ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024

MAY 2024

INSTITUTE FOR ACTIVISM AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Instituti për Aktivizëm dhe Ndryshim Social

Dear Reader,

January 2024 marks the five-year anniversary of our first steps as activists, human rights defenders, volunteers advocating for those in need. In the diverse context of our country's reforms and our clear commitment to European integration, we have sought to provide a vital alternative voice by integrating the needs, constraints, challenges, and opportunities of our communities. The Institute for Activism and Social Change, a nongovernmental, nonpartisan, and non-political organization, was officially registered on January 31, 2019 under Court Decision no. 6150, in the Tirana District Court (L91420451O).

We are a group of professionals dedicated to human rights and fundamental freedoms. Through our individual and organizational experiences, we have learned valuable lessons and continue to believe that our country and region can improve. Our mission is rooted in the conviction that more inclusive, empathetic, and resilient societies can combat growing social polarization and promote inclusiveness and human dignity.

Since our founding, IANS has evolved into a dynamic national organization focused on achieving results and making a tangible impact. We are willing to take risks and are grounded in values that have remained fundamentally unchanged since our inception. We strive to remain close to those with whom and for whom we work, ensuring we are useful and respectful while confidently overcoming challenges and perceiving issues holistically to approach solutions effectively. We wish to retain the energy and idealism of our early days and existing professional backgrounds, along with the creativity, common sense, and integrity of our efforts, all while building professional capacities through collaboration with individuals of profound expertise and experience.

In a globalized world facing complex crises, conflicts, and wars—just like those we experience here at home in our beloved Albania—our services are still needed, perhaps more than we could have imagined in our early days as human rights defenders in the early '90s.

We thank you for the opportunity to reflect on our work, our co-workers, volunteers, partner organizations, and of course, the donor community from many countries.

Thank you for your trust and support; we are delighted to continue our efforts thanks to you.

Erinda Bllaca Ndroqi
Founder & Executive Director

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ABOUT US

We are the Albanian Institute for Activism and Social Change—a non-governmental, non-profit organization founded on the conviction that inclusive, empathetic, and resilient societies are essential in combating social polarization and fostering human dignity. We believe in the fundamental right of individuals to make decisions about their lives, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Our vision is to cultivate a society that is open, informed, engaged, and responsible in addressing local and regional challenges. We actively strive to create a community where cultural, ethnic, racial, and other differences enrich our collective experience rather than sow discord.

We carefully determine our areas of focus based on the urgency of social issues and our capacity to effect meaningful change. While we recognize that we cannot be everywhere, we are committed to ensuring that our efforts yield tangible results.

Our work responds to the real needs of local communities, empowering individuals who face barriers to truth and justice, while also monitoring institutions for accountability and transparency. We are dedicated to helping people overcome social exclusion.

Our organization draws upon the lessons of our nation's 20th-century experiences, aiming to provide support during times of totalitarianism and transition. Just as the free world once aided the struggle for liberation in former communist states, we stand in solidarity with those who engage in dialogue and critique of power, advocating for the observance of fundamental human rights and the pursuit of more open societies. We firmly believe that a vibrant civil society is crucial for effective governance in emerging democracies.

Through dedicated social work grounded in mutual respect and responsibility, we assist individuals living in social exclusion in Albania. We collaborate with them to address their challenges, with a particular emphasis on empowering youth to enhance their prospects and build resilience against societal issues. We also confront structural challenges, including social neglect, discrimination, trans generational trauma, violence, labor market exclusion, and disparities in health and education.

Our efforts aim to nurture free and responsible individuals who navigate the complexities of contemporary life with openness and critical thinking, actively shaping the social landscape. We engage deeply with the experiences of those we serve, addressing structural themes such as sustainable development, the pursuit of freedom and human rights, social inequality, and the status of marginalized groups, while integrating considerations of gender and climate change.

We believe that in achieving our freedom after decades of oppression and isolation, we embraced a shared responsibility. Ignoring distant injustices is as shortsighted as forgetting our own past. Thus, we are committed to building our profile, engaging in meaningful work, and inspiring both the public and institutions to take collective action.

We are grateful to our generous donors—both one-time and regular—who support us through programmatic grant.

Let's walk through the year!

OUR TARGET GROUPS

Our focus is on individuals in need—those who are excluded, underrepresented, and often overlooked by governmental and societal structures. These structures frequently prioritize donor-driven reforms without adequately addressing the realities faced by local communities, who struggle with uncontrolled inflation, political extremism, crises, and widespread mistrust in government institutions.

