases and some estimates indicate a larger number of undiagnosed cases. Based on data collected by the Institute of Public Health, as of November 2020, 1,387 cases of HIV infection were registered in Albania.¹⁸ This number represents

¹⁴ Benson PJ, Smith CS. Cytomegalovirus prostatitis. *Urology* 1992; 40:165-167.

¹⁵ Hogben, Matthew, Leichter, Jami S. Social Determinants and Sexually Transmitted Disease Disparities. *Sexually Transmitted Diseases*: December 2008 – Volume 35 – Issue 12 – pp S13 – S18

¹⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q6rP8GxqeqE>

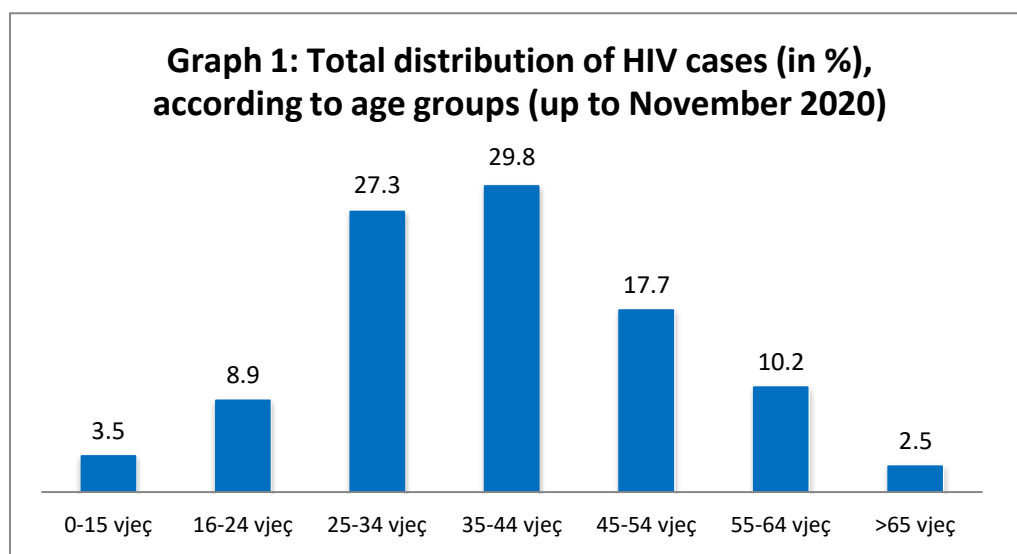
¹⁷ HIV/Aids në Shqipëri, 2020, Raport i ISHP-së

¹⁸ HIV/Aids në Shqipëri, 2020, Raport i ISHP-së

the diagnosed cases, while the projections estimate that the number of people living with HIV/AIDS in Albania is 1400.¹⁹

Table 1: Cases with HIV in Albania		
	National Total	Cases in 2020
Total	1387	81
Men	998	57
Female	389	24
Children under 15 years old	46	1
Youth (16-24 years old)	129	8
Adult	1212	72

The distribution of HIV cases by age group forms a normal distribution that shows that in our country the peak age group as 35-44 years (29.8%), followed by the age group 25-34 years (27.3%), which is a sexually active age group. The 16-24 age group accounts for 8.9% of cases²⁰, however, it should be noted that the lifestyle, since adolescence, directly affects the health problems that appear later in life.



3. Unwanted pregnancies and abortion

According to the ADHS 2017-18, less than 1% (0.7%) of women and 1.3% of men aged 15-19 have had their first sexual contact at exactly 15 years of age.²¹ The health demographic study showed that

¹⁹ Unaid Spectrum 2017

²⁰ HIV/Aids në Shqipëri, 2020, PHI Report

²¹ AHDS report 2017-18, pg 94, tab 4.5

2.8% of all women aged 15-49 years and 0.4% of women aged 15-19 years used any modern method of contraception. Unmet family planning needs among married women aged 15-19 were 27.4% and in all women in this age group were 2.3%.

It can be seen that abortions in the 15-19 age group have a downward trend from one year to the next. The abortion ratio for the 15-19 age group, analyzed in single ages, shows that for 2020 the age of 17 has the highest value of this indicator: 104 abortions per 1,000 live births.

Table 2: Number of abortions and births according to the age of the women²²

Age	2018			2019			2020		
	No. Births	No. Abortions	Ratio of abortions	No. Births	No. Abortions	Ratio of abortions	No. Births	No. Abortions	Ratio of abortions
> 15 years old	54	1	19	39	2	51	44	3	68
16	100	8	80	91	12	132	96	4	42
17	236	17	72	208	17	82	164	17	104
18	422	69	164	399	52	130	309	28	91
19 years old	696	90	129	656	74	113	646	52	80

4. Adolescent births

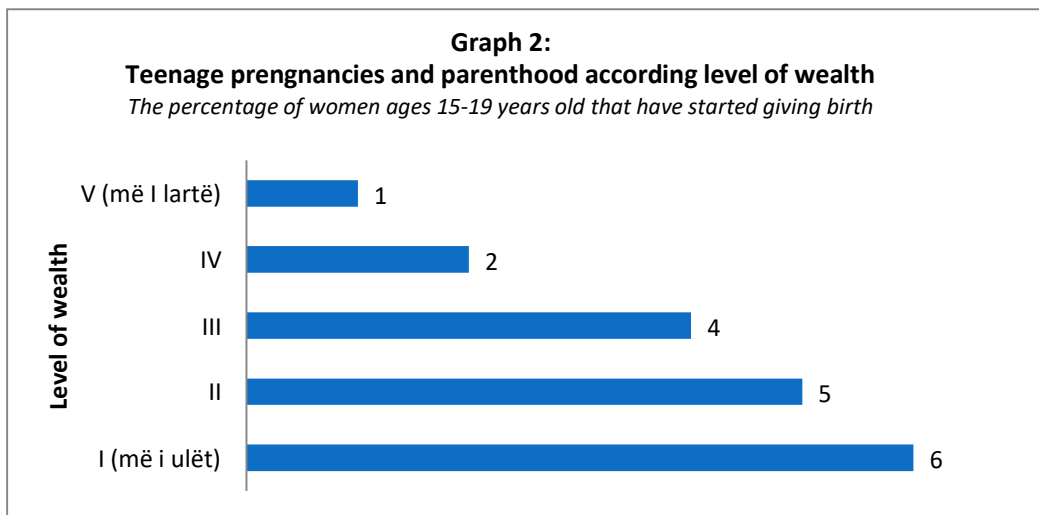
According to INSTAT,²³ the number of adolescent births in Albania from 2018-2020 decreased by 2.6% (tab.6). Meanwhile, according to ADHS 2017-2018, less than 4% of adolescents had started giving birth at the time of the survey. But it must be said that compared to the findings of the 2008-09 ADHS, the percentage of Albanian women aged 15-19 who have started giving birth has increased to 3.5% compared to 2.8% in the 2008-09 ADHS. The ADHS 2017-2018 showed that the percentage of young women who have started giving birth increases with age, from almost 1% in women aged 15 to 7% in women aged 19.

The birth rate of children is higher in rural areas (5%) compared to urban areas (3%). Meanwhile, the percentage of adolescents who have started giving birth to children is inversely proportional to the level of education. Thus 9% of women who have given birth to children have 9-year primary education compared to 1% of teenage mothers with secondary education and none of them with university or post-university education. Lower levels of economic prosperity also increase the likelihood of an early onset of childbirth: 6% of adolescents who have given birth are in the lowest

²² Source: *Women and men in Albania, 2021, INSTAT*

²³ *Women and men in Albania, 2021, INSTAT*

wealth quintile and only 1% of those in are in the highest wealth quintile.



5. Gender-based violence

Gender-based violence has deep roots in patriarchal traditions and customs in Albania. It includes rigid gender identities and roles, patriarchal abusers, respect for the system of honor and shame, habits of hierarchical orders within the family, and intergenerational control in the family.

- **Violence in the family**

In Albania, domestic violence is a problem that negatively affects women and children, as well as families and communities.²⁴ However, Albanians tend to consider domestic violence as a private, family matter, and as a normal part of marital and family life. As domestic violence often occurs behind closed doors and is not openly discussed, accepted or treated in Albanian society, victims generally suffer in silence.

