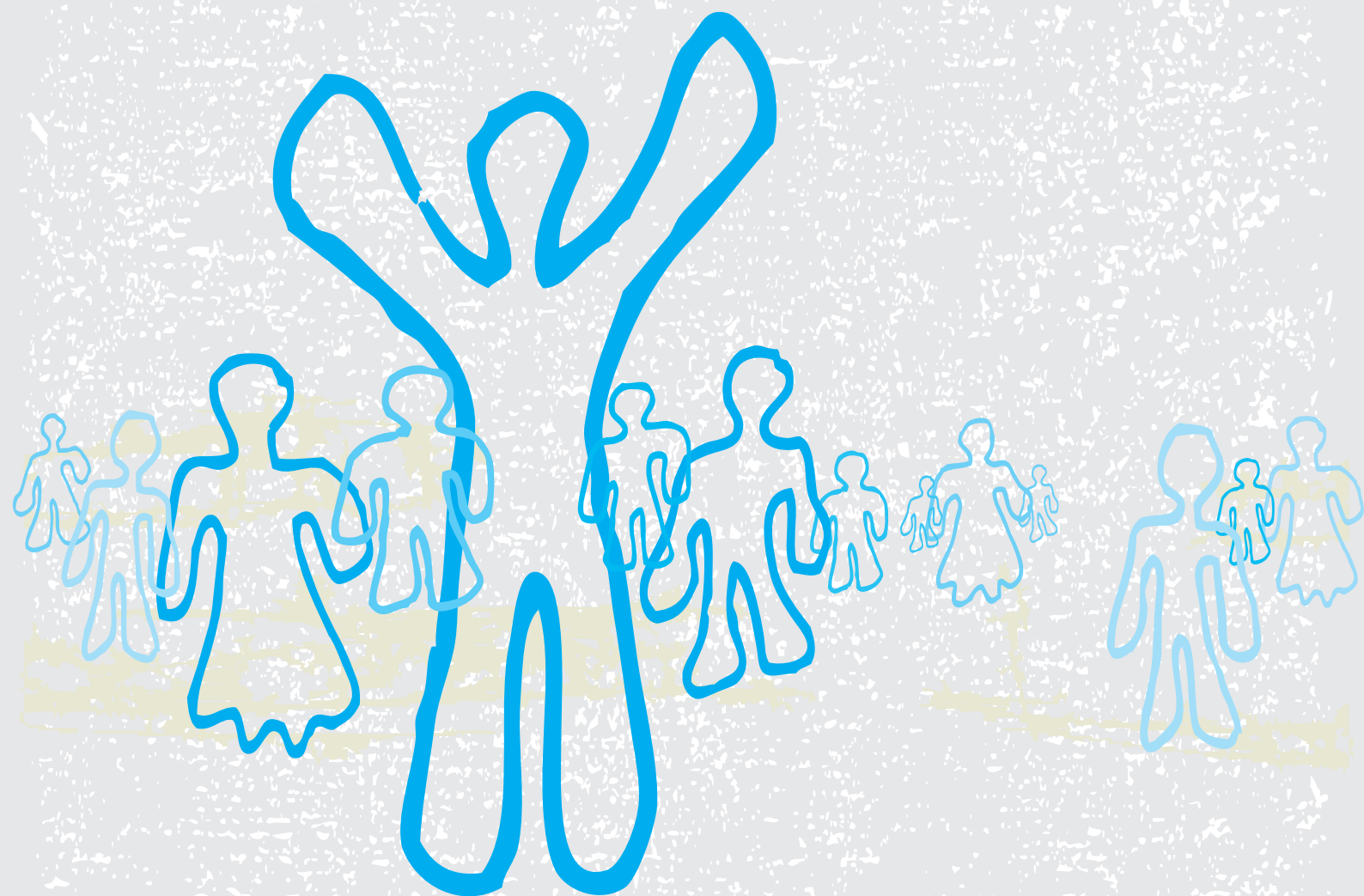


THE STATE OF ALBANIA'S CHILDREN

2007

Women and Children in Albania

Double Dividend of Gender Equality



Social Research Centre
INSTAT 2006

THE STATE OF ALBANIA'S CHILDREN
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DOUBLE DIVIDEND OF GENDER EQUALITY

ACRONYMS

CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
INSTAT	National Institute of Statistics
IPH	Institute of Public Health
ISOP	Institute for Public Opinion Studies
LSMS	Living Standards Measurement Survey
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MICS	Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey
MoH	Ministry of Health
MoLSaEO	Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NSDI	National Strategy for Development and Integration
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
SEDA	Sustainable Economic Development Agency
UNDP Albania	United Nations Development Programme, Albania

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Acknowledgements

A joint initiative of UNICEF Albania and the INSTAT Center for Social Research, this publication was made possible thanks to the efforts of specialists from governmental and non-governmental structures.

Special thanks go to the INSTAT Center for Social Research and the group of specialists comprising Vilma Kolpeja, Mirela Muça, Lantona Sado, Irena Dona and Elda Kapllani, who collected and analyzed data for this report. Grateful thanks also to line ministry staff – L. Thomo, E. Muça, N. Caushi, Sh. Lamçe and T. Panariti – who contributed with professionalism and dedication to the improvement of this report.

Grateful thanks go to the team of the Republic's President, which was highly committed in the project implementation and contributed strongly to improving the quality of this report.

Acknowledgements also go to UNICEF, not only for supporting the project financially, but also for launching and leading it. The authors also thank Mimoza Gjika and Iain F. Wilson for translation, editing, adaptation and preparation of the final text, both in Albanian and English.

Executive Summary

Women and Children in Albania: Double Dividend of Gender Equality, is published as part of UNICEF's series of periodic reports on The State of Albania's Children. This publication is the second such annual report and focuses this year on critical gender issues, highlighting in particular the impact of gender on poverty, discrimination and inequality against women, with concomitant consequences on the Albanian family and children.

Gender equality is a new principle for Albanian society, with which it is desperately struggling to come to terms with. Due to its strong patriarchal Balkan traditions, Albanian society has traditionally been dominated by males, with women forced to submissive positions. The years of communism created a stark contrast between the rhetoric of emancipation and the reality of everyday life. Following the fall of communism in 1991, Albania went through a period of often dramatic changes in the social, political and economic fields.

Women comprise 51 per cent of the Albanian population. Up until 1990, the patriarchal family was still dominant, with two to three generations living under the same roof. As the country started to open up, external and internal migration accelerated the dissolution of the patriarchal family. However, poverty, unemployment and individual safety problems continued to deprive women and young girls from some of their basic rights, especially in the poor and remote areas. This situation has not changed.

Data on poverty in Albania testify to the feminization of poverty and increasing numbers of children afflicted by it. Although in 2005, the level of absolute poverty was reduced by 27 per cent, the figures for children and women fell by less. Data show that poverty reduction is lower in rural areas due, in addition to other factors, to the inferior economic and social status of women in comparison with that of men.

Although there are no reported indicators of gender inequality in school enrolment and attendance rates, data show that women of reproductive age have lower educational levels. Data also show that women's educational levels, especially at or above secondary education, have a positive impact on the improvement of their economic status and reproductive health. For every additional school year that mothers have above elementary level, under five mortality rate declines by 3.8 per cent.

While gender inequalities in education are not prominent, the same cannot be said with regard to employment and participation in the labour market. Women participation in the labour market fell drastically during the nineties, from 78 per cent in 1989 to 46 per cent in 2005. Besides having a lower level of employment, women are paid less and are the first to lose their jobs. Moreover, women of reproductive age are discriminated against in the market because they may start a family, and thus have fewer opportunities for retraining and qualification. Since they occupy the lower ranking positions, women are paid less, and although a woman may have attained the same educational level as a man, there are marked differences between them in the level of remuneration.

Gender inequalities have deepened due to women's low level of representation in policy and decision making. In addition, Albanian society pays little attention to educating boys and men with the principles and values of gender equality, whether inside the family or in the wider society.

