

Executive Summary

2020 (Work Plan) Review of the Programme of Cooperation for Sustainable Development 2017-2021

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I. Introduction

The present United Nations report provides information on implementation priorities, progress and challenges, budget and delivery, covering the period 1 January to 31 August 2020, under the four year implementation of the Government of Albania and United Nations Programme of Cooperation for Sustainable Development (PoCSD) 2017-2021. Continuing on the 'Deliver as One' path, 8 resident and 9 non-resident agencies of UN Albania combined their expertise and experience in support of Albania's development priorities, providing more coherence, better results and greater impacts in the country.

Joint implementation efforts with the Government of Albania and various stakeholders supported acceleration of achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the country. UN Albania interventions in 2020 are assessed and matched against the SDG targets. Contribution to specific SDGs and targets is highlighted in each output slide. Financial contribution to SDGs is presented in slide 70, while general information on SDG progress in the country, supported by UN agencies in Albania, is presented in slide 74 of this report. An assessment of gender equality and human rights focused activities in SDGs is presented in slide 72, indicating strong presence in SDG 1, 16, 10 5 and 8.

The report also features a slide on UN Communication and Visibility efforts in the country. Both this report and its executive summary will be published in the UN Albania website (www.un.org.al) and results/progress will be shared with the Albanian citizens through UN Albania social media platforms.

Financial reporting, including available budget, funding gap and expenditures, is presented in several slides in this report. Implementation of PoCSD for the period 1 January – 31 August 2020 aimed at a budget of USD 51 million, with 90 percent supported by government and development partners in the country, and also sub-regionally, regionally and global. The biggest contributing development partners are the EU, USA, Switzerland, Italy, UK, Sweden and Norway. As the measures put in place for the COVID-19 pandemic slowed significantly the implementation of activities, by end August 2020, the programme reached 25 percent delivery.

Key milestones and challenges from implementation, for the period 1 January – 31 August 2020, in each of the four PoCSD outcomes are presented immediately below, followed by an account of UN agencies support to the COVID-19 response in the country.

II. Implementation Milestones

OUTCOME 1—GOVERNANCE AND RULE OF LAW

Human Rights

The Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, in collaboration with other ministries and institutions, is enabled to provide evidence, monitor progress, coordinate and report on the implementation of recommendations from International Human Rights Conventions, Treaties and regular National Reports. The year 2020 saw the preparation of the CEDAW 5th periodic State Report and a report to the Secretariat of the Monitoring mechanism of the Istanbul Convention on measures undertaken by Albania to address gender-based violence during the COVID-19 pandemic, while the monitoring continues of the NAP implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on "Women, Peace and Security".

The Parliament and HR institutions have improved their role in protecting and promoting human rights, non-discrimination and providing equal access to justice for vulnerable populations. Key milestones include the Parliament's approval of the Child Rights resolution, highlighting the Parliament areas of focus for 2020 and demanding from several relevant ministries to step up actions in fulfilling the rights of children in various areas, and organization of a hearing session between the Parliament's "Friends of Children" group and MoESY and MoHSP to inquire about measures put in place in guaranteeing the rights of the child considering the new challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The People's Advocate developed a child-friendly Handbook on Human Rights, focused on Child Rights, as well as issued several public calls (soft forms of recommendations) to authorities for ensuring child rights during the COVID-19 pandemic. A collaboration PA-CPD to improve access to justice for vulnerable and marginalized groups resulted in upgrading a study on minimum subsistence and providing recommendations to responsible state institutions to respond accordingly as well as preparing a study on customers in need status, aiming to strengthen the legal framework in fighting all forms of discrimination and inequality in accessing basic services.

The protection monitoring system is strengthened with focus on access to territory and asylum for refugees, enhancement of pre-screening tools in the border areas and promoting non-discriminatory practices for asylum seekers and refugees. In this regard, the People's Advocate and UNHCR conducted regular protection monitoring visits at border areas as well as advocated for improvements in several areas. 238 government authorities capacitated on successes and challenges of implementing the new Law on Civil Status. 199 persons at risk of statelessness, out of which 106 cases of R/E origin, benefitted from provision of legal/administrative assistance. The Joint Coalition on Children and Statelessness identified new area for collaboration- set-up a statelessness determination procedure to protect stateless persons as per Albania's pledge at the 2019 High Level Segment on Statelessness.

Through UN support, INSTAT advanced in providing data that supports Human Rights work in Albania and evidences the progress. A collaboration PA-INSTAT to strengthen gender statistics and SDGs resulted in INSTAT publication “Women and Men in Albania, 2020” that includes for the first time a Human Rights section, based on PA’s data on complaints related to human rights violations in Albania, disaggregated by gender and relevant issues of complaint. This cooperation was formalized with a MoU, to be developed into a Work-Plan. INSTAT published at least 80 indicators focused on children, adolescents and young people in Albania, most are released for the first time, comprising an important achievement in terms of official statistics generation intended for decision makers to inform policies and actions as well as for public information.

Anti-corruption & Rule of Law

Rule of Law and public order institutions were enabled to address corruption, fight against organized crime, and reduce firearms misuse and illicit trafficking, including for cultural property. Tirana International Airport Air Cargo Control Unit is operational, SoPs are in place to enhance cargo security and harmonize national and international standards and TIA ACCU officers increased knowledge on countering trafficking, smuggling, methods of concealment, rip-on/rip-off phenomenon, Intellectual Property Rights and risk analysis. By end August 2020, total seizures from ACCU and PCU included: 32.000 undeclared Euro, a gun, and 25.5kg of chocolate shaped marijuana. The publication of independent evaluation of the *Regional Anti-corruption Initiative RAI-UNODC joint SEE Regional Programme on Strengthening the Capacity of Anti-corruption Authorities and Civil Society to Combat Corruption and Contribute to UN Convention against Corruption Review Process* improved accountability for anti-corruption efforts undertaken and learning for future strategic decisions on programme work in Western Balkans, including Albania. Albanian Forensic Lab revised SOPs for firearm criminal investigation and improved the technological base for forensic examination. Professionals from MoC, Law Enforcement Agency, Border Police and other relevant partners increased capacities on illicit trafficking of cultural properties under the newly approved *Regional Programme on Fighting against the illicit trafficking of cultural property in WB6*. The 2019 report of the Trust in Governance opinion poll finalized and launched.

