

Cover pages:

Joint Programme title:	UN Joint Programme “Leave No One Behind”
Outcome(s):	Cooperation Framework Outcome 1: Human Capital Development ▪ Output 1.1: Social protection Programme outcomes: Outcome 1: Vulnerable persons are empowered to influence public policy and its implementation, ensuring improved access to inclusive social services and receiving the support they need Outcome 2: National and local institutions effectively implement the social protection policy framework and financing mechanisms to optimize social service delivery across Albania
Duration	2 years (phase 3)
Anticipated start and end dates:	Start: January 2026 End: 31 st December 2027
JP Team: Lead PUNO: PUNOs:	UNDP UNICEF UNFPA UN Women
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» Managing Agent: (Consolidated only)	
» Administrative Agent: (Pass-through only)	Albania SDG Acceleration Fund Phase II, administered by the Multi Partner Trust Fund Office. Focal point: Mari Matsumoto mari.matsumoto@undp.org Fund Portfolio Manager (Development)
» Convening Agent: (Pass-through only)	UNDP
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Out of which:	
» Funded	CHF 2,000,000 estimated \$ 2,496,878.90 (UN Rates of Exchange as of November 2025).
» Un-funded	-
Source of funds:	
» Donor	Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) represented by the Embassy of Switzerland in Tirana, Albania

The legal basis for the joint programme is the Legal Annex for the signed United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (2022-2026). It refers to the cooperation or assistance agreements or other agreements that are the existing legal basis for the relationship between the Government of Albania and each Participating UN Organization.

Declaration of commitment and signatures

By signing this Joint Programme document, all signatories commit to work together in a spirit of partnership to achieve the results identified in the **results framework, work plan and budget**.

Co-Chairs of Steering Committee	
Government Name of Representative: <i>Evis Salia</i> Signature:  Name of Ministry or Department: <i>Ministry of Health and Social Welfare</i> Date: _____	United Nations Country Team Name of Representative: <i>Ingrid Macdonald</i> Signature:  Name of Organization: <i>UN Resident Coordinator Office</i> Date: _____
UN Organizations	
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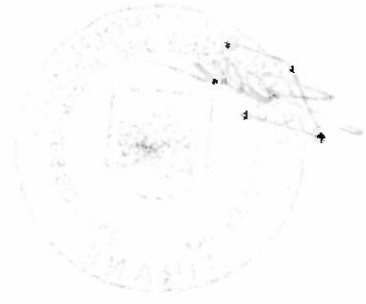
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List of Acronyms

ASCAP	Quality Assurance Agency of Pre-University Education
CHF	Swiss Franc
CPU	Child Protection Unit
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DaO	Delivering as One mechanism
DCM	Decision of the Council of Ministers
ESF	European Social Fund
EU	European Union
EUR	European Currency Unit / Euro
GDI	Gender Development Index
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GII	Gender Inequality Index
HDI	Human Development Index
HSLU	University of Applied Sciences of Lucerne
INSTAT	Institute of Statistics
IPMG	Integrated Policy Management Group
JP	Joint Programme
LGBTIQ+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer/questioning, plus
LNB	Leave No One Behind
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MECI	Ministry of Economy, Culture and Innovation
MES	Ministry of Education and Sports
MF	Ministry of Finance
MHSP	Ministry of Health and Social Protection
MIS	Management Information System
NARU	Needs Assessment Referral Unit
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Development Assistance Committee
PWD	Persons with disabilities
SASPAC	State Agency for Strategic Programming and Aid Coordination
SC	Steering Committee
SDC	Swiss Development Cooperation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SILC	Survey of Income and Living Conditions
SSS	State Social Service
TC	Technical Committee
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNWOMEN	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
USD	United States Dollar

Executive Summary

The “Leave No One Behind” (LNB) programme is a Joint Programme implemented by four UN partner agencies in Albania (UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, and UNWOMEN). UNDP is the lead UN agency for overall implementation and coordination of the Joint Programme. The LNB programme is financed by the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC). The first phase of the programme, from June 2017 to July 2021, was funded by SDC at the amount of Swiss Francs (CHF) 8.0 million. The second phase of the programme, from August 2021 to December 2025, is funded by SDC at the amount of CHF 8.0 million. The exit phase of the programme (*the subject of this programme proposal*) is planned to be implemented over a 24-months period, from January 2026 to December 2027, with SDC funding at the amount of CHF 2 million.