In 2020, 3,333 women reported domestic violence in Albania. Cases of domestic violence reflect the number of reports made to the police, a phenomenon which can cause the death of the person. Thus in 2020, out of 52 premeditated murders, about 13.5% of them came as a result of murders due to family relationships (Article 79/c).²⁵ For 2020 it is also stated that 90 children have been victims of domestic violence, of whom 43 were boys and 47 were girls.

The 2017-2018 ADHS study shows that 5% of 15-year-olds report having witnessed domestic violence throughout their lives. The prevalence of witnessing domestic violence in the last 12 months is much higher among boys (4%) than girls (1.4%).

The report on Violence against Women and Girls in Albania (2018)²⁶ showed that “violence affects most women and girls and leads to the exposure of children to violence, especially in those families

²⁴ INSTAT, Domestic violence in Albania, a national population-based survey, 2013

²⁵ <http://www.instat.gov.al/media/8713/burra-dhe-gra.pdf>

²⁶ INSTAT (2018) Violence against women and girls in Albania, a national population-based survey, 2018

where children witness violence against their mothers and become victims of violence. direct and/or indirect domestic violence.”

- **Violence and sexual harassment**

The “Adolescent and Youth Abuse in Albania” report found that about 8% of children reported being touched/petted during their lifetime and/or in the last 12 months prior to the study, a finding significantly more prevalent in boys than in girls (during their life 13% vs. 4%, respectively, while in the last 12 months 13% vs. 3%). The overall prevalence of sexual intercourse (attempted and/or indeed experienced) was about 3% throughout the children's lifetime and/or in the last 12 months prior to the study; divided by gender: in men it was 6.5% throughout life and 6.7% in the last 12 months before the study, while in women it was 6.8% throughout life and 0.6% in the last 12 months before the study.

Meanwhile, the research study "Intimate partner violence in adolescence in Albania"²⁷, with 1036 young people aged 16-19 years, found that 22% of boys and girls interviewed have experienced some form of violence from their partner with intimate partner violence higher in girls than boys.

It is interesting to find that the pressure or coercion of a partner to have a sexual relationship is considered acceptable by 10% of adolescents. The type of violence exercised also varies depending on gender. Girls are threatened, humiliated (20% vs. 8%) or physically abused (18% vs. 6%) by their partners almost three times more often than boys.

The same study showed that sexual violence perpetrated by partners through forced touching of intimate body parts or forced sex is reported in 13% of girls and 10% of boys. Moreover, young people who have been victims of domestic violence are three times more likely to be victims of intimate partner violence²⁸ (43% of young people who have experienced domestic violence are victims of intimate partner violence). Young people who have not suffered domestic violence are victimized three times less.

Regarding the existing mentality, 64% of young people consider it acceptable to the controlling of their partner's activity on social networks, 52% consider it acceptable to determine who to associate with or not, 38% consider it acceptable to shout their your partner when they are alone and 28% find it acceptable to ignore their partner and refuse to talk to him/her.

Meanwhile, another study conducted in 2018 on sexual harassment and other types of gender-based violence in public spaces in Albania²⁹ showed that almost half of the girls and women respondents (44%) have a friend or family member who has been the subject of sexual harassment or sexual violence. 38% of them reported being at risk or having been exposed to sexual harassment or violence before or after the age of 15 years. The data also showed that sexual harassment is more

²⁷ [https://awenetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Studimi-shqip-DHUNA-N%C3%8B-](https://awenetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Studimi-shqip-DHUNA-N%C3%8B-MARR%C3%8BDH%C3%8BNIET-INTIME-N%C3%8B-ADOLESHENC%C3%8B-N%C3%8B-SHQIP%C3%8BRI.pdf)

[MARR%C3%8BDH%C3%8BNIET-INTIME-N%C3%8B-ADOLESHENC%C3%8B-N%C3%8B-SHQIP%C3%8BRI.pdf](https://awenetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Studimi-shqip-DHUNA-N%C3%8B-MARR%C3%8BDH%C3%8BNIET-INTIME-N%C3%8B-ADOLESHENC%C3%8B-N%C3%8B-SHQIP%C3%8BRI.pdf)

²⁸ Genc Burazeri, Gentiana Qirjako, Irida Agolli, Monika Kocaqi, Report “Abuse of adolescents and young people in Albania. An in-depth analysis”, supported by the UNFPA Office in Albania and funded by the Government of Sweden. (November, 2020)

²⁹ Report on sexual harassment and other types of gender-based violence in public spaces in Albania, 2019
[https://www2.unwomen.org/-](https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20albania/attachments/publications/2019/05/albanian_web.pdf?la=en&vs=353)

[/media/field%20office%20albania/attachments/publications/2019/05/albanian_web.pdf?la=en&vs=353](https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20albania/attachments/publications/2019/05/albanian_web.pdf?la=en&vs=353)

common after the age of 15. Women and girls living in centers seem to be more exposed to this type of violence.

The study "Violence against women and girls in Albania"³⁰ showed that 1.2% of women interviewed stated that they had experienced sexual violence before the age of 15, while 3.1% of women stated that they were ever sexually affected or forced to do something sexual that they did not want between the ages of 0-17.

- **Gender discrimination**

Gender discrimination is an important issue for Albania, especially in relation to selective abortion. The study "Selective abortion in Albania, 2018" published data on how in the period 1990-2017 Albania had 33,000 missing girls³¹ who were aborted because of their gender. Although the official statistics of the last four years show an improvement of the situation, still the attitudes towards boys and girls are not the same.

Even according to ADHS 2017-18, less than 5% (4.7%) of women aged 15-19 agree with the fact that there is at least one reason why a man can beat his wife. In fact, the report on violence against women and girls in Albania (2018) showed that "violence affects the majority of women and girls and leads to the exposure of children to violence, especially in those families where children are witnesses of violence against mothers and become direct and/or indirect victims of domestic violence. This finding was indicated by the large percentage of women who reported having experienced non-partner violence since the age of 15, as well as childhood violence by parents, stepfathers and siblings. Also, women exposed to non-partner violence as young as 15 were at greater risk of experiencing adult intimate partner violence. "These findings support the theory that intimate partner violence is related to domestic violence." This report also supports the fact that Albanian women and girls have little or no knowledge of the legal framework and their rights.

6. Bullying

- **Bullying in school**

Bullying in school is known as a global phenomenon, which affects a significant part of children and adolescents, thus affecting our society^{32,33}. Research shows that there is an increase in the number of students who accelerate their use of violence over the time that they are being bullied³⁴. The national study on bullying and violent extremism in the Albanian education system 2017³⁵ included 2377 students of grades IV-XII. He showed that bullying was most evident in children aged 15-16 (grade

³⁰ Violence Against Women and Girls in Albania, 2019

³¹ <https://www.togetherforlife.org.al/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Aborti-selektiv-me-baze-gjinore-ne-Shqiperi.pdf>

³² Limo, S. Bullying among teenagers and its effects, 2015.

³³ Kokkinos, E and Panayiotou, G. Predicting Bullying and Victimization Among Early Adolescents: Associations with Disruptive Behavior Disorders. 2004.

³⁴ Seo, H J, et al., et al. Factors associated with bullying victimization among Korean adolescents. Neuropsychiatric disease and treatment, 2017

³⁵ National study on bullying and violent extremism in the Albanian education system, 2017, <https://rm.coe.int/albania-study-report-on-bullying-egn/1680732872>

XI), followed by those aged 10-11.

In terms of gender, in all categories boys seem to be more involved in this phenomenon compared to girls. In inclusion practices boys identify themselves mainly as bullies (68%) and less as victims (52%); while girls in 48% feel victimized and only 32% of them identify themselves as harassing.

The most common form of bullying is reported to be psychological (45%), followed by verbal bullying (37%), physical (33%) and less virtual/cyber bullying (15%). Although no gender differences were found in the most common forms of bullying, social bullying is more prevalent in boys (24%) than in girls (15%), as well as sexual bullying (24% in boys and 13% in girls). Forms of bullying for girls who reported being bullied 2-3 times a month or more were: psychological (54%), verbal (41%), physical (34%), and sexual (18%).

About 19.4% of students have been bullied or involved in bullying at least 2 or 3 times a month. About 10% of them consider themselves victims, 5.2% admit to having bullied others and 4.3% have experienced both bullying and being a victim of it.

A higher percentage of students, about 29%, admit to being involved in bullying only once or twice a month. The forms of bullying for boys who were bullied 2-3 times a month or more were psychological (49%), verbal (49%), physical (38%) and sexual (30%).

