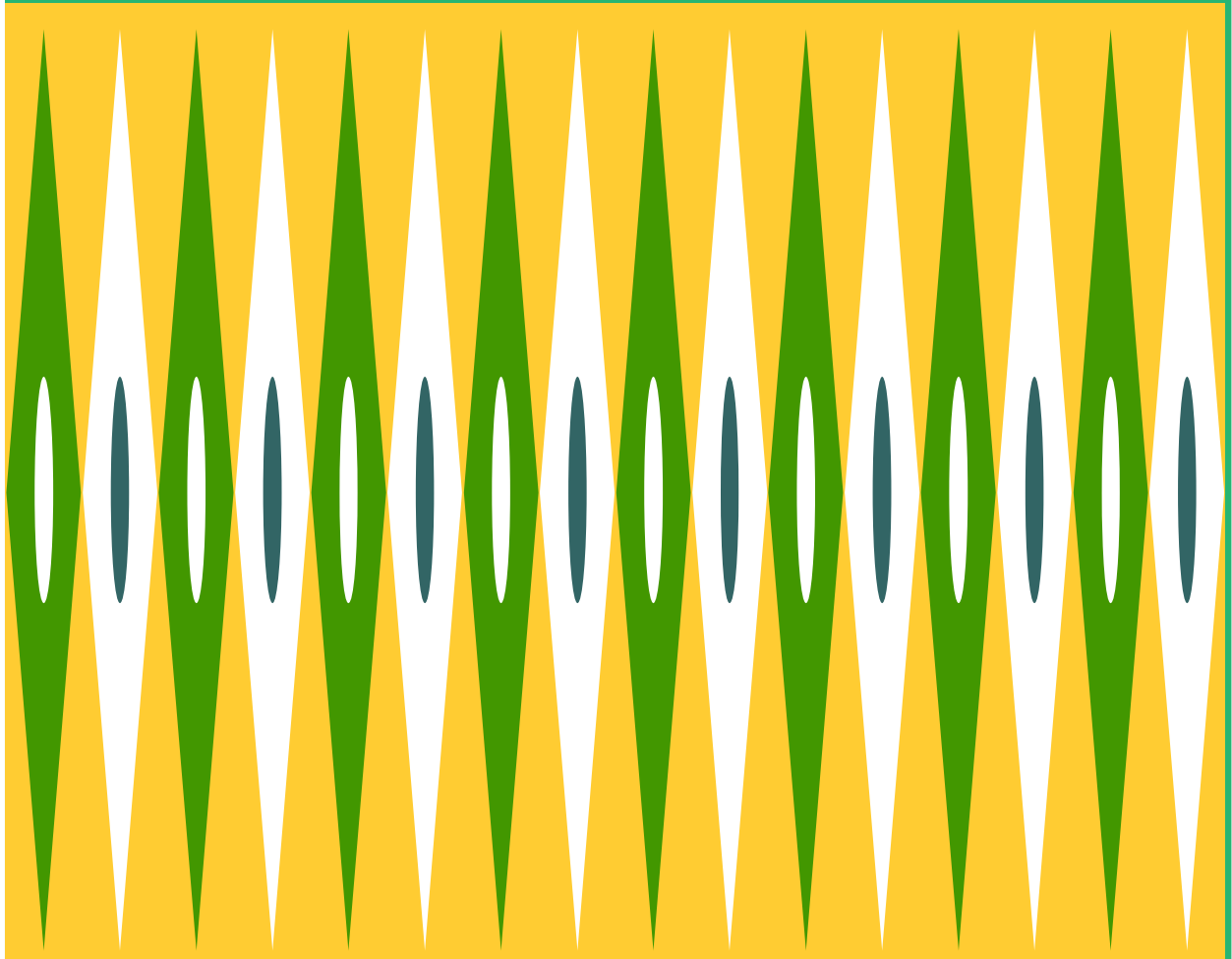




**HIDHE
HAPIN**

Take a Step

Integration of Women Internal Migrants



EVALUATION Report

Hope for the Future Association

EVALUATION OF THE “TAKE A STEP” PROJECT

(Integration of Women Internal Migrants)