The low representation of Albanian women in decision making, with only seven per cent of seats in parliament, nine women in senior positions in central government and only two per cent of leaders at the local level, creates an obstacle for reforms and policies oriented towards the needs of women, children and the family. Notwithstanding the satisfactory participation rates of women in public administration, men hold the leading posts. Women are also insignificantly represented in the political party leaderships.

The low levels of women representation in the decision making structures is an indicator of the fact that the aspirations and needs of women are not fully recognized and that women have fewer opportunities to promote policies addressing poverty and gender inequalities, or upgrade their weight and role in the economic and social progress of the country, or both.

However, there are encouraging efforts on the part of the government to empower women. The National Gender Strategy currently being formulated will enhance the gender perspective of public policies and will help real positive steps to be taken towards achieving gender equality in the future. The prospective law on Gender Equality will supplement the legal framework on gender equality in education, employment and decision making. It will enable the establishment of governmental structures towards the formulation of gender-sensitive policies and will create the premises for measuring policy impacts on the real situation through the institutionalization of periodical assessments and evaluations.

The approval of the national strategy on gender equality and the endorsement of relevant documents represent the first step towards the creation of an overall enabling environment for improving conditions for women. Why is gender so important? Because gender costs are double since these costs are borne not just by women but by the entire society, especially children. This study rests on the assumption that protection of women from gender-based discrimination means protecting the rights of children too, because women give birth to life and protect it; women give birth to the future and contribute to building it.

Chapter One

Inequalities and gender based discrimination in Albania



1.1 Gender equality vis-à-vis women's poverty

... Gender equality is a milestone in the democratic development process of a country. For this milestone to be laid at the appropriate place it is necessary that account be taken of all the gender inequalities arising nowadays in the family, community and labour market, and in Albanian society in general.

UNICEF, Social Monitor 2006

The deep economic and social transformation that began in Albania in the early 1990s has brought about remarkable changes to the structure of its economy and the living standards of its people. Not all of the changes, however, have been positive. Of particular importance has been the reversal of the gender balance in Albanian society. Even though in the course of transition the country has made great positive strides towards the construction of a democratic society, the rights and freedoms that have been won have not affected men and women equally.

Employment that people were once able to find in Albania's centralised economic system reduced social conflict and the stress associated with unemployment, nurturing thus an approach of indifference towards unemployment and job-seeking. As regards the country's legal framework concerning employment and unemployment issues, the legacy from the past was very weak. As a result, Albanian society was unprepared for the profound economic reforms that took place early on in the country's transition, with the large-scale shutdown of ineffective state-run enterprises, the effects of which are still being felt. During the 1990s, the unemployment rate increased drastically. Despite improvements in subsequent years, unemployment and poverty still threaten many Albanian households and continue to have a negative impact on the social status of women in the country.

¹ Absolute poverty line estimated at 4,891 lekë per person

The traditional patriarchal family, in which two or three generations would share a home, was prevalent until the end of the 1980s. Following Albania’s opening up in 1991, emigration from the country and immigration from rural areas to the cities accelerated the disintegration of this form of family. However, there has been a revival of patriarchal traditions interwoven with issues related to unemployment, poverty and personal safety. Thus Albanian women and girls, particularly in rural and poor areas, have been, and still are being, denied many fundamental rights.

Data on poverty in Albania point to the feminisation of the phenomenon, and an increase in the number of poor children. Whilst between 2002 and 2005, the absolute¹ poverty indicator decreased by 27 per cent,¹ there was less reduction in poverty among female and child population groups (Table 1). Thus, lower rates of poverty reduction are found in rural areas where, aside from the numerous factors contributing to poverty, women’s inferior social and economic position has had a strong impact.

Table 1

Percentage of women and children living in poverty, by geographic area, 2002–2005

Area	2002			2005			Percentage change, 2002-2005		
	Total	Females	Children ≤18	Total	Females	Children ≤18	Total	Females	Children ≤18
Tirana	17.8	15.0	24.7	8.1	6.6	12.6	-54	-56	-49
Urban	20.1	18.1	25.8	12.4	10.4	17.6	-38	-43	-32
Rural	29.6	25.8	36.1	24.2	22.0	30.2	-18	-15	-16
Total	25.4	22.0	32.1	18.5	16.1	24.7	-27	-27	-23

Source: INSTAT, LSMS 2002 and 2005

In a poor country such as Albania, a discriminating gender-based culture is not merely a matter of violation of women’s and girls’ rights. Gender inequality represents a serious impediment to acceleration of poverty reduction. Addressing gender inequality plays a primary role in enhancing the well-being of thousands of Albanian children who live in poverty.

Women have traditionally borne the main burden of sustaining family well-being. Despite this, they have less opportunity than men to access the necessary resources and means to meet these responsibilities. The high unemployment rate among women and their poor educational attainment and vocational training have limited their access to the job market. Moreover, their poor social status in the family and the domestic violence they are subjected to often prevent them from participating in public and political structures. Therefore, the current status of women has created stagnation and the prolongation of poverty in Albania, affecting thus even more women and children.

1.2 Root causes of gender-based discrimination

1.2.1 Dominance of patriarchal customs generates gender-based discrimination

In Albanian traditional history the prevalence of patriarchal customs is one of the main reasons behind gender-based discrimination. Norms and social organisation in the Albanian family and society consider women as inferior to men. The man is the head of the household and thus has the responsibility of ensuring the financial well-being of the family. Meanwhile, the woman is destined to look after children and run the home. Such work has always been undervalued, and therefore the social status of the woman is lower than that of men.

¹ Comparison of data contained in LSMS 2002 and 2005

1.2.2 Weaknesses in implementation of the law hinder realization of women's rights

Following the collapse of Communism in Albania the rights of women were reshaped from the perspective of democratic concepts and principles of human rights. Even so, full respect for women is limited, both on account of the prevalent patriarchal mentality and the difficulties surrounding application of the legislation. Legislatively, Albania depends on the commitment made by its government to ensure gender equality. Ratification of a number of international agreements, including the Conventions for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the European Social Charter and adoption of many laws, including the Criminal, Civil, Family and Labour Codes, and the Laws for Gender Equality and against Domestic Violence, are important milestones aimed at, among other things, ensuring respect for women's basic rights. However, even though a qualitative legal framework is in place in Albania, the achievement of the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) concerning gender equality seems a long way off. Gaps in implementation of the law, budget constraints and institutional shortfalls hinder the realization of women's rights.

1.2.3 Low educational attainment among women reinforces their economic disadvantage

Education is extremely important to a country's well-being and development. Even though no gender inequality is reported with respect to school attendance, educational attainment among women of reproductive age and who live in poverty is low (Table 2).

Table 2

Education attained by females aged between 15 and 49 years, by quintile¹, 2005

Level of education attained by females	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6
Higher	2.9	9.7	12.5	24.1	50.8	100
Secondary	10.1	14.9	21.3	23.4	30.3	100
Eight-year	22.1	25.2	21.2	18.4	13.1	100
Basic	55.8	9.9	12.0	14.1	8.2	100
Female illiteracy	72.5	17.5	3.6	2.9	3.5	100

Source: INSTAT,
LSMS 2005

Following completion of national compulsory education, poverty and traditional beliefs and family practices bar many children and youths (of either gender) from continuing secondary and higher studies. Data from LSMS 2005 indicate that the number of children from poor families who attend secondary general education, secondary vocational education and university studies, is respectively 3, 3.3 and 27.6² times lower than that of children from richer families.

Women's educational attainment is positively correlated with better economic conditions and reproductive health, and for each additional year beyond obligatory education undertaken by the mother, the under-five child mortality rate decreases by 3.8³ per cent.