- **Cyberbullying**

Today we live in the digital age, which of course has brought many benefits to our lives, especially facilitating and improving communication. On the other hand, this ease of communication can negatively affect the life of everyone, especially those people who spend a lot of time online, use social networks extensively, seek to make virtual friends, play, etc. Smartphones are the most used device to easily access the Internet. Children and young people who use the Internet for such purposes can sometimes be attacked by malicious people and fall prey to cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying is not just about two people (the bully and the bullied); it involves a larger group of people, many times increasing the negative effect on the bullied person. The combination of forms of bullying, such as: physical, verbal, psychological or cyber (through social networks), leads the victims of bullying to a predominantly psychological state.

The “One Click Away” study found that about 14% of children interviewed had unpleasant online experiences. Internet bullying was reported by less than 1 in 10 children³⁶, but this figure is likely underestimated, given the high levels of face-to-face bullying³⁷. The same study found that exposure to all forms of online risk increases with age. In addition, compared to girls, in most cases boys are more likely to be exposed to online risks, although girls are the ones who are most concerned about these experiences.

Of the children surveyed 6.4% reported being repeatedly abused, bullied or ridiculed by someone during the last twelve months (8% boys; 5% girls). Of these, 47.9% reported being bullied via a

³⁶ Dunja A, Gjergji O, Gvineria D, Hallkaj E, dhe Verzivoli I. 2019 Një Klikim Larg: Përvoja e përdorimit të internetit nga fëmijët në Shqipëri. UNICEF në Shqipëri & IPSOS, Strategic Marketing, Tiranë.

³⁷ Studimi kombëtar mbi bulizmin dhe ekstremizmin e dhunshëm në sistemin arsimor shqiptar, 2017, <https://rm.coe.int/albania-study-report-on-bullying-egn/1680732872>

digital device.

When asked about hate speech, 36.6% of children interviewed reported being harassed at least once because of online messages with hateful and derogatory content. This was more common among children aged 15–17 years (45%) and less common among those aged 9–11 years (27%);

Young children are more likely than adults to report physical bullying, while older children are more likely to report cyber bullying. This is probably due to the fact that adult children use the Internet and digital devices more often and longer than young children, increasing the possibility of having harmful online contacts. The fact that bullying is understood or recognized by children and young people should also be taken into consideration.

The National Survey on Bullying and Violent Extremism in the Education System in Albania (2017) showed that virtual/cyber bullying was the least prevalent form with 15% of respondents exposed to this form³⁸.

- **Obesity**

Obesity in children is associated with a number of undesirable psychological and social consequences, including relationships with peers, school experiences, poor psychological well-being. Overweight and obese adolescents are reported to be more often victimized than their average overweight peers.³⁹⁴⁰⁴¹

According to ADHS 2017-2018, in men aged 15-19, 17.8% of them are overweight and 3.7% are obese. The situation of women in the same age group is more favorable, 13.9% of women are overweight and 3.0% are obese.⁴²⁴³⁴⁴⁴⁵

Boys face more obesity bullying than girl⁴⁶s. They are more often victims of physical bullying, and numerous studies support the fact that overweight and obese male adolescents are more likely to be affected by bullying than normal weight male peers⁴⁷. Meanwhile, obese girls have more problems

³⁸ Studimi kombëtar mbi bulizmin dhe ekstremizmin e dhunshëm në sistemin arsimor shqiptar, 2017, <https://rm.coe.int/albania-study-report-on-bullying-egn/1680732872>

³⁹ Falkner NH, Neumark-Sztainer D, Story M, et al. Social, educational, and psychological correlates of weight status in adolescents. *Obes Res* 2001; 9:32–42.

⁴⁰ Gortmaker SL, Must A, Perrin JM, et al. Social and economic consequence of overweight in adolescence and young adulthood. *N Engl J Med* 1993; 329:1008–12.

⁴¹ Must A, Strauss RS. Risks and consequences of childhood and adolescent obesity. *Int J Obes Relat Metab Disord* 1999;23: S2–11.

⁴² Eisenberg ME, Neumark-Sztainer D, Story M. Associations of weight-based teasing and emotional well-being among adolescents. *Arch Pediatr Adolesc Med* 2003; 157:733–8.

⁴³ Janssen I, Craig WM, Boyce WF, et al. Associations between overweight and obesity with bullying behaviors in school-aged children. *Pediatrics* 2004; 113:1187–94.

⁴⁴ Neumark-Sztainer D, Falkner N, Story M, et al. Weight-teasing among adolescents: correlations with weight status and disordered eating behaviors. *Int J Obes Relat Metab Disord* 2002; 26:123–31.

⁴⁵ Pearce MJ, Boergers J, Prinstein MJ. Adolescent obesity, overt and relational peer victimization, and romantic relationships. *Obes Res* 2002; 10:386–93.

⁴⁶ Smith PK, Ananiadou K. The nature of school bullying and the effectiveness of school-based interventions. *Journal of Applied Psychoanalytic Studies* 2003; 5:189–209

⁴⁷ Janssen I, Craig WM, Boyce WF, et al. Associations between overweight and obesity with bullying behaviors in school-aged children. *Pediatrics* 2004; 113:1187–94.

with appearance and lack of close friendship than victimization.⁴⁸⁴⁹

7. Discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity

The 2016⁵⁰ study by the Pink Embassy and Pro LGBT, which conducted an interview including over 1400 high school students in six municipalities of the country, found that about 50% of adolescents in public high school are witnesses of discrimination of other adolescents in school (for all reasons). Such a high percentage coincides with the data reported during the years of violence and ill-treatment of children and adolescents in the pre-university education system. Meanwhile, according to the study, almost 5% of adolescents state that they are victims of discrimination because of their gender identity (real or perceived), while 4% of adolescents are victims of discrimination because of their sexual orientation. The study notes that LGBT adolescents, despite enjoying the same rights as any other adolescent in school, due to the lack of policies to protect and eliminate school violence based on homophobia and transphobia, often face difficult experience due to their gender identity or sexual orientation. Adolescent parents also state that issues related to gender stereotype in appearance (clothing colors, hair length, etc.), which are related to gender, confusion in the definition / self-determination of gender identity / sexual orientation or / and bullying are also a concerning matter.

⁴⁸ Bjorkquist K. Sex differences in physical, verbal and indirect aggression: a review of recent research. *Sex Roles* 1994; 30:177–88.

⁴⁹ Wolke D, Stanford K. Bullying in school children. In: Messer D, Millar S, eds. *Developmental psychology*. London: Arnold, 1999.

⁵⁰ Hazizaj A., Poni M. *Diskriminimi i adoleshentëve në shkollë për shkak të orientimit seksual dhe identitetit gjinor*, 2016

II. REASONS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THE SITUATION

1. Lack of information

The 2016 Shadow report on Albania⁵¹ shows that women and girls seem to have little or no knowledge of the legal health framework and their rights to access health services. The document shows that *all interviewed NGOs report/conclude that women and girls in general, and especially women from vulnerable groups (such as women with disabilities, women living in rural areas, LGBTI, Roma women , etc.), have limited or no knowledge of their health rights and do not know the laws in place.* In addition, the same report states that there is no awareness among women about sexual and reproductive health due to lack of information. Also, there are cultural barriers and attitudes, and a marked lack of necessary services and confidentiality by health staff.⁵²

Meanwhile, the study "Sexual Abuse of Children In the Circle of Trust in Albania, 2015"⁵³ reported shortcomings in the Albanian child protection system, including limited human resources and a lack of professional knowledge. The study showed that there is evidence of ethics violations by media and a lack of monitoring and punishment mechanisms. The study documented some social norms that contribute to the invisibility of child abuse in Albania, particularly the culture of violence and tolerance of violence, stigmatization and discrimination of victims, and gender discrimination.

The study "Abuse of adolescents and young people in Albania, 2020,"⁵⁴ after analyzing the situation recommends the need to increase overall community awareness and improve knowledge on sexual abuse of adolescents and young people, to change problematic attitudes and behaviors. A need for ongoing training of journalists on issues of adolescent and youth abuse, especially sexual abuse, and in particular a need to raise awareness, knowledge of, and work habits that would lead to a more responsible treatment and media empathy for cases of adolescent sexual abuse.

