

FEBRUARY 2024

COPASAH EUROPE NEWSLETTER NO.2



COPASAH EUROPE NETWORK
COPASAHEUROPE@COPASAHEUROPE.ORG

+389 2 3298 295

ABOUT COPASAH EUROPE

COPASAH Europe was established in 2021 and represents the regional sub-network to the Global COPASAH network established in 2011. The Global COPASAH network in addition to Europe unites practitioners from Africa, Asia, and Latin America. COPASAH Europe is a community where practitioners who share an interest and passion for the field of community monitoring for accountability in health interact regularly and engage in exchanging experiences and lessons; sharing resources, capacities, and methods; in the production and dissemination of conceptual, methodological and practical outputs towards strengthening the field; in networking and capacity building among member organizations; and joint advocacy.

OUR RESOURCE PLATFORM

In September 2021 we officially published COPASAH Europe's official resource and communication platform and provided channels for learning and support among members



OUR VISION

Communities are actively engaged in promoting accountability and transforming health systems towards the realization of social justice.

OUR MISSION

Our mission is to nurture, strengthen and promote collective knowledge, skills, and capacity of community-oriented organizations and health activists in Europe who are- working in the field of accountability and social action in health, promoting active citizenship to make health systems responsive, equitable and people-centered.

OUR STRATEGY

The strategic plan of the Hub covers the period of five years (2022 – 2026, not including the year of Hub establishment). The strategic plan was developed through a participatory process involving all organizations involved in the Hub establishment. Development of the strategic plan was based on inputs collected from the organizations on the following topics: issues organizations are currently working on regarding the right to health and access to health care; groups of the population organizations are working with; experience in the implementation of social accountability methodologies; organizations' experience and needs in general; advocacy capacities and needs. Based on the inputs provided by the organizations, the following conclusions were arrived at: the need for further development of organizations' capacities and skills on the specific issues identified through the assessment; the need for continued communication and experience sharing among organizations; and joint advocacy on a national, regional and international level. Based on the guidelines derived from the assessment, the strategic plan was developed through a process that included a three-day strategic planning workshop, an adaptation of the strategic plan priorities to the national contexts of the participating organizations, and individual meetings at the country level.

Link: <https://bit.ly/3GGE7zA>

MEET OUR MEMBERS

Our members are civil society organizations, experts, and professional institutions from Europe, united for joint capacity development and action. After one year COPASAH Europe has more than 21 active members coming from eight countries.



OUR STORIES



NGO Juventas is a non-governmental organization founded on January 29th 1996 in Podgorica.

Today, Juventas is an organization active on the national and regional level, active in advocacy and public policy recommendations, as well as in the provision of social services to different target groups.

Juventas' mission is to improve social cohesion through provision of innovative and strengthening of existing services for people in risk of social exclusion, together with strengthening their capacities for active participation in the process of advocacy and public policy development aiming to improve their quality of life. Juventas' vision is a society of social justice where all people feel safe, free and respected, participate in the decision-making processes, have equal opportunities and enjoy their human rights no matter their differences and personal characteristics.

Juventas implements its activities within the framework of three programs:

- The direct assistance program for persons in risk of social exclusion and socially excluded
- Program for capacity building, research and advocacy
- Sector for financial, legal and general tasks

We provide direct support on a daily basis to: young people, LGBTIQ+ people, people who use/inject drugs, people who provide sex or sex related services, people in prison, former prisoners, Roma community, asylum seekers and people under international protection.

In addition, NGO Juventas has ISO 9001 certificate for quality control management. Besides, Juventas is a licensed service provider¹ for two services: Community-based support - Drop in and Counseling service.