¹ First quintile represents the poorest groups, and fifth, the richest groups, divided according to their level of expenditure; each quintile includes 20 per cent of the surveyed households

² Stravri Llambiri, *Education and Poverty*

³ Data taken from MICS 2005

1.2.4 Malnutrition and poor access to health services negatively affect mothers' health

Women living in poverty have higher maternal mortality rates than those who are economically better off. Poor women in Albania are faced with a number of problems that affect reproductive health, including malnutrition and poor access to potable water and health care services. A 2002 study³ showed that while five in ten poor women had their first medical check-up during the first three months of pregnancy, three in ten had no medical check-up at all throughout pregnancy. The same study revealed that seven in ten⁴ poor women did not have information on contraceptives, and of those who did five in ten did not use them because they could not afford to buy them. A higher proportion of women who were better off used contraceptives than those who were poor.

The consequences of poverty and poor access to reproductive health services are manifested in women's poor health, high maternal mortality rates⁵ and high birth rates. Through failure to exercise their right to choose the number of children they have and the time between births, poor women create families with many children, and such children are likely to continue in a life of poverty. In 2002, the average poor family had 5.7 members, of whom two were below the age of 15 years. In comparison, rich families, which on average had four members, included only one child below the age of 15 years. The bigger the family, the more difficult it is to break the poverty cycle.

1.2.5 Equality in employment

The economic rights of women are limited. Weak attachment to the labour force, difficulties in keeping a job and low pay demonstrate clearly that women face severe problems in trying to enjoy their economic rights. As reported below, employment among Albanian women is restricted by a number of factors, including their obligations and responsibilities to their children and household chores, their low educational attainment and limited access to vocational training, property ownership and possibility to receive loans.

While there are no clear gender differences in the level of education attainment in Albania, there are clear gender differences in participation in the labour market. During the 1990s, female participation in the labour market dropped by nearly a half, from 78 per cent in 1989 to 46 per cent in 2005.

In Albania, women have fewer opportunities to obtain work than do men. As a result, a higher level of unemployment is registered among women than among men. Even though females and males have equal access to schooling, this does not ensure women the same opportunities in the labour market.⁶ In 2005, the level of employment among women was estimated at 46 per cent versus 69 per cent among men. The situation in public administration is even worse with women accounting for 43 per cent of those employed in central government and 31⁷ per cent of local government employees. Only 18 per cent of women are in positions of authority in public administration. However, inequality is even more evident in the non-agricultural private sector, where only a small number of women, 17 per cent, are assigned to leadership positions. The share of such businesses run by women is small: two per cent in the transport sector and 25 per cent in the service sector.

Analysis by gender of the economically inactive population⁸ shows that for every 100 economically active females there are 46 females who are inactive, while for every 100 economically active males

¹ Public Health Institute and INSTAT, *Productive Health Survey 2002*

² Public Health Institute and INSTAT, *Productive Health Survey 2002*

³ In 2005, the Ministry of Health reported the infant mortality-rate to be 23.3 for 100,000 live births

⁴ INSTAT, *Gender-based Perspectives in Albania, Tirana 2004*

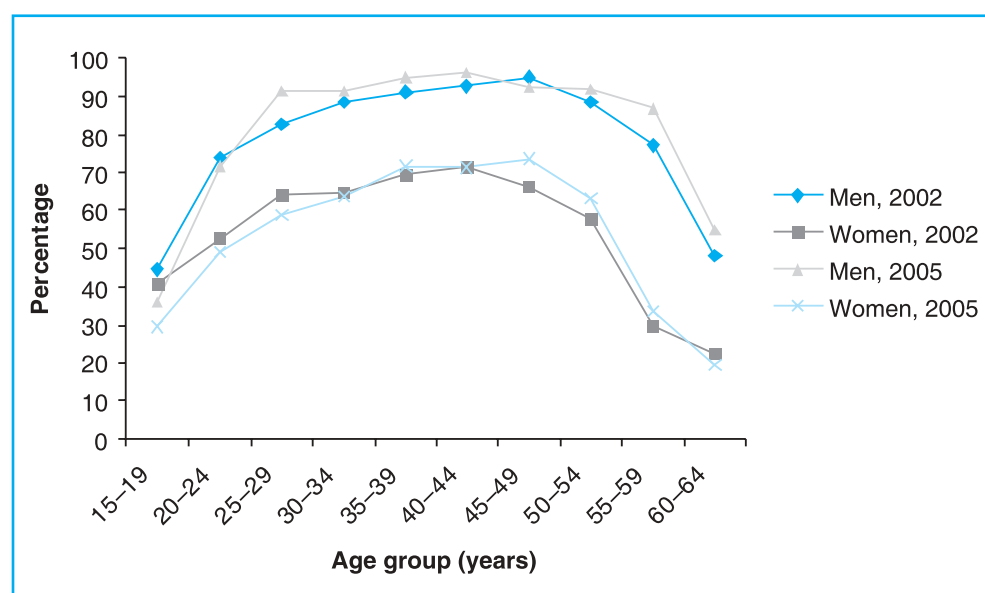
⁵ INSTAT, *Females and Males, 2005*

⁶ INSTAT, *Females and Males, 2005*

there are 22 men who are inactive, a much lower figure than for women. A low level of participation in the labour force is characteristic of all age-groups among women.

Figure 1

Level of participation in the labour force by gender and age group, 2002 and 2005



Source: INSTAT, LSMS
2002; 2005

As the analysis presented here shows, the employment rate amongst women is lower than among men, women are paid less than men, and are at greater risk of being dismissed from a job. The probability of a woman of reproductive age becoming pregnant and her inability to pick up new skills render her less preferable in terms of offering her employment or keeping the job for her. Women often receive a lower salary than men. They are more likely to hold lower level positions and as a result are paid less than their male peers. Differentiation in remuneration between men and women is evident even when they have the same level of education (see Table 3).

An analysis of the factors affecting the amount of remuneration, including age group, level of education and gender, indicates that the last of these proves to have a strong effect. Women are considerably exposed to greater discrimination than men, with their average pay being 35 per cent less for the same level of education. A more detailed analysis highlights that in all sectors of the economy men receive higher monthly net pay¹ than women, with the difference being more pronounced with regard to salaried employees in the private non-agricultural sector.

Table 3

Gender comparison of remuneration by educational attainment and age group

Level of education	18 - 35 years		36 - 64 years	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
Eight-year	1 ²	0.61	0.99	0.57
Secondary general	1.07	0.65	1.02	0.68
Secondary vocational	1.06	0.71	1.06	0.71
Higher	1.44	1.04	1.37	1.23

Source: INSTAT,
LSMS 2005

¹ INSTAT, LSMS 2005

² Payment for employed belonging to age-group 18-35 years with less than secondary education taken as one unit

The low level of remuneration is also reflected in women’s low participation in self-employment, which generates higher earnings than the public sector. Limited access to ownership (only eight per cent of women legally own property¹), and shortage of favourable policies boosting women’s opportunities for self-employment account for the small number of female-headed small, medium or large businesses. As mentioned above, in 2005, women ran only 17 per cent of non-agricultural businesses. Ensuring equal opportunities for paid employment positively influences the family’s moving out of poverty, and the elevated social status of women and girls in the family.

1.2.6 Women have higher unemployment rates

Since the end of communism, official data show that the unemployment rate is higher among women than among men. The high unemployment rate among women prevents them from being economically independent and, therefore, they are often discriminated against, even within the family.

