



## UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REPORT

Submitted by:

### UNITED FOR CHILD CARE AND PROTECTION COALITION IN ALBANIA YOUTH ADVOCACY GROUP (BKTF<sup>1</sup>)

#### UPR report prepared by children and youth

This report is prepared with the input of *28 children aged 7-15* from the center the House of colors (ARSIS), Little Angels (SHKEJ), Terre des Hommes, SOS Children's Villages, the public institution in Tirana Zyber Hallulli, and the Advisory Group on Community Children in Elbasan (Rrapishte commune) and Fier (Balltez commune),

All the information is provided by the children through focus groups and games.

#### Methodology

**The objectives of the meetings organized with children were:**

I. Children understand what the process of UPR report is.

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<sup>1</sup> The members of BKTF coalition are: Aksion Plus, ARSIS, Terre des Hommes, Save the Children, Center for Integrated Legal Services and Practices, International Social Service – Albanian Branch, Partnerë për Fëmijët, Fëmijët e Botës-Shqipëri, Help for Children, World Vision, Tjeter Vizion, Qendra për Iniciativa Ligjore dhe Qytetare, Unioni "Amaro Drom", Volontariato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo Albania, Rromani Baxt, Shërbimi Ligjor Falas, Shoqata Kombëtarë Edukimi për Jetën, Shoqata e Grave me Probleme Sociale, Qendra Kombëtare për Shërbime Komunitare, Centro Informazione Educazione di Sviluppo, Caritas Albania, Veprime të Koordinuara kundër Varfërisë, Shërbimet Sociale "Bethany", SOS Fshatrat e Fëmijëve Shqipëri, Fëmijët Sot, Qendra për Mbrojtjen e Fëmijëve CRCA/DCI, Shoqata Internazionale për Solidaritet, Qendra Psiko Sociale Vatra, SHIS.

2. Children learn more about their rights;
  3. Children discuss the positive aspects, the difficulties they face and suggestions / recommendations that want to rise in this report regarding the implementation of children's rights in Albania, with a special focus children belonging to the Roma the Community
- The Methodology used during the meetings was games, activities, working group, and brainstorming.

## **General Overview**

### **Positive changes according to children perspective:**

- Establishment and participation in Children's Advisory Group on Community, within the community for raising the voice of other children has given children the opportunity to learn about many rights.
- Participation in the summer camp, as a good opportunity to meet, to play and have fun with other children.
- Participation in awareness raising activities where Roma rights are promoted.
- Many more children are informed on their rights. Children have learned some of their rights “I've learned that I need to get an identity to be enrolled in the school”.
- Today I received free school books. Now the school has too many rules and psychologist.
- Children have more information about the Ombudsman and the services provided to children.
- The organization of recreational and awareness activities, and trainings for children run by children in schools, neighborhood and community.
- The donation of school bags and other school materials by different NGO-s for Roma children.
- The donation of books for Roma children.
- In schools is provided attention for health care services.

### **General findings/issues children are faced with nowadays:**

**(Some of the situations are presented through the quotes of children)**

#### **1. Discrimination :**

I noticed that the teacher in the school discriminates us, leads us out when we make noise and she doesn't speak politely to us. This attitude makes me sad.

#### **2. Early Marriage :**

Many girls here in Rrapishtë are married at early age. They are children and having children in their age is not possible, it prevents physical development and denies them the opportunity to attend the school.

### **3. Economic Difficulties:**

There are many poor families. Unemployment of parents is in high rate and they don't have opportunity to take care for their children. Parents don't allow children to go to school because they don't have a shelter and cannot buy books. So, they prefer to keep kids at home, to beg in the street, to sell clothes and collect cans. There are many children who beg on the street. Many children do such hard labor e.g. collect flowers for sale etc.

### **4. Emigration to other countries:**

Parents go to Greece and prevent children from attending the school and they force them to work. These children don't know the Albanian language, they are not registered in the civil register and they don't know their rights.

### **5. Education**

Children are not comfortable in school, many children feel upset because they don't have good food, clothes to wear or to pay the doctor for the visit, when they are sick.

The school doesn't have a psychologist or a person to talk to. The teachers do not have time to listen us, when we want to talk about our problems.

Many Roma children drop out of school because they don't have clothes and they feel ashamed. Their parents keep them at home because of economic difficulties and problems. Children need to have notebooks, pens, bags, pocket money to buy something to eat in the break, etc. Roma children are discriminated at school; they feel ashamed by the white one.