- During 2021 NGO Juventas and NGO Link carried out research on monitoring patient satisfaction with the OAT program (opioid agonist treatment) in Montenegro with the aim of improving the quality of this program by targeting challenges and making recommendations for improvement. We included our beneficiaries as members of the Ethical Committee, two of them as interviewers, and 300 users of the methadone and buprenorphine program in Montenegro took part in the research and many of them are our present or former clients. The outcome was a publication „Patients satisfaction with OST programs in Montenegro” where we targeted the main challenges the patients face with and gave recommendations for improvement.
- Juventas use to employ persons with similar life experiences as its clients so during the 2022 we were actively working on the introduction of a new profession in the National Qualification framework of Montenegro called associate in social inclusion, so all those who have been employed so far as outreach workers will be able to qualify for this profession and get an adequate code for the profession on the labour market.
- Juventas marks important dates and carries out campaigns involving its beneficiaries as well as citizens from the general community with the aim of strengthening the visibility of the needs of people at the risk of social exclusion („Support. Don't punish” campaign, Overdose awareness day, World hepatitis C day, World day of fight against HIV etc.).



Picture 1:

„Support. Don't punish” campaign 2022/ NGO Link and NGO Juventas/Montenegro

- During 2021 we introduced a pilot program of post-penal support for former prisoners and their families through the provision of comprehensive support within the drop-in center and through cooperation with various institutions and organizations. Also, we provided support to prisoners in the process of preparation for release. This was the result of the fact that through many years of work we saw the need to strengthen pre-release treatment and due to the lack of structured comprehensive post-penal support in Montenegro.
- We created two studies („Analysis of the situation and recommendations in relation to the conditional release procedure“ and „System of alternative sanctions and probation in Montenegro – legal framework and process of transition from serving a sentence to reintegration into society“) related to alternative sanctions and postpenal support in Montenegro in which we included people serving prison sentences and former prisoners who participated in in-depth interviews and filled out questionnaires and thus gave their views on these topics and challenges. This approach helped us to create recommendations and a roadmap for strengthening the functioning of the system of execution of criminal sanctions. The main motive behind the creation of these publications is the lack of use of alternative sanctions in Montenegro, and insufficient consideration of the needs of the clients themselves and the challenges they face.

<https://juventas.me/publication/sistem-alternativnih-sankcija-i-probacije-u-crnoj-gori-pravni-okvir-i-proces-tranzicije-od-izdrzavanja-kazne-do-reintegracije-u-drustvo/>

<https://juventas.me/publication/analiza-stanja-i-preporuke-u-odnosu-na-uslovni-otpust/>

- During 2021 and 2022, we actively implemented projects in the field of HIV/AIDS prevention, which entailed the active participation of clients in various activities, and through the quarterly completion of service satisfaction questionnaires, they played an important role in creation of further work plans and introducing new support services

- Juventas got a licenses within the social and child protecton system for providing Counseling service (2021) and Community-based support - Drop in (2022). This implies that clients receive services from Juventas, and through the social protection system, the program envisages active participation of clients in the creation of individual work plans and service provision. Each client is an active participant in the entire work process and better quality support and cooperation is achieved than when this support is provided within the framework of the system. This was one of the main reasons for Juventas to become a licensed service provider.
- Also Juventas has 9 accredited training programs, accredited by the Institute for Social and Child Protection. By implementing these programs, the knowledge and competences of professional workers and professional associates in the social and child protection system are strengthened for working with different communities that are at risk of social exclusion (people who use drugs, people who provide sexual services, homeless people, children under institutional protection, LGBTIQ persons, etc.



HRDC was established in 2002 as an organization dedicated to improving the human rights situation in Albania (with special focus on women's rights. As an organization, HRDC works at these levels:

- HRDC is a credible source of expertise and experience on equality between women and men and women's rights in Albania
- Lobby and advocacy (international level as well)
- Improve domestic legislation (DV Law, sub-legal acts, AD law) focused in gender equality
- Provides dedicated services for GBV victims/survivors (free legal aid, health, psychological services, reintegration)
- Monitors on the ground the DV legislation (Courts, justice system)
- Assists in the effective functioning of Referral Mechanisms in some Municipalities of Albania
- Capacity building of service providers (police structure, municipality, health centers, schools), in the implementation of legislation against gender-based violence and domestic violence.
- Expert level-Stakeholder/shadow reports

HRDC works at different levels - monitoring /watchdog role at the domestic level - international one, and experts level as well as at the policy level (through the provision of contribution to law amendment).

