

Raport Narrativ Vjetor 2018-2019

1. Progresi i Përgjithshëm Programatik

The initial years of H.A.N.A (2018-2019) were characterized by determination, resilience, and a commitment to providing meaningful opportunities for the youth of Lezha. H.A.N.A emerged from a clear need: the lack of a dedicated space for youth engagement, personal growth, and community involvement in Lezha. With 57 public schools, including 13 high schools, the absence of opportunities beyond formal education for young people was glaring. This understanding led to the establishment of H.A.N.A—Albania's first youth center outside the capital city.

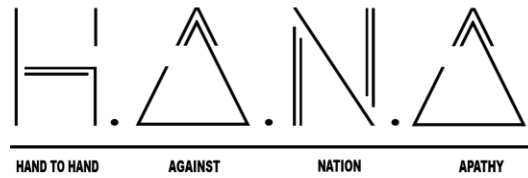
The first major milestone for H.A.N.A came in 2019 when the organization was awarded a grant of \$12,000 by the U.S. Embassy in Tirana under the Democracy Commission Small Grants Program. The Youth Empowerment Strategies (YES) project aimed to address the increasing trend of youth emigration by engaging them with local opportunities and fostering a sense of productivity and purpose within their community.

Under this project, H.A.N.A conducted a series of workshops, training sessions, and mentoring opportunities that focused on personal development, effective communication, and community engagement. A key achievement was the creation of Lezha's first online youth opportunities platform. This platform became an essential information hub, connecting young people to available jobs, internships, and scholarships, and empowering them to actively pursue local and national opportunities. In collaboration with the Municipality of Lezha and the Regional Employment Directorate, the platform demonstrated institutional partnerships that were instrumental in increasing youth employability and opportunities.

The YES project successfully engaged 47 direct youth participants and benefited over 150 community members through conferences and forums that focused on civic engagement, professional development, and motivation. It marked H.A.N.A's first structured, donor-supported initiative, setting the foundation for the organization's future work.

Simultaneously, H.A.N.A implemented a second impactful initiative funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). The Civil Society Participation and Advocacy (CSPA) project was aimed at enhancing the participation of local youth and civil society actors in decision-making processes, promoting transparency, and strengthening advocacy efforts within Lezha's municipal structures.

This project focused on empowering young people with the tools and knowledge necessary for civic participation, equipping them to contribute to decision-making processes that affected their community. The CSPA project achieved significant outcomes by engaging youth in community forums, advocacy campaigns, and consultative processes, promoting a sense of ownership and direct involvement in the civic affairs of Lezha.



Key activities under the CSPA project included:

Advocacy Workshops: Engaging local youth on the importance of civic engagement, human rights, and advocacy skills. These workshops aimed to demystify the decision-making processes and empower young people to participate in matters that impacted their community directly.

Community Forums: Providing a platform for dialogue between the youth and local authorities to ensure transparency and inclusiveness in decision-making processes.

Participatory Budgeting Pilot: As a pilot initiative, H.A.N.A. partnered with local authorities to introduce the concept of participatory budgeting. This allowed youth participants to be involved in discussing and deciding on the allocation of specific municipal funds, highlighting the potential of youth-driven decision-making.

Through the CSPA project, H.A.N.A. engaged 40 young participants in direct training, with a wider outreach impact on around 200 community members, stakeholders, and public officials through forums, advocacy events, and local partnerships. The success of this project not only strengthened H.A.N.A.'s credibility within Lezha but also established its role as a champion for youth-led advocacy and civic participation.