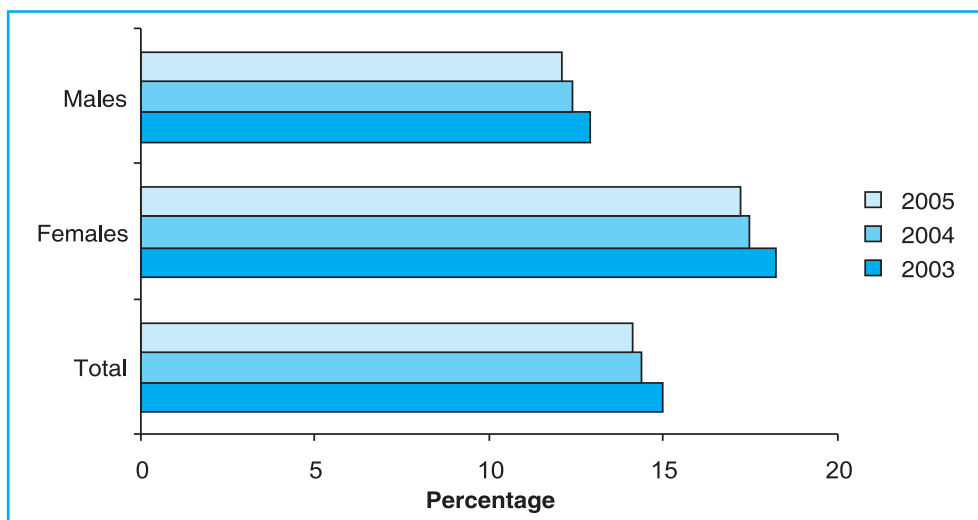
In recent years, despite the economic growth that has brought about a slight reduction in the unemployment rate for both genders approximately equally, the male to female inequality ratio in terms of unemployment has remained virtually unchanged (see Figure 2), with the difference falling from 5.3 per cent to only 5.1 per cent.

Overall, high unemployment rates² are typically encountered in urban areas in Albania. The population in rural areas has managed to find employment in agriculture and animal husbandry, allowing them to ensure their means of living and providing some earnings. In contrast, in urban areas, the opportunities to obtain work are rather limited. High unemployment and lower salaries restrict women’s real possibilities to enhance the level of their well-being and that of their children.

A 2005³ analysis of the employment status of females between 15 and 64 years of age found that only fourteen per cent of women are involved in active job seeking while 86 per cent remain inactive. A number of factors contribute to this phenomenon. On the one hand, the labour market is very limited, while, on the other, scarce financial means and lack of child care programmes force women into staying at home to care for their children and do household chores.

Figure 2

Unemployment rate by gender, between 2003 and 2005



Source: INSTAT, administrative data 2003–2005

¹ Amnesty International, *Albania: Violence against Women in the Family. It is not her shame*, 2005

² World Bank and INSTAT, *Albania: Poverty Assessment*, 2003

³ INSTAT, *Preliminary data; LSMS 2005*

Table 4

Employment status of population below absolute poverty line (age group 15–64 years), 2002–2005

Status	2002			2005		
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
Employed	66.7	49.8	57.6	68.6	45.0	55.9
Unemployed	17.7	15.0	16.3	10.8	9.4	10.1
Inactive Homemakers	0.7	16.9	9.4	0.6	23.1	12.7
Inactive others	14.9	18.3	16.7	20.0	22.4	21.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Preliminary data, INSTAT, LSMS 2005

Unemployment among females exerts a negative impact on the well-being of the typical Albanian household. The unemployment rate among females is higher in poor households (those below the absolute poverty line) than in those above the poverty line. The employment rate among such women fell further between 2002 and 2005, thus increasing the number of poor and unemployed women (see Table 4). Although there was a decrease in the percentage of both men and women employed the proportion of females looking after the house increased by 37 per cent.

1.2.7 Equality in the household

Women from poor families and from rural areas are to a large extent excluded from decision making in the family on account of the social norm of recognising men as the head of household. When decision making concerns spending of money, in the overwhelming number of cases the final decision is taken by the husband or other males in the family, who also have the final say in terms of the number of children and their schooling, emigration or migration of the family or any of its members, and a child's marriage when this is realised through match-making. Even though there are a lack of studies and data on woman's participation in decision-making in the family, it is common knowledge that her participation is related to educational attainment, area of residence, age and access to ownership and earnings.

The lower a woman's educational attainment, the poorer her decision-making powers. As a result, unemployed rural women and poor women have few rights concerning decision making on important issues in the family. These women instead play an informative or consultative role in relation to the need for buying certain foods, or advice on selling a home-made product. Participation is also affected by poor access to information and knowledge. Leading an isolated social life exerts a negative impact on her access to information. Higher levels of education, enhanced access to information and contribution to the household income increase the ability of poor women and those living in rural areas in decision making in the family.

1.2.8 Equality in politics and government

In Albania, respect for women's rights is determined mostly by their level of representation in the decision-making process. Given that the current level of representation is low, respect for women's rights is also low, not helped by the insufficient attention that Albanian society pays to relevant education of its men and boys. Traditionally, the norms and values related to gender equality in the family and in society are treated superficially.

Box 1

I feel good because I am useful to my family

In the village where I live, the farming economy does not allow us to save money. The only cash payments we received before I started as administrator in the kindergarten, was an old-age pension and state financial assistance, which helped us a little bit to meet our needs. The modest remuneration of 10,000 lekë a month, which is the payment I receive as administrator of the kindergarten, is no big deal compared to the effort and time I devote to it on a daily basis, and the fact that this kindergarten is located in my property grounds. Still, the salary that I receive helps me meet several unfulfilled needs, and my family leads a better life. I feel good because I am contributing to my children's well-being. The relationship between my husband and myself has also changed for the better. I am much more independent than I used to be in having a say about the purchases in the family.

A poor mother from a rural area in Dibra

Source: UNICEF, medium-term assessment of the project "Promotion of social cohesion and conflict prevention and improving ECD in North Albania", 2004

Women account for only seven per cent of parliamentarians in Albania, and only nine women hold leadership positions in central government. In local government, the situation is worse: only two per cent of local leaders are women. The lack of women in policy making positions creates an obstacle to accomplishing reforms and implementing policies focused on the needs of women, children and families. Men dominate leadership positions both in public administration and in the political parties.

This situation is not driven by indifference that women may feel towards engagement in politics, neither does it reflect any inability to lead. The lack of women in politics is related more to the difficulties they face in adapting themselves to the current reality of Albanian politics, and reflects the shortage of standards and appropriate mechanisms for identifying priorities that would enable a greater role for women in the leadership of the country, with women themselves insisting even more on playing this role.

The poor level of female representation in the decision-making structures is indicative of the fact that their aspirations and needs are under represented, and that they have little chance to foster policies addressing women's issues, including poverty and gender inequality, or to elevate their status and role in the social and economic development of the country.

The government is making positive efforts to ensure empowerment of women. The National Strategy for Gender Equality, still under development, will provide for greater incorporation of gender-specific issues into public policies, and will facilitate the undertaking of positive steps towards ensuring

gender equality in the future. The Law for Gender Equality completes the legal framework concerning gender equality in education, employment and decision making. It allows introduction of government-led mechanisms in the development of policies in favour of gender equality and prescribes measuring the impact of these policies through periodic assessments and monitoring.

1.2.9 Domestic violence against women

Gender-based discrimination and violence are present throughout the course of women's life in Albania. Gender-based violence comes in many forms. It can be expressed through psychological or physical abuse, or both. Often, it is manifested in forms of domestic violence, trafficking for purposes of prostitution and selective abortion. A 2000 study¹ conducted in eleven Albanian districts found that 64 per cent of women who had participated in the survey admitted to experiencing psychological and physical violence. Of these, 40 per cent reported experiencing physical violence. Violence in the family is largely related to the patriarchal model for maintenance of the household. Traditionally, the man is considered the sole breadwinner. As a result of crippling poverty and unemployment, men often find it difficult to implement their responsibilities for the family. Hence, many resort to violence exercised against women and children to demonstrate their power.

Box 2

Violence against women is growing

A study carried out by forensic medicine experts in Tirana between 2001 and 2003 showed that there was a high incidence of violence exerted against female partners. The data indicated that there had been an increase in violence during the course of the study. Seventy-one per cent of cases involving abuse of the female partner were violent, and in 68 per cent of the cases the victims were homemakers between 20 and 40 years of age with a history of repeated violence. Professor Sokrat Meksi, who has worked in forensic medicine for many years, stated, "Violence in the family is growing. In the first years of transition it did not register as high a rate as at the moment. That it has had an increasing trend over the past five to six years is extremely worrying."