HRDC is a lobbyist organization accredited by the Parliament of the Republic of Albania as an influential lobbyist NGO in 2019 and has contributed to the amendment of Law "On measures against domestic violence", bylaws for its implementation, Law no. 10221/2010 "On protection from discrimination", Law no. 111/2017 "On legal aid guaranteed by the state", Law no. 22/2018 "On Social Housing" and its by-laws, the Decision of the Council of Ministers, regarding the functioning

of the Coordinated Referral Mechanism, Strategies, Action Plans on gender-based violence, Protocols and Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) and recently to the Criminal Code of Republic of Albania. HRDC has prepared Stakeholder/Shadow reports for different Committees like GREVIO, CEDAW, UPR, Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, EU progress Reports of Albania, etc. HRDC has given its contribution also in the Amendment of General Recommendation No. 19 of the CEDAW Convention (2016), the EU Victims' Rights Directive (2022), the EU directive on combating gender-based violence and domestic violence (2022).

HRDC has signed collaboration agreements with public and independent institutions like the Ombudsman, Commissioner Against Discrimination, General Directory of Police, General Directory of Prisons, Coordinated Referral Mechanisms in several Municipalities of Albania, etc.

Timely notification of victims of violence/survivors regarding the release from prison of persons convicted of the criminal offense of domestic violence in order to inform them."

Through its work regarding addressing victims of violence with support services, such as legal aid, case management, supporting of Referral Mechanisms which addresses the needs of victims of violence, monitoring of Penitentiary institutions such as Police Stations, and monitoring work of the justice system, HRDC is in position to the identification of problematics that women/girls victims of DV face in daily life.

HRDC identified a problem arising from practice regarding non-informing of victims of domestic violence at the time of the release of the perpetrator of the criminal offense of domestic violence. This task belongs to the prosecuting body.

Notifying the victim of violence in this case is very important in order to avoid further conflicts or take measures to separate the parties or accommodate the victim elsewhere. Cases of domestic violence should be treated as special cases due to their specificity and sensitivity.

Based on the number of population in 2022, Albania was ranked in first place in Europe regarding cases of femicide.

The Convention of the Council of Europe, "On Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence," provides in its article 56, the right of the victim of violence to be informed when the perpetrator escapes or is released temporarily or definitively. According to Article 67 of the Law "On the Rights and Treatment of Prisoners and Detainees" as amended, "The court, the local police bodies and the Ministry of the Interior are immediately notified of the release of the convict and in special cases also in advance."

In order to address this issue, the HRDC has addressed two official letters to the General Directorate of the State Police and the General Directorate of Prisons, as well as held meetings with senior officials at these Directorates in order to discuss the steps and procedures necessary to solve this issue.

As a result, we have been informed that the practice has changed, and currently, there is a well-defined procedure according to which the General Directorate of Prisons informs the Local Police Directorate in advance, and the latter immediately informs the Police Station that the person under its jurisdiction (the perpetrator) who will be released.

The Police Station immediately informs the victim of violence upon the release of the perpetrator and is responsible for following up and monitoring the case if the report sent by the DPB shows that the convicted person is dangerous even after leaving prison.

ROMANIA

Founded in 2016, ROMAJUST is committed to combating discrimination and providing legal support for rights- deprived and vulnerable members of the Roma community in Romania. It provides support for the professional development of young Roma lawyers in Romania with the aim of creating a generation of lawyers committed to the defense and promotion of the rights of Roma. ROMAJUST has a network of lawyers actively engaged in lawsuits in ten cities, dealing with issues such as forced evictions, with 70 current active cases involving more than 500 families.

The organisation also runs its innovative „Legal Caravan’ with four lawyers and four jurists, which provides direct and mobile access to justice for Romani women from communities.