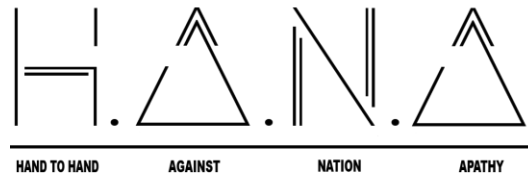
Overall Reflections and Achievements

The initial years of H.A.N.A. highlighted the importance of being rooted in community needs while striving for meaningful change. By combining youth empowerment with structured advocacy efforts, H.A.N.A. has set a solid foundation for the growth of civil society in Lezha. These two projects—the YES project supported by the U.S. Embassy and the CSPA project funded by the SDC—allowed H.A.N.A. to leverage its position as an emerging leader in youth engagement.

The progress achieved through these projects underscores H.A.N.A.'s commitment to building a more inclusive community where young people are not only seen but heard, and where their participation has a direct influence on local decision-making. The establishment of the online opportunities platform and the successful implementation of community forums represent some of the first steps in creating spaces where young people in Lezha can actively shape their futures.

Through these early interventions, H.A.N.A. has demonstrated the effectiveness of its approach—combining non-formal education, professional development, and advocacy—to create long-term, positive change for the youth in Lezha. The lessons learned, partnerships established, and outcomes achieved during 2018 and 2019 have provided H.A.N.A. with the tools and the experience to continue making an impact, driven by the belief that the youth of Lezha deserve opportunities to learn, grow, and lead their community towards a better future.

2. Projekte dhe aktivitete



1. Y.E.S (Young, Eager & Successful) - A Call for Action (Funded by U.S. Embassy in Tirana)

This project was H.A.N.A's very first grant-supported initiative, marking the beginning of the organization's formal engagement in youth empowerment. The core aim of the Y.E.S project was to enhance the professional and social skills of young people in Lezha, promoting their active participation in the local community and preventing the increasing trend of youth migration. Key aspects of the project included:

Objective: To empower the youth of Lezha by enhancing their skills and providing opportunities for them to build professional identities and social connections that could help curb the rising emigration trend.

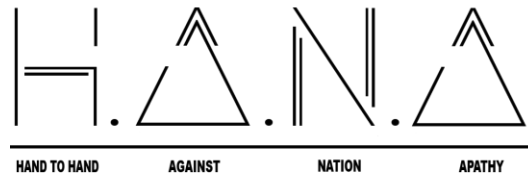
Activities

- *Training Sessions:* Conducted multiple training sessions that covered areas such as self-improvement, communication skills, career guidance, and the effective use of online tools for personal development.
- *Career Guidance and Mentorship:* Engaged youth in mentorship activities, including CV writing, preparation of motivational letters, and career planning.
- *Online Platform Development:* Established a platform named "Rinoreyes" (<https://www.platformarinoreyes.al>), aimed at connecting youth to job opportunities, internships, and skills-building resources.
- *Community Engagement:* Organized forums, workshops, and public events focused on topics such as youth employment, career opportunities, and addressing youth migration concerns.
- *Stakeholder Collaboration:* Facilitated discussions and roundtable meetings with local businesses, municipal leaders, and educational institutions to establish networks and foster cooperation for future initiatives, including paid internships.

The Y.E.S (Young, Eager & Successful) project had an impact on youth engagement, community building, and institutional collaboration in Lezha. Through this initiative, H.A.N.A directly involved over 50 young individuals in a range of training and mentorship activities. These efforts equipped participants with crucial skills and career guidance, helping them to prepare for a professional future and navigate the complexities of the job market. By focusing on personal and professional development, the project empowered youth to become proactive in shaping their own career paths.

One of the notable outcomes of the Y.E.S project was the establishment of the online platform "Platforma Rinore YES." This platform has become a valuable resource for hundreds of young people, offering opportunities in education, career growth, and skill-building. By creating an accessible space for young individuals to connect with various opportunities, H.A.N.A contributed to strengthening the community's support systems for youth development. The platform became an essential tool for addressing the needs of young people and facilitating access to valuable resources.

Moreover, the Y.E.S project significantly enhanced institutional collaboration. H.A.N.A worked to foster relationships with local businesses, educational institutions, and public offices, which led to the creation of a network supporting youth employment and professional growth. This network played a key role in ensuring that young individuals had access to internships, mentorships, and job opportunities, thereby promoting sustainable community development.