GOVERNING STRUCTURES

We operate without membership policies. Our governance is guided by a Board of Directors comprised of five members, selected for their altruism and commitment to our organization and to Albanian society. We are operating with new membership of outstanding professionals adding reputation and excellence to IANS.

NETWORKS

We are actively engaged in several national and regional coordination mechanisms, including the National Coordination Referral Mechanisms for Domestic Violence, HIV/AIDS, and Child Protection. We hold an observatory status within the National Commission on Mental Health and are members of the Balkan Civil Society Development Network, the European Radicalization Awareness Network, and the SMART Balkans Regional Network. Additionally, we collaborate with UNICEF Albania, UNDP, and WHO Albania, negotiating partnerships with state administrations, ministries, and Parliament.

Collaboration with the Albanian Council of Ministers:

- We support the National Centre for Countering Terrorism within the Prime Minister's Office in finalizing rehabilitation programs for 170 returning foreign terrorist fighters.
- We assisted in the rehabilitation of 10 former Guantanamo prisoners with support from UNVFVT.
- We developed the first pilot program for the reintegration of repatriated former terrorist fighters, along with their spouses and children.

Collaboration with the Ministry of Justice:

- We have a signed agreement with the General Directorate of Prisons to ensure access to health care, deradicalization, and dignified treatment for over 5,500 prisoners in Albania.
- We developed four protocols for managing health emergencies in prisons, all endorsed by the General Directorate of Prisons.
- With financial support from OSFA Albania and the Council of Europe, we trained over 240 prison staff in the implementation of these protocols.

Collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Social Protection:

- We created two endorsed manuals for training and mentorship on "Addressing Multiple Traumas for Individuals Returning from Conflict Zones" and a "Rehabilitation Program for Psychologists, Psychiatrists, and Frontline Practitioners."

- We contributed to the national legislative review on "School Health."
- We trained over 540 medical professionals through accredited programs on stress management for primary health care staff and on depression in patients with HIV/AIDS.

Collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Sports:

- We trained over 6,000 educational staff on the rehabilitation and reintegration of children from returned families.
- We developed training curricula on post-traumatic stress disorders for children and adults from returned families.
- We trained 220 school security officers to recognize early signs of violence, radicalism, and violent extremism.

ADDED VALUE FOR PARTNERSHIPS AND NETWORKING

We are confident in our approach, perspectives, and cultural values. The Balkans, particularly the Western Balkans, have long been arenas of conflict and struggle. The nationalist sentiments that underpinned the conflicts in former Yugoslavia continue to create serious obstacles to stability. However, the European Union integration project has emerged as a powerful force for change, reducing the influence of these nationalist agendas.

Albania exemplifies this transformation: a country that once threatened regional stability is now a NATO member contributing to peace in the Balkans and in global hotspots such as Iraq and Afghanistan. Our engagement in regional cooperation not only fosters peace and stability but also positively impacts global security.

We wholeheartedly support the vision of "a Europe that delivers for all," founded on promises of peace, prosperity, and democracy. We advocate for a political, cultural, and socio-economic landscape that enhances public understanding of civil society's role and values. We strive for constructive dialogue between civil society and governing bodies, enabling policies and narratives that empower citizens and organizations to engage meaningfully in public discourse and policy-making.

We recognize that we cannot achieve these goals alone. We seek partners and organizations that share our vision for a more just, inclusive, and empathetic society.

PROGRAMS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

"Safer prisons – safer communities" - Promoting humane detention conditions and rehabilitation for people deprived of their liberties

Supported by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The program was considered a representative initiative implemented by Institute for Activism and Social Change, to effectively prevent radicalisation within Albanian prison system, contribute for coordinated efforts towards rehabilitation of convicted prisoners of terrorism during their transition to social and community life. The project paved the way for prison authorities to develop sound interventions and prioritize the importance of the early prevention in prison context; clearly evaluate the interventions, revise the internal classification and prison regimes and provide a human rights-based approach when dealing with convicted for terrorism related crimes.

The program had a clear support from the National Coordinating Centre on Countering radicalism and violent extremism, the General Prisons Directorate, the Probation Service, Anti-Terrorism Directorate at the Albanian State Police – structures and agencies with which IANS finalized 24-months term Agreements of Cooperation.

This program was an opportunity to deeply scrutinize the current efforts of prisons, CT/CVE institutions, police and local authorities towards rehabilitation and reintegration of convicted prisoners of terrorism return to their families. The outcomes show that the Albanian prison system is lacking a tailored legal framework for information exchange regarding convicted prisoners of terrorism.