From 2022, Romajust is involved in the project Challenging online and offline discrimination against Roma in Europe with the ERRC where the group of volunteers is established. Currently, there are ten young volunteers, mostly tertiary students from the Roma background, who are engaged in monitoring online and offline space and helping ROMAJUST’s legal experts to find cases of discrimination suitable for litigation.

ROMAJUST has implemented several projects concerning human rights, fighting discrimination, hate speech, and abuses against the Roma and vulnerable communities, combating antigypsyism, and monitoring human rights for the Roma population and since 2022 for Roma Ukrainian Refugees.

Roma Lawyers Association ROMAJUST implemented the project "Empowered women, empowered communities", financially supported by the Embassy of the Netherlands in Romania through the Human Rights Fund, between September 2022 and April 2023.

The project aimed to empower women in vulnerable communities so that they can identify and report cases of abuse or discrimination against women in access to education, justice, health, and sexual and reproductive rights and support them in the fight against domestic violence, sexism and/or harassment.

We aimed to create and empower an action group to be able to fight and report against discrimination and actively engage in the promotion and defense of human rights.

The target groups of the project were women and girls from vulnerable groups in rural areas, focusing primarily, but not exclusively, on Roma communities in Fetești, Slobozia Bradului, Eforie Sud, Barcea and Slobozia (communities in 4 counties). We also included Roma women refugees from Ukrainian refugee centers in Slobozia, Suceava, and Tulcea.

To achieve our goal, we carried out the following activities:

1. We organized group and individual meetings to promote human rights in general, access to justice, health system, education, crisis situations (pandemic, war), and housing rights in each of the communities listed. We tried to raise awareness among women of the fundamental rights they have.
2. We identified the needs faced by the target group and provided advice, guidance, and legal representation in cases of abuse and discrimination (5 cases) in order to reduce the number of cases of discrimination and abuse.
3. We created a task force to monitor the respect of women's rights, and we have empowered this task force to be able to fight discrimination and to report and actively engage in the promotion and defense of human rights.
4. We organised two trainings for human rights monitors in each community to empower women in vulnerable communities to identify and report cases of abuse or discrimination against women.

The general problems found are:

- In each locality involved in the project, it was found that Roma women have low levels of involvement and participation in community life. This is due to low self-esteem, low educational level, and family customs where husbands do not agree to their wives' involvement in community activities, and the lack of Roma women representatives to inform the community and be role models for other Roma women.
- At the level of each locality, according to the reports of the women participating in the Women's Initiative Groups meetings, there is still discrimination and especially anti-Roma attitudes on the part of the majority population, and in localities where there is no formal Roma representation, these situations are more evident, especially in the relationship with local authorities.
- In each of the project localities, there was a lack of information among women about access to certain services (especially medical services).
- Also, from the reports of the participants in the Women's Initiative Groups meetings, it appears that there are a number of problems for members of Roma communities, mainly women, to obtain certain documents (identity, property, health insurance).
- There is also a fear on the part of Roma women to get involved in community life due to pressure from their partners.

Following the implementation of the project, positive short-term results have been achieved, such as the training of 10 community human rights monitors, informing more than 250 women and girls about their fundamental rights, organising a training course and an awareness-raising campaign, and bringing 5 cases of abuse or discrimination to the attention of the authorities.

In the long term, the project has contributed to the organisational development of the organisation and the empowerment of the beneficiary communities by ensuring the presence of a human rights-trained person in the community. The project has also had a positive impact by decreasing the number of cases of abuse or discrimination against women in terms of access to education, health, and justice

It is important that organisations and governments continue to provide support and resources for projects that aim to empower women in vulnerable communities. In addition, there is a need for organisations to turn their attention to other vulnerable groups, such as women with disabilities, women in marginalized urban areas, and other groups that are often forgotten or ignored.