The report on high school students' knowledge of sexual and reproductive health⁵⁵ also highlights young people's lack of knowledge not only about the legal framework but also about issues such as HIV/AIDS that have been worked on extensively in recent decades. The report, which interviewed 200 young people from Tirana and the Lushnjë and Kukës districts, shows that a significant proportion of adolescents interviewed think that a person affected by HIV/AIDS is distinguishable by their appearance. It turns out that about half of the young people from the districts think that they can distinguish an HIV/AIDS victim in appearance compared to 20% of young people who

⁵¹ Shadow report, healthcare field - case of Albania, 2016

⁵² https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/ALB/INT_CEDAW_NGO_ALB_23255_E.pdf, pg. 32

⁵³ <https://childhub.org/sq/online-biblioteka-o-djecijoj-zastiti/raporti-i-studimit-abuzimi-seksual-ne-rrethin-e-besimit-ne>

⁵⁴ http://jotabu.al/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Abuzimi-i-adoleshenteve-dhe-te-rinjve-ne-Shqiperi_Albanian.pdf

⁵⁵ <https://www.togetherforlife.org.al/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Njohurite-e-te-rinjve-te-gjimnazeve-mpi-shendetin-seksual-dhe-riprodhues.pdf>

answered the questionnaire in Tirana. Meanwhile, the percentage of young people who do not know how to answer this question is high, with 26% of young people in the districts and 14% of young people in Tirana.

2. Lack of faith in the physician/psychologist

Young people lack trust in doctors to maintain the privacy of conversations they may have, especially regarding sexual and reproductive health. This is even more true in small communities, where doctors get to know the families of teenagers. Thus, the TFL⁵⁶ report shows that 76% of young people in the districts are not safe or think that the doctor does not maintain patient confidentiality compared to 62% of young people in Tirana.

Additionally, the lack of information on sexual and reproductive health is related to the lack of communication with the doctor. Of the young people interviewed, one in three young people in Tirana and one in four young people in the districts do not know whether the information received in their last communication with the doctor could be trusted or not. Also, one in three young people in the capital and one in five in the districts state that they have not received the necessary information from the relevant doctor.

The National Strategy for Reproductive Health states that health personnel are insufficiently trained to provide services to adolescents and that there is a lack of guidelines, protocols, and standards in place for these services.

3. Lack of communication in the family

Teenagers do not have good communication within the family on issues related to sexual and reproductive health. This situation turns out to be even worse in the Albanian capital compared to the districts. In the Adolescent Knowledge Survey (TFL, 2020), young people who participated in the survey were asked to name the three main sources of information on sexual and reproductive health issues. For young people in the districts, the mother ranks third as a source of information after school and the Internet, while in Tirana the third source of information after school and the Internet are friends, considered as such by one in three high school students. Meanwhile, in the capital less than one in five high school students communicates with the mother and less than one in twenty high school students communicates with the father, indicating the very low communication of high school students in the family regarding sexual and reproductive health with parents. It turns out that boys are even less inclined to talk to their parents about sexual and reproductive health issues. Thus, only two of the boys interviewed in Tirana have identified their parents (mother and father) as a source of information on these issues.

The lack of parent-child communication becomes clear in the answers to the question "Do you talk to your parents about sexual and reproductive health issues?" The study showed that one in three high school students in Tirana and one in four high school students in the districts included in the

⁵⁶ <https://www.togetherforlife.org.al/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Njohurite-e-te-rinjve-te-gjimnazeve-mbi-shendetin-seksual-dhe-riprodhues.pdf>

study never communicate with parents about sexual and reproductive health issues. Meanwhile, two in three high school students in the districts and one in two high school students in Tirana communicate rarely.

4. Lack of knowledge/usage of contraceptives

The Report on “Adolescents' Knowledge About Sexual and Reproductive health, 2020” asked 200 young people (100 in districts and 100 in Tirana) about the term “contraception”. In the districts, one in five young people answered that they do not understand such a term at all, while in Tirana the situation is more or less the same considering that one in seven young people stated that contraception is neither a right nor a responsibility.

Gymnasium (High School) youth were also asked about contraceptive methods. A significant portion of young people both in Tirana and in the districts think that contraceptive methods are only for girls or have no knowledge about contraceptive methods. This is especially understood in meetings with young people, where the term "contraception" or "contraceptive method" is incomprehensible to them. It is especially worrying to hear a high percentage of young people answer that they do not know who contraceptive methods are for (girls or boys), where the level of awareness goes from 44% of girls in the districts to 26% of girls who answered the questionnaire in the capital.

Regarding sexual health, according to the "Reproductive Health Strategy in Albania 2017-2021", there is a very significant imbalance in the boys/girls ratio regarding sexual intercourse. Thus, 39% of 15-year-old boys report having had sex versus 2% of girls of the same age. On the other hand, 63% of 15-year-old boys reported having used condoms during recent sexual intercourse versus 35% of girls of this age.

This strategy states that *adolescents' access to modern contraceptive methods from the public sector is difficult because this group does not attend these services because they are offered in clinics and maternity hospitals and even less in health centers in rural areas. Two other operators operating in the market also report low contraceptive use. In some cases, the data show that young people use emergency contraceptive methods incorrectly.*

The Shadow 2016 report⁵⁷ for Albania shows that “about 59% of women aged 15-49 use the natural method of withdrawal as a protective measure against pregnancy. The most commonly used modern method is the male condom (4%), followed by female sterilization (3%) and the pill (2%). The use of all other methods is less than 1%.”

5. Lack of supporting environment for the youth

According to the WHO (2018), in many countries service providers do not work towards meeting the needs and rights of adolescents. This is also stated in the "Reproductive Health Strategy in Albania 2017-2021" which states that "Health services for young people are partial and clearly not defined for the health of adolescents." The local plan of the Municipality of Tirana 2018 states that for all young people there is a lack of services for health and social orientation, such as lack of sex

⁵⁷ https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/ALB/INT_CEDAW_NGO_ALB_23255_E.pdf

education, sexually transmitted infections or other groups of health problems, for which young people have been identified. as a vulnerable group or in need of information. "Activities that raise awareness or aim at preventing health or social behaviors/risks in young people should be increased, especially in those who are in a difficult economic and social situation and in those with disabilities. There should be a monitoring and evaluation system that would improve and monitor the progress of these services, regardless of how these services exist or the way in which they are accessed by young people sporadically," the plan reads.

6. Lack of education and the role of the school

Young people who start sexual activity at an early age are more exposed to the risk of contracting an STI or becoming pregnant (in the case of girls). According to the ADHS 2017-2018, one percent of women and three percent of men aged 15-24 report having had their first sexual intercourse before the age of 15; 14% of women and 23% of men aged 15-24 report having had sex before the age of 18.

Education is an important element for early initiation of sexual activity for women: 33% of young women with 8-year primary education had their first sexual intercourse before the age of 18 compared to 14% of those with secondary education and 6% of those with university or postgraduate education. It turns out that young women in rural areas (17%) and young boys in urban areas (26%) are more likely to have started sexual activity at the age of 18 years.

Health and sex education began to be part of the Albanian education system in 1995 and since then great strides have been made, despite the challenges in securing sustainable funding, reaching out to marginalized groups and overcoming resistance from conservative segments of society. UNFPA has been one of the international organisations that has worked with the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth and other partners in Albania for almost a decade to institutionalize inclusive age-appropriate sex education as part of the 10- to 18-year-old curriculum in Albanian schools. This nationwide initiative involved developing a package of teaching materials and training teachers on sex education, with around 3,000 instructors trained so far on best practices in teaching the topic⁵⁸. However, as stated by members of the parents' boards in the schools of Tirana, but also by the media, although the schools have in their curriculum education within biology, free hours and the program of consultations with the psychologist, in the best case this is done with gender- isolated groups of boys and girls, which is wrong for both sex education, reproductive health and the treatment of sexual harassment problems⁵⁹.

The Monitoring Network against Gender-Based Violence stated in 2020 that schools appear to be closed to information that should be given to students about the phenomenon of gender-based violence⁶⁰, including domestic violence, legal remedies and existing mechanisms for prevention, protection and referral of cases of violence when they occur. The curriculum of psychologists and

⁵⁸ <https://eeca.unfpa.org/en/news/embracing-comprehensive-sexuality-education-albania>

⁵⁹ <https://top-channel.tv/2019/10/17/edukata-seksuale-ne-shqiperi-unfpa-perparime-te-medha-ne-perfshirjen-ne-shkolle/>

⁶⁰ https://portavendore.al/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/DEKLARATA-E-RRJETIT-10-Qershor-2020_compressed.pdf

social workers in schools or of clinical psychologists lacks in addressing topics on the phenomenon of sexual violence, while the boards of parents and students in schools are often ineffective and lack transparency. Schools are becoming unsafe institutions for children and the placement of school security officers did not increase school security because often the community and schools are seen as separate from each other.