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Donor: HEKS (Swiss Interchurch Aid)

1. Evaluation of objectives

1.1 Short and long term objectives

1.1.1 Long term objectives:

The long term objective of this project has been to promote the integration of internal migrant women by giving them the opportunity of vocational formation and further training in order to facilitate the employment process in their new living place and thus contributing ever so little in the empowerment of the marginalized and vulnerable groups in Albania.

We intended to offer a full integration packet of this target group including professional, social and cultural integration.

We also aimed at offering counseling and emotional support and full access to the social-cultural activities organized by the project staff.

What we expected to do was also to keep continual contacts even after the termination of the program. The most part of them was expected to be employed in the same field they were trained. We would be continued to offer information and counseling according to addressed needs. Our association would also encourage and support individual or group initiatives of self-employment among beneficiaries. This would be a small scale support as e.g. providing small material tools, technical support and other similar facilities. We would be trying to create a small generating fund for this.

And last but not least his project focused on women would be a path that leaded us to the community projects what we aspire to explore in not a far future.

1.1.2 Short term objectives:

1. Vocational training

According to addressed needs the women would be provided with vocational formation in different areas of training. We aimed at providing them with new skills in order to facilitate and accelerate their employment process.

This would be done in different specialized training courses and in cooperation with entities and vocational training centers which could provide with these services.

2. Counseling and emotional support

Counseling sessions would be done with every one who needed psychological and emotional support.

3. Other training on women's problems

The identified target group compound by woman and young girls with different education level faces a lot of problems in every day life. The problems and difficulties they have to cope with are much harder than in the city life. Furthermore it is a lack of information and necessary culture to understand them. We considered indispensable to offer some training sessions on healthy, sexually transmitted diseases and hygienic problems because the risk of being affected was high.

1.2 Target group and beneficiaries

Women Internal migrants

- Rural women – Laknas village, 25 km away from Tirana.

These women and girls were organized in groups and attended training courses in vocational formation centres and were supported and monitored by “Take the step” project staff. Counseling sessions, Open House meetings and trainings sessions on different topics were made to better address this target group’ needs and solve their problems.

They say they have ever had before counseling or such help and support how to overcome their life problems.

2. Project background

- Area of intervention

2.1. Project implementation

Since 1990 Albania has undergone external migration flows along with large internal migration. The scale of this migration has been such as to disrupt rural social and kinship systems which, before 1990, were strongly focused around cohesive family bonds and paternalistic state directives and provisions for all members of the population.

The big flux of migration, the inability of the state to provide houses and infrastructure and that of the urban plans to guide the development followed by a general situation of anarchy and disorder led the new-comers to provide houses for themselves through squatting the land illegally. Data shows that in 1997 approx. 235 000 inhabitants (almost 50% of Tirana’s population) were living in areas lacking basic infrastructure and using illegal connections.

Factors like the vicinity with existing infrastructure, proximity with job opportunities and the land property were the main location factors.

The migrant population is relatively of young age, the internal migration is a phenomenon that affects more the active young ages. The women are more predisposed to migrate internally than men. This dominance of women however is not absolute for all ages. The young women are urged to migrate because they in general have no right to inherit from the family property in the village. They get to move sooner than men of the same age because the job opportunities in the tertiary sectors are more.

While poverty acts as a push factor for internal migration, it seems to be a constraining factor for the more costly international migration. The results also suggest that rural migration to urban areas contributes to the relocation of poverty in urban areas.

