



**QENDRA PËR MBROJTJEN E TË DREJTAVE
TE FEMIJEVE NE SHQIPERI**

Children's Human Rights Centre of Albania

THE VICIOUS CIRCLE

A report on child labour - ALBANIA

**Altin HAZIJAJ
S. Thornton BARKLEY**

March 2000

Acknowledgments

The Children's Human Rights Centre of Albania (CRCA) would like to thank Mr. Altin Hazizaj and Mr. S. Thornton Barkley for the carrying out of the child labour fact-finding mission and also for the preparation and writing of this report.

CRCA would like to thank Mr. Fatos Rexhaj and Ms. Shpresa Pula for the translation of the report from English to Albanian.

CRCA thanks Save the Children in Albania and its staff for all the support given to the child labour fact-finding mission and for the preparation and review of this report.

CRCA would like to thank Ms. Valli Corbanese, UNOPS Tirana (Project "Promotion of the Socio-Economic Status of Women in Albania"), for reviewing on numerous occasions the report on child labour – Albania.

CRCA would like to extend a special thanks to those people who co-operated with us in the compilation of this report.

CRCA thanks all the representatives we spoke to from local NGO's, International Organisations and to those children and young persons with whom we had the pleasure to interview.

Our thanks also go to the various state bodies in each region that helped us greatly with their level of local knowledge, statistics and problems explained to the CRCA team.

Copyright Notice

The entire contents of this publication copyright © 2000
the Children's Human Rights Centre of Albania (CRCA)
(CRCA - Tirana)

All readers are permitted and encouraged to copy and distribute all or any part of this publication, provided that proper attribution is given to the Children's Human Rights Centre of Albania. No part of this publication may be sold in any form without prior written consent of the CRCA.

The opinions expressed in this book do not necessarily represent the policies or opinions of the CRCA.

Funded by Save the Children in Albania

Published by CRCA, Tirana
Published in ALBANIA, March 2000

C O N T E N T S

1 INTRODUCTION

- ❖ A history of Albania from 1990
- ❖ How the political, economical and social realities have affected children in Albania?

2 - OBJECTIVES

- ❖ The objectives of the fact-finding mission

3 – WHY CHILD LABOUR?

4 - GEOGRAPHICAL AREAS

- ❖ Which cities, town and villages

5 - METHODOLOGY

- ❖ Methods
- ❖ Criteria
- ❖ Target

6 – THE CONFLICT OF NATIONAL LAW WITH THE INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS

- ❖ References to the national and international legal standards
- ❖ The Conflict of laws

7 – THE VICIOUS CIRCLE

- ❖ Forms of child labour
- ❖ The vicious circle
- ❖ Consequences of Child Labour

8 – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- ❖ Findings
- ❖ Conclusions
- ❖ Recommendations

ANNEX 1

1 - CHILDREN TALK ABOUT THEMSELVES

- ❖ Interviews with children
- ❖ References
- ❖ Contacts

1 – INTRODUCTION

1.1 - A short history of Albania from 1990 to present

Albania is situated in the southeast corner of Europe. In the country there are 3.6 million inhabitants referring to the state data's. However the last registration of population was made in 1986. Nowadays the Albanian government has started the procedures for the new registration of population.

Until the end of 1990 Albania was still a communist ruled state, where many freedoms and human rights were often violated. In December of the same year the student movement obliged the last communist leader Ramiz Alia to change the direction of Albania towards democratic ruling.

The Democratic Party of Albania (DPA), the first real opposition to the communist regime won the elections in 1992 after beating the ex communist party, which had changed its name to the Socialist Party of Albania (SPA).

In June 1996 new elections were organised. The Democratic Party headed by Sali Berisha, president of Albania at that time again gained the second pluralistic elections. The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe OSCE complained that the elections were not regular.

The early nineties in Albania saw the establishing of several companies run by Albanian citizens. Most of them have based their business on borrowing money from citizens on the bases of very high percentages. They were called "pyramid schemes". By the beginning of 1996 they have borrowed such huge amount of money and most of them could not give back what they have hired from the people. In the end of '96 and beginning of 1997 the first pyramids became bankrupt. The Government of DPA did too little to change the situation.

The beginning of 1997 started with massive protests by the people in Vlora, Lushnja, Gjirokastra etc, while March started with a massive turmoil. In many cities protesters got guns and ammunitions from state military installations. Albania was under shock and the nights were covered by the noise of shots. Pictures of children involved in the robbery of guns and ammunitions were shown from the mass media all over the world. World TV broadcaster such as BBC, CNN etc covered the situation while the publishing of the Albanian press was limited by a Parliamentary law.

The Albanian turmoil of 1997 resulted in many lost lives. The data's on the exact number of those killed during that time were never published. It is believed that during the crisis 2400 people were wounded, injured or lost their lives from which 150 were children.¹ In 1997 fifty percent of all the crimes were murder and 33 percent temptation for murder.²

The crisis of 1997 had very bad consequences on the economy of the state and of the family. The inflation increased at the level of 180.2 percent and the economical growth declined at -7 percent.³

In June 1997 new elections were held and won by a coalition headed by the Socialist Party. The start of the Kosova war found Albania under the flood of more than 500 thousand refugees. The political conflicts between two main political parties SCA and DPA were forgotten for a while. However the Democratic Party had refused to enter Parliament. From April until the end of July the Kosovan war was the main issue of discussion and Albania again was making headlines of TV and printed media. With the return of the refugees to Kosova, the political conflicts became again alive.

On 1999 the young leader of Socialist Youth, Ilir Meta, 30, became the third Prime Minister of Albania, since the Socialist Party won the elections.

1.2 - How the political, economical and social realities have affected children in Albania?

Albania since the start of its transition period in the early nineties has been producing very traumatic and turbulent situations especially on the political level, which have produced negative consequences in the economical and social level.

During years 1993 – 1996 Albania started to develop its reforms towards the free market economy. Many state industries were either closed or privatised. Drastic measures were taken to pass over the crisis that the communist regime had left Albania. The GDP in 1996 increased by 9 per cent and showed that Albanian economy could recover within a short time.⁴

However the political life didn't follow the same development as the economy. The two political parties never established a democratic way of communication. Crisis and a low level of communication have followed most of the political life during the transition period.

Albania came out of communism without a culture of tolerance in a political sense. In a country where the freedom of opinion was prohibited for a long time was difficult to establish this freedom within a short period. The political discussions of two main political parties often have been followed by the use of the violence between the fans of each party.

Most of the population of Albania still lives in rural areas. It is believed that 60 per cent of the population is in villages. However the recent years have seen a huge migration from the villages towards the cities or also to the neighbouring countries. A census of the population hasn't been organised since 1989.