7. Societal norms

The study "Men and women in Albania 2021" estimates that 46.5% of members of the community where abused women live believe that domestic violence should be tolerated to keep the family together. The physical violence experienced by women in the family is mainly seen as partially being their fault, and making public outside the family circle the experience of violence is considered shameful.

Another study on domestic violence in 2012,⁶¹ analyzed community attitudes towards domestic violence. From the in-depth discussions it was found that domestic violence against children (shouting, name-calling, slapping, pulling the ear, threats, etc.) is generally considered acceptable, arguing that this is in the best interest of the child and educational for him. While domestic violence against women is considered deeply rooted in the patriarchal mentality of the population. Female participants cite this as an unpleasant and irritating fact, while males are mostly descriptive, without expressing openly whether this is acceptable or not. 2.7% of men state that domestic violence is acceptable under any circumstances versus 1.4% of women who state this. 71% of respondents living in urban areas versus 63.9% of those in rural areas consider domestic violence as unacceptable regardless of the circumstances.

The study "Sex selective abortion in Albania, 2018" showed that gender discrimination is present and visible in general in Albanian society, in the city and even more so in the countryside. Participants from the northern areas insist that the highly patriarchal mentality and prejudice and discrimination against women is highly evident in these areas. Women say that, in fact, their role is very important in the family and beyond, but they are not properly valued for their contribution to the family and society. Often their care for the family is considered as an obligation, and not as an added value.

Meanwhile, the report on sexual harassment and other types of gender-based violence in Albania⁶² showed that the rate of reporting violence, especially when it comes to sexual harassment and/or sexual violence is low. 50% of women and girls who are at risk of bullying do not report it because they are ashamed or afraid that people will judge them or their families.

8. Internet usage

Although the number of children using the Internet is increasing and the online safety of children is a concern, there has been little systematic and comprehensive research in this regard in Albania,

⁶¹ <http://www.cp-project.al/archive/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Dhuna-ne-familje-dhe-PSh.pdf>

⁶² https://un.org.al/sites/default/files/Sexual%20HarassmentGBV%20-2018%20ALB_0.pdf

especially no research commissioned by the state.⁶³

The 2014 World Vision study on child safety in Internet use in Albania shows that "improving online safety is of paramount importance." According to the study, which included 821 children aged 13-18, 85% of them had computers at home and 62% had equipment in their rooms, while Internet cafes are widespread in both urban and rural areas. However, the devices with which young people access the Internet more are mobile phones (65%), PCs (69%), and laptops (43%).

Of those who responded, 44 percent stated that they use the Internet to view pornographic material on a daily basis, while 62 percent confirm that they have friends who visit similar sites. Harassment, password theft, and unintentional viewing of pornography occur in 45 percent of respondents every day. Further, 47 percent of young people surveyed have been contacted online by a stranger over the past year, who in 40 percent of cases was a foreigner. The level of risk within the age range of 13 to 18 is a cause for serious concern and is accompanied by low rates of online security information exchange.

Only 44 percent of children receive information about online safety from parents or from various media for reporting incidents online. This suggests a 'large technological gap between generations' in Albania. Children see parents (48%), friends (37%) and siblings (36%) as the first to report a problem, while teachers (32%) and police (27%) are the least likely people to who would report.

9. The role of media

The Media is one of the most powerful means of communication worldwide. It directly affects society and shapes it. In recent years, an increasing role in the process of informing the public in Albania is being taken by social media,⁶⁴ which provides massive amounts of controlled and uncontrolled information. Not. Such an influx of information directly affects young people, who spend a considerable amount of their time on social networks and have the Internet as their main source of information. Recent studies have shown the negative effects that social media has on young people, while "misleading them, leaving them sleepless, exposing them to bullying, gossip, unrealistic views on the lives of others and peer pressure."

Even the European Union has pointed out that unrealistic social media portrayal of life or individuals causes major problems in the mental health and well-being of young people. In Albania there are still no real studies on the impact that the Internet and social media have on young people and adolescents, however, in everyday life the situation of this age group in our country is the same as that of European young people, given the great opportunities that Albanian youth have in accessing the Internet.

On the other hand, the visual media continues to broadcast inappropriate movies or shows to children even during the day hours when they are active in front of the television. Shows that are normally broadcasted after midnight are also rebroadcasted during the day. Meanwhile, civil society organizations have raised this issue before the Audiovisual Media Authority (AMA), which

⁶³ Një klikim larg, UNICEF, 2020

⁶⁴ <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/albanien/12291.pdf>

stated that "negligence in planning broadcasting has serious consequences for the mental, physical or moral development of children."⁶⁵ Complaints from parents about hate speech issues used by the media have also reached the office of the Commissioner for Protection against Discrimination (CPD), who states that, based on the mutual agreement they have with the AMA, the complaints are sent to this authority for investigation.

⁶⁵ <http://ama.gov.al/mbrojtja-e-femijeve-nga-permbajtjet-e-demshme-audiovizive-mbetet-prioritet/>

III. LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND POLICIES

The Albanian state has adopted various laws and policies related to the protection of children from various risks, including that of losing their access to sexual and reproductive health rights.

- **The Albanian legal framework**

In the framework of child protection, Albania has adopted Law no. 18/2017 "On the Rights and Protection of the Child,"⁶⁶ which defines the rights and protection enjoyed by every child, the mechanisms and responsible authorities which effectively guarantee the exercise, the respect and promotion of these rights, as well as the special protection of the child. Article 7 of this law "Right to life" clearly states that *the protection of the child's life is guaranteed by law. The child enjoys the highest possible standards of health, treatment and rehabilitation. It states that "the right of the child to access health care institutions is guaranteed regardless of gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity and ability or economic, social and legal situation of the parents or guardian. The law also clearly states that "any child in need of health care or medical or rehabilitation treatment in an emergency, either alone or through a parent or guardian, has the right to contact health or social care institutions for this purpose."*

Article 14 also gives the child the right to *request or receive any information regarding his or her well-being, education and physical and psychological development, in accordance with applicable law.* Article 21 gives the child the right to free health care, as well as the right of access to health services. Meanwhile, Article 23 provides the child with *protection from all forms of violence, including abuse, neglect, exploitation, trafficking, hostage-taking, pornography, sexual abuse, and other forms of violence, regardless of where it is committed, as provided by law in power.* Articles 26-27 also clearly define the right of the child *to be protected from trafficking and any form of abuse and sexual exploitation, as well as from access to material with harmful or illegal content on the Internet.*

Article 35 of this law defines the duties of the National Council for the Rights and Protection of the Child, *as an advisory body established by order of the Prime Minister, on the proposal of the Minister who coordinates the work on issues of rights and protection of the child and has as its task to be the main center for the coordination and advising of state policies to guarantee the rights and protection of the child in all areas, especially those of justice, social services, education, health and culture.*

The protection of children from harmful content is also regulated by Law no. 97/2013, "On audiovisual media in the Republic of Albania."⁶⁷ Article 4/b of this law provides that the activity of audiovisual broadcasting *respects in a special way the rights, interests, and moral and legal requirements for the protection of minors.* Article 33 also stipulates that *Audiovisual Media Service Providers (AMSs) shall not broadcast pornographic programs without ensuring the protection of minors through conditional access*

⁶⁶ https://www.drejtesia.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/04_Ligj_18_2017_23.02.2017_Per_te_drejtat_dhe_mbrotjten_e_femijes.pdf

⁶⁷ https://akep.al/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Ligj_97_04032013_perditesuar_2017.pdf

and parental control devices; whereas Article 46/dh provides that the broadcasting code must ensure that in matters involving morality and ethics in programming materials, in particular the presentation of violent and sexual behavior is carried out with due care to the sensitivity of the public and the effects of such programs on moral, mental and physical development of minors. The media service providers are not allowed to broadcast programs that could seriously impair the physical, mental, or moral development of minors, in particular programs that contain pornography or present scenes of extreme and artificial violence. The media service providers are not allowed to show other programs that may impair the physical, mental and moral development of minors, unless otherwise provided, choosing the broadcast schedule or any other technical measure that the juvenile normally does not watch or listen to such broadcasts.