Overall, the Y.E.S project marked a significant milestone for H.A.N.A, demonstrating the organization's commitment to empowering youth through practical skills development and fostering community involvement. The project's success underscored H.A.N.A's dedication to building a supportive environment where young people in Lezha can thrive and reach their potential.

2. Shoqërizimi i Ligjit të Rishikuar për Dhunën në Familje (Funded by SCPA - Strengthening Community Policing in Albania)

This project was focused on the implementation of the revised Law 47/2018 on Domestic Violence, aiming to raise awareness, build trust between the community and law enforcement, and improve preventive measures and support systems in Lezha and Rrëshen. Key aspects of the project included:

Objective: To foster better communication and collaboration between the State Police, local actors, and community members, thereby enhancing the preventive and protective measures against domestic violence.

Activities:

Community Forums: Held community forums in Lezha and Rrëshen that brought together state representatives, police officers, and community members to discuss the importance of preventing domestic violence and the new legal provisions.

Informational Videos: Developed and disseminated two informational videos that explained the revised domestic violence law and highlighted the role of community policing in addressing these issues.

School Awareness Sessions: Conducted six awareness sessions in local high schools targeting students aged 15-18, aiming to educate young people about domestic violence, gender roles, and the importance of prevention.

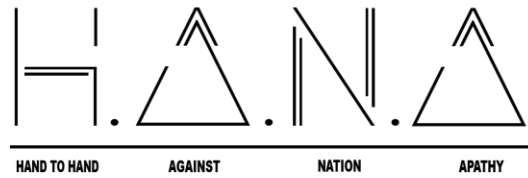
Institutional Visits: Facilitated institutional visits for youth, helping them gain firsthand knowledge of law enforcement operations and how domestic violence cases are handled, which contributed to demystifying police processes and building trust.

Community Survey: Conducted a survey among 118 youth participants to assess perceptions of domestic violence, followed by a published report analyzing the findings and sharing recommendations.

Roundtable Discussions: Organized discussions involving local authorities, the police, and civil society organizations to establish a shared action plan for tackling domestic violence in the community.

The project brought about a significant increase in awareness of domestic violence laws among both the youth and the broader community. This effort emphasized not just legal knowledge, but also the critical understanding of gender dynamics and the importance of prevention. Through targeted activities, H.A.N.A successfully engaged the community in conversations that were previously considered uncomfortable, thus encouraging a more informed and proactive stance against domestic violence.

A key achievement of this initiative was the strengthening of community policing. The project fostered a culture of trust and cooperation by enhancing collaboration between law enforcement and the community. By focusing on sensitive topics such as domestic violence, the project built bridges between



law enforcement and local residents, ensuring that these issues could be addressed more openly and effectively. This trust-building exercise marked an essential step toward a more cooperative relationship between authorities and community members.

Moreover, the project promoted institutional accountability by fostering a cohesive network of stakeholders dedicated to combating domestic violence. By bringing together law enforcement, civil society organizations, and other relevant institutions, H.A.N.A. encouraged collective responsibility and a more coordinated, proactive response to domestic violence issues. This approach ensured that combating domestic violence was seen not just as an individual or family matter, but as a community-wide challenge that demanded collaborative solutions.

Overall, the project made significant strides in engaging the community in proactive discussions about domestic violence, strengthening relationships between the police and community members, and promoting the essential concept of community policing. Through these efforts, the foundation was laid for ongoing collaboration and sustained progress in reducing domestic violence in the community.

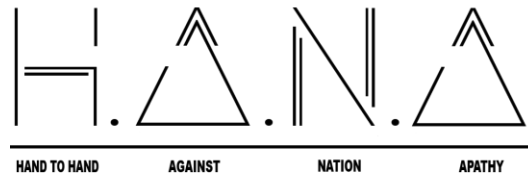
During the first two years of its existence, H.A.N.A. undertook two foundational projects that laid the groundwork for its mission to serve the youth and the wider community of Lezha.