Laknas is a very poor zone with a lot of social problems deriving from poverty, old traditional stereotypes of gender inequality (women are often bitten by husbands) different cultures, where girls are not allowed to go to school, because of unsaved status quo. The medical services are established in lamentable conditions. There is quasi total unemployment and the life is hard for them. Women are engaged to response to all the family needs: children, husband, other familiars (they still life in the patriarchal style – three generations together, often 8-12 people, under the same roof, within 45-60 m2) living in very difficult, miserable conditions. The difficult relationship they have within family because aggressive husbands (who protest their unemployment becoming aggressive) and out home, especially if single women or widows, are a heavy burden to their mind and heart.

Many families moved down to this area with nothing, and faced a lot of hardships and difficulties in building a place where to live. Normally families are grouped according to their original areas where they came from, or family relations: the major part are originated from Kukes but a big number of families come also from Tropoja, Puka and Mirdita and less from the south.

According to the data got in the Kamza municipality, Laknas population at the end of 2005 was 7885 inhabitants, 4019 out of them were male and 3866 female. The number of families which used to live in that area was 1311.

EVALUATION OF PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

2.1.1. Preparatory phase

Information

Plenty of information about the areas where the internal migrants are concentrated is gathered. This information was gathered paying visits in the Tirana vicinity and further areas meeting local people there. Information via Internet and from our beneficiaries that live in those areas was also made use of.

Our intention was to implement this project in a virgin area where the other NGOs activity was blank.

Publicity of the project

A leaflet containing information about Take the Future project and “Hope for the Future” Association was distributed in the areas of interest to us for developing this project. Also flyers which invite women and girls to participate in this programme were disseminated. We decided to develop this project in Laknas because we had there the support of our beneficiaries who live and work in this village. One of the beneficiaries was appointed as a deputy director in the Laknas primary school and he gave us all his support organizing meetings with parents of school children and distributing the prospects.

Identification of partners and signing bilateral agreements

It was of common interest and in benefit of the project to establish links and collaborate with the local government. Upon the request of Hope was arranged a meeting with the mayor and vice mayor of Kamez Municipality. The meeting was aimed at getting information and figures about Laknas population and situation in that area, identifying the major problems and needs they have in order to define the means of intervention. We were informed that is a high rate of unemployment among women; the major part of them are low educated and no opportunities for vocational training in that area. It is a poor infrastructure what makes their life harder.

There are made several meetings in the Kamza municipality premises to present our NGO and the planned project activities and to explain them our ideas of intervention in Laknas area. It took some time to convince them in our good will and wish to develop a project for women since they were skeptical and prejudging to NGOs in general.

Two months later we received a thankfulness letter from this municipality for the excellent work we were doing with women and their families in Laknas area.

In the framework of collaboration with Kamez municipality Hope had the opportunity to join the NGOs network operating in Kamez area. Share of information and experiences, coordination of actions to better address the community needs have been on focus of these meetings.

Hope has already negotiated with such entities like the Tirana Regional Employment Directory (Hope has already signed an agreement with this public institution) and the public vocational training center no.4). By signing this agreement we have the opportunity to settle the project beneficiaries in vocational training centers (lower course fee), and offer job places after the termination of the courses. This agreement also gave us the opportunity to coordinate the actions and services towards the beneficiaries.

In the framework of this agreement the women that attended tailoring, computer and language courses have received job-brokering assistance when the courses were over.

Regarding cooking and hairdressing courses we made a request to UAW direction and found their understanding to settle women in the courses that Professional Alternative center (former FERILASSES) provides. When the courses were completed Hope has referred the beneficiaries to Employment Agency in Tirana to be registered as unemployed persons and to get job offers according to their education and skills obtained in the professional courses.

Pursuant to co-operations with other actors Hope had several meetings with Medica Mondiale Tirana, which is a specialized center in offering psycho-social and medical support to women and girls under stress. Hope has organized training with beneficiaries on Prevention of sexual transmitted diseases with a specialist from this center. The women with medical problems mostly with STD are referred to this center to receive specialized services which are free of charge.