Efforts for the return of Albanian Citizens from Conflict Zones have advanced with the preparation of a Plan for the Return of Albanian Citizens from Conflict Zones and Reintegration Research / Baseline Assessment for the reintegration of returning foreign fighters and their families, assessing the special needs of women, men boys and girls. In addition, under the coordination of CCCVE - Coordination Center for Countering Violent Extremism a multidisciplinary working group was established (May) on the reintegration assistance to FTF and their families tailored to their specific needs. 100 humanitarian packages procured and supplied to CCCVE.

The public services reform in Albania progressed with further consolidation of citizen-centric public service delivery. In this regard, the co-location of central government service windows by ADISA was enabled in municipal one-stop-shops in four additional municipalities (Mat, Pogradec, Roskovec and Ersekë), bringing the overall number to 11. Mystery Shopper assessment report of service delivery performance in central government institutions is issued, inclusive of recommendations and identification of winners of 2019 Public Services Excellence Awards - ADISA as the top institution followed by the General Road Transportation Service Directorate and the National Employment Service (SHKP Devoll and ADISA Krujë as the top performing branches). ADISALab is enabled on adopting experimentation as a tool for innovation in citizen-centric public service delivery in Albania.

Integrity Planning efforts advanced with completion of Integrity Planning in six municipalities and finalization of the Roadmap on further extension of the Integrity Plan through the Integrity Risk assessment methodology. The Ministry of Justice has in place its own Ministry’s integrity plan for implementation.

Local Governance

The project *Consolidation of Territorial and Administrative Reform (STAR 2)* is completed reaching by end of August 2020 a cumulative expansion of OSSIS to 48 municipalities and 14 administrative units out of a target of 50 as well as successful conclusion of a second round of Local Governance Mapping. A new STAR 3 project is under development, supported by a broad partnership and sufficient resource mobilization, to strengthen local democracy, expand OSSIS to all administrative units of 50 municipalities and build capacities of central and local officials in the area of local governance.

National advocacy platforms to monitor planning and implementation of reproductive services and rights, focused on vulnerable groups and key populations, expanded at municipal level: “Youth voice” platform established in 2 additional municipalities, bringing the overall number to 12; Youth voice “Media platform” established in two additional municipalities, bringing the overall number to 9 and media reporting on SRH and youth improved in the first half of 2020 – 50% increase in published articles vs. same period last year; Youth education and SRH budgeted for in two additional municipalities, bringing the overall number to 9. JoTabu portal, apps and Facebook page had a total reach of 236,000 people.

Access to Justice

All stakeholders are enabled to implement the relevant legal and policy frameworks through UN support on institution building, capacity development, establishment of IMS, promotion of inter-disciplinary collaboration for case management, establishment of FLA centers,

development of SOPs, improvement of legislation and provision of information about rights. Key milestones in 2020 include (i) formulation of the workplan of the National Strategy on the Legal Education of the Public with due attention to child rights; (ii) development of case management systems and practical working tools, instrumental to effective and efficient implementation of the FLA Law, by the FLA Directorate at MoJ; (iii) official approval (MoJ, NAIS) of ToRs for establishment of the online Integrated System of Data on Criminal Justice for Children and NGO contracted for implementation; (iv) mapping of the Albanian criminal legislation vs. the UN International Classification of Crimes is being prepared by INSTAT and other administrative authorities. As a result, 1,153 people in need benefited from FLA services provided by three revitalized FLA centres in District Court of Fier, Lezhe and Durres and two FLA Centers in Peshkopi and Shkoder; Berat and Gjirokaster Police Departments equipped with child-friendly interview units to conduct interviews per the legal standards, while 5 other departments are being completed with construction works, equipment, training and furniture supply; 119 children in contact with the law benefited from psychological, legal, mediation and socio-economic reintegration services in Berat and Gjirokaster; 43 professionals in Berat and Gjirokaster participated in capacity-building workshop in handling cases of children in conflict/contact with the criminal law and 375 students participated in various workshops organized to support them with skills in resolving conflicts peacefully.

Unaccompanied or separated children (UASC) continue to be at the center of support efforts. Two emergency/coordination round table meetings held (Aug.-Sept.) to address the situation with the increased number of unaccompanied foreign minors, who are identified and intercepted in the Albanian territory and are at risk of trafficking and smuggling, and specific actions are identified for implementation within 2020. 103 UASC identified at borders by Caritas Albania and People's Advocate (partners of UNHCR); 8 children identified as unaccompanied foreign minors (from Egypt) at immediate risk of trafficking and accommodated in UNICEF-supported emergency shelter "House of Colors"; 24 minors have been assisted by Caritas Albania (with UNHCR funding) in Erseka Social Center (8 minors) and "Fshati I Paqes" in Shkoder (16 minors).

Gender Equality & GRB

Greater usage of gender statistics by different players at national and local level was enabled to inform advocacy, research, policies, and programmes. The workshop "users-producers of gender statistics with Ombudsman" resulted in the preparation of gender data tables that fed into INSTAT's annual "Women and Men Publication 2020". SDG gender related indicators definition of metadata revised, aiming to increase the number of these indicators measured in INSTAT dashboard. INSTAT's annual SDG report prepared, including recommendations to increase the number of SDG gender-related indicators presented in the report and respective data values. In the framework of NSDI III preparation, a mapping of SDG gender related indicators was conducted and used in several workshops to present the current situation of data-collection of gender statistics and responsible institutions that collect gender statistics and compute gender indicators. A Rapid Gender Assessment during COVID-19 situation conducted based on a nationally representative sample of 1,300 respondents. Two analysis conducted - Policy Scanning and Private Sector Scanning - aiming for implementation of family friendly policies by the private sector, first time in Albania, and promotion of gender equality.