There is lack of profiled human resources that can effectively work for the rehabilitation of the convicted prisoners of terrorism. Information exchange requires some additional efforts for the prison staff working with convicted prisoners of terrorism as stakeholders involved need to familiarise themselves with each other's roles, and that requires time to understand the

respective mandates, areas of action and their regulatory framework as well as some basic understanding of the legal boundaries.
There is a different language and mindset when talking about dynamic security versus rehabilitation programs: security and care sectors generally tend not to have the same mindset when it comes to information exchange. While intelligence services are usually not allowed to share, the care actors are much more predisposed towards sharing information. Some actors, such as municipalities, are best placed to liaise and establish relevant connections with both security actors and the stakeholders involved in rehabilitation.
IANS was able to talk about the set of rights and freedoms that affect life in prison for the category of convicted prisoners of terrorism. Detention monitoring today is happening through well trained experts and a monitoring instrument dedicated to this category of inmates. IANS has performed monitoring through a written memorandum of understanding and authorisations from the General directorate of Prisons.

Albanian prisons lack a coordination mechanism that should respond similarly to the needs of relevant actors at different management phases; as well as to the needs of convicted prisoners of terrorism; both, before and after release.

Based upon good models of European countries, IANS is committed to assess the suitability of case conferences for an Integrated Case Management (ICM) and, promote such practice as an excellent tool for information exchange, under a well-developed protocol describing roles, coordination mechanisms and leadership to facilitate the cooperation among the relevant actors and improve impact of the prevention work (yet we are not talking about rehabilitation programs in Albania).

Our recommendations were presented to all state authorities and responses were collected periodically by IANS. IANS has used opportunity to share recommendations and be a trustful organization in providing input for the Council of European Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT); the UN Sub Committee on Torture (UN SPT), the US Department of State Country Report on Human Rights; recently it has submitted shadow report to the upcoming Universal Periodic Review on Albania.

A closing conference held in Tirana gathered over 75 high-ranking representatives from the Albanian Parliament, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Interior, embassies, international organizations, and frontline practitioners. This event, organized in close coordination with CVE Albania, prisons, and police, focused on the theme "Safer Prisons - Safer Communities," with the special participation of His Excellency Mr. Reinout Los, Ambassador of the Netherlands to Albania. Symbolically, this conference was held on the International Day of Commemoration for Victims of Terrorist Attacks on September 11,

underscoring the critical importance of maintaining a professional, continuous chain of duties in the prevention, rehabilitation, and reintegration of individuals returning from conflict zones, as well as those reentering society after serving long sentences in closed institutions.

The conference brought together officials from prisons and police, local government, frontline practitioners, academics, and civil society representatives. Mr. Denis Deliu, a member of the Parliamentary Commission on Security, emphasized the importance of a coordinated approach to support prisons, advocating for a more integrated, multi-actor framework to address the significant challenges facing the penitentiary system, particularly regarding foreign terrorist fighters and the rehabilitation of individuals convicted of terrorism-related offenses.

This sentiment was echoed by Mr. Klevis Qose, the General Director of Prisons, who provided an extensive reflective analysis on the ongoing reforms aimed at improving management, material conditions, working environments for staff, and the treatment of incarcerated individuals. Mr. Sejfulla Metro, a representative from the Regional Police Directorate of Tirana, noted that addressing new forms of radicalism necessitates greater investments in manpower and technology, which should be considered prerequisites for police forces investigating terrorism-related crimes.

Mrs. Lejdi Dervishi, the CVE Director, highlighted the importance of mutual cooperation among various stakeholders and the role of international support in promoting best practices that extend beyond Albania to the wider region and the international community. Mr. Sajmir Ismaili, a theologian and researcher, provided valuable insights into the implications of religious beliefs in rehabilitation approaches. He recommended mid- to long-term strategies for constructing counter-narratives to all forms of extremism. Mr. Robert Gajda, the Commissioner against Discrimination, focused on the urgent need to broaden the concept of extremism to include gender-based extremism, which affects institutions, families, and Albanian society as a whole.

Cyber security as modern vulnerability to democratic process

Supported by Small Grants for Democracy of the US Embassy in Tirana

Cyber (or online—the terms are here used interchangeably) security encompasses borderless challenges, while responses remain overwhelmingly national in scope and insufficient. Threats and attacks undermine confidence in institutions, amplify false narratives that confuse the truth, reveal modern vulnerabilities that weaken democratic processes.
There are enormous gaps in both our understanding of the issue, as well as in the technical and governance capabilities required to confront it. Furthermore, democratic governance concerns—particularly regarding control, oversight and transparency—have been almost entirely absent from the debate.
This project, beyond only governmental efforts, can prioritize action towards security of all users—and the well-being of communities and economy - endangered by misinformation and cyber risks.
The project has a two folded result: on one side, it will start an informed debate with the parliamentary commissions regarding country's obligations in implementing international law on critical infrastructure (including cyber security); and, on the other, it will mobilize professional discourse and a round of events for cyber-aware citizenship. Albania represents the model that a system of critical infrastructure protection (CIP) has the state as the central point for the regulation of relationships in terms of the authorities and responsibilities of the institutions in managing and ensuring continuous activity on strengthening of CIP system. Thus, the importance should be paid towards proactive governance roles—particularly regarding control, oversight and transparency- that still remain to be tested.
IANS proactively contributed with discussions at the Albanian Parliament about the cyber security legislation and shared the findings of its research on Cities' preparedness against cyber terrorism.

