



Annual Report for the year 2023

Organization WOMAN Delcevo

Introduction

In 2023, the discrimination faced by women from marginalized groups in North Macedonia, expressed across various areas such as employment access, social protection, housing, healthcare services, and education, lacked an adequate response from the state. Activities related to key laws and policy documents were not implemented in practice in these areas.

The situation was further exacerbated by increased hate speech against women, women's organizations, and gender equality in general. This discourse was perpetuated by some political and state officials at the highest levels of power and by official representatives of the Church.

The increased number of women killed in 2023 confirms the fundamental unpreparedness of the state to address the issue of protecting victims of gender-based violence and domestic violence, despite the existence of a solid legal framework. Investigations and appropriate measures to prevent femicide in cases of violence, which state authorities knew or could have known about, are lacking, and there is no accountability for the deficiencies in the system. On the contrary, the strong pressure from victims, the public, and the media only momentarily prompted responsible institutions such as the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy to show readiness to take concrete measures, which represents a normalization of institutional violence.

A central registry for all acts of gender-based violence has yet to be established. There continues to be a lack of support services for victims of violence, inadequate accessibility and geographic reach, insufficient human and financial resources, and inadequate knowledge among professionals.

This year was, in many ways, more challenging than the previous one. However, it also brought the unexpected: initiatives, actions, and inspirations. We chose not to remain silent but to inform, educate, and personally grow.

Many of us are proud of what we achieved in 2023, which for us was not only a year of professional challenges but also personal ones. We have gained new partners and strengthened existing ones.

A novelty is working with young people and activities with youth in the field of gender equality and protection from peer violence.

A challenge for us in the coming year will be to open a counseling center for victims of domestic violence and to register an office to provide free legal assistance.

We are grateful to our supporters who recognize the partnership in achieving the organization's mission, to our constituents who selflessly engage in our activities, and finally to the members and employees of Organization ZHENA who, with their professionalism and dedication, manage to be the voice of the citizen every day.

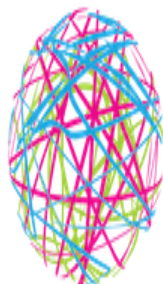
Organization ZHENA

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Romalítico
ROMA POLICY ANALYSIS



Project: Dress Pink - Dress Confidence

Donor: Embassy of the Republic of France in North Macedonia

Implementation Period: 01.09.2023-31.12.2023

Project Objective:

To sensitize citizens and local authorities to zero tolerance for family and gender-based violence and to promote timely and effective control, diagnosis, and treatment of breast cancer in women.



- **Debate on the topic "Why Breast Cancer Prevention Matters and the Role of Mental Health"**
- *The forum was held on October 24, 2023, and was attended by more than 51 individuals, including 4 men. At the beginning, all attendees were given a brochure containing basic information about the causes, risk factors, and diagnostic methods for breast cancer. Additionally, all participants were given pink ribbons in support of the international campaign against breast cancer.*
- *Our goal was to increase women's interest in undergoing preventive mammographic screenings through information and education to build mentally strong women.*
- *The conclusion emphasized the need to sensitize local authorities for joint cooperation with health centers to promote preventive screenings for breast cancer and mammographic examinations. This, in turn, initiated activities to raise awareness among rural women about regular breast cancer screenings in the Annual Work Program of the Commission for Equal Opportunities for the year 2024.*

- **Free Breast Ultrasound Screening for 20 Women from Rural Areas**
- This activity was announced during the forum itself, but since our target group was rural women, we informed them about the opportunity for a free breast ultrasound examination through women leaders from several rural locations.
- The activity was implemented during the months of November and December 2023, when a total of 20 women from various rural areas were examined by a gynecologist.

- **Debate on the Topic "Why Women Stay Silent About Domestic Violence"**
- Held on November 25, 2023, the debaters included representatives from the Social Welfare Center, the Municipality of Delchevo, a former coordinator of the Commission for Equal Opportunities at the Municipality of Delchevo, and a deputy commander from the Delchevo Police Station, as well as a lawyer providing free legal aid.
- The event was moderated by the Vice Chairperson of the Commission for Equal Opportunities.
- The presentation by Sofia Spasevska, the lawyer providing free legal aid, drew significant interest as she presented case studies from practice and discussed the institutional barriers faced by women victims of domestic violence. Although representatives from the institutions responsible for addressing the issue of domestic violence disagreed with her presentation, it remains a fact that victims lack trust in the institutions for their complete protection from the perpetrator, both legally and physically.

The conclusion of this debate was that the municipality, in collaboration with the non-governmental sector, should find a way to establish a shelter center for victims of domestic violence, given the fact that there is no such center in the Eastern region, which would be beneficial for the citizens of these municipalities.

As a second conclusion, it was determined that the Commission for Equal Opportunities at the Municipality of Delchevo should allocate intervention funds in its 2024 program to assist victims of domestic violence. Additionally, activities and measures should be implemented to strengthen victims economically and socially.