Identification of women internal migrants and distributing information about the project

To identify the potential beneficiaries for Take a Step project Hope staff undertook several steps. Initially Hope contacted the Director and Vice-director (former Kape' client) of Laknas primary school presenting the overall goal of the project and the benefits that the community would have by receiving the project services. Hope through the support of the Vice director had the possibility to organize several meetings with the school teachers explaining the significance of the project to this community and the impact this target group and the whole community would have if included in the program. They considered our project as very useful and indispensable especially for women who are a vulnerable group that needs support such as education, professional trainings, economic integration and social services. Hope staff jointly with the teachers distributed the project leaflets and questionnaires to women accompanying the children to school and through the meetings the teachers had with children relatives. It was of worth to use the school settings to contact and give information regarding the project to the women because it's the most frequented place in this village.

Some cases were referred from Kamez municipality. There were women living in poor conditions, with fair education level, lacking work experience. In the framework of collaboration with Kamez municipality Hope selected these women as eligible ones and supported to attend sewing and cooking courses.

Also we asked for support of the Laknas reeve considering him as the most reliable person in this community. We could identify a considerable figure of potential beneficiaries through his support and follow up. The women thus showed more interest in our assistance and their families (husbands or brothers) were less skeptical to our services. It was a very special support from this authority because Hope could have the possibility to know deeply the problems of this community and provide the proper assistance.

Another support is given to us by two former Kape clients that used to live in Laknas area. They share their positive experience of being part of Hope reintegration program and encourage them to break the ice and to go outdoors to integrate themselves professionally and socially as well. They were the right persons to be good examples for showing to Laknas people that Hope is a credible and successful services provider.

After contacting and filling up questionnaires Hope organized four Open House meetings with women in Laknas discussing about their common needs, problems, future plans, their familiar economic situation, the level of unemployment and the job opportunities existing in that area. Next step was the selection of the eligible women that fulfilled project criteria such as -the age 17 – 40 years old, poor economic conditions, a low education and without any profession.

Afterwards Hope social workers made an individual interview with each of selected woman identifying the client's needs, social status, the client's priorities and some ways of solving the problems focusing on client's decision making.

There was compiled all the documentation with bio data, personal aspects for each beneficiary in forms of personal files.

2.1.2. Services provided

Counseling

It is provided the required psycho-social support to the women that are project beneficiaries. Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease and infirmity.

Psycho-social support has been adapted to particular needs and attributes of a situation and has been responded to the psychological and physical needs of the people concerned, by helping them in accepting the situation and improving it.

Counseling is offered in cases of school drop-out, health problems, domestic violence, labor market situation, etc.

It is organized individual or group counseling, that are usually held in our office premises. In specific cases we have offered family counseling as well on gender related issues, the family obligations share out, etc.

It is worthy to mention two of our follow-up cases.

We had two 18 year old young girls who had dropped out school because of their family dispraise. These are two families which come from rural areas of North Albania. Based on a patriarchal and backward mentality dealing with woman, they don't allow the girls to continue further studies after completion of the primary school. This age is considered "age of marriage" and for the girls of this age is not good to go out the house according to the parents. This is really a big problem of the Albanian old mentality.

In order to improve the situation of our programme beneficiaries, Hope staff paid visits to their houses, met their parents and other familiars and discussed with them this problem. We made them known the great importance of education, what future means without school, and all the situation dealing with personal education. Hope staff paid some visits to these families (which are cousins to each other) and till now we reached to convince one of the two families to allow his daughter to attend school. Our efforts to break the second family's resistance are not over. We are in contact with girl's parents and very soon we are going to pay another visit to their home. What we notice now is that the girl's parents are not as rude and determined as they were in the first meeting.

The beginning of the new academic year of high school will show us more concrete results for our both beneficiaries.

Vocational formation

The beneficiaries of "Take a step" project are provided with:

Sewing course

16 women are provided with vocational training in a sewing course.