Source: *Amnesty International, Albania: Violence against Women in the Family: "It's not her Shame", 2005*

Trafficking of women and girls for profit is one of the worst forms of gender-based violence. It is not known exactly how many women and girls may have been trafficked from Albania in the past 16 years. Since there is no way to track accurately the incidence of this phenomenon, it is difficult to determine what the exact numbers may be. Many women and girls who are trafficked are destined for

¹ *Women's Association Refleksione, 2000*

neighbouring countries and the sex trade. Public opinion is aware of the fact that the largest percentage of trafficked women and girls have been kidnapped, deceived or coerced. Women and girls from poor families, who have poor educational attainment, little access to information and little support in the family, are exposed to a greater risk of trafficking than financially more secure females.

The data that are available on human trafficking are not encouraging. Information available to the Ministry of Public Order does not always include data on the gender or original abode of the victims of trafficking, and so the figures of females trafficked from poor rural areas are likely to be grossly underestimated.

Selective abortion is another form of gender-based violence. Data from Albania's hospitals show that many would-be parents would prefer a baby boy rather than girl. As a result, 60 per cent of abortions are attributable to the gender of the child. Most mothers having an abortion in the second trimester of pregnancy come from rural areas, with the gender of the baby the reason for abortion.¹

¹ UNDP & SEDA; *Pro-poor and Pro-women Development, 2005*, p. 106

Chapter Two

A world that is not fit for women is not fit for children either



Poverty is transmitted from one generation to the next, and gender inequality and gender-based discrimination have negative consequences for children in exercising their basic rights, and in fully achieving their potential. Women's poverty affects children in many ways. Biologically, malnutrition and poor health are crucial factors linked to premature birth, incidence of disease among babies and infant mortality. Socio-economically, by having access to resources that generate well-being – education, employment and empowerment in the family and society – women can ensure conditions conducive to gender equality, human development and poverty reduction.

2.1 Poor women give birth to many children

Poor women have less access to family planning tools than better off women, and this results in a higher birth rate. Data from 2002¹ indicate that the birth-rate indicator among women from a low economic level is 2.9, 12 per cent higher than that for women from a better economic background.

2.2 Infant mortality is closely related to a mother's level of poverty and educational attainment

The indicator of underweight children and of infant mortality are linked to health and social well-being, which are closely tied with the mother's health care, nutrition and education. The data contained in the Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey (MICS) 2005 give a level for underweight live births of 6.9 per cent (Table 5). A women's educational attainment and economic level also effect the birth-rate. About six in ten mothers who have given birth to premature babies (weighing less than 2,500 grams) come from a low or medium economic level,² and the same proportion have finished only eight-year or basic education.

¹ Public Health Institute and INSTAT, *Albania: Reproductive Health Survey, 2002*

² Low and medium level of economic well-being refers to three poorest quintiles

Table 5

Underweight live births, by area of residence, 2000–2005

Area	Percentage underweight live births (<2,500 grams)		
	2000	2002	2005
Overall	2.6	4.6	6.9
Urban area	3.4	4.4	7.0
Rural area	2.1	4.7	6.8

Source: MICS 2000, 2005; Albania: Reproductive Health Survey, 2002

Reduction in poverty and enhancement of the mother’s educational attainment have a positive effect on reducing child mortality. In 2005, the probability of death among babies and children under five years of age in families with a good economic level was a quarter of that in families from the middle and poor strata (Table 6). Irrespective of the fact that the data reported in MICS 2000 and 2005 show a decrease over time in infant mortality-rate and under-five child mortality-rate, the levels are still high compared to other countries of the region¹. Along with an increase in well-being, improvement of the mother’s educational attainment is important to bring these phenomena down.

Table 6

Infant and Under-five Child Mortality Rate (per 1,000 live births), 2005

	Infant mortality-rate	Under-five child mortality-rate
Mother's educational attainment		
None or eight-year	23	27
Secondary at least	17	19
Mother's educational attainment		
None or eight-year	23	26
Secondary at least	6	6
Secondary at least	18	19

Source: INSTAT, MICS 2005

2.3 Mother’s educational attainment impacts child nutrition

A poor, malnourished women, with poor educational attainment, is likely to raise malnourished and underdeveloped children, thus repeating the cycle she and her mother experienced.

The findings from MICS 2005 reveal the relationships that exist among chronic malnutrition, education and economic well-being. Chronic moderate malnutrition is 1.3 times higher among children whose mothers have low educational attainment than among other children, while poor children are twice as threatened by chronic malnutrition (Table 7). Compared to the data obtained in 2000, those for 2005 point to a reduction in malnutrition primarily related to improvement in the mother’s economic level and elevation of her educational attainment.

2.4 Educational attainment and economic well-being help foster child psycho-social development, learning and school readiness

A mother with an inferior status in the family and who is stressed from having to deal with the ramifications of poverty has little opportunity to influence positively her children’s psycho-social

¹ Social Monitor 2006, UNICEF- IRC, Florence

Table 7

Percentage chronic malnutrition, by mother's educational attainment and economic well-being, 2000 and 2005

Indicator	Chronic malnutrition, 2000		Chronic malnutrition, 2005	
	Moderate	Serious	Moderate	Serious
Overall	31.7	17.3	22.3	8.8
Mother's educational attainment				
Basic	38.3	19.7	28.2	13.3
Eight-year	25.4	15.9	22.3	6.9
Secondary at least	19.2	9.4	21.4	10.9
Economic status				
Q1, poorest quintile	-	-	30.1	12.8
Q2	-	-	22.9	5.9
Q3	-	-	24.1	14.1
Q4	-	-	18.4	5.6
Q5, richest quintile	-	-	13.9	5.5

Source: INSTAT, MICS 2005

development during early childhood. According to MICS 2005, a poor mother with poor educational attainment is little engaged in activities that foster learning and school readiness (Table 8).

Table 8

Indicators that foster child learning, 2005

Indicator	Percentage of children of mothers who engage in ≥ 4 activities that foster learning and school readiness	Average number of activities devoted to child
Mother's educational attainment		
None or basic	34.7	3.0
Eight-year	62.4	4.3
Secondary at least	78.0	4.9
Economic status		
Q1, poorest quintile	53.2	3.9
Q2	64.7	4.3
Q3	67.9	4.5
Q4	76.0	4.8
Q5, richest quintile	82.2	5.1

Source: INSTAT, MICS 2005

Another study, *Promotion social cohesion and conflict prevention and improving ECD in North Albania*, which was conducted in several poor urban and rural areas in that region in 2005, found that a mother's empowerment through access to information and encouragement of organisation and participation in activities related to early childhood had a positive impact on child development. Even in the most discriminated and poorest areas both improvement of women's access to health care services and increase in child enrolment at school were crucial factors in improving child psycho-social development and a women's role in the family.

Mothers have an important role to play in their children's life. If educated and appreciated in the family, a mother can take the best decisions and encourage her children to do the same. The MICS

2005 survey also identified a positive relationship between a mother’s educational attainment and the likelihood of her children finishing compulsory education. The higher a mother’s educational attainment and level of well-being (Table 9), the greater the chance of her children attending secondary education.

Table 9

Compulsory and secondary education attendance, by mother’s educational attainment and economic status

Indicator	Compulsory		Secondary	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
Mother's educational attainment				
None or Basic	96.5	82.3	22.1	24.5
Eight-year	95.0	95.3	41.7	43.7
Secondary at least	96.9	96.8	70.7	66.1
Economic status				
Q1, poorest	93.4	95.7	30.1	40.1
Q2	95.0	94.2	44.3	51.5
Q3	95.9	97.8	62.1	61.1
Q4	98.3	94.2	73.9	69.3
Q5, richest	96.9	96.8	81.0	75.4

Source: MICS 2005

Gender-based discrimination does exist and is rather pronounced in rural areas. According to one study conducted by UNICEF,¹ even though the same level of drop-out is recorded for both genders in compulsory education, the number of girls from rural areas dropping out of school as a result of having received “enough education” was nine times higher than among boys. In addition, lack of security and the prevalent mentality discourage girls from attending secondary school.