Migration & Asylum

As of 30 June, UNHCR and partners recorded 4,552 arrivals and 2,095 asylum requests. Despite closure of borders for 2.5 months, this is still a higher number of arrivals compared to same period in 2019 – mostly due to upticks in mixed movements pre-COVID (e.g. 1,521 arrivals in February). UNHCR engaged closely with government counterparts early in the year on the development of emergency plans (in case of sustained arrivals) and contingency plans (in case of sudden further increases). Discussions particularly focused on reception capacities, as during February the National Reception Centre for Asylum-Seekers (NRCAS) reached its maximum occupancy on several occasions.

During the reporting period, UN agencies supported the strengthening of national frameworks and systems of preparedness and response through supporting the implementation of the National Strategy on Migration (2019-2022) and Action Plan; signing a MOU between UNHCR and MOI on closer operational cooperation on all relevant asylum-matters, supporting fulfilment of Albania's pledges at the Global Refugee Forum and High-Level Segment on Statelessness and allowing for greater data-sharing between the two entities; providing comments and recommendations to draft Laws on Asylum and Law on Citizenship; providing inputs on MOI draft Regulation for the National Reception Centre for Asylum-Seekers (NRCAS) and reaching agreement for the Centre to receive a full renovation and dedicated premises to host UASC and persons with specific protection needs, as well as a 24/7 police presence to address security concerns. Moreover, year 2020 saw the establishment of the Registration and Temporary Accommodation Centre for irregular migrants in Kapshtica, Korçë, 60 persons capacity; improved conditions for children, women and girls in vulnerable situation in the reception facilities in two Registration and Temporary Accommodation Centres for irregular migrants in Albania as well as increased availability and access to sanitary services in the context of the COVID-19 situation; counselling on Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) from Albania provided to 3,982 irregular migrants; 16 UASC supported by ARSIS and provided with shelter, assistance and psycho-social support.

Health

The health system framework was further strengthened in 2020 with (i) the evaluation of National Health Strategy 2016-2020, (ii) rapid assessment of COVID-19 impact to NCD Prevention & Early Detection Programmes in PHC, (iii) revision of Law on Reproductive Health Emergency preparedness and response, (iv) preparation of the PDNA (Health Chapter), (v) pilot study and training on “the First Few X (FFX) Pandemic Influenza A (HxNy) Cases and Contact Investigation Protocol”, (vi) MoHSP Emergency Operation Plan, Influenza Hospital Preparedness and Response Plan and Emergency Operation Plan of the National Centre of Medical Emergency, (vii) revision of 2020 national data on monitoring child growth and infant and young child feeding practices and preparation of bottleneck analysis with representatives of National and Regional Health Operator Structures, (viii) revision and approval of the Universal Salt Iodization Law no 12/2020, (ix) analysis of regulatory framework on food standards in school settings and unhealthy food marketing to school age children along with secondary analysis of nutrition status and nutrition knowledge, attitudes and practices among school age children in Albania, (x) assessment of HIV & TB central/regional laboratories, 7 guidelines on TB & HIV care and ToT, Protocol on “Estimating the size of key populations at risk to HIV in Albania”, PHC Strategy (draft) and revision of PHC Standards, (xi) training of over 500 health professionals trained on various health-related issues.

Education and Culture

The education sector saw increased efforts in advancing data and research to inform sector policies. In this regards, the new Education Strategy is drawing from findings of (i) UNICEF-prepared study on Albania’s assessment and evaluation system with OECD; (ii) UNESCO’s comparative interdisciplinary analysis of SDG 4 in SEE with focus on Albania; and (iii) PDNA exercise UNICEF-inputs used for emergency and recovery planning within the new sector strategy. Moreover, school practices improved to promote quality inclusion and equity. Implementation of a positive behaviour intervention program to combat violence in schools resulted in capacity development of 700 teachers, which benefited directly 1,250 children. Drop-out mechanism for early interventions are made part of the professional development networks for teacher training and inspection guidelines, with 600 teachers trained by end Q32020. Model online classes prepared, facilitating teachers’ delivery of online CSE classes all over the country. 300 teachers trained in inclusive preschool education, while the standards and assessment for preschool directors is being developed jointly with ASCAP. An optional learning module on negotiations and dispute prevention skills for general high schools and VET students is being developed in collaboration with ILO-International Training Center in Turin and (ASCAP).

The culture sector will benefit from the implementation of the new regional EU-UNESCO project “Fight against illicit trafficking of cultural properties in Western Balkans” (approx. 3 million euro), where Albania is one of the six beneficiaries to enhance capacities of professionals to fight this phenomena. Moreover, a new project “Digitization of the archive of the National Institute for Cultural Heritage and the establishment of a protocol for emergency evacuation of the archive” started implementation for the period August – December 2020.

Social Inclusion & protection

Establishment of municipal social services for vulnerable people is advancing: costed social care plans are being developed for 21 municipalities; 50 municipalities capacitated to use MIS for social care services; 7 municipalities supported through Social Fund grant scheme to introduce innovative social care services at local level; 2 municipalities developed local youth action plans; 10 municipalities benefited from technical assistance/mentoring in applying GRB within MTBP 2021-2023; 6 municipalities and rural administrative units conducted participatory practices for GRB by involving local CSOs to engage the community and vulnerable women. 60 consultations held with participation of 739 women discussing needs/priorities.

Capacity development continued throughout the year: 20 CSOs trained on integrated social care services sector planning and expenditure monitoring and are currently being supported and mentored to prepare 6 Gender Budget Watchdog reports; 157 municipal staff trained on new legislation on social care services and their tasks and duties; capacities of 6 municipalities strengthened through training/mentoring for development of social care plans, accessing Social Fund and using MIS on social care services; Online trainings on Local Finances and Gender responsive budgeting held with 8 Municipalities.