### **6. Safety in the community**

There is lack of drinking water, canalization, road signaling in the communes. There is no bus, cars for traveling in the city. There is lack of hygiene and infrastructure in the school. There is no garbage bins in the neighborhood or at school. There is lack of entertainment places.

Many Roma children and children who live in the street don't have any shelter.

### **General recommendations:**

- To implement the right of education, because many children do not attend school and are tough with bad manners. We call upon the state that the right to be educated is not only a right but also a rule.

- Mayor together with the president of the Roma association should help children to enroll into school and get marital status.
- The Director of the school should give free books and notebooks for each pupil in school
- The state should punish parents who marry their children at an early age (12-14 years old).
- Health Booklets for all the Roma children should be free. Doctors who take money should go to jail. Doctors should care for children every time, not only when they are at the hospital.
- Implementation of laws that respect the rights of the child
- The voice and needs of the people in need should be heard.
- Every neighborhood and house should have drinking water.
- We need to have playground and parks, to have fun
- All persons who abuse children should be punished.
- Free professional courses for English, hairdresser, electrician, and computer should be provided to children.
- All unregistered children should be registered in the Civic Registration office.
- There should be no children who beg in the streets.
- The state should provide scholarships for children in need and especially for Roma children.
- All the children should attend school.
- Children should not do hard work that is not appropriate for their age.
- Families should have accommodation where they can stay.
- The Roma children should not have to drop school.
- The state should help the families in need who should be provided
- There should be no children who collect cans.
- There should be established a structure for the protection of children.
- There should be increased the number of services for children.

During the discussions children paid special attention to the issues following:

### **I. Children in Care**

The children's voice in the various complaints about the violation of their rights or other aspects has been heard recently in the written and spoken media or in the institutions where they live as well as in international institutions such as the Human Rights Committee.

- There have been organized activities and trainings with children and youth in order to teach them their rights and therefore they can require their rights to be respected in cases of violation or neglect. Children also take part in processes and where decisions concerning them are taken.

- The trainings organized with the staffs that works with children have been effective because they have learned how to behave with children, and how to create facilities for them and to love and take care for children.
- Some of the public institutions buildings have been reconstructed in order to be more suitable for children who live there.
- A part of the public institution's staff have become aware on the respect of children's rights.
- Some of the children / youth have become part of the Advocacy groups where they can express their opinion freely.
- It can be said that both the physical and mental violence against children that live in alternative care in the public institutions has been reduced.
- The nongovernmental organizations provide their help by implementing projects or providing trainings to children to help them to advocate for their rights.

**\*The current difficulties or problematic.**

- Lack of funds from the government for the wellbeing and support of youth in State and private Institutions.
- The selection of the employees on the residential institutions is not done on the basis of several criteria. Most of them do not have the appropriate educations to distinguish the relevant needs and to provide the appropriate help to children without parental care.
- Children, who leave the Public Institutions at age 15, more probably start an unsuitable work because they have no other employment opportunities.
- No work is done to empower families in need and their recovery.
- There is a lack of "individual development plan" for young people living in residential state institutions.
- There are few health care and economic opportunities to ensure the welfare of children in some buildings or in state institutions.
- In some institutions there is a lack of adequate facilities to provide children the necessary conditions for their normal wellbeing and development.
- There is a violation of the right of children to stay in the same institution with their biological brothers or sisters.
- There are few opportunities that are provided to children to maintain continuous contact with families.
- It has been noticed the violation of the privacy and some personal data have been revealed from the employees and the head of the institutions.
- Children / young people once they have lost the parental care, they are placed in an institutions far from their hometown and from the rest of the biological family.
- The employees of the institutions abuse with the public funds and moneys provided for children.
- There is a lack of possibility to prevent the separation of children from biological families due to the economic situation.
- There is no qualitative treatment of children in institutions. There is a lack of parental love and care.
- It has been noticed that the youth after leaving the institutions and placed in dormitories, have lack of care in all forms. (unsuitable conditions , malnutrition , etc)

- Children without parental care are distinguished from peers and teachers in schools and in this way they lose perspective and the will to work for a better future.
- There is a lack of interest from the state regarding the poor families and the media abuses with the extreme cases by treating them in their interest to attract audience.
- There is a lack of information among youth on the time they will have to leave the institutions.
- In institutions, those who feel more the lack of care, attention and equal love are the Egyptian children.