A social reform started during 1993, but however without establishing a real social security scheme. At the end of 1996 Albanian Government was spending 6 per cent of its GDP for pensions, 1.4 per cent for Economical Aid and 0.8 per cent for its Social Assistance for Unemployment.⁵

All the changes in political, economical and social terms put also under pressure the Albanian family as the basic cell of the community and the society in general. The reforms left without employment especially males and females between 40 - 50 years old. Most of them had established their families. Families in rural areas have more children than the families in urban Albania.

The hard economical reforms were done under the pressure of many international institutions such as IMF. Inside Albania the need for fast change and economical growth followed the closure of many state enterprises and industries. Many people were left without a place of work. The level of inflation from 240 per cent at the end of 1995 was 6 per cent.

An informal sector of employment was developed and the private sector employment was increased by 80 per cent in the end of 1995. A report from the World Bank in 1994 said that 30 per cent of the rural and 15 per cent of the urban population were living under the official level of poverty. The unemployment rate was never published, but however from unofficial sources put the Albanian unemployment between 40 – 50 per cent in urban areas and 11 per cent in rural ones. At the end of 1997 the unemployment official rate was 15 percent.⁶

For many people, left unemployed and not finding any other way of survival in the country, the best thing to do was to immigrate to other countries. From the start of 1991 till present the Albanian society has been

immigrating to neighbouring countries in legal and illegal ways. Most of the Albanian immigrants today are living in Greece and Italy, while others are in Germany, France, UK, and Netherlands etc.

Immigrants have also included children. However few of the specialised bodies of the Albanian Government have ever reported for the illegal migration of children to Italy and Greece.

It is believed that the number of slaved children outside Albania used for begging, cleaning windows and cars without payment in Italy and Greece should be at around 3000. Few officials may know the real number of the slave children. Their bosses usually have well shaved faces, use expensive perfumes and drive expensive cars. They are not only Albanian, but also Italians and Greeks.

By the other side many Albanian young girls after being “fiancée” with unknown persons have been facing the worst forms of violence. Many of them today still are used to prostitute on the roads of Greece and Italy. Others are used also within Albania for the same purposes. Official Italian statistics (Censis) say that there are approximately 900 children prostitutes in Italy coming from Albania.

In Albania these forms of child labour are not considered as such. In the prisons at the present there is no one being convicted for using a child as prostitute, beggar, slave etc.

“Don’t ever look for them – said an important official of Ministry of Justice – they have enough money to pay for their freedom to the Judge and then to go back to Italy and Greece to run their human” businesses”.

More than 40 per cent of the Albanian population is under schooling age.

Under the communist rule the education of children from 6-16 was obligatory and the family could face heavy consequences if children didn’t follow the schooling. The same obligatory rule was kept unchanged during the transition period, but however the fines established on the “Pre University Law” were never executed. It is still the same today.

The official data’s of child truancy in during these years are very low, but most of the researchers believe that data's don’t present the reality. The worst year of children’s dropout from school is accepted to be between 1991 and 1992 with 6.34 per cent. The lowest percentage of dropouts was between 1989 and 1990 with 1.03 per cent. However after 1990 the child truancy has never been under 3 per cent.⁷ The statistics of Ministry of Education and Sciences for schooling year 1999 – 2000 show that there are more than 16 thousand children or 3% who have dropped out of school in Albania.

CRCA research shows different statistics. Children themselves accept that they have abandoned the school for a short or a long time for many reasons. The child truancy was at 38 per cent at the end of 1998.⁸

UNICEF Situation Analysis 1998 for Albania shows that the number of families receiving Social Assistance beneficiaries until the end of 1997 was 165,000.

“Using an average family composition of 4.2 – says the UNICEF report - about 693,000 persons of all age groups are part of the scheme. Of the beneficiaries, 50 per cent live in urban areas”.

2 - OBJECTIVES

2.1 - Objectives of the fact-finding mission

- a) To study the phenomena of child labour through interviewing children.
- b) To observe the cases of abuse and violence against children who work
- d) To report on the forms of child labour
- e) Sensitisation of the public opinion, Albanian government and Parliament of the issue of child labour
- f) Preparation and presentation of recommendations for the law and policy makers for the improvement of the situation
- g) Pushing the main actors such as the Government, the Parliament, other state bodies, the NGO community to design together a National Action Plan on the issue of child labour.

3 – WHY CHILD LABOUR

The Children’s Human Rights Centre of Albania – CRCA has studied child labour issues since its establishment in 1997.

On March 1998 a research carried out by CRCA in partnership with the Ministry of Education in 11 Albanian cities on the child truancy issues, we discovered that more than 17% of the children abandon their school because they have to work.⁹

The children of age 8 – 15 were given a questionnaire and by the other side the teachers filled another questionnaire. One of the questions put to the children was, Have you played truant from school, because...”

We discovered also that the children of young ages such as 6-9 work less then of children age 11-14.

However children work not only in the village but also in the cities. As you’ll see by the interviews of the children in this report children in the cities are being involved in works that never before have been done by children.

Another reason of choosing child labour as topic of our fact-finding mission was because of the large number of children in Tirana involved in selling cigarettes, drugs, chocolates and chewing gums. In the last two years the number of child vendors has tripled in the capital city of Albania, while many other cities don’t know this form of child labour.

4 - GEOGRAPHICAL AREAS

During the fact-finding mission six Albanian cities were visited. These six cities cover a large geographical area, which starts from Gjirokastra to Shkodra and from Vlora to Korça, Berat and Tirana.

The six cities were decided to be those because of the number of news, stories, complaints and geographical position of the cities.

Gjirokastra as a district has a population of 77 thousand. More than 42 thousand inhabitants live in the villages and the other 34 thousand in cities of Gjirokastra and Libohova. The city is near the border with Greece and has a high level of immigration. The official statistics show that more than 12 thousand people are currently working in Greek cities.

Vlora have a population of 220 000 inhabitants divided 50 per cent by 50 in villages and the towns.

Over the years Berat has had an image of being the place where most of the young Albanian girls are either abducted or trafficked for prostitution. Also it is known for a fact that the most of the illegal transport and trafficking of emigrants towards Italy, including young boys and girls, drugs etc is organised and starts from Vlora. We are referring to the police reports from Albania and Italy. The same reasoning is relevant to Gjirokastra and Korça on the same topics mentioned above.

Most of the cities visited by CRCA have a large population, face transition problems and also the consequences. Some of them are known for the large unemployment rates such as Shkodra and others for high rates of emigration to the neighbouring countries such as Korça and Gjirokastra.

Under the term of geographical areas we can say that CRCA visited the North, Central and South of Albania. The mission started on 23rd and finished eight days later on 30th of January 2000. The team spent almost one day in every city.