Girls’ education is an important factor in reducing gender inequality and poverty. The longer girls stay at school, the greater the possibilities for them to find well-paid jobs, to have educated, and a smaller number of, children.

2.5 Violence in the family has a high cost, paid for by children

Violence in the family is more common in the poor strata of Albanian society and in groups with poor educational attainment. Violence administered against wives or children has a disastrous effect on children and society, as it in turn cultivates violent behaviour. A qualitative study on violence exercised against women in the family indicates that it leads to an increased number of undesired pregnancies and, specifically, causes an increased number of children with developmental and mental health problems. Violence in the family has a deep impact on children, whether or not they themselves suffer the physical violence. The children of violated women reveal emotional and behavioural problems.²

¹ Drop-out in the area of Durrës. Reasons behind it, and recommendations, UNICEF 2001

² Adriana Baban, Violence against Women in Family and Society, 2002

Box 3

Evidence provided by mothers on the impact on their children of violence in the family

... My eldest son is always anxious and irritated. He is not sociable and more often than not bothers other children by breaking their toys.

... My son is aggressive towards the other children. If they don't let him get his way, he becomes angry and hits the other children. When at home, he throws things on the ground ... He imitates his father's behaviour.

... My daughter is not like the other children; she doesn't like to talk; she never goes out to play with her girl friends, and I've noticed that she keeps her distance from other children. When her father comes home, she is very frightened and worried.

Source: Adriana Baban, Violence against Women in Family and Society, an explorative study funded by UNICEF, CIDA and ISOP

Children, as an object of or witness to violence in the family, have poor academic performance, and, consequently, a higher probability of living in poverty. According to a study carried out on reproductive health in 2002,¹ the respondents from the cluster of the poor reported the highest figures regarding violence suffered during childhood. About 14 per cent of poor women, and 52 per cent of poor men, had been witness to violence exercised by their father against their mother, with 31 per cent of women and 70 per cent of men having themselves been subjected to violence by their parents. The difference in the figures for men and for women can be accounted for by the fact that a large number of women do not speak about the violence they suffer. Irrespective of this, poverty and childhood experiences involving violence have a negative impact on a child's life, and increase the likelihood of violent behaviour being perpetuated in the family when they grow up.

2.6 Children raised in poverty are forced to work in jobs harmful to their health

For children living in poverty going to school is a possibility only in the short-term, generally from only four to eight years. While other children learn, many children from poor families have to work. The risk of dropping out from school is even higher among children from female-headed households, with the probability of going to work being high.

The exact number of children working in Albania is unknown. In 2003, data provided by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities indicated that about 2,000 poor children aged up to 17 years were beggars, washed car windows, were travelling vendors or collected tin cans at waste disposal sites. A still greater number of children from rural areas dropped out of school and busied

¹ Public Health Institute and INSTAT, *Albania: Reproductive Health Survey, 2002*

themselves with household chores, or helped increase the family income or means of living. Many little girls walk long distances alone or with their mothers to fetch potable water. They clean the house and care for their younger brothers and sisters. From morning till night, boys tend livestock or help their parents with agricultural chores.

Doing heavy physical jobs is harmful to a child's physical development and schooling. The body is not yet prepared at a time when the child should be attending school and participating in games and recreational activities. Such children are exposed to jobs that are hazardous to their health, working at dump sites, staying outside on hot summer days and cold winter days, and exposed for lengthy periods to air saturated with dust and car emissions at road junctions.

2.7 Poverty increases the risk of child trafficking, particularly of girls

There is scant information on the numbers of trafficked children. According to the Ministry of Interior, between 1992 and 2002 about 4,000 children were reported to have been trafficked to Albania's neighbouring countries for purposes of work, including forced work, and engagement in illegal activities such as begging, theft or distribution of narcotic substances and sexual exploitation. Reports from Italy and Greece identify large numbers of trafficked Albanian children being subject to illegal adoption for profit. These victims almost always come from families living in extreme poverty, whose parents are illiterate or have poor educational attainment, with a history of divorce, with sometimes remarriage, and from families headed by single mothers, without support.¹

¹ *Terre des homes, The Trafficking of Albanian Children in Greece, January 2003*

Chapter Three

Reducing women's poverty is a call for equality

Reduction in poverty in Albania, and specifically, reduction in the number of poor children, is being achieved through developing and applying policies and programmes aimed at increasing the possibilities for ensuring gender equality and empowerment of women in general, and of poor women specifically. In Albania, poverty experiences are different for men and women. Understanding of the gender specific dimensions and implications for future generations necessarily calls for the development of new policies and priorities, as well as implementation of programmes designed to reduce poverty through respect for women's rights and reduction of gender inequality.

3.1 Empowerment of women, a vision for development that can and should be attained

As described in the preceding chapters, improvement in the well-being of children, and specifically, poor children, is closely related to the empowerment of the role of half of the population – Albania's women and girls. Encouragement of equal distribution of the labour force in Albanian society, individually, economically and politically, will have an impact on a woman's increased control of her individual or social life, and allow her participation in and influence on the decision-making structures. Empowerment of the role of women and girls should be considered as a vision for development that can and should be attained.

For this aim to be achieved it is necessary for:

- ♦ possibilities allowing for attendance of education beyond compulsory education to be increased;
- ♦ the right to have control of reproductive health to be guaranteed;
- ♦ equality in employment and income to be guaranteed;
- ♦ violence to be reduced;
- ♦ participation in and influence on the political decision-making at a central and local level to be boosted.

The accomplishment of these targets calls for numerous *pro-gender* interventions, strategies and policies, which will guarantee positive changes in the life of women and of their children.

3.1.1 Policies conducive to poverty reduction will guarantee women rights and gender quality

Gender equality and empowerment of woman are significant instruments that can reduce inequalities and poverty among Albanian women and children. Interventions and strategies to ensure reduction in poverty and respect for the rights of the poor are shown to be successful if they (a) recognise women as a group with little empowerment and limited possibilities to exercise their rights; b) enhance women's participation in identifying the solutions to their problems while not just respecting their rights, but also contributing to the development of sustained programmes and policies; and c) combine development of policies with the principles underlying basic rights and gender equality.

3.1.2 Education of children beyond compulsory education is a challenge with a long-term effect on reduction in poverty and gender inequality

Education of children beyond compulsory education has positive effects both on them as individuals and their would-be parental role. Education should serve as a vehicle for the transformation of beliefs, behaviours and habits that nourish gender-based discrimination and gender inequality.

Sending girls to school allows them to have more opportunities to acquire new information and knowledge, and to use them effectively. Mothers with secondary education have more knowledge on preventing disease among their children, and are more inclined to look for or employ family planning methods. Moreover, women with good educational attainment have more opportunities to find well-paid jobs. Thus, education has a positive impact on relations inside the family, and outside, with the community or society.

Even in rural areas, in which a patriarchal culture is prevalent, women who have more than just compulsory education are more engaged in debates in the family concerning family expenditure compared to women with poor educational attainment. Educated women are more capable of dealing with a violent man. A review of the data acquired from the assessment of an early childhood development project, implemented in certain poor areas in Albania, found that use of dialogue during conflicts with spouses improved the situation owing to their knowing better of how to address conflicts. In both urban and rural areas, positive outcomes were related to the woman's elevated educational attainment.