In the institutional context, Parliament and its members (MPs) play a crucial role in developing the legal and institutional framework for cyber security, as well as in ensuring the principles of good governance are upheld in this domain. Beyond their responsibility to pass new laws, MPs hold oversight authority to ensure the implementation of existing legislation and to convene stakeholders for public policy discussions. This inclusive, multi-stakeholder governance model is essential in the field of cyber security due to its cross-sectorial nature.

Given these responsibilities, it is vital for MPs on Parliamentary Committees dealing with cybersecurity—directly or indirectly—to collaborate with other committees focused on telecommunications, education, information society, and human rights, among others. Cybersecurity impacts not only security policy but also a range of equally important policy areas. MPs should be kept informed of the latest developments in cybersecurity to equip them with the knowledge and understanding necessary for informed discussions and policymaking.

Current capabilities are insufficient to ensure a high level of security in networks and information systems. Merely preparing responses to cyberattacks is inadequate; there is an urgent need to build new technical and legal capacities. Cyberattacks and their potential consequences in urban environments remain significant and underexamined issues in Albania. This may partly stem from unresolved definitions and a low threat perception shaped by a focus on physical violence in understanding terrorism.

Local authorities must adopt a comprehensive, action-oriented approach to prevent, protect against, and prepare for cyberattacks. In this way, cities become essential components in achieving preparedness and sustainability at both local and national levels. These dynamics often obscure the existing weaknesses in local response systems to cyberattacks, which threaten public trust in authorities, disrupt essential services, and interfere with social, political, and economic activities. In severe cases, they can lead to destruction or physical harm.

This report recommends prioritizing a comprehensive, action-oriented approach for local structures and institutions to effectively prevent, protect, and prepare for cyberattacks. Regardless of national policies, it is ultimately at the local level that information related to critical infrastructure, citizens, and services is impacted. Therefore, cybersecurity measures must be developed and implemented locally to safeguard citizens and services.

It is insufficient for Albania to merely transpose the European Union Acquis (Directive (EU) no. 2022/2555, NIS 2). To effectively address the security challenges associated with networks and information systems, a comprehensive approach is needed at both the state and international levels. This approach should establish minimum yet robust capabilities for planning, information exchange, cooperation, and joint security obligations among operators of critical and important information infrastructures.

Strengthening the role of School Security Officers in P/CVE

Supported by CVE Grants for Democracy of the US Embassy in Tirana

The role of the school security officer (SSO), apart from regulatory framework, can simply be described as "chain" of trust, visible presence; professionalism at all times, being friendly and impartial, but fair to all without judgment. This role becomes very important when countering early signs of violent extremism and radicalization and being able to report effectively and prevent acts of violence.

The Albanian education system has currently employed 220 SSOs for the pre-university education institutions (high schools). Each SSO was trained through basic training on the assignment, yet non –exhausting information about violent extremism and radicalization. In a context when all effort are towards a consolidated coordination and referral system through setting up a fusion center within the national CVE center mandate, the role for a frontline profile, such as the school security officer, becomes important.

Preliminary survey, performed during the basic P/CVE training with 128 candidates for SSO, showed that the level of information about social, religious, ethnic and geopolitical contexts of threats remain unknown; less is known about early signs of radicalization, even lesser is known about types of violent extremism, the profile or a reporting system.

The program aimed to set up an operational and well-trained SSOs' workforce, for the advancement of public security and P/CVE efforts in schools.

Supporting local safety and security actors/ services performing their roles in the national P/CVE Referral system in Albania

Supported by HEDAYAH - the International Center of Excellence for Countering Extremism and Violent Extremism, through the second phase of the European Union funded STRIVE Global II (Strengthening Resilience to Violent Extremism) Program

Violent extremism and radicalization, in all forms and manifestations, currently constitute the most serious threats to peace and security of a country's democracy and rule of law. As such, the fight against these threats, regardless of where they occur or by whom they are committed, requires governmental actors to strengthen cooperation at the national level. Similarly, prevention requires to be permanent, ongoing, and through multi-agency approaches.