During the travel villages were visited such as in the towns of Kavaja, Tepelena, Fier, Berat and Lezha.

The fact-finding mission team of CRCA travelled more than 1200 Km from South to North of Albania during eight days of travel.

5 - METHODOLOGY

5.1 - Methods

The main methods used during the fact-finding mission were:

- a) Random interviews with children met in different cities and villages;
- b) Interviews with children from marginalised groups
- c) Observations of the situation before and during the fact-finding mission
- d) Interviews with children suggested from other NGO partners
- e) Discussions with local authorities such as local Labour Offices, Directorate of Educational Directorates, Municipality and Prefecture officials.
- f) Interviews with representatives local and international NGOs in other towns

5.2 - Criteria

The criteria's taken into consideration on the issue of child labour were:

- The age of the child should not exceed 18 years old;
- The priority will be given to the children below 14 years old;
- The child should have worked or is still working currently;
- Should exist any form of child economical exploitation either from the family, state or private entities.

- All the names of the children whose interviews are published in this report are either changed or not mentioned. This is done because we would like not to worsen the position of children who freely spoke with us. Photos published in this report have received the permission of children.

5.3 - Target group

Based on the articles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child of United Nations (CRC) such as articles 32 and 33, and on the Convention 138 of ILO, the targeted groups of children were:

- Street children
- Children employed by their families either in urban or rural areas
- Children involved in prostitution either inside or outside Albania
- Children involved in drug running either inside or outside Albania
- Children employed in state enterprises
- Children employed in private enterprises / businesses

6 – THE CONFLICT OF NATIONAL LAW WITH THE INTERNATIONAL LAW

6.1 – References to the national and international legal standards

The Albanian legislation on the issue of child labour is based on three documents:

1 – Labour Code. The New Labour Code of Albania (No. 7961 on 12.07.1995, changed with the Law No. 8085 on 13.03.1996 “On some changes on Labour Code”) was approved by the Albanian Parliament in July 1995 and on 1996, several changes were approved. This is the main document on the organisation of labour in Albania. It is also accepted that by a hierarchic level this Code applies into practice after the Albanian Constitution (first) and International Conventions ratified and signed by the Republic of Albania.

2 – Law for the State Inspectorate of Labour approved by the Albanian Parliament. (No. 7986, of 13.09.1995)

3 – Decision of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Albania (No. 384 of 20.05.1996) “For the protection of Minors at work”.

4 – Order of Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of Republic of Albania (No. 13 of 06.07.1998) called “For the protection of Minors at work”.

5 – Law “For the Pre-university Education” of the Republic of Albania (No. 7952 of 21.06.1995)

While about the International standards concerning child labour we were based are:

1 – Convention on the Rights of the Child of United Nations (20th of November 1989). The Albanian President ratified the Convention on 28th of February 1992 with a presidential decree.

2 – Convention No. 138 of International Labour Organisation (ILO) of 6th of June 1973.

3 – Convention No. 182 of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) of 1st of July 1999. This Convention is not yet signed and ratified from the Albanian Government and Parliament.

6.2 – The Conflict of laws

The Albanian legal system is part of what mostly is known as the Roman Law system. In cases when the definitions are missing the lawyers refer to other similar laws at a national or international level. This means that since there is not any other Albanian law, which contains these definitions, we should refer to the international standards.

The Labour Code in Albania is the most important legal tool for the protection of those being employee or employer and also regulate most of the labour agreements, relations etc between state, labour organisations etc.

The Labour Code has 205 articles but in none of them there is a definition of what labour is, who is the employer and who is the employee. In none of the articles of the Labour Code there is a definition of what is considered to be child labour or adult labour.

Article 5, paragraph c of the Labour Code says:

“Are not considered to be part of this law the following actions:

c) the family works, which means the works done by the members of the family, the husband, the wife, the children, their predecessors or other relatives of the second degree, including the adopted persons for the time that they live in the same common economy with the employer, with the exception when, it shows that the persons that are doing these works are employees.

This is the only article of the Labour code that talks about children, the work within the family scheme, but however living very open the interpretation.

In a later stage, Chapter (10) of the Labour Code has a special chapter on women and child labour. Children in this chapter are called “Minors”. For purposes of this part of the report we are using also the term “minors” which will refer to the children above fourteen and below eighteen years of age.

Chapter ten is called: “Special protection for the minors and women”.

Article 98 writes “It is prohibited the employment of minors under 16 years of age. This prohibition is not relevant for the minors of age not less than 14, during school holidays”.

Article 99 writes, ”Minors of age 14 – 18 may be employed in light work that doesn’t damage their health and formation only during school holidays. The Council of Ministers decides what is light work and put special rules on how long can these works be and also about the conditions of the working”.

The Council of Ministers of the Republic of Albania with its decision No. 384, date 20.05.1996, one year after the approval of the Labour Code, decides about the conditions for employment, the minimum age of employment, what is a light work etc.

The decision of the Council of Ministers leaves much to be desired, especially on the matter of definitions and legal terms. This is the only legal tool, not approved by the Parliament, but by the Prime Minister, which

defines certain rules about child employment in Albania. In the decision are mentioned the terms “employer” and “employee”. Just the same as the Labour Code there is no definition of what does it mean “employer”.

For the purposes of the practicing and supervision of labour the Albanian Parliament with a separate law No. 7986, date 13.09.1995 established the State Inspectorate of Labour. The reason of the law itself and the Inspectorate is “to ensure the implementation of labour legislation from the employers and the persons employed by them”. Again in any of the articles of this law there is no definition for “employer” and “employee”. However both sides have obligations under Labour Code and the Inspectorate law.

For these reasons a meeting was held with the Director of the State Inspectorate of Labour. We asked Mr. Blendi Marikaj and his Legal Adviser about the definition of the word “employer” and also about the problem of child labour.

However we have to say that Mr. Marikaj has only held the position of the General Director of the Inspectorate of Labour for a period of two weeks when asked by CRCA.

Concerning the definition of “employer” was said, “employer is a physical or judicial subject who is licensed from the relevant state institutions”.

Concerning child labour was said, “The State Inspectorate of Labour is not responsible for the supervision of child labour if the subject is not licensed.”

Being licensed or not this is only a procedure to be followed by the subject in order to be legally binding the legal provisions. However the “employer” and the “employee” exist even without being licensed. These are the so-called illegal employers and employees, or otherwise informal labour market. Who is responsible for this kind of labour?

Since the State Inspectorate of Labour declares not to be responsible for the issue of child labour, than who is responsible?

The Director of the State Inspectorate of Labour said, “Responsible for child labour in Albania is the Ministry of Education, based on the law for “Pre-education University in Albania”.