The Y.E.S (Young, Eager & Successful) - A Call for Action project was our first grant-supported initiative, funded by the U.S. Embassy in Tirana. It focused on equipping young people in Lezha with the skills needed to build professional identities, find employment, and stay connected to their community, ultimately seeking to reduce youth migration. The project successfully involved over 50 young individuals in a structured program, established a youth-centric online platform, and cultivated partnerships with local stakeholders, creating a solid foundation for future youth empowerment activities.

The Shqërizimi i Ligjit të Rishikuar për Dhunën në Familje project, supported by SCPA, focused on increasing awareness and preventive measures against domestic violence through community engagement, education, and collaboration with law enforcement. This initiative emphasized the importance of community policing, strengthened relationships between police and the community, and directly engaged youth through awareness sessions, forums, and institutional visits.

Together, these two projects encapsulate H.A.N.A.'s core values—empowering youth, fostering social responsibility, and building meaningful community ties. They were instrumental in establishing our role as a youth-centered organization dedicated to addressing the needs of our community through both educational empowerment and advocacy for social justice.

3. Mësimet, Sfidat & Mundësitë



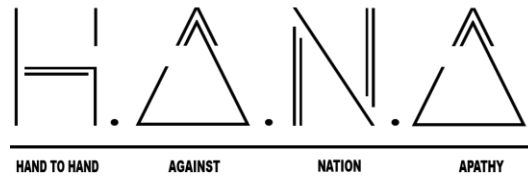
The journey of launching H.A.N.A Youth Center has been one of resilience, passion, and an unwavering belief in the transformative power of youth engagement. From its inception, H.A.N.A was envisioned as more than just a non-profit organization—it was intended to be a vibrant, inclusive space that would provide young people with the opportunity to grow, learn, and lead within their community. However, the path to realizing this vision was filled with challenges that tested the endurance of the founders at every step.

The very idea of H.A.N.A began with a desire to establish the first youth center in the municipality of Lezha, a region with 57 public schools, including 13 high schools and two professional schools. The founders recognized that while these schools provided an education, they fell short in offering young people spaces for non-formal learning experiences, spaces that could nurture their values, shape their critical thinking, and give them the tools to contribute actively to their community. This gap was particularly significant in a locality like Lezha, where community facilities and opportunities for youth were often minimal or lacking.

The process of establishing H.A.N.A as an official NGO was, however, fraught with bureaucracy. The initial court submission took months of preparation, involving legal consultation, paperwork, and constant visits to government offices. After months of waiting, the founders learned that the application had timed out, forcing them to restart the process from scratch. Despite this setback, they remained undeterred. They resubmitted their application, this time with a deeper understanding of the hurdles facing NGOs in Albania. It was a powerful early lesson in persistence—a lesson that would serve them well as they continued to navigate the many obstacles to follow.

Even while waiting for official recognition, the founders were proactive. They began building the brand identity of H.A.N.A, designing a logo, setting up a website, and preparing a communication infrastructure—all while searching for a physical space that could become the center's home. They combed through every rentable building in Lezha, negotiating and evaluating different options until they found a suitable spot: an open space of 250 m² on the second floor of a private building. Though it was considered impractical for other purposes, for H.A.N.A, it was perfect. Despite limited financial resources, they rented it without hesitation, covering the rent from their own pockets for the first two years. During that time, furnishing the center was a luxury they could not afford, so they made do with the essentials—bare rooms, basic seating, and borrowed equipment. It was a minimalist setting, but it was filled with purpose.