This intervention addresses regions and mechanisms that fall under the national strategic priorities within the national strategy to speed up the case management system. In fact, the proposed project is based upon a thorough analysis of the new CVE Strategy 2022-2025 and it is referring to a clear commitment towards more resilient communities and reduced risk of radicalisation (Goal 1 of the Strategy), by revitalising the role of local actors, frontline practitioners and local structures with the national context; and liaising the information between municipalities as independent governmental authorities and the central level represented by the National Coordination Committee (still to be established and supported with methodology of work).

Our approach is also in line with the National Cross-sectorial Strategy on Community Safety 2022-202612, where it is explicitly stated the need for unified "modus operandi" of local safety councils. Additionally the project is in line with the overall objective of the Call for Proposals when addressing the need for strengthened capacities of civil society organisations and government entities to prevent and counter radicalisation leading to VE and terrorism, by an efficient national referral mechanism in Albania.

Investing in training and capacity building for case management and collection of data and case stories as good examples, does not overlap with any parallel mechanisms that contemplate and are functioning to support the CVE Centre in its role as a National Coordinator; we aim to revitalise ties that link local communities, families and individuals with state structure to find "open doors" in addressing concerns, identify and prevent risks and consolidate resilient local actors.

What is at stake today relies on unified approaches that sustain results that foster resilience against the spread of violent extremism. In fact, through this project, we assess the importance of "local ownership" and "lead-by-example" cases that such municipal mechanisms have previously created.

This project comes as a support to the National CVE Co-ordination Centre in its newly assigned role as national CVE Coordinator with the potential of unifying case management and referral methodologies/protocols; empowering community resilience and revitalizing the role of local safety councils as liaison chain between state and non-state actors.

Activities are tailored to local needs and strategic priorities when combining training with consolidated referral instruments that, when properly used by local structures, effectively prevent and address drivers that feed radicalism and violent extremism.

Picture taken during the regional conference on advancing skills for school security officers in early detecting signs of violent extremism, held in Tirana on 08 November 2023

Strengthening youth resilience to violence and crime

*Supported by of the "**SMART Balkans** – Civil Society for Shared Society in the Western Balkans" regional project implemented by the Centar za promociju civilnog društva (CPCD), Center for Research and Policy Making (CRPM) and Institute for Democracy and Mediation (IDM) financially supported by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (NMFA).*

Although youth face many challenges that make them particularly vulnerable to crime, violence and victimization, it is important to remember that, by virtue of their age, energies and learning abilities, young people are key agents of change in creating a better future and have great potential to advocate on behalf of themselves and their communities. This key element was the key for our Project: by (i) empowering youth with competencies, values, confidence and social connectedness to make them more resilient to violence, crime and radicalism; (ii) increasing youth socio-economic opportunities and perspective, through skills development and expertise; and promoting youth civic education in their community and local institutions; and by (iii) establishing a regional exchange hub for sharing good practices and lessons learnt on violence prevention.

The program goal: "To strengthen prevention efforts in Western Balkans, and increase youth resilience and exchange of good practices through Regional Exchange Platforms/hubs". This Goal contributes towards strengthening the roles and capacities of CSOs and CSOs networks/ platforms to engage in the advancement of culture of tolerance and resilience to violence, while contributing towards inclusive societies for sustainable development (smart Balkans' goal, also echoing with the priorities outlined in the Guidelines for Applicants).

Institute for Activism and Social Change is partnering with Shelter for DV and GBV Victims "E. Haxhiymeri" (Albania), Peer Educators Network (PEN) (Kosovo) and Udruzenje „Zemlja djece u Bosni i Hercegovini"/ Association Land of Children in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) for a great 14-month timeframe project supported by the "SMART Balkans – Civil Society for Shared Society in the Western Balkans" regional project implemented by the Centar za promociju civilnog društva (CPCD), Center for Research and Policy Making (CRPM) and Institute for Democracy and Mediation (IDM) and financially supported by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (NMFA).

The "Sports and Resilience" program has launched its implementation following the end of the school year, creating opportunities for 100 young boys and girls to enjoy their summer holidays in a recreational and engaging environment. This initiative combines sports, life skills, and entertainment to keep youth away from crime and violence. IANS has received support from local administrative units in Durres and surrounding areas, which are known for high rates of juvenile crime and fractured communities. Over 100 youths, aged 9 to 17, have begun classes and training sessions led by qualified football and career coaches. We are pleased to report strong support from parents as well.