At the Law for “Pre – university education” under the chapter of Sanctions there are two articles that deals with child labour. The first one (Article 59) covers the issue of school dropouts and the second one (Article 60) about the child labour.

Article 59 reads “*When pupils of age 6 until 16, who are included in obligated public education, are absent in school without reason or they have abandoned it, their parents are accused for administrative violation with the charge from 5000 to 50000 Lek (Albanian currency) as about:*

When a pupil misses 30-50 % of classes without reason in two months on going the charge is from 5000 to 15000 Lek and if it is repeated again in the same year the charge will go on to 25000.

When a pupil misses more then 50 % of class without reason in two months on going the charge is from 25000 to 35000 Lek and if it is repeated again in the same year or school abandoning, the charge is 50000 Lek.

The amount of the fine depends from the director of the educational directory in the commune, based on the principals’ proposition. Objections against the decision can be made 10 days made public by local juridical authorities.

Excluded from the charges are those parents, who’s children are registered in an Albanian or foreign school, in and out of the country, in condition to report the document of registration in the principals office in school of their inhabiting place.”

While the Article 60 reads *“The employment of children included in the obligated education is prohibited.*

When the opposite has been proven the state or private employer will be caused for administrative violation from the Labour Inspector and charged with 100.000 Lek and if repeated with 200.000 Lek.

The objections against the decision can be made within 10 days after made public by local juridical authority.”

This is the first case when the Law - makers have shown their original intent when they approved the Labour Code one-month after the approval of the Law “For pre-university education”. Even that the article 60 is open for interpretation; again it has designed a very clear responsible person for the control of child labour in Albania. And this person is “Labour Inspector” depending from the State Inspectorate of Labour.

By the other side the international norms are very clear about the term child labour, which is the object of this report. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 32, paragraph 1, explains very clearly the definition of child labour.

“State Parties recognize the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child’s education, or to be harmful to the child’s health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.”

This means that in the Albanian legislation there is a legal gap considering the definition of child labour and by referring to the international norms, ratified by Albania, we can accept those ones as being appropriate at the present.

After we studied all the laws dealing with labour, the responsible bodies for all child labour forms are the Ministry of Labour and the State Inspectorate of Labour. The first reason is that since there is no clear definition of term “employer” we cannot say that the family cannot be or act as an employer.

Following this reasoning we have the right to say that a child employed by the family is an “employee”. By the other side the division of “child labour” in to forms such as “in a licensed subject” and “unlicensed subject” in our opinion it is not relevant. How it can be possible that the State Inspectorate of Labour is responsible for one kind of child labour and not for the other one. Then which law in Albania defined the term “child labour”?

The CRC is very clear on defining the term child labour:

“State Parties recognize the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child’s education, or to be harmful to the child’s health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.”

Since there is no definition in the Albanian legislation of the term “child labour” this means that Albania by ratifying the CRC on February 1992 has accepted the CRC definition. In this article you can not find anywhere written who is the employer, because understandably we are talking about the protection of children from any kind of economic exploitation and it is not very important if the employer is the family, the state, a private subject or a licensed one. This protection should be offered from the Ministry of Labour and the State Inspectorate of Labour.

The most important aspect of this article and the CRC is the protection of the child. The children need the protection, because they are not policy or lawmakers. And this protection in the case of child labour should be offered from the State Inspectorate of Labour.

7 – THE VICIOUS CIRCLE

7.1 – Forms of child labour

During the fact-finding mission the CRCA team observed different forms of child labour. The main forms of child labour reported are:

- Street and shop vendors
- Beggars within / outside Albania
- Farming
- Drug running and processing
- Prostitution within / outside Albania
- Shoe cleaner
- Industry
- Street children

However the above forms do not show that these are the only forms of labour that Albanian children are currently doing. Many other different forms of economical exploitation of children may exist but go unreported, because of the low level of awareness of the families, public opinion and state institutions.

7.2 – THE VICIOUS CIRCLE

KAVAJA

Fatos and his sister Ana from Goc of Kavaja were selling outside on the national road since two hours. Was still morning. Fatos is 12 and his sister 13. Both of them go to school every day and after 12 o'clock in the afternoon they go to help the mother and the father to sell the farm products, basically carrots. They don't work more than 4 hours every day and they have never felt to drop out of school. They like the school, but they like to help their family to sell their products, so they can live better.

Together with both children there were some other 20. All of them were selling the carrots, which seems to be the only source of income for most of the families. Fatos is one of the few that have not dropped out from school. At least 20% of children of the village have dropped out at the moment when they reach 14 years old.

Most of the children stay beside the national road and there have been at least two cases of accidents during 1999. The parents work together with their children, in order to secure their existence. Persons depending to the families living in villages cannot profit social assistance from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. Most of the families have to employ their children in many works. Some of the parents that we met declared that their children have to work with them from 6 o'clock the morning until late at night. In summer time the working hours are longer than in winter and most of the children because the schools are closed work. The children do not get paid for their work.

GJIROKASTRA

The number of registered unemployed people under 20 years of age is 537. In the Labour Office of the district the head, Ms. Kristina Mio explains, “there are no concrete statistics about child labour in Gjirokastra”

Gjirokastra has a problematic village of Lazarat which most of the time is under police surveillance. Some early conflicts between the police forces and the gangs of the village have produced a kind of isolation for this village, which politically is described to be against the ruling of the current Government. Currently Lazarat has 3000 inhabitants.

In Gjirokastra anonymous state sources said that most of the gangs of Lazarat are children of age 15 – 18 years old. Most of the children are reported not to go to school. The village is closed for visitors and an inhabitant of Lazarat should accompany if someone would like to go in.

A state official in Lazarat reported also that since two weeks there was an epidemic of Hepatitis A, but since the village was closed the doctors could not go inside.

“The non implementation of the law have got these children under the umbrella of crime in Lazarat” – said a state representative. For many years the children dropped out of the schools and than during 1997 they got guns also. Now it is very difficult to put them under state control, especially when you know that someone else controls them.”

Was advised not to visit Lazarat, especially because that day the police have done an operation in the village and there were some armed conflicts.

“Gjirokastra does not have a problem of child labour – said a representative of the Municipality – but however it serves as a trampoline for prostitutes from all over Albania to Greece”.

We identified several forms of child labour especially the most obvious one such as street vendors, shop assistants, and shoe cleaners. Most of the children come from very poor families or they are abandoned at least by one of the parents.

“We work all the day long – said a Roma child – If I don’t have 200 Lek a day my father will beat me up. There have been times when I have been sleeping outside with other friends. My mother is not here. She left to Greece, because her and my father had problems together”. Another Gypsy boy in the centre of the town cleans the shoes for 50 Lek. He starts to work at 7 o’clock AM and finishes at 15.00 PM. He is illiterate. Has been to school for a while, then dropped out. His parents could not afford his schooling. Public schooling in Albania is free of charge.