In cooperation with Regional Employment Office of Tirana, it was enabled to settle this target group to follow the sewing course near public Vocational Center No. 4.

This is explained by the fact that most of them come from the rural areas where education and in particular vocational training is almost absent. It has to be mentioned as well the transition period that Albania is living for 16 years. There is a long time where education and vocational training is not well stabilized especially in rural areas and northern part of Albania.

If sewing is your passion, you'll be amazed how the technique of sewing improves your garments.

In this context, the women group we selected to attend the sewing course was women fond of sewing, willing apprentice and with a future vision in sewing. We have to mention that the most part of the applicants was interested in this course.

We provided our beneficiaries with the kit which is an integral part of the sewing classes in order to learn and practice the techniques described in the lessons. Kit contents included: different kind of cloth, tape-measure, needles, thread bobbins, zips, etc

Computer course

13 women are provided with computer course. This course group was made of women who had at least a High School Diploma and needed a computer course to improve their professional skills. We identified two cases that had completed University in Economics and found it hard to get a job place without any knowledge in computer. This course was also offered near public Vocational Center No.4.

Hairdressing course

7 women are provided with vocational training in a hairdressing course.

This course focuses on providing the main knowledge in the beauty education. It was offered by Professional Alternative Center ("Useful to Albanian Woman" Association) whose Diploma is recognized by the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities. This course lasted 3 months. All 7 women completed the 3 month course in satisfying results. It was provided with one month more hairdressing course, esthetic part, 5 of 7 women who finished the course in very good results and were willing to continue it and thought to practice this profession in the coming future.

Cooking course

7 women are provided with vocational training in a cooking course.

This course was also offered by Professional Alternative Center. It lasted 3 months. It was based around fundamental cookery techniques and methods that can be applied whether you're working in a professional kitchen or entertaining at home. Theory and practice were well combined in order to teach our beneficiaries the culinary art.

English course

7 women are provided with English course

Knowing a foreign language is one of the main demands of the nowadays labor market in Albania. English language is considered as an international one. Hereby our beneficiaries were interested in English course. This beneficiaries' group is compound by young girls that have completed the High School and wish to go to university. Only one of them has completed the university studies and to find a good job according to her expectations English language was needed.

Training

This project realized three training sessions for its beneficiaries. These trainings covered the following problems:

1. Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD)
2. Domestic violence and gender roles
3. Auto presentation skills in a job interviewing process

“Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD)” training

The topics discussed:

- What is a sexually transmitted disease (STD)?
- How do I get an STD?
- What are the symptoms of STD?
- How do I get tested for STD?
- How are STD treated?
- What can I do to avoid getting an STD?

“DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND GENDER PROBLEMS” TRAINING

Domestic violence is a widespread problem that occurs among all ages, genders, races, educational backgrounds, and socioeconomic groups. However women and children are the most affected target group by this phenomenon. Being less educated and domestic women, make our beneficiaries be in risk of being violated and suffer the gender non balance.

Topics discussed in this training were:

- What is domestic violence?
- Violence forms
- Violated women and men physiognomy
- Violence cycle
- What is gender?
- Gender discrimination
- Gender balance
- Role plays on domestic violence and gender related issues

“AUTOPRESENTATION SKILLS IN A JOB INTERVIEWING PROCESS” TRAINING

Getting vocational formation helps this target group to facilitate the employment process. In order to be successful during a job interview, this training taught the main steps of job applying process. It was discussed about:

- How to have a successful job interview (basic skills, behavior training);
- How to write a CV;
- Interactivity among women and cooperation.
-

Social activities

Once a month is organized an “Open house” meeting. These meetings helped our beneficiaries to meet and know each other better and discuss about their situation. Every meeting discussed a topic. We can mention some of them:

- discovering who you are
- decision making and values
- communicating with others
- changing life styles
- children care, etc

Leisure activities

Leisure activities as entertaining ones helped the women’s integration in the social and cultural life of the capital. What we organized till now is:

- Visit in Kruja Town. Visit the old bazaar of Kruja and the museum of our national hero Gjergj Kastriot Skënderbeu.
- Cinema movie watch
- Theatre show watch
- Spring fair on domestic production visit.