Why Durres? The area has high seasonal petty crime rates. It boasts more sports facilities than other cities. The Albanian Government promotes Durres as the future home of an international football academy, making this program particularly appealing to children. The municipality and social services are also supportive of our efforts.

Developed by our experts, the program employs a methodology that combines skill development for the players while fostering teamwork, mutual respect, and accountability. Our coaches and professionals have experience in addressing gender issues, domestic violence, and working with juvenile offenders and children from challenging family backgrounds. The atmosphere has been fantastic exceeding our expectations: not only did the participants complete their classes, but they also played a match against the city's U-16 football team, showcasing the skills they've developed in the program.

Through partnerships with Governments, the program will include national and regional youth-oriented initiatives to further promote civic values, keeping youth from becoming involved in regional crime and violence and preventing (combating) violent extremism and radicalization that leads to terrorism in the region.

There are numerous publications that are prepared and contemplate activities with methodological theory and practices.

For more, follow our dedicated regional platform: https://smartrenet.com/community-sport-and-artistic.../

Support for repatriated women and children from the conflict zones (Syria and Iraq)

Implemented by Terre des Hommes, under the financial support GCERF

Radicalization into violent extremism typically in Albania has taken place within native communities. This is "closely tied to a recent past defined by tensions, segregation, and victimization, and a current reality marked by popular perceptions of failed leadership efforts and unmet expectations against a backdrop of identities in flux." This makes the "Albanian" radicalism and violent extremis as a "home-made" product and a phenomenon of religious radicalization in marginalized rural communities that threatens security if enabling or "push" factors are not addressed.

It has been well documented that, in many cases of radicalization, and especially in those of younger individuals, the choice to join radical groups has been motivated by the desire to meet immediate psychosocial needs, rather than by extremist or violent ideologies. The dynamics of such groups provide these individuals with a sense of belonging, inclusion, equality, dignity, and purpose, and often fill psychosocial gaps left open in their previous lives. Indeed, in an alarming number of cases, individuals who join these groups come from broken families where they were exposed at a young age to some combination of neglect, domestic violence, and various forms of addiction on the part of a parent, most frequently their father.

Overall, it is believed that over 140 individuals traveled to Syria and Iraq from the end of 2012 until 2016, when the Albanian law enforcement authorities convicted the so called 9 self-proclaimed imams.

Traveling during(2012-2016)

Burra	Gra	Fëmijë	Total
79	27	38	144

Voluntary repatriations 2012-2019

Burra	Gra	Fëmijë	Total
30	**7**	**8**	**45**

Government repatriations 2019-2022

Burra	Gra	Fëmijë	Total
-	10	27	37

Still in camps

Burra	Gra	Fëmijë	Total
23	16	21	48

The concept of "hotspots" is linked with communities/ neighbourhoods and regions where FTFs, voluntarily returning from Syria and Iraq, were settled. Such concept was introduced when the first programs dedicated to rehabilitation of the voluntary returnees started and they were located in relation with their accommodations. Furthermore, based upon the first pilot program on rehabilitation and reintegration of 45 former foreign fighters (30 men, 7 women and 8 children) voluntarily returning during 2012-2019, IANS institutionalised the concept of case management and multiagency response - a model of intervention implemented during 4 government led missions (2020-2022), that additionally repatriated 10 women and 27 children returning from the conflict zones.

The process of their repatriation has showed and prioritised the need for rehabilitation and reintegration projects, as returnees are facing urgent needs for health (mental) care, child protection, education, accommodation and settlement measures. 37 returned women and children requested to be accommodated in the capital and not with their families of origin, due to fear of refusal, stigmatisation and their unstable psychological status that could require specialised tertiary services.

They have shown visible signs of PTSD, anxiety, frequent panic attacks, depression and sleep deprivation. Almost all of them feared losing their children. Some of them expressed constant fear from the stigmatisation of themselves and their children. Additionally, local municipal structures faced difficulties in finding appropriate and stable accommodation for the returned women, assistance with registration of children in kindergartens and primary schools, assistance with assigned supporting teachers, psychological support, financial support for rentals and furniture, medication, food and material supplies, employment orientation sessions, etc.

The profile of the Albanian returnee includes distrust to state authorities, post-traumatic stress disorder, problems of attachment, urgent health care concerns, housing and accommodation (as most of them sold their houses or refused to return to their families). Children needed registration, support with vaccination process, most of them could not speak Albanian upon return. As of today, children face the adulthood and different needs and concerns, while some of women are kept under surveillance as there are some concerns regarding their previous engagement into criminal activities while in the conflict zones.