The representative of one of Gjirokastra NGO said that in Gjirokastra there exist two other worst forms of child labour. “I have seen myself four-five girls of age 15-16 that are prostituting just in the centre of Gjirokastra. Two young guys control the girls and they have rented a house at Lagjja 11 Janari. We have reported to the police the case. One day they came round here but they found nothing...”

I haven’t heard about this – said a young journalist from Gjirokastra – but by my experience as a reporter I have heard and I have met with lots of girls who are currently prostitutes in Greece. In Gjirokastra there is a group of around 10 – 15 young children that are used by gangs as pick pockets.

Was impossible to verify the fact that five young girls were used for prostitution, but none of the other NGO’s that spoke with us could verify this fact. The police officials didn’t accept this also.

The Director of the District Educational Directorate said that Gjirokastra have the lowest level of child dropouts from schools between 1st and 8th class. For this educational year there are only 10 cases of child truancy. The NGOs' said that the number of children playing truant should be higher at around 100.

Few local NGO's are working currently on the issue of children's rights and especially of child labour in Gjirokastra. However we met with some NGO's who are running projects or programmes for children. The Community Centre of Gjirokastra has decided to establish a Social Centre for 100 children coming from poor or problematic families, abandoned, abused etc.

TEPELENA

In Tepelena a 15-year-old boy was working as a shepherd, whilst outside it was snowing. He had dropped out of school since he was 13. His father came after 10 minutes to us and asked why we were talking with his son. The boy left with his goats while the father was talking to us. "Why should I let my son go to school? – He said – to be killed or to get cleverer. His life will be with goats and that's what he has to do."

Most of the children in Albania who have dropped out from school come from rural areas. Ilir, the name of the young shepherd carries out for more than 12 hours every day the sheep of the entire village. His younger brother is only 12 and his father has decided to take him out of school. The parents who their children have dropped out of school before reaching 14, based to the Law for the "Pre-university education" should be fined. However until now there has been no such case registered. There is no executing body to support and collect the money of the fines.

VLORA

From previous reports Vlora town was described as having children of age below 14 involved in drug running to Italy because they can't be charged for any crime, because of their incapability.

The state representatives of the Labour Office and Directorate of Education declared not to be responsible for child labour issues. Official statistics on the issue are missing. There are no accurate data's on unemployment in Vlora.

Concerning the dropouts Vlora has quite a high number of children who have abandoned school. 300 children didn't go to school during 1998-99 and during 1999 – 2000 there are 167 children who play truant. Most of them are from the rural areas. Concerning the issue of child labour the Director of Labour Office from Vlora, Mr. Seimen Gjokoli, was very open to talk about. "In reality it looks like there are no problems of child labour in Vlora – he said – but there are. Personally I have seen children who are involved in reconstruction, or who serve in bars, restaurants, mechanical works etc. There is also a large number of children who are pickpockets."

"Usually the children who work come from very poor families and they put the children to work because they don't have enough money to survive."

In most of the cases the NGO members are more aware of the problems of the society than the state officials and they work more to improve the situation also. "Personally I know a policeman who has organised a group of children and they sell around the city his stuff. He does not pay the children." – said an NGO representative. The number of these children should be 15."

Another NGO representative reported that there are a large number of young girls involved in prostitution to Italy. Italian Institute of Statistics reports that there should be more than 900 young Albanian girls age 14 – 18, prostituting in Italy. Most of the girls come from the villages and the Mafia, which also controls a large

number of children who beg in northern cities of Italy such as Milan, Florence, Turin etc, controls them. Cases of young abducted girls have been published in all the printed media such as the case of a young girl from Velça. She was in Italy where she reported the case. The abductors were never caught from the police either in Italy or Albania.

There are no statistics on the general number of girls or boys being involved in prostitution or trafficking by INSTAT (Albanian Institute of Statistics). Statistics of Ministry of Labour put the number of children who have immigrated to neighbour countries at 2000 children. Nobody knows where they are and what they do. However the police in Vlora have accepted to work with the local NGO's to tackle the problem of child prostitution.

We met a young guy who has been involved in drug running. "I had an ambition to study at Oxford University in Britain the cost of which costs in the region of 12000 USD per year. I thought what was the best way for me to obtain this money." The young boy first moved to Italy to visit some cousins and then illegally to Switzerland. In total they were 4 persons 16-17 yr. Caught by the Swiss police the boy will meet a Kosovan guy, who will offer to him some work. Drug running from one place to another. He accepts. "We spoke together on what was the best way to do the delivery. He said: you can't say no. He left me some money 300 Swiss Francs saying that he would think about the rest of the money. If you are good you'll get 40%, I'll get 60%, he also gave me a mobile phone telling me to keep it secret. Two weeks later I arrived in Switzerland where he gave me the package to send to another town some 30km away, I went by train."

However the police should have got a report on the issue and the young Albanian boy get arrested and then trailed.

"I was not allowed to speak to my family. – He said - I was acquitted because of my age and they gave me 100 Swiss Francs for my journey back to Albania. I returned to my hometown and after finishing some exams went back to school. Now in my mind this is a forgotten story one that I do not want to remember."

Young Roma girls begging for money and food stay from morning until nighttime at the "Independence" statute in Vlora. Four girls of age between 8 and 12 are totally alone. Only a neighbor of the village accompanies them. They have been sleeping outside last night, because it was too late to go to their village. They are freezing and for that reason have started a fire with some wood and papers. None of them seemed to have had a proper shower for a long time. Nobody has really taken care of these four girls. The only way to survive is begging. They say that there have been no cases of sexual abuse towards them. However two of them declared that they have been often physically abused by their parents and then from the people on the road.

BERAT

Most of the reports about number of abductions and prostitutes in Albania have been coming from Berat.

However the first children we met were not those used for prostitution, but again beggars. In Berat compare to the previous cities the number of street children is obvious and most of them are Roma. One of the Roma boys could not talk properly and had a little handicap. If someone was working with him this handicap could be passed within a short time, but the mother had abandoned the boy. She left to Italy as prostitute. The father was left alone.

We visited three times the Labour Office of Berat, but the Director was never there. Nobody knew where she was, even her administrative secretary.

The number of reported children used for prostitution in Berat is at around 30 girls. This was reported publicly in a conference organised by the Association for the Protection of Women in the Village and in the City, Berat.

By the other side the same organisation has been working with 62 abandoned children of different ages from Berat and the surroundings whose mothers are prostitutes and fathers have immigrated. The association has helped in different ways the children to be kept in foster families, such as grandmothers or cousins.