Vulnerable groups empowered to demand their rights and hold institutions accountable for quality delivery of social care services. In this regard, the policy framework on inclusive policies is further developed: four draft bylaws of the Law 93/2014 on Inclusion of and Accessibility for PWD drafted, National Action Plan on PWD 2016-2020 revised, National Action Plan on the Integration of R/E 2021-2023 drafted with a particular focus on integrated social care services reaching the most vulnerable individuals and families, and 32 draft legal acts/ by-laws on social housing drafted and consulted (17 approved; 15 pending approval). Quality community-based services for PWD delivered in 9 municipalities. 4 new community-based services will be established and implemented in Kruje, Maliq, Korce, Vlore. Over 2,750 R&E, PWD, women and youth enjoy increased access to services and over 2,000 received quality social care services. 7 awareness sessions promoted/expanded the community-based model for quality integrated Sexually Reproductive

Health services in Puke, Malesi e Madhe, and remote areas of Elbasan, Berat, Korçe. “Youth voice” advocacy platform established in 3 additional LGUs (Kruje, Ure Vajgujore, Shijak). A comprehensive resource package on social care and social protection literature for social workers and social protection workforce developed and available for all pre-service and in-service social workers. National report “Fiscal Space for Social Protection” is being prepared (to be finalized within 2020), serving as basis for the national dialogue to be initiated around this topic. Handbook “Fiscal Space for Social Protection - making an assessment of financial options” published in Albanian language, serving to guide capacity building activities with central and local authorities in selected municipalities. Roadmap finalized to develop, for the first time, the EU child deprivation index. INSTAT conducted a vulnerability mapping study in 16 municipalities to assess social exclusion, vulnerabilities and gender-based discrimination at local level, providing policymakers with information about the current situation and main poverty-risk-factors for citizens, including women and girls in the 16 municipalities.

Child Protection

Albanian children benefited from provision of direct professional support services, including for emergency response: over 3,500 children and families received psycho-social care, tailored individual counselling and referral to mental health professionals, following the earthquake, through 14 Child-Friendly spaces. 675 children benefited direct counselling from National Child Helpline ALO 116 111 and 1,320 children and 1,311 adults benefitted psychosocial and mental health care from the web-based counselling service <http://www.nukjevetem.al>; 7 Police Stations equipped with child-friendly interviewing rooms for interviewing children in contact or in conflict with the law; 363 children at high risk (183) and immediate risk (180) of violence, abuse, exploitation or neglect identified, rescued, referred to protection services and assisted with direct services, including to prevent separation of the child from the family - 76 children identified as potential victims of trafficking.

The De-Institutionalisation process is progressing rapidly. The National Plan for De-Institutionalisation developed, reviewed and approved; three new models of services (Professional Foster Care; Child and Family Support Hub; Child and Family Reunification Model) developed to support the family and the child, setting up foster families and procedures for the de-institutionalization of children; 28 children prevented from institutionalization and remained with their biological families; 41 families of children currently in institutions empowered with direct support and through the family strengthening program in preparation for the child to return to the biological family.

Systemic Response to Human Trafficking strengthened through (i) setting up and capacitating 4 Mobile Units to identify VT/PVoT in most at risk trafficking areas; (ii) establishing an emergency service for VT/PVoT in Municipality of Shkodra, including a new psychosocial team trained in providing emergency services in the shelter and main services to children at high risk; and (iii) 3 school support programs established (Kukes, Tirane, Ndroq) to assist youth in risk of school drop-out. As a result, 10 VT/PVoT identified by Mobile Units during Jan.-Aug.2020; 203 individuals in hotspot areas entered the prevention programme, benefitting from a range of different support services, including vocational education and training; 163 VT/PVoT received direct support services, shelter, basic needs care and access to services and assistance for reintegration and rehabilitation; 50 children and youth in risk of school drop-out assisted with catch up classes and parental counselling for school integration.

Gender-based Violence

The normative and accountability framework to EVAWG, including harmful practices, is strengthened through development of two standardized protocols for CRMs members on managing domestic violence cases in normal situation and in COVID-19 situation; adoption of Protocol “On the operation of public and non-public residential centres, providing shelter services to victims of domestic violence and human trafficking during the COVID-19 pandemic”; development of policy and procedures against harassment and sexual harassment to protect women and men respectively among armed forces (approved) and police forces (pending approval); approval of three SoPs for Health, Psycho-Social and In Emergencies; submission to Parliament of recommendations to address violence against women in elections and an analysis of the Albanian legislation in this field; conducting the national legal framework gap analysis regarding the ILO Convention 190 on “Ending violence and harassment in the world of work”; MOU signed between People’s Advocate and Department of Public Administration to develop unified policies and procedures, safeguarding work environment in public administration from violence, harassment, sexual harassment along with follow up actions for effective policy implementation; finalization of PA alternative report to CEDAW Committee in the framework of Albania’s forthcoming review 2016-2020 and monitoring and analysis of budget planning to address GBV in MTBP 2018-2020 of the central government and five municipalities; MoHSP monitoring of the GE Strategy and Action Plan 2016-2020 and generation of data needed for the new strategy; 5 municipalities effectively apply gender responsive planning and budgeting in the local MTBP, with a focus on budgeting in VAWG; development of teacher training programmes related to Sexual Violence prevention by the Quality Assurance Agency in Higher Education.

Improved Services for survivors of VAWG: LILIUM Center provided specialized integrated emergency support services to 21 cases (3 women; 17 girls; 1 boy) of sexual violence, out of which 14 cases supported during COVID-19 pandemics. An internal regulation developed on managing emergency sexual violence cases in COVID-19 situation and is being currently used by LILIUM Center. In addition, the costing of the Lilium Center services prepared to ensure budgetary allocations. Implementation capacities of over 1,200

local actors and law enforcement agencies improved in adequately implementing VAW related laws and policies and 2018 amendments of DV law, through certified trainings by ASPA, School of Magistrates, others.