Sensitive changes adopted in the Criminal Code by law no. 144/2013⁶⁸, provide guarantees for the protection of children from sexual crimes (including pornography), sexual harassment and economic exploitation. The amendments focused on crimes where the victims were children, bringing Albanian criminal legislation in line with international law. In the changes made there were additions related to: sexual violence (Article 107/a) and harassment, as well as pornography (Article 117), which provides that *the production, distribution, advertising, import, sale and publication of pornographic materials in environments where have children, by any means or form, constitute criminal offenses and are punishable by imprisonment of up to two years; the production, importation, offering, making available, distributing, transmitting, use or possession of child pornography, as well as the creation of knowingly access to it, by any means or form, is punishable by three to ten years of imprisonment; recruiting, using, forcing, or persuading a child to participate in pornographic performances, or participating in pornographic performances involving children, is punishable by five to ten years' imprisonment.* All these changes to the Criminal Code are very important for the protection of children.

Since 2002, Albania has adopted Law no. 8876, "On reproductive health".⁶⁹ This law regulates the organization, functioning and supervision of all activities that take place in the field of reproductive health, in private and public health institutions, protects the reproductive rights of the individual and the couple, and ensures that the reproductive rights of each individual are protected in accordance with national laws and policies with other internationally-recognized principles.

Article 8 of this law provides that *all individuals and couples have the right to decide freely, but respecting the desire of each partner, for the time, number and interval of births, to be informed about the appropriate means of their realization, and to request the highest standards of reproductive and sexual health.*

Article 19 of this law provides that *adolescents and young people enjoy the right to information and services related to reproductive health, information and programs aimed at preventing unwanted pregnancies, abuse and everything related to their sexually active behavior, in accordance with their age.*

Article 22 also provides that *the activity of reproductive health care services includes, inter alia: c) adolescent*

⁶⁸ <https://qbz.gov.al/preview/a2b117e6-69b2-4355-aa49-78967c31bf4d>

⁶⁹ <http://www.ishp.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2015/ligjet/Per-shendetin-riprodhues.pdf>

health care; c) control and treatment of sexually transmitted HIV/AIDS; d) sexual information and education; Meanwhile, Article 44 of this law provides that *it is the Minister of Health who must provide free reproductive health and sexual education services for adolescents*, while in cooperation with the Minister of Education is obliged to issue special acts to determine the specifications regarding: a) educational and health institutions for adolescents for sex education; b) models of education programs for sexual education and protection of reproductive health.

Albania has approved law no. 9952, "On the prevention and control of HIV/AIDS."⁷⁰ This law aims to establish rules for the prevention and supervision of measures for HIV/AIDS, care, treatment and support for people living with HIV/AIDS.

Article 4/1 of this law on "Principles of prevention/control of HIV/AIDS" states that *prevention is achieved through a combination of financial, psycho-social, technical, medical and scientific measures for the prevention and control of HIV/AIDS through information, education and communication to change the behavior of individuals*. Article 12 of the law states that *everyone has the right to access information, education and communication, for the prevention and control of HIV/AIDS, while among the interested groups, who have priority for information, education and communication, for prevention/control of HIV/AIDS, are also young people (12/è)*.

Article 13/4, on the institutions responsible for information, education and communication for the prevention and control of HIV/AIDS stipulates that the *Ministry of Education and Science has the duty to introduce in the national education system curricula and textbooks for the prevention and HIV/AIDS control, combining this information with sex education and reproductive health, while point 6 of this article states that the Albanian Public Radio and Television should create space and priority for programs for information, education and communication, for HIV/AIDS prevention and control*.

Meanwhile, Article 19 provides that *the responsible persons in educational institutions ... have the duty: a) to organize continuous information on the prevention and control of HIV/AIDS*.

The law "On termination of pregnancy"⁷¹ guarantees the respect of every human being from the beginning of life. The law states that this principle is not violated, except when necessary and under the conditions set out in the law. Adherence to this principle, information on the problems of life and national demographics, education of social responsibilities, acceptance of the child in society and family policies are considered as national obligations.

Article 2 of the law states that *the health service of all levels should use family planning services as a means to avoid unwanted pregnancies. Termination of pregnancy will in no case be considered as a method of family planning*.

Meanwhile, regarding adolescents, Article 8 of this law states that *in case of extramarital pregnancy in minor girls up to 16 years, in addition to her request, the termination of pregnancy requires the approval of the*

⁷⁰ <https://shendetesia.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/35-1.pdf>

⁷¹ <https://shendetesia.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/8-1.pdf>

person exercising parental authority or her legal guardian. The request of the girl herself must be made without the presence of the persons mentioned above.

Also, Article 15 of the law provides that any kind of propaganda and advertising, directly or indirectly, in word or image, of institutions, methods, drugs and products that cause abortion, is prohibited, except in scientific publications intended for doctors and pharmacists.

The “Law on Protection against Discrimination”⁷² regulates the implementation and observance of the principle of equality in relation to gender, race, color, ethnicity, language, gender identity, sexual orientation, political, religious or philosophical beliefs, economic, educational or social status, pregnancy, parental affiliation, parental responsibility, age, family or marital status, place of residence, health status, genetic predisposition, disability, belonging to a particular group, or for any other reason. This law is very important for the protection of human rights and is the basis for the work done by the Commissioner for Protection against Discrimination.

Also, the Law "On pre-university education in the Republic of Albania" approved in 2012 has provided as grounds for discrimination and "sexual orientation". Article 5/1, although it does not include all the reasons provided in Article 1 of the Law "On Protection from Discrimination" has left sufficient space for the implementation of the latter by the pre-university education system. Article 5, which provides for the right to education, explicitly states that “1. *In the Republic of Albania, the right to education of Albanian citizens, foreigners and stateless persons is guaranteed, without being discriminated against by gender, race, color, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, political or religious beliefs, status, economic or social status, age, residence, disability or for other reasons defined in the Albanian legislation.*” The law also provides for the general principles, where Article 6/3 states that: "In the pre-university education system, students and employees are offered protection from any form of action or inaction that may cause discrimination, violence, ill-treatment or moral damage."

- **National plans and strategy**

Understandably, the Albanian state has prepared and approved several national strategies which function to support the implementation of Albanian laws and which, through their action plans, apply the mechanisms to achieve the goal. The Health Promotion Action Plan 2017-2021⁷³, the Strategic Document and Action Plan for Sexual and Reproductive Health 2017-2021⁷⁴ and the Basic Package of Services in Primary Health Care⁷⁵ also focus on the needs of adolescents. These documents are in line with the Contraceptive Safety Action Plan 2017-2021⁷⁶.

⁷² http://www.uart.edu.al/media/150329-Ligji%2010221_%202010%20per%20mbrojtjen%20nga%20diskriminimi.pdf

⁷³ http://www.ishp.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/PLANI-VEPRIMIT-PROM-SHEND_2017-2021.pdf

⁷⁴ https://shendetesia.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/STRATEGJIA_E_SHENDETIT_RIPRODHUES_2017-2021_Final_5_dhjetor_2016-1.pdf

⁷⁵ https://shendetesia.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Paketa_e_rishikuar_e_miratuar.pdf

⁷⁶ https://shendetesia.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/STRATEGJIA_KOMBETARE_TE_SIGURIMIT_TE_KONTRACEPTIVEVE_2017-2021_Shqip_Final_5_dhjetor_2016.pdf

The National Strategy for Health Promotion 2017-2021⁷⁷ has as a strategic objective the increase of the awareness of the Albanian population for health and the orientation towards a healthy lifestyle and the proper use of health services, while as a specific objective among others has the increase of the population awareness for services provided related to the early identification of health problems, including services for young people. Among the indicators set out in the strategy is also at least 50% of young people use youth-friendly health services (reproductive and sexual health, substance abuse, mental health, etc.).

Another specific objective envisages the improvement of knowledge and practices on sexual health and reproduction and family planning in the Albanian population, having as indicators:

- *50% reduction in the onset of sexual intercourse before the age of 16 years.*
- *25% increase in condom use in boys under 16 years of age.*
- *Increase in condom use in men aged 15-49 from 4% to 30%.*
- *50% increase in condom use among women aged 15 years.*
- *Increasing the use of modern family planning methods in women of reproductive age from 11% to 30%.*

This strategy focuses on young people and adolescents with the aim of empowering supportive environments and promoting effective interventions for the implementation of health education and promotion programs for a healthy lifestyle, such as: physical activity, healthy eating, violence, alcohol, tobacco, drug use, mental health, sexual and reproductive health, and family planning. The application of this program aims to increase the awareness of the population as a whole on healthy behaviors and health through health education.