Berat as a district has also problems with children dropouts from schools. For 1999 – 2000 there are more than 780 children who are playing truant. The majority comes from the villages. In Berat city only 35 children have abandoned schooling.

The reported forms of child labour are farming, street vendors, beggars, child prostitution.

Some of the NGO members from Berat said that in many cases the parents have sold their children to the gangs. In some other cases the young girls have been obliged to be fiancée with an unknown person, who later on has pushed the girl to prostitute. In Berat stories like this repeat each other.

We met the parents of one young girl who is a prostitute. Today she is 20 years old. The girl is still in Italy with her “fiancée”. The mother didn’t know at the beginning what kind of job her daughter was doing. Later, after a call from Italy, the daughter said that she was used for prostituting and she could not leave, because the “fiancée” threaten her life, her mother’s and sister’s life. She accepted to sacrifice – her mother said.

Asked why she didn’t report these facts to the police the mother said that nobody could protect them, especially the police.

KORÇA

The Geneva based organisation Terre Des Homme has been working in Korça, Berat and Elbasan since early 1995. In 1995 they agreed to pay some kind of economical profit to the families of those children who have abandoned the school and were involved in child labour. The children were of age 8-12. The children would receive also books, clothes etc in exchange of going to school. The programme has been working very well and has involved all those children living in poor areas or families. The general number of children who has been involved under such programme is 150.

The dormitory of the orphan girls in Korça is situated at the end of “Parku Rinia” in the suburb of the town. At the top floor of a three-floor building, 17 girls were living in the most difficult conditions that we saw during the fact-finding mission. They were all orphans. In such inhuman conditions the 17 girls have established a self-protected community.

Only two of them were children, the other ones could be considered adults. The maximum age was 25. Some of the girls because of the economical conditions have been used for prostituting in Greece while they were children. There have been at least 5 reported cases from the girls themselves of child prostitution in other countries. Here is the story of one of the girls:

“I was fiancée and my boyfriend asked me to go with him for holidays in Greece. When we arrived in Athens my boyfriend abused me sexually together with his friends and then obliged me to prostitute. We left four girls in total at the end of August 1998 to make our way illegally to Greece. The girls were obliged to do the same. I was working in Athens for 2 and a half months as a prostitute. At that time I was 17 years old. I lived in a rented apartment, which was under surveillance all the time.

Each night I made between 100,000 – 200,000 Drachmas and if I failed to earn this much money they beat me and tortured me. There were three guys who tortured and cut me with knives. One of them lives in Korca and he still threatens me now.”

There is a level of irresponsibility of the state structures towards these seventeen human beings, which are orphans also. The orphan girls come in Korça to study in a vocational school for textile etc. After finishing their high school they remain here because they don't have where to go.

The payment that these girls receive from the state as social assistance is 2400 lek a month plus a 700 lek extra given from the municipality. This is all. At the moment when we met them the girls haven't received the money since one month and half, because the money haven't been sent from the central government to the local one.

What they suppose to do when there is no money? Some of the girls said that when they have been minors they have been doing different kind of "works" just to survive. But again has been very difficult. Out of 17 girls only five of them work. For the others there is no a place of work.

This is the "vicious circle" where these young girls have to live. They have to survive with the little money they take from the Government every month. While they have to study in the High School and get specialised for textile the money they receive is not enough to fulfil their needs. The state institutions could not offer "extra" aid to the girls because is not allowed. They live in a environment that does not accept them, just because their parents years ago could not carry for their children. None of the girls could imagine going at University, because the economical statue would not make it possible. Being in such circumstances some of them preferred just to leave Albania and go prostitute in Greece. Some others were happy when they found someone to love them, but later oblige four of them to prostitute after abusing the girls sexually. This is the vicious circle where they cannot escape, like many other children all over Albania. Because of circumstances, different realities and little possibilities given to them to protect themselves and then develop their authorities, these children suffer mostly the violation of their rights. They have lost what children have in common, the right to play and the right to study. This is the vicious circle of child labour in Albania.

One of the adult girls said that an unknown person bit her two months ago. She reported the case to the police but they didn't do anything. The two orphan children living there said that most of the time they were scared from the outsiders, who could come inside their dormitory very easy. The girls also declared that there was no one responsible for them, even they were orphans and two of them children. "Here we are not protected at all. The police do not protect us but if you pay them they will provide us with protection. We become very frightened when at night a car stops outside the building. Only a few nights ago a loud banging at the front door awakened us, we were too afraid to go to sleep." – said one of the girls.

We asked a meeting with the Head of Police for the Public Order, but this was not possible. The head of the police was very busy and in mission. Than we requested the assistance of the OCSE field office on the current issue. Few days ago we received the answer from the Chief of Commissariat of Korça. He was not aware about the issue.

However there is letter from the head of Orphans Association of Korça, Mr. Marash Zefi, sent to the Police. The request has been written and presented at the Chief of the Public Order in Korça on December 2nd 1999, asking them to observe during nighttime the Dormitory. No answer was received from the association.

The Chief of Commissariat said to OSCE field office of Korça that they have decided to put a patrolling car outside the dormitory.

"This category of orphans is unprotected from any law or disposition. We as municipality have the obligation just to give to these girls the social assistance. Personally I have asked for the improvement of the conditions of their dormitory, but nobody has responded. Unfortunately I have to say that these girls may be considered to live illegally in such spaces from the Directorate of Education. However they have accepted to make a favour to these girls by letting them to stay there." – said the Mayer of Korça.

The Head of the Orphans Association for Korça, Mr. Mirash Zefi explained the difficulties for the protection of the orphan girls living in the dormitory, but also of the orphan girls outside it.

“As far as I can remember – he said – there has been 15 orphan girls who have left the dormitory for being prostitutes in Greece. Most of us don’t know what have happen with these girls, if they are alive or not. I personally have requested the police to protect the girls of the dormitory from the violence and from the outsiders, but the police never answered to our request.”

“Here in Korça the life is very difficult – said one of the young orphan girls from the dormitory. The only solution I see for our problem is to move from here and to go to Tirana. The society here have a very bad opinion about us and few will offer us a proper job with a proper payment.”

Few weeks ago all the Albanian printed media published news for a strike of the 17 orphan girls of the Korça’s Dormitory. The girls have declared that if the state could not offer a solution to their financial support and protection they would go in a hunger strike. However before publishing this report we learned that the girls have changed their decision in order to see how the state structures would react after their call.