Improved institutional response to EVAWG: the multi-sectorial coordinated referral mechanisms (CRMs) have scaled up and consolidated, serving as institutional response to violence against women at the local level, and the data collection system (REVALB) has improved. As a result, 55 CRMs established, covering 90% of Albania, 21 (38%) of which established with UNDP support; 637 GB&DV cases are recorded in REVALB, 17% increase compared to 545 in 2015; 366 DV cases benefited from multiple services provided through CRMs at local level, 270 DV cases provided with psychosocial services, 181 women and 1 man supported with psychological counselling, 51 children sustained with online school support and counselling and online psycho-social support.

OUTCOME 3—ECONOMIC GROWTH, LABOUR AND AGRICULTURE

Economic Development & Labour

The Competition Authorities of the Western Balkan countries, including Albania, benefited from sharing of lessons learned and best practices on the consumer protection issues under the COVID-19 pandemic' situation, which has opened the way to abusive business practices impacting the consumers. The Albanian Customs Administration benefited from an Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA) in line with the provisions of the World Customs Organization and European Union.

The employment and VET sector furthered, among others, with the establishment of the Social Employment Fund, finalization of the National Employment and Skills Progress Report 2019, finalisation of a comprehensive VET review, mapping out the current VET model and identifying challenges that hamper the system from responding effectively to skill demand in the labour market, development of seven Active Labour Market Programmes in line with the needs of the registered jobseekers, including laid-off workers from COVID-19, and approved by the Council of Ministers, formulation of a draft model for accreditation of (public and private) VET providers in Albania, revision of the Rights@Work for Youth learning package in accord with Albanian national legislation to raise young people's awareness of their rights at work.

Agriculture and Rural Development

Rural women will be economically empowered through the project GREAT-Gender Rural Equality and Tourism, financed by the government of Italy and implemented by FAO and UNWOMEN, to start in October 2020. Smallholders will benefit from increased income opportunities and access to VET thanks to a project financed by the government of Albania and implemented by FAO and ILO, to start implementation in October 2020.

Knowledge and capacities of public/private chain actors on food quality and safety standards upgraded through trainings on small scale processing. Project document prepared for assisting MoARD on elaboration of the framework conditions for producers and businesses, strengthening their competitiveness, including support for Ch11 approximation with EU. The regulatory framework on product quality certification, including GI, organic and traditional products, developed and training provided to MoARD staff.

OUTCOME 4—ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

DRR & Climate Change

National Circumstances, Institutional Arrangements, Constraints & Gaps, Financial, Technical & Capacity Needs developed as part of 4th National Communication and 1st Biennial Update Report. The time series for GHG emissions 2012–2016 for several sectors prepared. Four bio-energy technology demonstrations installed in 4 pilot enterprises, feasibility studies and business plans prepared aiming to make biomass energy projects economically feasible to reduce the national GHG emissions. The legal and institutional framework for Sustainable Land Management strengthened with the drafting of two sublegal acts for the forestry sector, addressing the criteria and rules for forest classification, and a guideline on the professional criteria for the appointment of employees of the structure responsible for forestry in the local government level. Sustainable Land Management priorities identified for mainstreaming in multi-sector strategies and work is ongoing to finalize a handbook containing SLM strategic priorities.

Green Climate Fund (GCF) Country Programme development advanced with (i) screening of project proposals and organization of six multi-stakeholder meetings to communicate the screening results, and (ii) clustering project proposals and aligning them with GCF financing requirements. A total of six programmes/projects consistent with the Fund's initial investment framework identified and synergies established with several developing partners operating in Albania. Two knowledge products outlining Albania's engagement possibilities with the GCF are being finalized and translated.

Natural Resources

Protected Areas Development: Marine park Karaburun-Sazani equipped with a new speedboat, fulfilling needs of local administration to better and efficiently accomplish the monitoring and enforcement tasks, and other activities in the area. Landscape solutions/studies are being developed for Dajti and Llogora National Park and buffer zones will provide design alternatives for most prominent ecotourist facilities, in compliance with conservation and management expectations.

Maritime Development: High level representatives from the 5 Drin Riparians signed the Strategic Action Programme for the sustainable management of the Extended Drin Basin, comprising over 100 agreed policy and technical actions for countries to implement. 28 Legal Acts developed ensuring 100% compliance with 30 EU Directives and Regulations accompanied by the respective table of concordance covering the areas of (i) Maritime policy (ii) Flag State (iii) Passenger ships (iv) Insurance. A technical working group on maritime is established and functional by MoIE Order. Full review and assessment of Maritime Education Training Sector and performance in Albania conducted. Training packages are being delivered to maritime institutions in the country. A functional coordination mechanism established for the operational management of Ohrid-Prespa watershed, the Biosphere Reserve and cultural and natural heritage of Ohrid lake region.

Innovation in environment information and monitoring: Following signature of the MOU between UNDP, MoTE and Academia, students from the Environmental Engineering Department in Polytechnic University of Tirana developed a methodology 'Erosion Potential Method (EPM)' to monitor soil erosion in Albania's environment. An MOU signed between UNDP and Agriculture University of Tirana to set-up the Experimental Field of Aromatic Medicinal Plants at the University, fostering their conservation and testing capacities and interaction with private sector. 9 CSOs supported in promoting biodiscovery projects to improve research capabilities, add value to genetic resources and traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources, and pilot bio-cultural community initiatives and protocols ABS related to support communities.

Earthquake Response

54 farmers will receive financial support to cover losses in agricultural productivity (up to EUR 300,000) through small scale investment grants and access to finance until December 2021.