3.1. Summary of Activities

No.	Activities	Person responsible	Duration of activity
1	Publicity of the project		
	Distribution of "Take the Step" Project leaflet	Project coordinator and project staff	January 2006
	Meetings in Laknas rural area giving information about the project	Project coordinator and project staff	January 2006
2	Preparatory phase		
	<i>Identification of women internal migrants and distributing information about the project are arrived through these meetings:</i>		
	Director of Laknas Primary School	Project staff	January 2006
	Municipality of Kamëza	Project coordinator Public relation officer	January 2006
	Reeve of Laknas village	Project coordinator Social worker	January 2006
	"Kape" Project's former clients	Project staff	January, February 2006
	<i>Identification of partners and sign bilateral agreements.</i>		
	Municipality of Kamëz	Project coordinator	January 2006
	NPO network of Kamëza area	Public relation officer	February 2006
	Regional Employment Office of Tirana -Vocational Center No.4	Project coordinator	February 2006
	Professional Alternatives Center		March 2006
	Medica Mondiale	Project coordinator	April 2006
3	Vocational courses		
	Sewing course (16 women)	Vocational Center No.4	February 2006 and on
	Cooking course (7 women)	Professional Alternatives Center	March 2006 and on
	Hairdressing course (7 women)	Professional Alternatives Center	March 2006 and on
	Computer course (13 women)	Vocational Center No.4 Wisdom Center Universe Center	February 2006 and on
	English course (7 women)	Universe Center Wisdom Center	February 2006 and on
4	Monitoring		
	Visits in Vocational Centers	Project coordinator Social workers	Once a week
5	Trainings		
	Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD)	Medica Mondiale	April 2006
	Domestic violence and gender problems	Medica Mondiale	June 2006
	Auto presentation skills in a job interviewing process	Sorros Foundation	September 2006
6	Social Activities		
	Open house meeting	Social workers	Once a month
7	Leisure activities		
	Spring fair on domestic production	Project staff	April 2006
	Theatre show watch	Project staff	June 2006
	Cinema movie watch	Project staff	August 2006
	Visit in Kruja	Project staff	September 2006

1.2. Project achievements

Vocational trainings

Sewing course

16 women completed successfully the 4 month sewing course. 12 of them got employed after they finished the course. 2 women got self employed and 10 got a job place in private business. Their employment was realized through "Take the step" project.

Hairdressing course

7 women completed the 3 month hairdressing course. 5 of them were qualified with very good results and were willing to get deeper knowledge in this field. "Take the Step" project provided these 5 women with one month more esthetic course. Because of summer holiday esthetic course was interrupted in June and restarted in September. The 5 women are participating very regularly the course and they appreciate the benefit from this section. 2 women who finished the 3 month course actually are unemployed and looking for a job place. "Take the Step" project is negotiating to find a job place for these 2 women.

Cooking course

5 women completed successfully the 3 month cooking course. All of them appreciate the knowledge learnt on the beautiful domain of cooking. Up to now 2 of them got employed after they finish the course. One is employed in a bakery and the other in a sweet-shop. 2 women are still attending the cooking course.

Computer course

9 women completed the 2 month computer course. Their achievements have to be congratulated. 6 of these women could be employed by the help of our project. 4 other women are still continuing the course which will be over in the end of September. We should mention that during summer public and most of non public centers are closed and open in September.

English course

Up to now 3 women completed the 4 month English course. 2 of 3 ones got employed after they finished the course. 4 other women are still continuing the course. Their course is finishing by the end of October.

In sum up to the end of August 2006, 35 women have completed a vocational formation. 15 women are attending a vocational one. 22 of 35 women are almost employed which means 62%.