The first two years of H.A.N.A's existence were marked by tireless effort. Every day, after completing their full-time jobs with an international NGO, the founders would head straight to H.A.N.A. They invited local youth to the center for informal gatherings, conversations, and even makeshift movie nights with projectors and laptops loaned by friends. The founders transformed the rented space into a haven where young people could feel seen, heard, and valued, even if it meant using a bare room with limited



amenities. These gatherings—often spontaneous, filled with laughter, and full of passionate discussions—were the beginning of the community spirit that H.A.N.A aimed to foster.

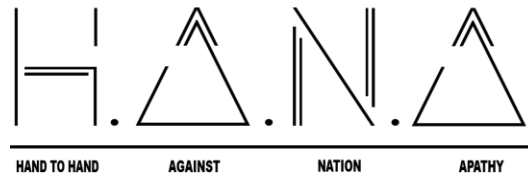
Seven months into their journey, the founders finally received a significant breakthrough: the U.S. Embassy in Albania awarded H.A.N.A its first grant of \$12,000. It was the much-needed push that allowed them to go beyond informal gatherings and implement their first structured program. With the funding, they were able to bring more youth into the fold, launch activities that fostered civic engagement, and hold forums that brought community members together to discuss important issues. This funding allowed H.A.N.A to move from being a fledgling idea to becoming a tangible community institution.

However, it was a subsequent opportunity that truly transformed the center's trajectory. The European Endowment for Democracy (EED) took notice of H.A.N.A's grassroots efforts and invited the founders for an informal meeting. To their astonishment, they were soon after awarded core support of €80,000. This support came with a condition—they had to commit themselves entirely to the youth center, which meant resigning from their full-time positions. It was a leap of faith, and a significant risk, but the founders knew it was a chance they could not pass up. It was an investment in the vision they had held close for so long.

With EED's backing, the founders threw themselves into establishing a fully functional youth center that would stand as a beacon for the community. They began decorating the space, not with a lavish budget, but with DIY projects that transformed it into an inviting and creative environment. Each room was designed for different activities—spaces dedicated to arts, civic discussions, and skill-building workshops—creating a sense of place and belonging that many young people in Lezha had never experienced before. This marked the beginning of H.A.N.A's journey towards consolidation—a new phase that allowed the founders to shift their focus from basic survival to expanding impact.

Despite their newfound resources, the founders knew that creating lasting change required more than a space or funding; it required building networks and partnerships. They leveraged their relationship with EED to connect with like-minded individuals and organizations—people who were committed to democracy, youth empowerment, and community-driven change. These connections pushed them beyond the limitations of a small-town mindset, challenging them to think bigger, and reinforcing the importance of collaboration over isolation.

In Lezha, a community often skeptical of non-profits and resistant to change, the founders had to challenge preconceived notions and the closed mentality that cast organizations as self-serving. H.A.N.A was always meant to be about the collective good—not about individual advancement. However, challenging the status quo inevitably drew criticism. The founders faced accusations of insincerity and hidden agendas, especially in an environment where dependence on public institutions often limited people's perceptions of civil society's role.



Yet, through it all, the founders persisted. The youth center they envisioned became a reality—hosting hundreds of activities and engaging countless young people over the years. H.A.N.A. has welcomed ambassadors, local government representatives, and international organizations, transforming into a recognized center for youth activism, growth, and community building. Today, H.A.N.A. stands as a testament to what resilience, dedication, and an unwavering belief in community can achieve. It's a space that not only provides learning opportunities but inspires young people to believe in their power to shape their own futures, a space built from the ground up, not by external agendas, but by those who deeply understand the community they serve.

Now, about the challenges and learning opportunities accompanying 2 of our very first donor-supported structured interventions.

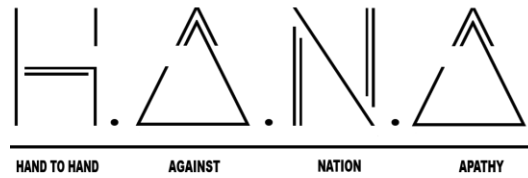
The implementation of both projects presented challenges that were significant in shaping H.A.N.A.'s approaches and methodologies. For the "Y.E.S." project, one of the most challenging aspects was addressing the socio-economic barriers that young people in Lezha face when attempting to access education and career opportunities. The lack of local infrastructure for youth engagement, coupled with limited institutional support, made it difficult to provide consistent mentorship and skill-building opportunities for the youth. Additionally, changing attitudes towards employment and professional development in a community where opportunities are scarce required persistent effort and trust-building.