Meanwhile, the Reproductive Health Strategy has four main objectives related to the sexual and reproductive health of the population according to the following areas: family planning and maternal health; the health of the newborn, infant, child and adolescent; reproductive system morbidity (tumor diseases, sexually transmitted infections, HIV and AIDS, and infertility); E-health (electronic health). Among the areas covered are Adolescent Health: *Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health, Life Skills Education, Prevention and Management of Sexually Transmitted Infections, HIV and AIDS.*

Meanwhile, the Primary Health Care Service⁷⁸ through its basic package also covers the provision of health information. It includes: *follow-up visits for teenage mothers; counseling for adolescent girls with iron deficiency, to recognize pregnant women in adolescence and to organize with them special programs for monitoring their nutritional status, ways of feeding them and treatment of nutritional problems they may have*

⁷⁷ Plani i Veprimet Të Promocionit Shëndetësor 2017-2021

⁷⁸ https://shendetesia.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Paketa_e_rishikuar_e_miraturar.pdf

during pregnancy; information and education on STIs/Syphilis/HIV/AIDS and other infections of the reproductive system (including adolescents); sexual health care including information and education on reproductive and sexual health (including adolescents) respecting gender differences.

In 2016, the National Agenda for the Rights of the Child 2017-2018⁷⁹ was defined and approved by DCM no. 372, dated 26 April 2017. Its vision is to create favorable conditions for the healthy physical and psychosocial development of children, their social inclusion and participation in all processes, based on the best interests of the child.

The agenda represents a strategic document, which expresses the priorities of state institutions in the field of children's rights, as well as, at the same time, a unified framework for monitoring the progress of the Albanian Government towards the realization of children's rights in all relevant sectors. The agenda aims to achieve the effective protection and promotion of children's rights in the Republic of Albania, implementing international and national standards in this field and promoting an integrated and comprehensive approach to children's rights.

The agenda contains three strategic pillars. *1. Good governance in order to promote, respect and protect the rights of children; 2. Elimination of all forms of violence against children; and 3. Child- and adolescent-friendly systems and services: development and education, justice, health and nutrition, and social protection.*

- **Adopted conventions and resolutions**

Albania has ratified the main conventions and protocols of the United Nations and the Council of Europe, which emphasize that children enjoy full rights due to the features they have: lack of physical and intellectual maturity, and the need for protection and special attention by family and state institutions.

Albania has been a party to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child since 1992. Ratification of the third Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the "Communication Procedure" sheds light on the fact that Albania recognizes that children are subject to full rights and gives them the opportunity to seek solutions at the international level as well. The purpose of the Protocol is to strengthen the protection and promotion of the rights of the child and of their fundamental freedoms.

In 2013, the Albanian Parliament adopted the Resolution "On the protection and respect of children's rights in Albania"⁸⁰ (decision No. 63 dated 26.11.2013). In this decision of the parliament, among other things, support for the initiative was declared and a request from the civil society was made to create the Parliamentary Group for the Protection of the Rights of the Child, as an ad-hoc advocacy group of parliamentarians, which will encourage the Albanian Parliament to reviewing initiatives and actions in support and protection of children's rights in Albania. As a result, in November 2014, the Parliamentary Group "Friends of Children" (GDMF) was established, a

⁷⁹ <https://childhub.org/sq/online-biblioteka-o-djecijoj-zastiti/agjenda-kombetare-te-drejtat-e-femijeve-2017-2020>

⁸⁰ https://www.parlament.al/Files/sKuvendi/Femijet/rezoluta_per_mbrojtjen_e_femijeve.pdf

voluntary parliamentary group of deputies which is not of a political nature. It is composed of MPs from all parliamentary groups who express the desire to contribute to addressing the rights of children and their realization in an effective way during the exercise of legislative functions of the Assembly, parliamentary control and during the discussion and approval of the state budget. This grouping is an added value to support and collaborate with all partners and groups of society involved and children themselves in the field of children's rights and their respect. GDMF consists of 50 deputies and is organized in six committees as follows:

- Juvenile Justice Commission
- Commission for cooperation with NGOs
- Committee on Child Health and Welfare
- Commission for children placed in public institutions
- Committee for budgeting for children
- Commission for the Protection of Children from Violence.

The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence aims to protect all women, including girls under the age of 18, from all forms of violence and to prevent, prosecute, and eliminate violence against women and domestic violence. It aims to develop a comprehensive policy framework and protection and assistance measures for all victims of violence, given that *women and girls are often exposed to serious forms of violence, such as domestic violence, sexual harassment, rape, marriage forced, crimes committed in the name of so-called "honor" and mutilation of the genitals, which is a serious violation of the rights of women and girls and the main obstacle to achieving equality between men and women.*

The Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual⁸¹ Exploitation and Sexual Abuse is the first treaty to address the protection of children against sexual abuse and exploitation. It aims to: prevent and combat child sexual abuse; protect the rights of child victims of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse; and promote national and international cooperation against the sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children.

The convention came as a necessity in the face of the challenges posed by technological development. It states that each state takes the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that children, during primary and secondary education, receive information on the risks of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse as well as on means of self-defense, adapted to their developmental level. This information provided in collaboration with parents, as appropriate, will be provided within a more general context of information about sexuality paying particular attention to risky situations, in particular the risks associated with new information and technology technologies.

The Convention mentions the sexual abuse of children, offenses related to their prostitution, offenses related to pornography, offenses related to the participation of a child in pornographic

⁸¹ <https://rm.coe.int/168046e1e3>

performances (recruitment of children), corruption of children and their use for sexual purposes. The Convention was ratified by Albania with Law no. 10 071, on 9 February 2009 and entered into force on 1 July 2010.

The Council of Europe Convention on Cybercrime (Budapest Convention)⁸² penalizes offenses committed through computer systems, including sexual exploitation. This convention was ratified by Law no. 8888, on 25 April 2002 and the Additional Protocol by Law no. 9262, July 29, 2004, "On the ratification of the Additional Protocol to the Convention on Cybercrime, on the criminalization of acts of a racist and xenophobic nature committed through computer systems". Article 9 of this convention specifically provides for "Offenses related to child pornography". It states that *each Party shall adopt such legislation and other measures as may be necessary to establish as criminal offenses under its domestic law, when committed intentionally or unlawfully, in the following ways:*

- a) *the production of child pornography, for the purpose of its distribution through a computer system;*
- b) *providing or making available child pornography through a computer system;*
- c) *distributing or transmitting child pornography through a computer system;*
- d) *procurement of child pornography through a computer system for itself or for another*
- e) *possession of child pornography through a computer system or in a computer data storage device.*

Albania is also part of the Global Alliance against Sexual Abuse of Children on the Internet⁸³, established on December 5, 2012. The Alliance aims to raise worldwide standards and join efforts worldwide to better combat online sex crimes against children. It brings together 54 countries that are committed to taking concrete action to improve victim protection, identify and prosecute offenders, raise awareness, and reduce the availability of child pornography online and the re-victimization of children.

⁸² <https://qbz.gov.al/eli/ligj/2002/04/25/8888>

⁸³ https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/cybercrime/fight-against-child-sexual-abuse/we-protect-global-alliance-end-child-sexual-exploitation-online_en

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

After an analyses of the situation on Albania toward sexual and reproductive health rights of adolescents, the following key points need to be emphasized. They include the necessity for several actions in the following years to achieve the best results in this regard.