What do the beneficiaries think of the social and leisure activities?

Efforts to provide support to integrate the women internal migrants must be based on the belief that integration is possible for all target groups.

Friendship is vital to a happy life. Social and leisure activities allow people to have fun, relax and meet one another who share similar interests and may become friends.

Our beneficiaries feel warm and comfortable in our team. They are satisfied by the activities arranged for them. They feel themselves changed even in their look.

Watching a movie or a theatre play was a new experience for the most part of our beneficiaries. Rural life had almost excluded these women from attending social and cultural activities. They felt happy and enthusiastic during the activities arranged by us. These activities gave them the chance to know and enjoy another part of life they could not have the opportunity to experience up to the moment.

How were the Trainings realized considered by the beneficiaries?

Our beneficiaries have appreciated mostly the training realized on their needs. They feel supported by us, their problems are addressed and they say at the end that changes they have done helped by "Take the Step" project have improved their general status: health and psychological ones.

To work with these women is a process that cannot end up in a week or a month. But we think we have established good services for them, and as time goes by, we will see more concrete results for all the group of beneficiaries.

3.3. Problems encountered

Hope during the running of Take the Step project faced many difficulties and obstacles in different project phases. It was a hard job at the beginning of the project to build confidence and trust among Hope staff and women. They had no information on Hope activities and moreover no other NGOs had operated in this community.

It was not easy to make them leave out the houses to attend the vocational course, due to the fact that they were used to be households all the time taking care for children and domestic works. Another issues related to this fact was that they have been placed in Laknas area the last years so has been hard for them to be integrated in this new social and economical environment.

We made all our efforts to change the patriarchal mentality that dominates in the village. Women must have the permission of their husbands, fathers or brothers to take a step in their own future, to leave out the houses, to go to school or to attend the vocational courses.

The women transportation was a problem just because there was no public means of transportation from Laknas to Tirana thus Hope hired two minibuses to drive them to the vocational training centers in Tirana. The roads infrastructure is in very bad conditions so when was a bad weather it was very difficult even for Hope staff to pass through that area.

The first Open House meetings organized from Hope were less frequented due to the reasons mentioned above. The women sometimes were accompanied by their men or relatives, they were not actively participating in these meetings and they were not sure either to receive the Hope services or not. But after several meetings and counseling sessions they were proactive and willing to participate in Hope activities.

At the beginning of the project it was even difficult to build confidence to Kamez Municipality seniors what was indispensable to be done in order to transmit their sustenance and approval for Hope teamwork to the beneficiaries. So we organized several meeting with this public body to make detailed presentation of Hope services and work done throughout the years.

Another difficulty that Hope faced was the lack of kits in the sewing public course so we furnished this center with all materials needed for the well going of the training.

The prices of hairdressing and cooking courses were higher of what we have foreseen (up to 70.000 lek) in both public and private centers thereby Hope negotiated with Professional Alternative center for reasonable prices and succeeded in a good solution (lower prices and good collaboration).



3.4 Lessons learnt

Lessons learnt by implementing this project are:

- To start projects like this must be well prepared and have enough courage to confront the difficulties and not to give up in every situation.
- Before starting vocational training or whatever assistance must fight to make women aware on how to fight against the patriarchal mentality and overcome the prejudices in order to have more guarantee for the success of the project.
- This project laid the ground to have access in the rural areas but this should be followed by other steps, by other projects that should be aimed at community services.
- To made used of all the opportunities and benefits which come from bilateral agreements with public institutions or other entities and coordinate the services.
- To explore deeper in the community life in order to better respond the addressed needs.
- To encourage the vocational training course attendance of the persons who have no/lack profession skills as required in Albanian labor market;
- To support the internal migrants initiatives to start up small businesses, even though it's temporarily a difficult challenge to be faced;
- To keep on women as target group because with them we can do good projects.



Take a Step

Integration of Women Internal Migrants