NORTH MACEDONIA

The Association for Legal Education and Transparency LET STATION Prilep is a grass-roots organization focused on legal empowerment and access to justice for marginalized communities, especially the Roma and rural communities in North Macedonia. In our work, we use a community-based approach to empower citizens in realizing their rights, particularly focusing on health and social rights, as well as housing, environment, citizen participation in democratic processes at the local level, transparency and accountability of institutions etc.

As such, we provide legal and paralegal assistance and legal education, facilitate field activities, community mobilization and advocacy to address the most pressing issues our target groups face. Our team consists of lawyers, paralegals and community health promoters who work together and mutually advance their knowledge and practice. As a grass-roots organization, we carry out our activities in the office of the organization located in the town of Prilep, but also through a mobile office that travels through three rural areas (Mariovo, Krivogashtani and Dolneni) as well as through online/telephone communication. In this way, annually we provide about 1200 services and engage more than 100 representatives from communities, various groups and institutions in field activities.

The Goals and tasks of the Association shall be:

- To provide education and assistance to citizens in exercising their rights by means of free legal aid and preliminary legal assistance, with a primary focus on vulnerable and marginalized groups, especially the Roma population, in the area of health and social rights;
- To encourage system institutions to demonstrate transparency and accountability in their operations, tailored to the needs of citizens;
- To promote equality of citizens on all grounds by taking activities aimed at prevention and protection against discrimination;
- To encourage natural persons and legal entities to join humanitarian actions aimed at reducing and alleviating poverty;

- To ensure conditions for multi-ethnic and social cohesion and operation by involving persons of different ethnic, geographic, and social profiles, thus allowing them the opportunity to make actual and effective contributions to positive changes in the society;
- To contribute towards the attainment of gender equality and address existing inequalities between men and women, with a view to advance women's inclusion in societal processes.

Association LET Station, through its lawyers and paralegals in the municipalities of Prilep, Krivogashtani, and Dolneni, offers legal assistance to citizens in exercising their basic human rights within the Mobile Office for Paralegal aid. The mobile office, through lawyers and paralegals, provides legal advice and services to citizens living in rural areas who do not have the opportunity to travel to the city every day to exercise various rights. The purpose of the mobile office is for citizens to be able to receive assistance and services directly in their communities, which will significantly improve the exercise of their rights and provide equal access to justice for all. The Mobile Office for Paralegal Aid is a place where the citizens of these regions can turn for legal consultation, advice, filling out documents, and completing documentation for exercising a right to social, health care, agricultural activity, labor relations, personal documentation, housing, etc.

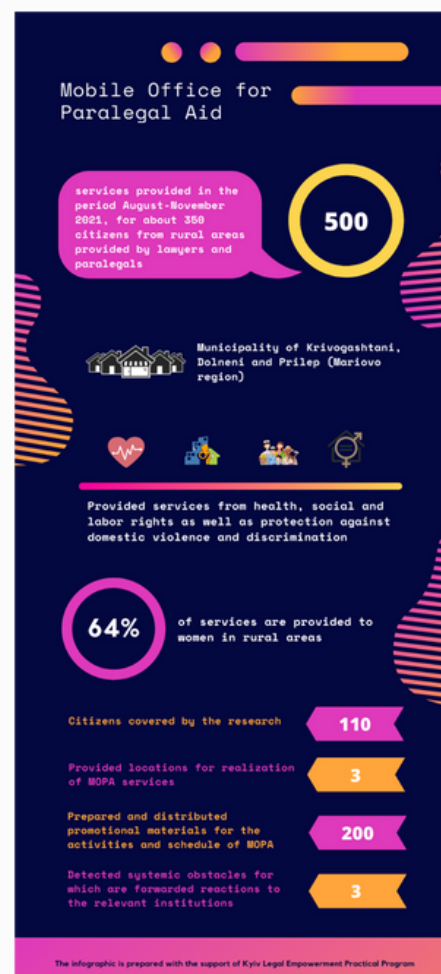
For more information visit:

<https://stanicapet.org.mk/en/mobilna-kancelarija-za-parappravna-pomos/>

CASE STUDY - Fatime D. 38 years

Fatime is a stateless person, that is, a person who is not a citizen of any country. She lives in a nonmarital union and has two minor children. Due to the lack of knowledge of the parents, the registration of the children in the birth certificate did not include the father, which is why both minor children are also not citizens of any country. After identifying the problem, the Association LET Station held meetings with the Inspector for Foreigners at the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Civil Registry Department, and the Center for Social Affairs. According to Family Law, the father of a child born out of the marital community is considered the person who will recognize the child as his own.