The LNB programme aims to support the national roll-out of the reform of social care services in Albania, commenced in 2017, in line with the government’s strategic priorities to improve the coverage and targeting of **social protection, social care and social inclusion measures targeting vulnerable persons and marginalized groups** at risk of poverty or exclusion. The programme intervenes on three inter-related levels, the system level (national government), the social service provision and delivery level (local government, public and non-public social service providers), and at the community level (citizen empowerment, civil society advocacy). Building upon the progress achieved during the previous years in the roll-out of Albania’s social care service and social inclusion reforms, **the exit phase LNB programme focuses on the consolidation of programme partners’ capacities** (a) to ensure the sustainable operation and utilization of the LNB programme results/systems and (b) to ensure further development of the policy, financial and operational systems for the delivery and further scaling-up of social services in Albania targeted to the needs of vulnerable persons and marginalized groups.

The principal **partners** for the LNB programme are the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, the State Social Service, the Ministry of Education and Sport (in the area inclusive education), Albania’s municipalities (with direct responsibility for local social service provision), local social service providers, workforce profession partners and academia, civil society organizations representing vulnerable persons and groups, and vulnerable persons as the final beneficiaries.

The programme interventions directly benefit the whole of Albania via the support provided to strengthen national systems to monitor implementation of and further develop the framework for delivering social services and social inclusion measures. The programme directly and indirectly supports municipalities in scaling-up local social service provision. All municipalities benefit via support to develop national policy, operational guidance and tools. The exit phase will provide direct support to ten municipalities – seven in which social service provision is currently limited in terms of categories of vulnerable persons supported, three more advanced municipalities to consolidate reform efforts and to act as champions of best practice transfer.

The conceptual framework for the LNB 3 programme is guided by the demarcation between **rights holders** (Outcome 1) and **duty bearers** (Outcome 2). It is essential that both sets of partners are capacitated to sustain the programme results and that the mechanisms for engagement between rights holders and duty bearers linked to policy planning and implementation are further strengthened, at the national and at the local level.

The overall **aim** of the exit phase LNB programme is for Albania to ensure scaled-up provision of social care services across the entire country, contributing to increased social and economic inclusion and opportunities for the advancement of vulnerable or marginalized persons. The programme **goal** is that vulnerable persons, especially people at risk of exclusion, have increased access to local social services and integrated models of support that address their needs, reinforce their well-being and promotes their social inclusion. The programme **outcomes** are: (1) Vulnerable persons are empowered to influence public policy and its implementation, ensuring improved access to inclusive social services and receiving the support they need; (2) National and local institutions effectively implement the social protection policy framework and financing mechanisms to optimize social service delivery across Albania.

1. Context (situation analysis)

1.1. Relevant economic, social, political, and environmental context

Albania is an upper middle-income country¹ with a population (Census 2023)² of 2.4 million people, of which nineteen percent (19%) are under the age of 18-years and twenty percent (20%) are the age of 65-years or over. Women and girls account for 50.4 percent of the total population. While males account for the majority of the population under 40-years, females account for the majority in age group 20-24 and in all age groups at/over the age of 40-years. The country's population has witnessed significant contraction and aging over the recent years. Albania's Institute of Statistics (INSTAT) data show that more than 400,000 Albanians left the country in the last decade. This is primarily due to continued outward migratory flows of people of working-age in search of better job opportunities, educational and professional perspectives.

Table: Albania's population and prevalence of poverty or social exclusion (2017-2023)

Albania	2017	2019	2021	2023
Population (million)	≈2.873 mio.	≈2.854 mio.	≈2.812 mio.	≈2.402 mio.
(Female, as % of total)	(49.7% F)	(50.1% F)	(50.3% F)	(50.4% F)
By age group (as % of total)				
-Age 0-14 years	17.9%	17.0%	16.4%	15.6%
(Female, as % of age group)	(48.2% F)	(48.8% F)	(49.0% F)	(48.1% F)
-Age 15-29 years	24.4%	23.5%	22.4%	17.9%
(Female, as % of age group)	(48.6% F)	(49.5% F)	(49.7% F)	(50.2% F)
-Age 15-64 years	68.7%	68.5%	68.1%	64.7%
(Female, as % of age group)	(49.7% F)	(50.0% F)	(50.1% F)	(50.7% F)
-Age 65+ years	13.3%	14.4%	15.5%	19.7%
(Female, as % of age group)	(51.7% F)	(51.7% F)	(52.1% F)	(51.6% F)
Population at risk of poverty	≈0.681 mio.	≈0.656 mio.	≈0.619 mio.	≈0.473 mio.
(as % of total population)	23.7%	23.0%	22.0%	19.7%
(Female / Male)	23.9% F / 23.5% M	23.8% F / 22.2% M	22.5% F / 21.5% M	20.2% F / 19.3% M
Population at risk of poverty or social exclusion (% of total population) (AROPE-Europa)	≈1.488 mio.	≈1.447 mio.	≈1.310 mio.	≈1.011 mio.
	51.8% (Europa 2020)	50.7% (Europa 2030)	46.6% (Europa 2030)	42.1% (Europa 2030)

INSTAT: Population (estimation 2017, 2019, 2021, Census 2023), Poverty (Income and Living Conditions Survey)

While the percentage of Albania's population at risk of poverty has declined over the past years, a significant share of the population remain at risk of poverty or social exclusion (42%).