- The Internet and school turn out to be the main sources of information about sexual and reproductive health for adolescents. Although the family should play an important role when talking about such sensitive issues, in reality it does not provide the necessary educational information for adolescents to understand their body and sexuality, as 85% of adolescents' declare they speak "rarely" or "never" with their families on sexual and reproductive health issues. Therefore, by using the internet as a tool, it is necessary to ensure the increased accurate and safe online information about sexual and reproductive health for adolescents. This can be done through online platforms backed by information from health and education professionals, to provide safe and secure information corner for them. Reports indicate that family physicians are not seen as a reliable source of support by adolescents due to the stigma that still surrounds sexual and reproductive health in Albania (they fear that physicians / health providers will discuss their questions / problems with their family members or between them). This means that teens prefer to communicate with sources anonymously, therefore, secure online corners can provide them with the information they want.
- Adolescents lack information about STIs and do not use contraceptive protection as well as have a low understanding of "contraception". Although nowadays sexual activity starts earlier and there are many cases they have sex with others who are not their partners, teenagers generally do not use contraceptive methods. This raises the urgent need to include sexual and reproductive health education in school curricula as compulsory, rather than an elective subject matter, given the stigma attached to these issues. Also, since sexual and reproductive health issues in most cases in schools are discussed in separate groups of boys/girls or in groups only with girls and not at all with boys, the need arises to train school staff, as such a division brings problems to the mentality of each of these groups.
- It is recommended that schools pay more attention to the inclusive age-appropriate sex education of young people, in order to have as much impact as possible on their future. It is also important to initiate national awareness campaigns on sexual and reproductive health issues and STIs. Such campaigns would help reduce the stigma

towards these issues, but would also contribute to improving the health and well-being of adolescents.

- Several studies show that there is a lack of understanding within the Albanian population about the sexual harassment and sexual violence (or harassment and violence as a broad term) and also a wide stigma toward the victims of sexual harassment and sexual violence. As a patriarch society, the woman was seen as weak, that must serve and obey the opposite gender. So, many young girls and women are not able to understand when they should feel violated, harassed and/or bullied and what the different forms of violation, harassment and bullying are. It is necessary to have a multidimensional approach toward the issues related to sexual harassment and violence as well, stigma and access to services. There is also an urgent need to increase the capacity of school staff on these issues, in order for these institutions to play their full role in educating the younger generation, especially as one of the main sources of information on sexual and reproductive health.
- Civil society has a special contribution in the changes of the community mindset. So, it would be a good idea to work toward supporting capacity building activities for the civil society organizations, especially those working with youth, to be enabled toward parenting programs, given the lack of communication within the family regarding sexual and reproductive health issues. The civil society organizations that work on community level should be encouraged to work with parents and teenagers to break down the taboos that exist in the communication between parents and children. The increased communication parent-child will not only contribute to lower the stigma, but will also contribute to strengthen the families now and in the future as a better understanding of sexual and reproductive health and rights is necessary for future parents to respect each other individuality.
- STIs and the health consequences that result from them are increasingly causing serious public health problems worldwide. Meanwhile, in our country there is a high resistance of the population to seek medical help in cases of sexually transmitted infections, a higher resistance in men than in women (less than half of women 44% and 28% of men who had STIs or symptoms associated with STIs, sought advice or treatment from a clinic, hospital, private doctor or any other health professional). Consequently, greater attention is required from public health institutions, such as the Institute of Public Health, to increase public awareness of the serious impact that sexually transmitted infections have on their lives.

REFERENCES

- World Health Organization (2008). Sexual and reproductive health
- Facts on the sexual and reproductive health rights of young people in Cyprus
- UNFPA, Parent Booklet
- UNHCR, Gender Based Violence
- Ministry of Health and Social Protection, Brochure: Sexual Violence for Professionals
- ChildSafeNet
- Susan M Sawyer, Peter S Azzopardi, Dakshitha Wickremarathne, George C Patton: Lancet Child Adolesc Health . 2018 Mar;2(3):223-228.doi: 10.1016/S2352-4642(18)30022-1. Epub 2018 Jan 30.
- Benson PJ, Smith CS. Cytomegalovirus prostatitis. Urology 1992; 40:165–167.
- Hogben, Matthew, Leichter, Jami S. Social Determinants and Sexually Transmitted Disease Disparities. Sexually Transmitted Diseases: December 2008 – Volume 35 – Issue 12 – pp S13 – S18
- ISHP, HIV/Aids në Shqipëri, 2020
- UNAIDS Spectrum 2017
- AHDS report, 2008-09
- AHDS report, 2017-18
- INSTAT, Women and Men in Albania, 2021
- INSTAT, Domestic violence in Albania, a national population-based survey, 2013
- INSTAT, Violence against women and girls in Albania, a national population-based survey, 2018
- AWEN, Violence in intimate relationships in adolescence in Albania, 2019
- Genc Burazeri, Gentiana Qirjako, Irida Agolli, Monika Kocaqi, Report “Abuse of adolescents and young people in Albania. An in-depth analysis ”, supported by the UNFPA Office in Albania and funded by the Government of Sweden, 2020
- UN Women, Report on sexual harassment and other types of gender-based violence in public spaces in Albania, 2019
- Violence Against Women and Girls in Albania, 2019
- TFL, Knowledge of high school youth in Albania on sexual and reproductive health, 2020
- TFL, Sex selective abortion in Albania, 2018
- Limo, S. Bullying among teenagers and its effects, 2015.
- Kokkinos, E and Panayiotou, G. Predicting Bullying and Victimization Among Early Adolescents: Associations with Disruptive Behavior Disorders. 2004.

- Seo, H J, et al., et al. Factors associated with bullying victimization among Korean adolescents. *Neuropsychiatric disease and treatment*, 2017
- Dragoti E., Ismaili E., National study on bullying and violent extremism in the Albanian education system, 2017
- Dunja A, Gjergji O, Gvineria D, Hallkaj E, dhe Verzivolli I. 2019 One Click Away: The experience of children using the internet in Albania. UNICEF in Albania & IPSOS, Strategic Marketing, Tirana.
- National study on bullying and violent extremism in the Albanian education system, 2017
- Falkner NH, Neumark-Sztainer D, Story M, et al. Social, educational, and psychological correlates of weight status in adolescents. *Obes Res* 2001; 9:32–42.
- Gortmaker SL, Must A, Perrin JM, et al. Social and economic consequence of overweight in adolescence and young adulthood. *N Engl J Med* 1993; 329:1008–12.
- Must A, Strauss RS. Risks and consequences of childhood and adolescent obesity. *Int J Obes Relat Metab Disord* 1999; 23: S2–11.
- Eisenberg ME, Neumark-Sztainer D, Story M. Associations of weight-based teasing and emotional well-being among adolescents. *Arch Pediatr Adolesc Med* 2003; 157:733–8.
- Janssen I, Craig WM, Boyce WF, et al. Associations between overweight and obesity with bullying behaviors in school-aged children. *Pediatrics* 2004; 113:1187–94.
- Neumark-Sztainer D, Falkner N, Story M, et al. Weight-teasing among adolescents: correlations with weight status and disordered eating behaviors. *Int J Obes Relat Metab Disord* 2002; 26:123–31.
- Pearce MJ, Boergers J, Prinstein MJ. Adolescent obesity, overt and relational peer victimization, and romantic relationships. *Obes Res* 2002; 10:386–93.
- Smith PK, Ananiadou K. The nature of school bullying and the effectiveness of school-based interventions. *Journal of Applied Psychoanalytic Studies* 2003; 5:189–209
- Bjorkquist K. Sex differences in physical, verbal and indirect aggression: a review of recent research. *Sex Roles* 1994; 30:177–88.
- Wolke D, Stanford K. Bullying in school children. In: Messer D, Millar S, eds. *Developmental psychology*. London: Arnold, 1999.
- Hazizaj A., Poni M. Discrimination of adolescents in school due to sexual orientation and gender identity, 2016
- Shadow report, healthcare field - case of Albania, 2016
- Terre des Hommes, Study Report "Sexual Abuse in the Circle of Trust in Albania", 2015
- Ending Violence Against Woman, Adolescent and Youth Abuse in Albania, An In-Depth Analysis, November 2020

- Public Request of the Monitoring Network against Gender Based Violence for serious reflection of institutions and taking some urgent measures, June 2020
- Data Centrum, Basic Study Report on Domestic Violence and the Albanian State Police, 2012
- Fridriech Ebert Stiftung, Social media and their use by Albanian media, 2015
- Law no. 18/2017 "On the rights and protection of the child"
- Law "On Reproductive Health"
- Law no. 97/20131 "On audiovisual media in the Republic of Albania"
- Law No. 9952, "On the prevention and control of HIV / AIDS"
- Law No. 8045, "On termination of pregnancy"
- Law No. 10 221, "On protection from discrimination"
- National contraceptive insurance strategy 2017-2021
- Reproductive health strategy 2017-2021
- Health Promotion Action Plan 2017-2021
- Basic package of services in primary health care, 2018
- National Agenda for the Rights of the Child 2017-2020
- Resolution on child protection
- Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse
- We Protect, Global Alliance to end child sexual exploitation online