

Adolescent girls situation in rural areas of Albania

It begins with “Congratulations, it’s a little beautiful girl”, and all of us can imagine what a girl’s life in rural areas of Albania, is supposed to be. She will grow up according to the tradition, which inherited some types of discrimination against women. Men are always trying to protect the “honour” of a young/woman, making sure that she behaves in the way determined by the society and tradition, to keep safe the good image of the family. It is exactly because of this good image that the needs and the rights of the girls become depreciated.

Being born a girl has many disadvantages, such as less opportunity for education and career, limited ease to decide for their future, marriages at early age, violence against women. Many of adolescent girls are not allowed to attend high school. Lack of education leads limitation of social relations, unemployment, and constantly depending on the family. They are expected to get married, and parents and relatives look after choosing a husband for them. The efforts of the girls to change their situation get very often punished. Girls are more exposed to violence when they are asking for any rights in the family. Violence is often used as a traditional way of educating and keeping girls under control, and to show the superiority of men.

In these last 3 years, the rate of suicides attempts amongst teenage girls has significantly increased. Depression and feelings of inferiority, constant psychological and physical violence lead them to act of self injurious.

Trafficking in human beings remains a concern for the Albanian society and authorities, who despite constant efforts are still facing challenges that limit an efficient and sustained response to this phenomenon also referred to as “modern days’ slavery”. Despite the economic growth witnessed over the last five years, a number of regions in the country remain economically deprived due to limited infrastructure, undeveloped labour market and lack of local development initiatives. This situation continues to fuel internal migration from rural to urban areas, as well as international migration of Albanian citizens who often seek irregular routes, exposing themselves therefore to high risks of being exploited. The strongest factor to trafficking in women and girls is strongly related to harsh economic conditions. Other factors include the limited awareness of the existence of this phenomenon, romanticized views of work abroad, perceived marriage opportunities as well as coercion from parents, friends and acquaintances. Moreover, Media despite the human dimension of trafficking is very often interested by the scoop, often leading to the stigmatization of the victim. Domestic violence is also a strong precursor and/or concurrent of trafficking in women and girls. Lack of uneven response towards domestic violence around the country increases lethality and puts survivors to a higher risk of trafficking and exploitation.

Mary Ward Women intervention for empowering adolescent girls

The core of MWW work is the prevention against trafficking in persons and reducing domestic violence through the development of ethical and human values, economic opportunities and creativity. Through empowering the women, the family is empowered and the risk of being victims of domestic violence, or victims of trafficking in persons and exploitation are lower.



Empowering through Freedom, Justice and Sincerity

MWW implemented its development strategy and 170 girls from rural areas became part of it, attending group meetings and empowerment activities, and individual development programs. The human development methodology aims to build the skills, insights and abilities of women; to empower local self-reliant women's groups; to build confidence, knowledge and skills, and to develop a new level of leadership that is grounded in good theory and practice. Special attention has been paid to the empowerment of adolescent girls groups, and team building, in order to help them come together for the common needs and rights. We believe that these girls will reach their dreams, and will become active actors in bringing changes. Individual development programs include human, social, health and economic empowerment, basing on individual needs assessment.

Great work is done in prevention of marriages at early ages. Specific training sessions on "Early aged marriages" are organized with these groups, to raise awareness on the effects of these marriages on the personality, to prevent them from being next violence victims from their future husbands, to help them express their own dreams for their future, and to motivate concrete initiatives.

Women participated in these trainings, as main actors in prevention of forced marriages during adolescence. First step has been aware them for accepting this role and to act in accordance to this role. Further more, awareness sessions on adolescent girls needs are realised to enable the establishment of positive communication mother – daughter.

Adolescent girls have been motivated and supported in their actions. Girls from Kallmet initiate an activity on awareness of the community on international women's rights day, and according to this they distributed flyers with the history of March 8th as Women's Day. Other girls from Hoti i Ri organized an awareness activity to highlight the importance of adolescent girls education. The rate of girls giving up high school in our groups is significantly reduced.

Leading towards economic empowerment: girls have been actively engaged in economic activities, to raise capacity and make a working commitment culture. They could make their first steps to economic independence, which leads to more respectful role inside the family, and prevention of domestic violence. According to this, 22 girls have been engaged in handicrafts, producing handmade embroidered cards and handmade bracelets. To build sustainable income generations, they are trained in business startup and marketing.

Socializing is as well very important. Socializing through informal group meetings, celebration of special events, attending human empowerment activities, and through working in group. This helps them to feel accepted and build trust, to feel the sense of belonging to a group, to learn and modify social attitudes, to explore their inner emotions.

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