Aware of the major security concerns, Albanian Government undertook legislative measure that enforced criminalisation of recruitment for the purpose of joining jihadi terrorist groups in Syria and Iraq. Attention was paid to informal religious mosques that were illegally operating in the country; in 2016, Albanian law enforcement authorities faced the condemnation of 9 self-proclaimed imams that were operating in Tirana, Elbasan, Cerrik, Pogradec and Korca to recruit individuals in difficult conditions.

These areas were first considered as hotspots, but the real threats started with the process of repatriations (both voluntary and government led missions), where communities were not informed, and thus were unprepared to accept the “jihadi fighters” back as it nothing happens. Such approach spread up the hotspots including areas where high security prison accommodating the terrorist convicted prisoners were transferred/accommodated; in the areas, where returned individuals decided to go after rejected from their families of origin, or returned after finishing criminal sentences. As of today, we are talking about red flags reported from every single city of the Albanian territory.

IANS has been contracted to provide comprehensive support for eight cases involving women and children, focusing on their psychological well-being and engagement in afterschool activities. This important project began in July 2023 and is scheduled to continue through the end of 2024.

Our approach emphasizes creating a safe and nurturing environment for participants, addressing both their emotional needs and their developmental opportunities. Through tailored psychological support, we aim to empower these individuals to overcome challenges and build resilience. The afterschool activities are designed to foster social skills, enhance self-esteem, and provide positive outlets for creativity and expression.

As we implement this project, we are committed to working closely with the families and local communities to ensure that the support provided is both relevant and effective. Our team of dedicated professionals brings a wealth of experience in working with vulnerable populations, and we strive to create a collaborative atmosphere that encourages participation and feedback.

This initiative represents a significant step forward in our mission to support those in need and promote well-being among women and children. We are excited about the positive impact this project will have and are grateful for the opportunity to make a difference in their lives.

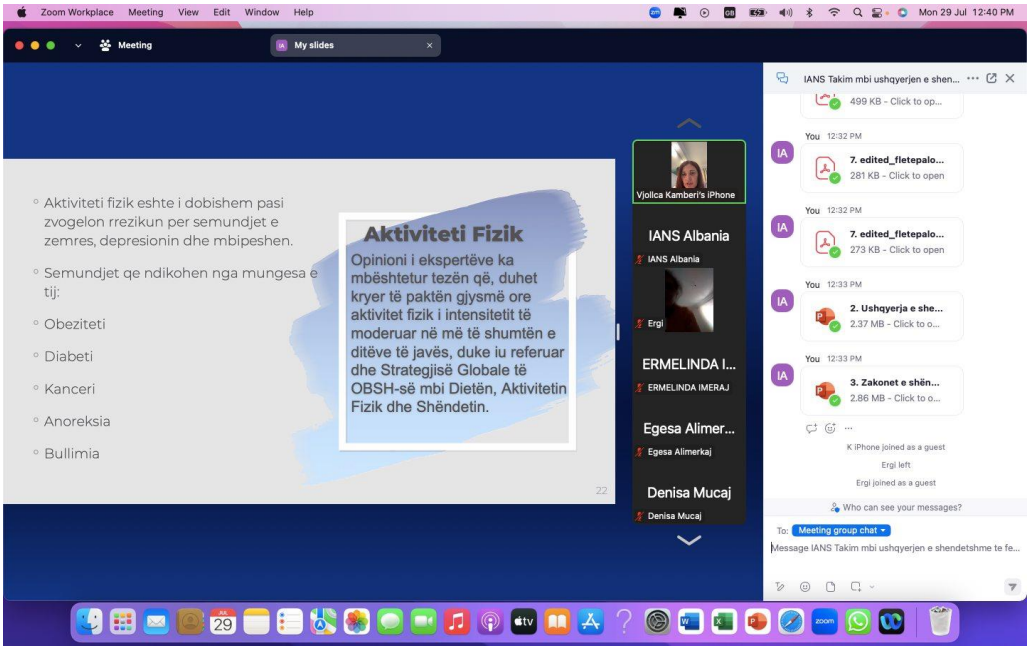
Service provision for raising capacities of parents/caregivers about healthy lifestyles and promoting positive parenting and nutritional awareness in Healthcare centers

in the framework of the project "Shkollat per Shendetin" implemented by Save the Children Albania, and financially supported by Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

The project "Shkollat për Shëndetin" continued focusing on raising the capacities of parents/caregivers, organization of earmarked informative sessions regarding healthy lifestyle habits and healthy behavioral practices and promote positive parenting, including also eating in family (family meals), as well as other healthy practices.