Paternity can be recognized before the Civil Registry Department, Center for Social Affairs, and The Court. Pursuant to the Law on Citizenship, the citizenship of the Republic of North Macedonia is acquired by descent from a child whose one parent is a citizen of the Republic of North Macedonia. For that reason, the children's father gave a statement to the competent Center for Social Affairs in which he recognizes them as his own. The Center is obliged to submit the record of acknowledgment of paternity to the Civil Registry Department responsible for registering the child in the birth register without delay. With that, the children will acquire citizenship of the Republic of North Macedonia and will be able to exercise all their rights according to the legal regulations. Subsequently, according to the Law on Foreigners, a temporary stay of a foreigner who intends to stay in the Republic of North Macedonia is granted for the purpose of family reunification, that is a foreigner who is a member of the immediate family of a citizen of the Republic of North Macedonia. For that reason, Fatime will acquire a temporary residence permit, where, after fulfilling the provisions of the law on citizenship, she will be able to submit a request for admission to citizenship in the Republic of North Macedonia.





NORTH MACEDONIA

Association for Emancipation, Solidarity and Equality of Women - ESE, was founded in 1994 as Humanitarian Association for Emancipation, Solidarity and Equality of Women - HA ESE, targeting its work at improving the situation of the woman and her representation in the decision-making structures. We focused on the situation of the women in the transition period, with particular emphasis on the women in the rural regions and the marginalized women. Our spirit stems from the principle of equity and equality, and hence we are committed to representing all women, regardless of their religion, ethnicity and age.

The Association for Emancipation, Solidarity and Equality of Women - ESE is a civil organization, founded in 1994. We work locally, nationally and in the region of Central and Southeast Europe in cooperation with partner civil society organizations.

We are working to improve the implementation of the social and economic rights of vulnerable groups of citizens, by strengthening them, mobilizing and engaging in the planning, implementation and evaluation of public policies and services; ensuring equal access to justice and promoting fiscal transparency of institutions in the area of social and economic rights.

These three strategic priorities reflect our belief that social and economic rights should be the highest priority of the state and that their implementation should be based on the interests and needs of citizens, according to the principle of allocation of maximum available resources, progressive realization of rights and non-discrimination.

VISION

ESE's driving force is its commitment to the resolution of problems. By promoting and improving human rights, we improve social and economic justice, having in mind that human rights are an invaluable collection of standards that should be enjoyed by all. We are particularly devoted to work in the field of promotion and improvement of health rights and women's rights. Therefore, we are focused on two goals, those being to address the urgent needs of citizens, in particular the needs of vulnerable groups of citizens, and to influence the creation of sustainable and long-term changes. We do much more than documenting, reporting, and publicly condemning injustices in society. We provide legal and paralegal assistance, allowing citizens to exercise their rights and change their living conditions. Moreover, we advocate for changes in legislation and policies that affect the exercise of health rights and women's rights. We advocate at the national and international levels. We draft and submit "shadow reports" and other types of documents to competent international bodies concerning the degree of implementation of international treaties on human rights.

MISSION

Association ESE is a civil society organization that works on improving the exercise of social and economic rights by vulnerable groups of citizens by means of their empowerment, mobilization, and engagement in the creation, implementation, and evaluation of public policies and services in the Republic of Macedonia.