- **Self-Help and Support Group**

Following the conclusions and recommendations from the participants of both debates and our daily experience working with women, we have selected topics for discussion within the self-help and support group for women affected by breast cancer.

1. An educational session was held for practical presentations on performing breast self-examinations and recognizing the first symptoms of breast cancer.

2. Another educational session focused on treatment methods for the disease, dietary considerations, prevention, reconstructive surgery, options for wigs, and special bras.

3. The third meeting covered "Patient Rights for Oncology Patients," presented by lawyer Sofia Milenkovska, addressing healthcare rights and patient rights according to Macedonian legal regulations.

There is an interest in continuing the operation of this group even after the project concludes.

Project: "NO to Domestic Violence"

Supported by the European Union Civil Society Resilience Mechanism (CSRM) as part of the project funded by the EU "Technical Assistance for Improving the Enabling Environment for Civil Society Organizations in the Republic of North Macedonia."

Implementation Period: August 23, 2023 - February 22, 2024

Project Objective: Sensitizing citizens of the Eastern region to the issue of domestic violence

Results:

- Developed an "Expertise on Domestic Violence in the Eastern Region" providing expert conclusions on domestic violence in the Eastern region, which will serve as a basis for all citizens, including local authorities and civil society organizations, for advocacy and policy-making in the municipalities of the Eastern region.

- Two trainings were held for two intersectoral groups from the municipality of Delchevo, and one joint training session was conducted for the combined body of municipalities Pehchevo and Berovo. The purpose of these trainings was to educate and legally strengthen the intersectoral bodies from the three municipalities on methods to combat domestic violence.



- A brochure containing legal provisions for the prevention and protection against domestic violence has been printed. Video campaigns are ongoing to combat domestic violence, including two animated videos showcasing the results of the expertise, as well as an animated video highlighting the rights of victims of domestic violence. Additionally, a billboard with a message against domestic violence is being installed.

Project: Engaging Youth for Sustainable Development in the Municipality of Delchevo

National Youth Council of Macedonia

Implementation Period: November 1, 2023 - April 30, 2024

Goal: Establishing a long-term systemic environment to support the development of youth, youth policies, and activities, thus providing an enabling environment for meeting the needs and priorities of youth in the Municipality of Delchevo.

Specific Objectives:

1. Increasing the capacities of youth in the Municipality of Delchevo for their participation in the process of preparation, implementation, and evaluation of youth policies.
2. Enhancing collaboration between youth and the municipality through an inclusive process of defining development activities and initiatives in the field of youth by creating a local strategic plan for youth.

The main activity is: Creating a Youth Strategy for the Municipality of Delchevo 2024-2028.

Results:

- Increased capacity of 20 young individuals from the Municipality of Delchevo in Youth Rights and Democracy.
- Enhanced capacity of 20 young individuals from the Municipality of Delchevo in Youth Participation, Organization, and Addressing Social Challenges and Issues.
- Adoption of the Youth Strategy for the Municipality of Delchevo for the period 2024-2028.

We expect to influence: Support for the development of youth policies and activities, thus providing conditions for success and integration of youth into various aspects of community life and encouraging the fastest possible independence of young people and their active social participation in the local community.

- **Debate Club for Youth**

Supported by: Youth Educational Forum

Implementation Period: 01.09.2023-30.08.2024

Activities:

- One debate club consisting of high school students and one activism club have been formed.
- Debaters gain experience in debating, as well as improving their critical thinking skills and articulation of opinions.
- Debaters participated in training organized by the Youth Educational Forum and debate events, including debate tournaments, public debates, seminars, and workshops.
- The activism club organized an event called "Be Someone's Santa Claus" - a volunteer action to collect warm clothing for children from vulnerable age groups of 6 to 14 years old.

Project: Together for a Prosperous Community"

Supported by the Institute for Policy Research and Analysis - Romalytico

Implementation Period: 01.10.2023-30.09.2024

Goal: Support for local initiatives of the Roma community

Activities:

Mapping community priorities in urbanization, support, and gathering of data and resources for implementing local actions

Mapping existing resources and connecting them with local initiatives

Results:

Equipping the daycare center in the villages of Crnik-Pehcevo and Vinica with cribs and small chairs

Funding for the completion of primary education for two women in Berovo.

Implementation of sewage system in the Roma settlement in Delcevo is in progress, along with procurement of manholes.

Income and Expenses for 2023

Donor	Project	Income	Expenditure until 31.12.2023
1. Embassy of France	Dress Pink - Dress Confidence	5.000 eur	5000
2. CRM-EU	No to Domestic Violence	20.000 eur	11000
3. National Youth Council	With Active Youth - Towards Sustainable Development of Delchevo Municipality	7.500 eur	3000
4. Youth Education Fund	Debating and Artivism Club	400 eur	300
5. Institute for Policy Research and Analysis - Romalytico	Project: Together for a Prosperous Community	400 eur	300