### **\*Recommendations**

- There is a need to amended legislation for the age of children who leave residential institutions at least at the age of 18.
- To develop periodic inspections in the public institutions in relation to nutrition, hygiene and the place where children spend a good part of the time.
- To implement the benefits that children should have due to the "orphan status", such as in transport facilities, education, health, housing and entertainment.
- The institutional environments should be reconstructed according to the needs of children.
- Children who live in public or private institutions should have an entire package of free medical services.
- There should be a performance monitoring of employee who work with children and youth in care.
- The Government should contribute in providing as much funds for public and private institutions, according to their needs.
- Children should be involved in the preparation of youth / children development plans which should be concrete and applicable.
- The social workers in the institutions should make possible for children frequent contacts with biological families in cases when children and young people have approved.
- Children in other districts and rural areas should be informed on their rights.
- To find jobs for parents of children who are at risk of losing parental care because of family economic conditions.
- The school psychologists should be selected on basis of criteria in order to facilitate and help somehow the children and youth in their problems.

## **2. Child labor**

### **\*The current difficulties or problematic.**

In our neighborhood there are children, among them some of us, who work for a living. Some of the works children do are:

- gathering scrap metal, copper, bottles, cans, etc.
- begging
- Selling (seeds, cigarettes, almonds etc.)
- sewing shoes

- playing musical instrument
- domestic work
- washing car windows
- take care of small brothers and sisters etc.

Children are also taken and lead to work and in other places.

Many children in my neighborhood but also from other areas beg in the streets. Children suffer illnesses, car accidents, and you may organs or die.

“I have been to Kosovo to work with my grandma.” (Emiljano 9 years old).

One of the reasons why children work is to help their families. Often there are parents or those who care for children that force children to work. There are also children who work or beg because they want to extract money for themselves so that they can go in an internet center to play games.

My 12 year old cousin was taken in the middle of the street and sent to Durres. My mother and my grandmother called the police and he was found and brought back home.

Nardi 13 years old.

gathering cans of metal.

My sister is 12 years old and she does not go to school because she is old. She sews shoes at home and gives the money because to daddy because daddy has no work. My sister gets very tired and when she has to deliver the shoes there are cases that she does not sleep at night and sometimes I help her. (Adelina 10 years old).

However we believe that children should not work. Children have to go to school, should have time to play etc.

Child labor is very harmful because children can get germs, become ill, prevents us from school, don't have time to play and are very tired all the time. There are case that we risk our lives, accidents happens when there are a lot of cars.

## **But what has the state been doing to help children who work?**

- It is provided free economic aid for children and families in need.
- The municipality has confiscated the bottles, carts and does not allow either the children or our parents to work.
- The municipality does not allow children to beg, and when they find them in the street the municipality sends them at the children's home.

## **We think that some measures should be taken:**

1. There should stay a police in the streets where a child beg and punish the parents who don't care for their children.
2. The government / State should provide financial assistance for children.
3. The government should support our parents to find work.
4. The state should provide jobs for parents who cannot have no possibilities to provide the necessary conditions for living to their children
5. The government should forbid children to work.
6. The government should provide housing for Roma people.
7. The government should help children who work, who do not have books, who cannot be washed to go to school and learn.
8. The government should take measures that children can have fun.
9. The state should regulate the streets and put traffic lights to avoid accidents with children.

### **3. Violence against children**

#### **\*The current difficulties or problematic.**

#### **Physical and psychological violence:**

Violence is bad, we don't need parents that hit children, but we want parents that speaks politely with us and not thrashing any time. Teachers behave badly and each time we talk to each other we despise, teachers call as "arixhinj" (discrimination terms for Roma community in Albania) and she has been very hurtful for our commitment to go at school. A man who stays always in the corner of the road always beats one of my friends when he doesn't get enough money. Children are not protected at school since older children beat the small children. There is still violence within the family, many parents beat, shout, pull ears and hairs of their children. Also there are many insults, even physical violence for Roma children from the majority.

"When we make mistakes we are beaten. Teacher beats me because my homework was not done correctly, but when we do mistakes they can beat us. This is not a problem. We are often beaten by our parents, our mother or grandmother. There are children that take knives, gloves, guns in schools, and threaten or hit other children. Violence against children is very bad. Our mother and dad screams or beats at us when we make mistakes, when we argue with other children, when we hit young children and when we quarrel with bigger children. Teachers beat us when we make mistakes or noise.



**But what has the state been doing to help children who are violated?**

- We have the right to complain to the school directorate.

**We think that some measures should be taken:**

- Children should not be afraid of their parents
- The state should dismiss from work teachers that abuse children.
- The State should teach to the teachers not to violate children.
- Teachers should help children with the lessons even at home.
- The Police should take measures that children are not crushed by cars and protected in the traffic.