On the other hand, boys' education is also extremely important. In the Albanian family and society, men have the power and hold leading positions. The fact that many males manifest unacceptable behaviour is indicative of poor educational attainment. Therefore, male drop-out should be a matter of concern. Encouragement of schooling for boys should be related both to their attendance at school, and their active participation in the teaching process.

3.1.3 Increasing opportunities for children to attend compulsory and secondary education is crucial

Many types of intervention can help improve school attendance. Making schooling an economically affordable challenge for poor children is one such intervention and can be achieved through:

- ♦ **Partial or full reimbursement of educational expenses**, including purchase of textbooks and school materials, or encouraging participation in school through increased support with conditional funds (conditional financial assistance) to poor households.

- ♦ **Reduction in distance to school** through increased allocation of transportation expenses for children or teachers. Reduction in distances to school impacts positively secondary education attendance by girls, and of all children in rural areas. Construction of well-located schools, or provision of free and safe transportation to schools located some distance away, would ensure that a larger number of poor children from rural areas would attend secondary education.
- ♦ **Improvement in teaching quality in rural areas** by provision of financial incentives to qualified teachers, for example by offering regular daily transport, and by upgrading school buildings and provisioning them with essential teaching toolkits.

3.1.4 Gender issues and fostering of cooperation should be introduced into schools

The dominant position of the male in Albanian society cannot be moulded by increased access to education alone. It is necessary to bring into the country's schools an approach designed to target, gain an understanding of and remove the reasons for gender inequality. This can be achieved not just by involving boys in processes that help reposition the role of the girl, but also by working directly with them to elucidate the various concepts of what it is to be a man, remoulding the models so that they become less discriminating against and violent towards, and more cooperative with, girls. The Gender Alliance for Development Centre and the Ministry of Education and Science have jointly launched an extremely positive initiative that should be taken into account and supported. As a result of this project, changes are expected to be made in the national curriculum, while the centre itself has produced a handbook for teachers that include guidelines for adapting current schoolbooks from the perspective of gender. Meanwhile, the curriculum at the School for Teachers has been altered to incorporate this issue.

3.1.5 The right to have control of reproductive health should be guaranteed and respected

Empowerment of women is closely related to their level of control of reproductive health. As highlighted above in Chapter One, gender inequality reduces the possibilities for women to control the family's financial resources and this encroaches on reproductive autonomy. Interventions designed to improve the right of women to have control over their reproductive health should be enshrined in both the public health system and the social welfare policies.

Hence, in the public health system, interventions designed to reduce malnutrition and anaemia should be implemented along with increased access to family planning services, and qualified obstetrician services. Outside of the public health system, sexual education programmes should also impart information to women and girls whether or not they are outside of school structures. Such interventions may be carried to effect in the presence of a supportive environment, one featuring politics and politicians. A greater number of women in decision-making may create such a supportive environment.

3.1.6 Reduction in inequality in terms of employment, a condition for women's empowerment

Women's empowerment is achieved by increasing employment opportunities. Allocation of opportunities and income to many unemployed women, to those confined to the family environment or on low income is related to undertaking of initiatives concerning the labour legislation, information on the labour market and the right to employment, the opportunity to gain qualifications and vocational training, and to access sources of income or receive loans.

Increase in employment opportunities for women, and specifically for poor women, is also related to the development and implementation of active employment policies, including the following:

- ♦ Enhancing and promotion of employment through increasing the number of vocational training institutions and their expansion to rural areas;
- ♦ Developing subsidized payment-related programmes designed for socially-excluded categories, including trafficked women and girls, women who are drawing closer to the pensionable age, or invalid or disabled women;
- ♦ Promoting the development of small businesses managed by women through micro-financing programmes, business clubs and development funds earmarked for the small business, combined with vocational training for the transfer of technologies, and development of services and marketing.

Box 4

Active employment promotion programme for female job-seekers

This programme is designed to actively promote employment among female job-seekers, aiming at integrating socially-excluded groups of women, including female Roma, women who are moving closer to the pensionable age or who are disabled or have been trafficked, into the labour market. Based on the three-year programme, for every unemployed woman recruited with a regular annual contract the Albanian State will, in the first year, reimburse the employer to the extent of 75 per cent of the social insurance contributions and the salaries for four months. In the second year, the employer will be reimbursed with 85 per cent of the social insurance contributions and the salaries for six months, while in the third year, the employer will be reimbursed with 100 per cent of the social insurance contributions and the salaries for eight months. During 2004, only three such projects were funded, and about 120 poor female job-seekers from north-eastern Albania were employed.

Source: V. Kolpeja and G. Qosja, Active Labour market Programmes in Albania, June 2006

Even though the above-mentioned programmes have proved to be successful in stimulating employment, women's participation in these projects was low. Thus, the programme for the Business Incubators funded by the World Bank between 1998 and 2004 supported the start-up and functioning of about 46 small businesses, even though only a small number of them were run by women. Business Incubators act as a form of active labour promotion for special categories, e.g. disabled people, who face difficulty in finding work. Likewise, even though foundations such as the American-Albanian Enterprise Fund, *Besa*, the Rural Financing Fund and the Albanian Micro-loan Partnership have successfully credited small-business activities, the number of women benefiting from these programmes, compared to that of men, has been extremely low.

Another obstacle preventing Albanian women from accessing the labour market is a lack of sufficient pre-school structures and social services for categories in need, including the elderly or disabled. Reduction in pre-school structures and absence of social service structures designed for the elderly or disabled has led to an increase in the number of women of working age who remain outside the labour market because of their domestic responsibilities for children or the elderly or disabled. Development of policies and programmes establishing child care in pre-school structures, or care for the elderly and disabled in specialised day centres, would both allow woman's participation in paid employment activities and reduce poverty by enhancing the economic level of the household.

3.1.7 Elimination of violence against women and girls, a moral and legal obligation

Violence against women and girls is a serious impediment to the social and economic development of Albanian society. Even though there are no accurate data on the incidence of gender-based violence, it is thought to be more commonly exercised against poor women and women from rural areas than in less poor communities.

It is common knowledge that isolated or sporadic interventions do not help reduce gender-based violence. Therefore, a combination of interventions in infrastructure, legislation, application of the law, education, health and elsewhere would have a considerable impact in reducing such violence and alleviating its negative effects on women and children.

The health system is a first point of reference for identification of the victims of violence. Many such victims turn to its structures. However, they often refuse to identify the perpetrator. Therefore, both the health and police structures should offer a number of interventions to assist the victim and prevent repetition of the violence, by ensuring that the cases are recorded and reported to the police.

Appropriate schooling also creates the opportunity to prevent gender-based violence, but interventions aimed at educating people should not be limited to school curricula. They should also be embodied in regular hard-hitting awareness-raising campaigns that address the devastating effects of violence, targeting the wider public. Awareness-raising campaigns through mass media have proved to be effective in achieving this aim in other countries. Transforming gender-based violence into a society issue would help enable it to be regarded as intolerable behaviour. For this to happen requires the support of all key stakeholders, policy makers, non-government organisations and both national and international donors.

3.1.8 Women's increased participation in decision-making structures influences the development of society

Enhancing women's participation in decision-making structures and in political life is a well-known and recognised vehicle for ensuring the empowerment of women. There are three reasons¹ why women's participation in decision-making is a strategic goal for their empowerment. Firstly, it has been proved that countries in which women's participation in political life is classified as less than 30 per cent reveal higher inequality and are less inclusive and less democratic than others. Secondly, it is common knowledge that women uphold interests that are different from those to which men attach importance. Women's direct participation in the decision-making structures ensures prioritisation of issues not specified by men. Finally, women's participation in political life and decision-making significantly improves the level of governance.