SHKODRA

Cases of prostitution were reported in the dormitory of girls, where several orphan teenage girls were living with girls from other cities who have their parents. After visiting the dormitory and interviewed four orphan girls we came in the conclusion that the orphan girls in Shkodra were just at the same or even in a worst situation as the orphan girls from Korça’s Dormitory. None of them accepted that any of their friends was used for prostitution in Shkodra. They explain that at least 5 orphan girls have left to Italy with their fiancée, but none of them knows what they are doing there.

“For two of my friends – said one of the orphan girls – I really don’t know where they are or if they are alive. One of them was so beautiful and nice. I miss her...”

However, the girls reported that the gangs outside their dormitory make their life very difficult and that there is no real protection for the orphan girls from the police.

Cases of violence against the girls were reported too. One of them involved the guard of the dormitory. The victim reported the case to the Head of the Dormitory, but nothing happened with the guard.

We visited the dormitory early Sunday morning and we didn’t meet anyone at the outside and inside door in the position of the guard. We went freely in and out of the dormitory where more than 100 girls were living together in difficult conditions. The electricity was cut at that time and the water supply is very erratic and only comes at certain times of the day. The food was very basic. A cup of tea, beans, soup, rise was the diet.

A social worker from the Catholic Church explained that there exist forms of sexual tourism in Shkodra. By working and assisting poor people in rural areas of Shkodra he said I received a complaint from two sisters in a village not far from here. The place is still kept secret. The young girls of age 15 and 17 said this story to the social worker: “Two young German men came to our house for one weeks holiday. They asked my father if they could stay during that time in out house. Than it seemed that they did another deal with our father. They gave lots of money to the father. Then the father said to us that we had to sleep together with the German guys for one week. He prayed to us to accept, because the money was good and we needed that money. He didn’t even ask if we accepted or not. At the end we had too...”

During 1999 and also 2000 there is an increase of suicides of children, especially young girls. There are also increasing cases of children killing their parents, because of conflicts in the families. Only last year two young girls killed respectively their mother and father, because they were often abused. One of the girls declared in a daily newspaper that she killed her mother because she was obliging her to work a lot and she was abusing her physically every time she was refusing to do so.

7.3 Consequences of Child Labour

- a) **Child Education** has been the most effected right from the phenomena of child labour. The previous and recent data's shows that the percentages of child dropouts in the primary and secondary school has never been under 3%.
- b) **Child Health** has been suffering from the involvement of children in work especially of those who are currently working as prostitutes in and outside Albania. Children who sell or beg also work for long hours under different environmental conditions. Children who sell in urban areas use cigarettes, drugs or alcoholic drinks while working.
- c) **Physical Consequences** come from the poor child health workers. In several cases the physical consequences come from the violence used against children or as a reason of poor diet or missing food.
- d) **Mental Consequences.** Especially children who are involved in trafficking, prostitution or drug running suffer psychological traumas, which in most of the cases are ignored from the parents or from the children themselves.
- e) **Spiritual Consequences.** From the involvement of children in labour one of the basic children's rights, the right to play has been violated. Children who work declare that they would like to go back to school and to play, but because of economical conditions or because of their parents they are obliged to work.
- f) **Social Development.** The integration of children who work in the Albanian society is lower then other children, especially because there is no ground for social development. The children who work lose their friendships at school and at the community because they do not have time to play, to talk with their friends, their parents, and especially to follow the school where children's social development is done mostly.

8 – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

8.1 FINDINGS

1. There is widespread of child labour forms in Albania, especially of begging, street vendors and farming
3. Children who work, are abandoned either from one or both parents
2. Children who are currently working come from families with a very low income
3. There are no official data's or statistics available concerning child labour and forms of child labour in Albania
4. Legal loopholes exist for the protection of children who are involved in child labour.
5. There is no real definition of the term child labour by the Ministry of Labour in Albania
6. The problem of school truancy is still very much in evidence with little having been done to lessen the problem.

7. Parents oblige their children to work for long hours against their will.
8. Children for their work get less paid compared to the others.

8.2 CONCLUSIONS

At the end of the fact-finding mission these conclusions were made:

1. The widespread phenomena of child labour is not tackled from any institutions such as Government, Ministry of Labour, State Labour Inspectorate
2. The minimum age of children being employed is at the lowest 4 and at the highest 14, while they work sometime 16 hours a day.
3. Children are forced to work because of economical condition in their families and sometimes because they lack the protection and the support from the Governmental social support structures.
4. Children have been abused sexually, abducted or manipulated from the adults during the time when they work.
5. There is a need for preparation and implementation of new laws into practice from the Albanian Parliament.
6. Government representatives and public in general are not aware of forms of child labour and ways to stop it.

8.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

For the Albanian Government

1. The new ILO Convention 182 should be signed after the ratification of the Convention from the Parliament
2. A Child Rights Committee should be established in order to follow children's rights situation and report on violations.

For the Ministry of Labour

1. Should prepare Guidelines for Protection of Child Workers in order to be more specific in what they mean by the terms "child labour" "employer" and "employee" and also to prohibit any form of child labour for children of below 14 years of age.
2. Draft a law for the protection of child workers above 14 years of age until 18 and pass it for approval to the Parliament.
3. Organise a National Conference and Action Plan in order to limit child labour and increase awareness to other structures and to the public in partnership with local NGOs and other relevant bodies.
4. The increase the social benefits for all the families on the bread line in order to discourage them from putting their children to work.

For the State Inspectorate of Labour

1. Organise a national registration of child workers in Albania and prepare a national report on child labour
2. A system of data's should be established to enable accurate statistics to be compiled with regard child labour in Albania.

3. A special reporter on child labour issues should follow up the implementation of a National Plan against child labour

For the Ministry of Education

1. Improvement of the school buildings and the whole learning environment is seen as very important step for the limitation of child labour in Albania.
2. In co-operation with other national and local authorities and the Directors of each school should fine every family that let their children to drop out of school.

For the Albanian Parliament

1. The immediate ratification of the Convention 182 of ILO and its implementation into practice is judged as being very important for the prohibition of the worst forms of child labour in Albania.
2. New laws should be drafted and approved from the Albanian Parliament in order to offer a better protection of child workers and to prohibit any form of child labour below 14 years of age.

For the Albanian NGO's and International Organisation

1. Actively monitor and participate at the work of the Albanian Government, Ministry of Labour and other state structures in order to make possible the preparation of a national report on child labour and of a national plan of action.
2. Establish socio- cultural centres to assist children who work or have economical premises to do so.
3. INGO's and other organisations such as UNICEF, IOM, UNDP should include in their strategies and priorities to assist the Albanian Government, Ministries and local NGOs in their plans to limit child labour phenomena in Albania.

ANNEX 1

CHILDREN TALK ABOUT THEMSELVES

Fourteen-year-old boy involved in drug running

I had a cousin in Italy and a friend asked him if he would like a way to make lots of money. I had an ambition to study at Oxford University in Britain the cost of which costs in the region of 12000 USD per year. I thought what was the best way for me to obtain this money.