Similarly, the domestic violence prevention project faced considerable challenges in engaging the community on such a sensitive topic. Cultural taboos and the reluctance of individuals to openly discuss domestic violence made it difficult to initiate meaningful dialogue. Fear of stigma and potential backlash further contributed to the hesitancy among community members to actively participate in discussions and activities surrounding domestic violence. The lack of coordinated mechanisms among law enforcement, social services, and civil society organizations also created obstacles in addressing cases comprehensively and efficiently.

Learning

The experiences gained from implementing both projects were instrumental in refining H.A.N.A.'s strategies and approaches. For the "Y.E.S." project, we learned that creating a sense of ownership among youth participants was key to their active involvement. Encouraging young people to take the lead in identifying their needs and goals fostered a sense of agency, which was crucial for their long-term engagement. We also recognized the value of establishing collaborations with local businesses and institutions as a way to provide a supportive network for youth employment and professional growth.

From the domestic violence prevention project, we learned that building trust with the community is foundational when dealing with sensitive issues. It was evident that creating a safe space for open conversation was essential to overcome barriers of fear and stigma. We also gained valuable insights into the importance of strengthening institutional accountability. By fostering stronger collaboration between law enforcement, social services, and the community, we were able to lay the groundwork for a more cohesive and proactive response to domestic violence.



In both projects, the importance of tailored outreach efforts became clear. Engaging specific segments of the population, such as marginalized youth, young women, and survivors of domestic violence, required targeted communication and dedicated support structures. The inclusion of diverse voices within project activities not only enriched the outcomes but also ensured that those most in need were given an opportunity to be heard and supported.

Opportunities

Reflecting on both projects, numerous opportunities emerged for H.A.N.A. to further expand its impact. The "Y.E.S." project laid the foundation for scaling up initiatives focused on youth skill-building and career readiness. The relationships established with local businesses, educational institutions, and public offices provide an opportunity for long-term collaboration aimed at enhancing youth employment prospects. The online platform "RinoreYES" serves as a resource that can be expanded to reach even more young individuals seeking educational and career opportunities.

In the context of domestic violence prevention, the increased awareness among community members presents an opportunity to deepen engagement and expand the conversation to other aspects of gender equality and community safety. The project's success in strengthening community policing and building trust between law enforcement and residents offers a valuable opportunity to address other sensitive issues collaboratively, using the community policing model.

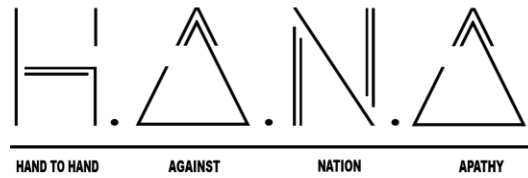
Both projects highlighted the potential for cross-sector partnerships. By building on the relationships established with local stakeholders, educational institutions, and civil society organizations, H.A.N.A. can create more comprehensive and sustainable programs. These partnerships could be instrumental in addressing broader social issues, including gender equality, youth empowerment, and community well-being.

Additionally, both projects underscored the importance of resilience and adaptability. The momentum generated by our initial efforts has created interest among additional donors and stakeholders, presenting opportunities for securing future funding and expanding the scale of our interventions. This growing interest and recognition affirm the value of our work and our commitment to empowering youth and fostering safer, more inclusive communities.

Overall, while both projects faced unique challenges, they also provided invaluable learning opportunities and opened new paths for growth. The insights gained will continue to shape H.A.N.A.'s approach to addressing community needs, ensuring that our interventions are effective, inclusive, and impactful.