The aim of these activities was to deliver healthy lifestyle messages in an attractive manner to parents/caregivers of children aged 6-16 years. It was expected that participation of parents/caregivers in these health promotion activities will improve naturally their healthy lifestyle habits and healthy behavioral practices (more specifically, healthy nutritional habits and promotion of physical activity for their children; oral health, sexual and reproductive health; mental health; waste management; and how to talk about health aspects with children according to their: age, gender, disability status and special needs)

IANS undertook a nationwide awareness raising campaign on the importance of healthy nutrition in healthcare centers of Tirana, Fier and Dibra. It also undertook a pre-and post-assessment survey regarding the level of knowledge and awareness among health care professionals.



EXTENDED GRATITUDE TO OUR DONORS

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our donors for their unwavering support and commitment to our mission. Your contributions are not just financial—they are a vital investment in the future of the young people we serve. Thanks to your generosity, we are able to implement programs like "Sports and Resilience," which create safe and enriching environments for youth to develop essential life skills, engage in meaningful activities, and steer clear of crime and violence.

Your belief in our vision empowers us to reach more people and communities in need, providing them with opportunities they might not otherwise have. Together, we are not only transforming individual lives but also strengthening communities and fostering resilience among our youth.

We recognize that your support comes with trust, and we are dedicated to using your contributions responsibly to maximize their impact. Through our collaborative efforts, we are building a brighter future for the next generation, equipping them with the tools they need to succeed.

Thank you for standing with us as partners in this vital work. We look forward to continuing our journey together, making lasting change and inspiring hope in the lives of many.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR 2023

Indeksi	AKTIVET	VITI USHTRIMOR 31.12.2023		VITI USHTRIMOR 31.12.2022	
		ALL	EURO	ALL	EURO
A-A	**Aktive Afatshkurtra**	**10,827,340.75**	**104,229.31**	**7,650,974.03**	**66,978.67**
A-A,1	Mjete Monetare dhe Ekuivalentet e Tyre	10,827,340.75	104,229.31	7,650,974.03	66,978.67
A-A,2	Te Drejta dhe Interes I Arketueshem		-		-
A-A,3	Kontribute te Arketueshme		-		-
A-A,4	Shpenzime te Shtyra		-		-
	Total i Aktiveve Afatshkurtra	***10,827,340.75***	***104,229.31***	***7,650,974.03***	***66,978.67***
A-B	**Aktive Afatgjata**	-	-	-	-
1	Investime financiare afatgjata		-		-
2	Toka dhe Ndertesa		-		-
3	Impiate & Makineri, instalime teknike dhe pajisje		-		-
4	Te tjera Aktive Afatgjata Materiale	-	-	-	-
5	Parapagime per aktive materiale dhe ne proces		-		-
	Totali	-	-	-	-
	Totali i Aktiveve Afatgjata	-	-	-	-
	Totali Aktiveve	**10,827,340.75**	**104,229.31**	**7,650,974.03**	**66,978.67**
C-A-1	**Detyrimet Afatshkurta**	-	-	**560,568.00**	**4,907.36**
1	Te pagueshme	-	-		-
2	Deftesa te pagueshme		0	-	-
3	Te pagueshme Sigurimet dhe Punonjesit		0	394,578.00	3,454.24
4	Te pagueshme per detyrimet tatimore		0	165,990.00	1,453.12
	Totali	-	-	***560,568.00***	***4,907.36***
C-A,2	**Kontribute te marra ne Avance**		**0**		**0**
	Totali Detyrime Afatshkurtra	-	-	***560,568.00***	***4,907.36***
C-B,1	**Detyrimet Afatgjata**	**0.00**	**0**	**0**	**0**
1	Grante		0	-	-
2	Premtime te kushtezuara per te dhene		0		0
3	Hua afatgjate		0		0
	Totali	***0.00***	***0***	***0***	***0***
	Totali Detyrime Afatgjata	***0.00***	***0***	***0***	***0***
	Totali i Detyrimeve	***0.00***	***0***	***560,568***	***4,907***
D-A	**AKTIVET NETO**		**0**		**0**
D-A-1	Te kufizuara	10,827,340.75	104,229.31	7,090,406.03	62,071.31
a	Toke dhe vepra arti te dhuruara per tu perdorur per qellime specifike me percaktimin qe te ruhen apo te mos shiten		-		-
b	Aktive te dhuruara me qellimin per tu investuar dhe siguruar prej tyre burime te perhershme te ardhurash		-		-
c	Grante te kufizuara ne kohe dhe Qellim	10,827,340.75	104,229.31	7,090,406.03	62,071.31
D-A-2	Te pakufizuara		-		-
	Totali Aktiveve Neto	**10,827,340.75**	**104,229.31**	7,650,974.03	62,071.31

Instituti për Aktivizëm
dhe Ndryshim Social