Over 3,500 children, parents and caregivers in the earthquake affected areas assisted with community services (mental health and psychosocial support - MHPSS), awareness session, referrals and provision of hygienic packages. 183 children at high risk of abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation identified, referred to child protection services, and assisted with direct services, including to prevent separation of the child from the family. 180,000 vulnerable children, including children affected by earthquake, benefited from MoESY-developed Standards for back to school and safe to school supplies.

48 Child Protection Workers and social workers at local level supported with technical professional mentoring for cases of children at high or immediate risk. Over 300 professionals from different disciplines benefitted from a joint UNICEF-WHO training on MHPSS during emergencies. 1,200 teachers benefitted from blended learning technique training alongside an upgraded and interactive platform for learning.

UNDP's *In Motion Program* supported micro and small businesses in their post-earthquake recovery efforts, by improving trade practices, commercial attention and customer service, enabling them to re-capture and expand their market and improve productive capacity. Following the steps of gathering socio economic information, diagnosis, personalised technical assistance, improved commercial image and financial support, 15 micro businesses in Durres benefited from this support.

III. Implementation Challenges

- The earthquake and the COVID-19 pandemic put a strain in the implementation of planned activities:
 - the participation of country delegations to the 64th session of the Commission on the Status of Women was canceled following the decision to change the format of the CSW proceedings, which did not receive the usual engagement of stakeholders and side events.
 - access to territory, while not limited under the country's State of Natural Disaster, it was constrained by additional border management measures. Interceptions and a more systematic use of pre-screening picked up again as of May, however, with reported cases of returns of persons who expressed intention to seek asylum in Albania.
 - focus on the municipal work shifted to provision of basic services and management of delegated task from the State Commission of COVID-19 Extraordinary Situation.
 - as MoHSP focus shifted mostly to health sector and addressing the COVID-19 emergency situation, the drafting of the new Gender Equality Strategy 2021-2025 and Action Plan and the assessment of the National Youth Action Plan have been postponed to a later stage.

- disruption of the academic year during 2019 earthquake affected children learning, with 21,000 children attending host schools for the academic year 2020. COVID-19 school lock down required a revolution in the way education interventions are designed, putting a heavy weight on the system and especially on teachers who had to shift to blended online learning.
 - child protection workers were not identified as core service work force during COVID-19 lockdown. Hence many cases of child abuse went undetected, unreported, unaddressed; lack of specialized community based mental health professionals and services to properly refer and treat children and family members affected by the earthquake and/or COVID-19; limited personal protective equipment and items for professionals and others to use to prevent and respond to violence against children in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - increased cases of VAWG and unavailability of services to survivors. COVID-19 pandemic showed the importance of declaring services to survivors of violence (especially GBV, DV), as essential during a crisis situation. Recent cases of sexual violence, especially among minor girls, and their mishandling, showed the urgent need to address the legal and institutional framework against sexual violence and the need to strengthen CRM mechanisms.
 - operationalization and collection of the levy for the Social Employment Fund would be perceived as another financial burden in this time of crisis and as such will probably be delayed; completion of the restructuring process of NAES, NAVETQ and MoFE was delayed, affecting the development and delivery of tailored capacity development measures for these institutions; implementation of active labour market programmes was re-directed to focus on the labour market re-integration of those jobseekers that were laid off during the COVID-19 lock down; private sector engagement in VET will need to be addressed in line with the country's economic recovery process.
 - implementation pace of enterprise level activities slowed down (postponed to 2021).
 - progress in support of earthquake recovery is dependent on the timely disbursement of funds from all contributing partners.
- Unavailability of regular age/sex disaggregated data in the country hampers the quality of human rights reporting, which is being addressed through UN support to strengthen the relation between INSTAT and human rights institutions.
 - Delays in lodging asylum applications continued despite of continuous observations made by UNHCR in several occasions and high -level meetings with authorities of Ministry of Interior. Pending approval of MoHSP instruction on accommodation of foreign UASCs required by the DCM 111 (06.03.2019).
 - There is a contradiction between the Law on the Rights of the Child and the Law on Social Care Services: As children in need for protection UASC have a right to alternative care as provided by social service.... However, they are not entitled to these services because the Law on Social Care has excluded foreign UASC from receiving any state social services in Albania.
 - Lack of emergency services near the border areas that would provide immediate shelter and assistance to the child.
 - Donated equipment in the health sector is not exempt of VAT (20%) when entering the country. Government counterparts need to explore opportunities to achieve a VAT exemption for UN donations.
 - Capacities and resources of public administration in charge of social protection and social services remain limited at all levels, both in terms of the number of staff, technical capacity and financial resources.
 - Patriarchal attitudes continue to pose a significant obstacle in efforts to combat violence against women and girls, which affects reporting rates and the ability of survivors to seek and receive support. Innovative tools are being considered and used to address these attitudes, but a wider societal shift is needed in behaviors and attitudes towards women's roles within and outside the family.
 - Weak financial and advisory services at local level and low capacity/knowledge to adapt food safety and quality standards.
 - Absence of adequate legal framework ensuring the best appropriate management of the cultural sector, lack of inclusion of the culture sector in DRR country plans, limited capacity development actions in the Cultural Heritage Preservation sector to address emerging issues in the preservation of Albania's rich cultural heritage.
 - The respective draft bylaws of the Law on Protected Areas, which are awaiting government approval, will be a step forward on supporting an effective management of the protected areas and introducing needful financial instruments.

IV. Support to the COVID-19 response

The UN Country Team in Albania completed its Socio-Economic Recovery and Response Plan for Albania which provides a scanning of the current situation and sets out UN's consolidated offer of socio-economic recovery and response support complementing the Government of Albania National Response Plan (to be released soon) and the current National Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan. The Plan identifies 113 priority actions focused in 5 key areas: Protecting health services and systems; Social protection and basic services; Protecting jobs and small and medium sized enterprises, and the most vulnerable productive actors; Macroeconomic response and multilateral collaboration; Social cohesion and community resilience. The Plan follows Secretary-General's launch on May 4th of the UN's global framework for immediate social-economic response to COVID-19.