4. Balanca Gjinore dhe Çështje tjera Ndërsektoriale

There was significant gender-related data regarding the implementation of both projects. Below are key insights. In the "Shoqërizimi i Ligjit të Rishikuar për Dhunën në Familje" project, there were a total of 261 direct beneficiaries, comprising both adults and youth. The gender distribution across participants showed a substantial imbalance. Females represented 82% of participants, including both women and



girls, while males constituted only 18%. Specifically, there were 97 women and 117 girls involved, compared to 13 men and 34 boys.

This discrepancy was attributed to lower interest from men to participate in activities focused on domestic violence awareness and gender equality, likely due to prevailing patriarchal attitudes and perceived gender roles that do not align with these themes.

In the same project, awareness sessions were held in five high schools across Lezha, with a focus on educating youth about gender-based violence and domestic violence. 118 youths aged 15 to 18 participated, and the study revealed concerning perceptions: 33% of youth believed that forced sexual relations were not considered violence within family relationships, indicating the need for deeper engagement and corrective awareness among both genders.

There was a marked emphasis as women and as beneficiaries in awareness campaigns, which was fitting given their increased vulnerability to domestic violence. Many of the project's activities, including awareness sessions, roundtable discussions, and collaborative events, involved female participants to foster a safer community environment.

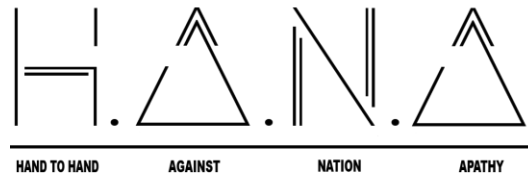
The challenges in engaging males during the implementation of both projects were notably significant. Throughout both projects, male participation rates were substantially lower compared to females. In the "Shoqërizimi i Ligjit të Rishikuar për Dhunën në Familje" project, only 18% of the total participants were male (13 men and 34 boys out of 261 participants). This disparity reflected the difficulty in involving men in discussions about domestic violence and gender-based violence. Such topics were perceived as primarily "women's issues," leading to low levels of interest and engagement from male community members.

A major barrier to male involvement stemmed from prevailing cultural and patriarchal norms within the community. The perception that topics like domestic violence, gender equality, and gender-based violence were not relevant to men, or that discussing them might undermine traditional male authority, discouraged male participation. Men often saw these subjects as contrary to societal expectations and their role in the family, making it challenging to change attitudes and encourage their engagement in these crucial conversations.

The sensitive nature of domestic violence, particularly within a community where patriarchal values are deeply rooted, meant that men were often hesitant or even resistant to participate in awareness sessions. Some viewed discussing such issues in public forums as unnecessary or stigmatizing. This resistance was evident in roundtable discussions and school awareness events, where male attendance was notably sparse.

During the awareness sessions held in high schools, it was evident that young males were less inclined to actively participate in discussions regarding gender-based violence. Only a small number of boys attended these sessions compared to the girls, highlighting the lack of awareness or interest among young males about the importance of these topics. In one instance, the study showed that 33% of youth believed that forced sexual relations were not considered violence within family relationships, further indicating the pressing need for targeted awareness among young males.

Many men and boys did not see how the topics of gender equality and domestic violence were directly relevant to them. The belief that these were "women's issues" prevented them from engaging meaningfully. Efforts to change this mindset proved challenging and highlighted the need for more



tailored approaches that make the subject matter relatable and demonstrate how gender issues affect everyone in the community.

The gender imbalance in participation rates underscores the need for a more strategic approach in future projects to engage men effectively. This includes utilizing male role models, creating safe spaces where men feel comfortable discussing these topics, and emphasizing the broader societal impacts of domestic violence and gender inequality that affect everyone, not just women and girls.

Raporti i dorëzuar nga

(Emri i plotë, titulli, nënshkrimi dhe data)