With some friends we decided to leave Italy to go to Switzerland. In total we were 4 persons 16-17 yr. olds and we all passed across the border illegally.

In Switzerland I stayed for 26 days, we went to a refugee camp, in this camp I stayed for 4 days. In this camp I met a Kosovan man who was 23 years old. All the Kosovans had a right to enter this camp and to send a package from one place to another. The camp was in Bern. I could leave the camp for up to a maximum of 100kms for example to meet with some friends' etc. I knew that it was drugs (heroin). The Kosovan guy met me and said that here I could do only one thing "drugs"

We spoke together on what was the best way to do the delivery. He said: you can't say no. He left me some money 300 Swiss Francs saying that he would think about the rest of the money. If you are good you'll get 40%, I'll get 60%, he also gave me a mobile phone telling me to keep it secret. Two weeks later I arrived in Switzerland where he gave me the package to send to another town some 30km away, I went by train.

The package was to be sent to Theatre Strausse near to a club. We were talking all the time on the phone, he told me to go to the toilet and to open the cistern. I got the money and I was trying to call him on the phone. When I opened the door the police were waiting. They hand cuffed the guy who was waiting for the drugs. Before the Kosovan guy had told me not to speak and to be silent.

In the car the police asked me if I knew the guy who was expecting the drugs. I said no. The police said that we had been distributing drugs for a long time together. They made photos took fingerprints etc. They said to me that I would spend my whole life inside prison. After some time they sent me to a rehabilitation school.

Fifty-four days later was my trial I had a lawyer and a translator. I was not allowed to speak to my family.

I was acquitted because of my age and they gave me 100 Swiss Francs for my journey back to Albania. I returned to my hometown and after finishing some exams went back to school. Now in my mind this is a forgotten story one that I do not want to remember.

In the future I want to be a lawyer.

Roma boy aged 12 years

My father works in the construction industry and my mother left some time ago to "work" in Italy. I leave the house in the morning around 9.00 am and then I return home at 14.00 PM to play.

My father cooks in the house and I have been left school since one year after finishing the fourth class because I don't have any money to buy books. Apart from me there should be from 50 – 100 children who work in Berat.

There are seven children in my family and I make around 400-500 Lek per day, I keep 200 Lek for myself and give the rest to my father. Once we cleaned the hotel gardens and they paid us 500 Lek and sometimes the white children beat us up to try and get our money.

The whites have invited me to go to work in Italy but I will go there only with Roma. We would like to go to Italy, as it is a good place to beg. I enjoy singing and in the future I would like to be a musician.

Roma Boy aged 13 years old

I have four sisters and two brothers, one of my brothers is a beggar on the street. I have been working at a car wash and sometimes I make between 1000 and 4000 Lek each day. I have also been scraping the walls of houses and hotels so they can be re-painted, I get 200 Lek for this. I like singing very much and would like to be a singer in the future.

Roma boy aged 9 years old

I make 100-300 Lek per day begging around the city. I live in very poor conditions. My house is on the ground and it is made from plastic and metal, the floor is earthen and it is very cold. We have no toilet and we just use outside. I have a bed but it is not a proper one my mother and father and two sisters also live in the same house as me. Some time before I had another sister who died. I don't go to school any more and I just went there for the first class.

My father works a lot and both of them smoke. I am illiterate.

Boy 15yrs old

I finished the primary school but now I don't go to school. I have been selling cigarettes in the city of Shkodra for the past year. My house is quite far from the centre of the city and I have to walk to work.

I start selling at 7 o'clock in the morning and work until 18.00 in the evening. A guy who was 24-28 years old has beaten me up once. He used to steal cigarettes from me every day.

I live in an apartment that doesn't have a fridge or washing machine. My parents are both unemployed and it was my cousin who helped me start to sell cigarettes. I have to work because my father hasn't had a job for over ten years and feels ashamed to sell on the street. I know of about 20 children who sell cigarettes around the bars here in Shkodra. I make about 500 Lek each day. I have one brother who goes to school and I am pleased that he does, but I am not going back to school. In the future I'd really like to work outside Albania.

Boy 15yrs old

I am from Shkodra and I have been selling cigarettes for one and a half years. I have finished the 8th class of school.

I start to work at 8.30 am and finish at 13.00. I make 400 – 600 Lek each day I have one brother who is 18 and he doesn't work. My father is in the UK working and sometimes he sends money home to us, my mother doesn't work either.

Of the money that I make I keep 200 lek for myself a little to my brother and the rest to my mother. I am saving every day because I want to buy a motorcycle.

I don't know what I want to do in the future, as I don't know if I will be alive or not and so it is difficult to think about the future. I would like though to go to Italy. In Shkodra there is child trafficking organised and controlled by adults. I have been invited to go to Italy to work by a guy who was over 20 years old.

Orphan Girl, Age 20

Her room had a copy of Tolstoy's War and Peace

We are eleven girls in total. Most of us are 16 – 17 years old. I am originally from Tirana but they sent me to Shkodra years ago. I am without work.

Each month we get 2500 Lek for personal expenses and 10,000 Lek a year for clothes.

We eat at the dormitory with about 160 other girls. We have a very good relationship with other girls.

Orphan girl, Age 14

Sometimes I go to school, sometimes I don't.

Some of my friends who have boyfriends have left to Italy and Greece. We feel very scared from outsiders and are always wary of new faces.

At Christmas there were 3 or 4 guys. We drank together...

Know one takes responsibility for us however we have good relations with the personnel. The director or municipality has never done anything to protect us. The police only come when the girls in the dormitory who are not orphans have problems.

We have lost count of the number of times we have had our doors destroyed. We feel the best solution is to establish a family house for all of us so we can feel secure and safe.

References

- 1 – Data's from Ministry of Order
- 2 - UNDP Human Development Report 1998
- 3 - UNDP Human Development Report 1998
- 4 - The Situation of the Family, Labour Market and Public Programmes in Albania – World Bank
- 5 - The Situation of the Family, Labour Market and Public Programmes in Albania – World Bank
- 6 - The Situation of the Family, Labour Market and Public Programmes in Albania – World Bank
- 7 - Data's from Ministry of Education and Science
- 8 - UNICEF Situation Analysis 1998
- 9 – The victims of truancy – A study on the reasons why Albanian children play truant

Contacts

Children's Human Rights Centre of Albania - CRCA
Mailing address: Kutia Postare 1738, Tirana / ALBANIA
Tel: ++ 355 4 24 22 64
Mobile: ++ 355 69 50 102
E-mail: crca@adanet.com.al