OUR APPROACHES

Joining the concepts of social accountability and legal empowerment

We are committed to the creation of health policies and health budgets based on the needs of vulnerable groups of citizens. In other words, we are committed to the full allocation of available funds and their efficient use towards the consistent application of programs and policies in the field of health. The needs and interests of citizens, which are the starting point for our work, are identified by mobilization and education of the population in order to increase their knowledge of health rights.

Thereby, we allow the population to independently assess the performance of health authorities and health workers, and moreover, we encourage them to identify themselves their interests and needs at the local and national levels. Those who need assistance and support in fulfilling their rights are provided with paralegal assistance and support. If a larger group of individuals and community members face a violation of a certain right, we help them find a proper solution and change existing policies and practices that prevent them from enjoying their rights. In the past years, we have been working on finding ways to join the approaches in our work with the community in order to increase the degree of efficiency and coordination in identifying the needs and advocating for the interests of the community and its members.

Gender-responsive budgeting

In addition to monitoring and analysis of health budgets, we have focused also on analyzing the impact of public policies on the condition of women, including budget analysis from a gender perspective. We apply gender budgeting to several issues related to female interests, such as improving access for women to reproductive health services, improving the conditions for women who care for severely ill individuals in their families, implementing foreign aid for issues related to gender equality, identifying legal costs for women that suffered domestic violence, and other activities.

Monitoring transparency and accountability of public institutions

We assess the level of reactivity and proactivity of public institutions in their publishing and sharing of budget and program information and data, thereby insisting on increasing the degree of transparency and accountability of public institutions, particularly those that are part of the public healthcare system. By participating in international and national initiatives related to these issues, we influence the situation at the national level. We work hard to strengthen the capacities of civil organizations in the field of transparency, accountability, and access to information, contributing to the creation of an ever-increasing critical mass of relevant actors who can impose their influence and make a difference.

Monitoring implementation of human rights

We observe the degree of implementation of internationally accepted obligations by the state, documenting and reporting to the internationally responsible bodies for human rights the identified areas of concern and recommendations. In this way, we impose our influence towards changing and improving legislation, policies, and practice. At the same time, we do our best to report on all significant violations of human rights and to start initiatives with the appointed Special rapporteurs and mechanisms for protection both of the UN and the European Court of Human Rights.

Assessment of the degree of legal and court protection

We are attempting to improve the legal protection of women who suffered violence by working with judicial bodies, civil organizations, and women who suffered violence. We are working on improving the degree of court protection by monitoring judicial cases of violence against women and by strengthening the capacities of judges working in this field. We identify obstacles and give recommendations for improving legal protection, and strengthen the capacities of civil organizations towards using international and regional mechanisms for the legal protection of women who suffered domestic violence.

Assessment of the degree of legal and court protection

We are attempting to improve the legal protection of women who suffered violence by working with judicial bodies, civil organizations, and women who suffered violence. We are working on improving the degree of court protection by monitoring judicial cases of violence against women and by strengthening the capacities of judges working in this field. We identify obstacles and give recommendations for improving legal protection, and strengthen the capacities of civil organizations towards using international and regional mechanisms for the legal protection of women who suffered domestic violence.

Providing assistance and information

We provide proper and timely legal and paralegal protection of certain vulnerable groups of citizens. We also inform them about their legally guaranteed rights, as well as with possibilities for their protection. In the absence of appropriate policies and protection of health rights, we identify as strategic the cases we consider available for interventions towards more essential changes, thereby offering proper assistance and support.

WHAT WE DO

Citizens participation in processes on planning, implementation, and evaluation of legal regulations, budgets and services in field of social and economic rights

Citizens' participation enables the development of budgets and policies that are based on the population's actual needs and guarantees adequate implementation thereof. By involving citizens in these processes, in particular marginalized population groups, the state would be able to deliver its commitment under the UN Sustainable Development Goals whereby "no one should be left behind" in the exercise of citizens' social and economic rights.