Below are presented some of the key UN agencies efforts to support COVID-19 response in the country until 31 August 2020:

- **Public health and health services:** MoHSP developed new Strategy for Adaptation of Health System for the Dual Track Response to COVID-19. Rapid Assessment of availability and access to essential health services during COVID-19 and Analysis of the Health System response to COVID-19 in Albania produced. Rapid Assessments conducted of COVID-19 impact to NCD Prevention & Early Detection Programmes in PHC; COVID-19 impact to the access and utilization of mental health services; impact of COVID-19 to the immunization programme in Albania. COVID Partners Platform <https://covid-19-response.org/> updated.
- **Assessments/Frameworks/Platforms:** MoHSP and SARPC developed guidelines for case management during COVID-19, laying out interventions in cases of children in need for protection as per level of risk and implementing protection measures while keeping professionals safe. Two standardized protocols developed for CRMs members on managing domestic violence cases in normal situation and in COVID-19 situation. An internal regulation developed on managing emergency sexual violence cases in COVID-19 situation and is being currently used by LILIUM Center. 2 Rapid Gender Assessments conducted: (i) measure the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on women and men, including in the area of GBV; (ii) assess challenges and gaps of 6 women's CSOs in offering services to survivors during COVID-19, resulting in adaptation of support to CSOs based on the situation. Seven Active Labour Market Programmes (ALMPs) developed in line with the needs of the registered jobseekers, including laid-off workers from COVID-19, and approved by the Council of Ministers. The Enterprise survey on Assessing the needs of enterprises resulting from COVID-19 completed. Protocol developed and approved on the management and functioning of shelters during the COVID-19 pandemic. The open source digital platform Akademi.al enriched its content with more 2100 video lessons, also aired in the main public TV for a bigger reach with the most vulnerable children. The evaluation is ongoing of the impact of Covid-19 to the food supply, food security and food production with specific monitoring of agricultural production, livestock sector and agritourism. State Labour Inspectorate is being supported to establish and observe the post COVID-19 OSH standards at the company level.
- **Communication:** MoHSP risk communication strategy developed. Campaign #SuperHeroesWearMask #WeHugwithHeart targeted children, families and teachers to stop COVID-19 spread. Communication package on AMR in the context of COVID-19 developed. Informative materials developed for distribution online and in different settings, including 3 video spots for daily TV outreach on measures to be taken by individuals to protect themselves from Covid-19. Daily situation reports and FB posts prepared on COVID-19 on WHO technical guidance. COVID-19 phone call green line '08004040' is active and run by the National Centre of Medical Emergencies. An online learning platform (Akedemi.al) established to provide all children (3-18 years) with online learning opportunities during the COVID-19 lock down. COVID-19 prevention key messages integrated into the Family Planning virtual platform.
- **Infection Prevention and Control (IPC):** Assessment of IPC gaps, training needs and practices at MTH, Regional Hospital Durres and PHC Centers in Tirane (ongoing); IPH mapped the confirmed and contact cases with COVID-19 by upgrading Infectious Disease Information System (ongoing);
- **Medical Supplies:** UN agencies procured various medical supplies, some of which are provided below.
 - UNOPS completed all four deliveries of EU's 4million Euro aid for health (#EU4Health) supplies to MoHSP to be used in the new COVID 4 hospital that has just been set up in Tirana in response to a worsening. These deliveries included 5 fully equipped ambulances, 100 ICU hospital beds, 30 portable mechanical ventilators, 30 ECG equipment and other necessary medical equipment to treat severe cases, 220,000 protective gloves, 2,000 face shields & protective goggles and 1,000 liters of disinfectants.
 - WHO, through USAID funds, supplied to Institute of Public Health 2500 RNA extraction tests, and reagents for more than 40,000 tests.
 - UNICEF, through USAID funds, delivered 400 infra-red no touch thermometers for 400 creches and kindergartens in 10 municipalities (Tirana, Shkodra, Durres, Korca, Vlora, Maliq, Berat, Kukes, Lezhe, Elbasan).
 - UNDP, through Sweden and Norway funds, supplied 31 ventilators to MoHSP for a more resilient health system in Albania and in response to COVID-19". Also, through the resources of the Rapid Response Facility and UN Programme "Ending Violence Against Women in Albania" funded by Sweden, 21,200 protective masks were distributed to first line providers and gender-based violence survivors to protect themselves from COVID-19.
 - UNICEF handed over to MoHSP medical equipment for oxygen therapy including 10 oxygen concentrating units and necessary consumables (oxygen supply tubes, nasal cannulas, pulse oximeters, oxygen analyzers, oxygen masks) for oxygen therapy, which will contribute to the capacities of health services for mother and child, in hospital care for case management with # COVID19.
 - IOM provided Albanian Border and Migration Police with over 112,000 pieces of personal protective equipment against COVID-19 made possible through funding from the EU and Norwegian Government.
- **WASH and Food Assistance:** over 25,919 children and 34,547 adults from vulnerable families in 13 municipalities reached with personal and family hygiene supplies; pre-school institutions in 11 municipalities supported with cleaning and disinfection supplies to ensure compliance with standards established by the national health authorities for reopening of crèches and kindergartens and protecting children from infection; 18,200 children benefited from 2,000 hygiene kits, containing cleaning and disinfection supplies, delivered to 400 creches and kindergartens (UNICEF). Reception facilities in two Registration and Temporary Accommodation

Centres for irregular migrants in Albania improved conditions for children, women and girls in vulnerable situation, and increased availability and access to sanitary services in the context of the COVID-19 situation. Provision of emergency food assistance and hygienic items to 2458 households (2204 UNDP, 254 UNFPA) from vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.