¹ *Global Urban Development Magazine, Taking actions to empower women: UN millennium project report on education and gender equality, March 2006*

How can women's participation in decision-making be enhanced? In the document *Pro-poor & Pro-women Development Policies in Albania*,¹ published in 2005, it is proposed that empowering women's participation in political life is determined by the following interventions:

1. Quotas or reservations are a way to enhance women's participation in political life and decision-making structures. Revision of the electoral law and support for actions aimed at ensuring increased number of women in parliament or decision-making structures at a local level, would create increased participation.
2. Raising awareness in Albanian society that women's active participation in politics brings new values into political life, with new forms of how to address the needs of society being introduced. It causes an increase in solidarity and equality, and helps construct a more democratic and more peaceful society.
3. Addressing gender-based discrimination in Albanian politics should not be regarded as a matter of concern for women alone. It should also be viewed as a responsibility of the political parties and the whole of Albanian society.

3.2 Institutionalisation of the empowerment of women should be incorporated into development policies

The interventions addressed above are insufficient and inaccessible if they are not combined with other interventions that help institutionalise woman's empowerment in the country's development policies. Therefore, it is necessary that development strategies incorporate policies in favour of the poor and women, that budgets supporting these policies are introduced, that women's participation in the policy development process is ensured, that database systems are built up in order to facilitate analysis of information on women's exclusion and that an active citizenry is introduced.

3.2.1 Revising the National Strategy for Development and Integration so as to ensure integration of pro-poor and pro-woman policies

In Albania, the policy-makers at the central and local levels have to some extent become aware of the relationship that exists between development strategies and those that restrict gender inequality and gender-based discrimination. On the basis of the experience so far and the recommendations made by Albanian and foreign experts, efforts are being made to re-draft the National Strategy for Social and Economic Development so that it is more sensitive to the poor strata and more effective in fostering employment and ensuring income for them. This would allow the poor, including women and children, to benefit more from the economic policies and foreign assistance.

3.2.2 Synchronising the Millennium Development Goals with the National Strategy for Development and Integration – a positive signal

The initiative for synchronising the MDGs with the National Strategy for Development and Integration is a positive sign that will maximise its impact on cost-effective development. Adaptation of the regionalisation of the MDGs by Albania would also help build a bridge between the regional, local and national priorities in the process of reducing poverty and gender inequality. Allowing stakeholders at a local level (local government and civil society) ownership of the process of developing strategic development plans and monitoring the progress has increased the possibility for achieving the MDGs.

¹ UNDP, *Report on Human Development, Albania, 2005*

3.2.3 Developing gender responsive budgets

A budget is a statement of a given policy, and reflects the social and economic priorities of a given government. Development of gender responsive budgets by the Albanian government is a form of accountability for achieving gender equality and ensuring respect for women's rights. Use of gender-responsive budget analysis will allow review of budgetary expenditure and income among women and girls, on the one hand, and men and boys on the other. It will also assist government, including local government, adjust policies and reallocate resources.

3.2.4 Introducing *gender mainstreaming* into policy-making institutions

Irrespective of the level of awareness of gender-specific issues, the current policies and programmes do not take adequate interest of gender equality. Introduction of *gender mainstreaming* into the development policies should serve as a vehicle for realisation of such equality. For as long as women are under-represented in the decision-making structures and register higher unemployment than men and suffer violence, the interventions and policies designed to reduce these inequalities should be at the centre of attention. *Gender mainstreaming* implies highlighting and purposefully supporting women on the strength that men and women do not benefit equally through neutral development projects. Carrying on development of policies and programmes that ignore their differential effects on men and women, seriously impairs societal development. Introducing *gender mainstreaming* into development policies is closely related to reduction in poverty, as it is focused on the achievement of outcomes that improve the well-being of poor women.

3.2.5 Establishing a gender management system

To enable gender mainstreaming to be established, it is necessary for gender equality to be institutionalised in the structures and institutions that develop policies at a national and local level. Establishment of a gender management system implies the introduction of a network of structures, mechanisms and processes that allow incorporation of a gender-based perspective into the development policies, plans, programmes and projects. A gender management system allows the realisation of essential and long-term changes in Albanian society, and should start with an organisational change in governance, given that the State is responsible for representing the interests of all of its citizens. Institutional changes instrumental in building a gender management system should include:

- ♦ reinstitution of the Committee for Equal Opportunities, attached to the Council of Ministers, with the function of a leadership agency, responsible for guiding the changes. At present, this function is taken on by the Directorate for Equal Opportunities at the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities. The change to the status of the Committee for Equal Opportunities, at the Council of Ministers, into a Directorate, at a Ministry, has resulted in limited financial resources, and prevents this structure from playing an important role in achieving gender equality.
- ♦ establishment of a leading group with representatives from all state institutions and civil society, assigned with coordinating and implementing the strategy for reducing gender inequality and gender-based discrimination.
- ♦ establishment of a supervisory committee tasked with observing the relationships among different ministries and institutions.
- ♦ setting up of a parliamentary group designed to promote and lobby for gender specific issues during the process of developing policies.

- ♦ introduction of interaction between civil society and the above-mentioned state structures so as to ensure flow of information and exertion of mutual influence on the governmental structures and civil society.

3.2.6 Setting up a database system designed to measure the progress of interventions

Empowerment of the woman's role and minimisation of poverty among them and their children is closely related to many development policies and programmes. This calls for the establishment of a system of indicators that can measure women's empowerment on a periodic basis and assess the effectiveness of the policies and programmes towards the established goals. Experiences from various countries show that it is necessary for the indicators to be broken down into two categories: those designed to measure progress at an overall social level, such as a Gender Empowerment Measure, or those designed to measure progress in the specific framework of a programme or intervention, such as with indicators concerning active employment programmes.

3.2.7 Introducing active citizenry and supporting bodies that contribute to the implementation of women's rights

Apart from lack of gender-specific expertise in the structures that develop policies, another factor attributable to the limitation of the presentation of gender-equality-related issues is the shortage or inadequacy of consultations with the principal stakeholders. This hurdle may be overcome by offering support to the local bodies so that they may exercise the necessary pressure to achieve gender equality, and by ensuring enhanced responsibility for action or omission to act in the service of gender equality on the part of the state structures, donors and international organisations.

Support for the bodies contributing to the implementation of women's rights is important for women's individual and collective empowerment. This should be made available as support in financial terms so as to ensure organisational development. However, it should also help set up a network of connections between non-governmental women's organisations and women in decision-making positions.

Concluding remarks

The government of Albania has initiated efforts to improve the development of policies and planning for gender equality, but gaps still remain. Supporting reform in social care focused on a reduction in gender inequalities, ensuring that integrated community-based services provide good quality care and are accessible, is one of the key goals of the National Strategy on Gender Equality. Establishing effective mechanisms that monitor the impact that policy interventions have on the reduction of exclusion and vulnerability and encouraging the participation of civil society and the business community in the decision-making process will ensure that the priorities of the government vis-à-vis key strategies are met. Looking carefully at the information provided in this report, whilst acknowledging its limitations, we recognize that:

- a) Data collection remains a critical issue. A system of data collection and analysis of indicators consistent with international standards is needed to formulate effective policies and programmes;
- b) Studies on the impact that gender discrimination has on the development of other critical social problems have yet to be taken. Such studies are necessary to provide insights for comparative analysis of the phenomena, the root causes as well as the geographical distribution;
- c) Allocation of resources is still far from being effective and decentralized. Adequate financial resources for social policies are required especially at local level;
- d) Institutional capacities in charge of monitoring gender-based social policies and delivering social care services, should be strengthened at the national and local levels.

In summary, the priority issues that should be considered are:

1. Strengthening legal reform as well as the efforts taken to implement it;
2. Ensuring coordination among government sectors at the central, regional and local levels to implement policies aimed at realizing women rights;
3. Promoting women's participation in making and implementing gender-based policies;
4. Establishing a comprehensive, disaggregated data collection system based on indicators that accurately measure the situation of women and children at risk.

Reduction in inequalities and gender-based discrimination in Albania is a matter for the whole of society. The urgent issue is to convert the strategies into reality and tangible achievements. Gender equality can and should be attained if all players concerned with equality participate fully.

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