By delivering training and technical support, we have equipped 29 representatives from 7 (seven) grass-root CSOs to successfully implement the social accountability methodologies in order to ensure the exercise of the right to health for Roma in four municipalities (Shuto Orizari, Delchevo, Pehchevo, and Vinica) and promote access to the labour market for women in four municipalities (Tetovo, Bitola, Sveti Nikole, and Strumica)..

By monitoring health policies, we have attracted the public's attention towards key problems and shortfalls in the implementation of five preventive and curative programs of the Ministry of Health and have demanded measures to address them in order to promote healthcare for mothers and children, women in reproductive period, Roma people and persons with rare diseases.

As a result of continuous advocacy, pursued together with other CSOs, the Government and the Ministry of Health increased 2018 budget allocations for four healthcare programs by an additional 25,350,000 MKD, those being: Program for Active Health Protection of Mothers and Children, Program for Early Detection of Malignant Diseases, Program for Systemic Check-Ups of Pupils and Students, and Program for Treatment of Persons Living With Rare Diseases.

Paralegal and legal aid for the poor and vulnerable groups of citizens

The progressive realization of social and economic rights is closely related to the promotion and establishment of effective access to justice for marginalized and vulnerable groups in our society.

- We promote legal empowerment and the provision of paralegal assistance and support as an effective model for solving the legal needs of vulnerable groups of citizens.
- We organize continuous education of paralegals and provide advisory support for the realization of the individual rights of their clients in the field of health, social protection, the labor market and other areas of social protection.
- Together with other NGOs, we advocate at the local, national and international level to improve access to justice and address the specific needs of vulnerable groups of citizens.

Data collection for access to justice

Providing evidence about the specific problems of vulnerable groups of citizens is the starting point for determining the barriers they face and taking measures to facilitate access to justice according to their needs.

- We promote evidence-based planning by direct consulting of vulnerable groups of citizens and determining specific needs in access to justice.
- We provide evidence for the need to provide legal assistance from CSOs for vulnerable groups of citizens, as well as the need to improve the actual situation of women who have suffered domestic violence and the realization of their legally guaranteed rights.

- We provide evidence for the need to improve access to justice and the financial situation of women who have suffered domestic violence by collecting data from women about the costs they have as a result of domestic violence, as well as the level of realization of their legally guaranteed rights.

Protection against domestic violence

Access to justice for women who have suffered domestic violence is conditioned by the provision of free legal aid and other types of support, as well as the continuous improvement of the legal framework and the capacities of practitioners from institutions and the judiciary involved in the justice system.

- We continuously provide legal assistance, free legal representation and psychological assistance and support for women in order to solve the problem of domestic violence and related legal problems, such as divorce, custody, child support, division of property, compensation for damages and others.
- We provide a significant contribution to formal decision-making processes and work with practitioners from the police, courts, PSOs, CSOs, health facilities and NGOs to improve knowledge and skills for the effective protection of women, but also to solve the related legal problems faced by women .
- We undertake comprehensive advocacy activities at the local, national, regional and international level to improve the actual situation of women who have suffered domestic violence.

Fiscal transparency and governance

Fiscal transparency is used as means to promote public sector governance, strengthen citizens' voice to influence decisions that affect them, and ensure unhindered access to and exercise of social and economic rights for citizens.

- Every year through the "Fiscal Transparency Macedonia and ESE" campaigns, we provide more than 1,000 information, educational materials, videos, and debates to raise awareness among the general public about the importance and benefits of fiscal transparency and the need to increase the current level of transparency in public institutions, which reach more than 500,000 citizens every year.

- More than 20 CSOs from the region of Southeast Europe, starting in 2020, receive continuous training and technical support for the application of methodologies for assessing the level of transparency and accountability, citizen involvement, budget analysis and advocacy, etc.
- We founded the Network of civil organizations that will work on the Partnership for Open Government (POV); we established the consultation process with CSOs and citizens when developing Action Plans for POV; we trained more than 40 representatives of public institutions and NGOs on POV; we co-chaired the POV Council; we are part of the European group of leaders who work to promote civil participation; and we are a key organization that works to promote POV in the country and outside it.