- **Surveillance:** Expert mission conducted to support GoA strengthen and scale up COVID-19 contact tracing system in Albania and elaborate a performance improvement plan with associated resources, required by transmission scenario. MoHSP supplied with 12 vehicles (rent + fuel) for field surveillance teams
- **Laboratory:** Laboratory assessment capacities to upscale country's laboratory operations for COVID-19 performed in 3 COVID-19 Laboratories – IPH, MTH, Shefqet Ndroqi; Laboratory online training on Saliva samples and Sequencing carried out; Assessment of COVID-19 laboratories in order to increase their capacity for COVID-19 testing carried out; 4 Laboratory Workshops conducted on "Pooling of samples".
- **Services for vulnerable groups:** FLA services provided with support of specialized CSOs, online and in person, benefiting 31 vulnerable women and girls in 5 operational FLA Centers in Durrës, Fier, Lezhe, Peshkopi and Shkoder. 15 students from the Law Faculty in Tirana, with capacities to support survivors of violence, are supporting lawyers of the Center for Legal Civic Initiatives to provide free legal aid to survivors. In the frame of the EU IcSP funding regional project, 60 individuals with refugee or other temporary complimentary protection status, experiencing economic hardships during the COVID-19 emergency, were supported with a one-off cash transfer and PPEs continues to be distributed among refugees and asylum-seekers residing in the country. Following the announced resumption of RSD procedures and a request by DfAC, UNHCR and partners provided equipment for the set-up of remote interviewing. Evidence containers donated to the Albanian State Police.
- **Capacity Development:** trainings conducted for over 7,000 medical and nursing staff of universities and regional/municipality hospitals on the full set of skills and knowledge on detection and treatment of COVID-19. 35 PHC providers strengthened capacities on provision of SRHR services in the context of COVID – 19. 41 Child Protection Workers received technical professional mentoring for cases of children at high or immediate risk and specialized services (medical assistance, mental health, psychosocial support, etc.) as per individual needs. 316 members of CRMs, 46 CRM local domestic violence coordinators, and social service providers benefited from 27 online trainings related to: i) use of the two protocols on how to manage DV cases during COVID-19 pandemics and under normal situation; ii) informative sessions on DV and case management during COVID-19; iii) CRMs steering committee and multisectoral technical teams meetings; and iv) systematically use of REVALB system. 37 public and non-public service providers trained on provision of sheltering services during COVID-19 based on the approved [protocol](#). 20 CSOs across Albania capacitated to respond to and mitigate the pandemic, fight against COVID-19 related domestic violence. 20 neonatologists from all over the country benefited from a webinar to discuss the challenges of the neonatology service in the context of the pandemic, the latest scientific evidence and global WHO/UNICEF recommendations for breastfeeding in the context of COVID-19, the important role of the maternity personnel to support breastfeeding, and address concerns of mothers for safe breastfeeding. More than 250 frontline professionals from child protection, social services, health, education and justice services participated in an 8-week, online training on 'Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergencies'. 97 asylum-seekers and refugees benefited from psychosocial assistance and counselling. 87 women and girls received online courses of self-defense which combine awareness-raising on genderbased violence with empowerment and self-defense techniques.

For more information on support provided by UN in Albania, please refer to our COVID-19 newsletters.

[Issue \(July-August\) 2020](#); [Issue \(14 May- end June 2020\)](#); [Issue \(15 April – 13 May 2020\)](#); [Issue \(15 March – 14 April 2020\)](#)

V. Contribution to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

UN is supporting government to establish SDG interim targets, draft Vision 2030 document that lays out longer-term priorities, and develop NSDI 2021-2027 aligned to SDGs.

UN in Albania started implementation of the project "Strategic policy options for SDG financing" financed by the SDG Fund, which among others, will support the Parliament for the implementation of the Parliament's SDG Action Plan. Also, the UN will work with the Parliamentary sub-committee for Sustainable Development, established in February 2020, to monitor and support the achievement of SDGs in Albania. Likewise, women MPs, members of the gender alliance will benefit from a gender related SDG session conducted by UN in partnership with OSCE.

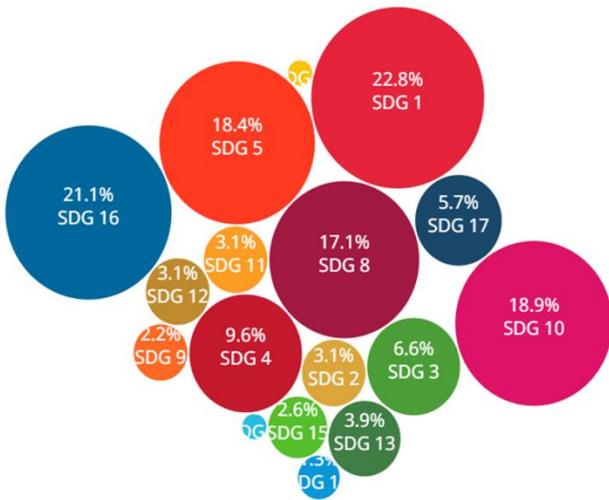
UN Albania interventions in 2020 are assessed and matched against the SDG goals and targets. As indicated by the figure below, out of the 51 million invested in 2020, almost 75% is focused on driving progress in achieving 5 SDGs - 23% on SDG 9, 16.5% on SDG 16, 15% on SDG4, 12% on SDG 11, and 6.7% on SDG 10.



The increased focus in SDGs 9 (mapped to Outcome 4) and 11 (mapped to Outcomes 2, 3 and 4) is mainly due to the earthquake funding received in 2020 to support national efforts to respond to this emergency. Details of UN agencies efforts in these outcomes is presented in the milestone section above. Meanwhile, the attention to the other SDGs is in line with the focus of UN work in Albania, which is on building strong institutions, ensuring quality education for all, and reduced inequalities. Key efforts on achievement of these SDGs is presented in the milestone section above – Outcome 1 and 2.

An assessment of gender equality and human rights focused activities in SDGs is presented in slide 72 of the report, indicating strong presence in SDG 1, 16, 10, 5 and 8.

Gender Equality Marker



Human Rights Marker