In order to address the significant challenges of poverty or social exclusion, the Government of Albania has prioritized the national roll-out of social protection and social care service reforms, with the aim to improve the coverage and targeting of social protection, social care and social inclusion measures and outcomes. National roll-out of the social protection and social care reforms was commenced in 2017, undertaken in parallel with other substantive Government reforms launched during the mid-2010s, such as territorial and decentralization reform, and labour market and employment policy reforms. While distinct progress has been achieved by Albania to expand the coverage of community-based public social care services supporting vulnerable people, the geographic coverage of services remains far from uniform, and the extent of specialized services remains insufficient to cover the needs of vulnerable people. *See section 1.2 for analysis of the situation of social protection, care and inclusion.*

¹ On the OECD-DAC List of ODA Recipients, Albania has progressed from the status of a low-income country in the 1990s to lower middle-income country in 2000 and, subsequently, to upper middle-income country, since 2011.

² INSTAT (2024), Albania Population and Housing Census 2023.

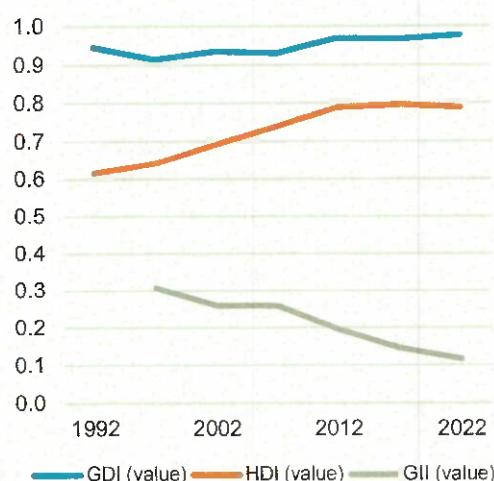
Albania's economy has continued to grow steadily over the past years, with economic growth of 4% in 2024, mirroring the 2023 performance. Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita in current United States Dollars was \$9,598 in 2024. The employment rate averaged 68.6% in 2024, and poverty declined by 1.7 percentage points. Unemployment dropped to 9.4% (a female unemployment rate of 9.9%, and a youth unemployment rate of 18.4%). Average wages rose by 9.8% in 2024, with gains across all sectors. Inflation more than halved relative to 2023, averaging 2.2% in 2024. Net Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) continued to perform strongly, increasing by 6.1%, and foreign currency reserves reached \$6.6 billion as of December 2024. Economic growth is expected to moderate to 3.2% in 2025 and 3.1% in the medium-term. Poverty is expected to continue to decline as employment and wages rise. Albania's primary fiscal balance is expected to remain positive from 2025, averaging 0.4% of GDP. Public debt is projected to decline to an average of 52.8% of GDP over the period. Risks to the outlook include geopolitical tensions and global trade and economic policy uncertainty.³

While still with significant development challenges to be addressed, the country is now firmly entering onto its pathway of accession to and future membership of the European Union (EU).⁴

Despite Albania's economic growth over the past decades, the country remains one of the poorer within Europe. In 2023, Albania's GDP per capita, in purchasing power standards (PPS), was the equivalent of 35% relative to that of the EU (EU=100%).⁵

While Albania has made good progress in terms of its rating on international global indices such as the UNDP's Gender Development Index (GDI) and notably so on the Gender Inequality Index (GII), Albania's socioeconomic development over the past decade has not translated in terms of progressing the country's Human Development Index (HDI) value. It has not significantly changed over the past decade. Albania is a high human development country, but below the HDI value threshold of a very high human development country.

UNDP indices - Albania



UNDP: Human Development Reports / data centre

Albania continues to demonstrate its commitment to international policy agendas, norms and frameworks, notably in the context of delivering on the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development⁶, and the work of the UN's Human Rights Council.⁷ Albania is party to the nine core international human rights treaties⁸, and has ratified the main Council of Europe human rights instruments. However, full and consistent implementation of the existing legislation is

³ Data sourced from World Bank webpage (May 2025) [Albania Overview: news, research, data | World Bank](#).

⁴ The formal process of EU-Albania accession negotiations was opened in July 2022. The fourth meeting of the EU-Albania conference on accession negotiations at ministerial level was in April 2025. Currently, negotiations have been opened with Albania linked to three of the EU's six thematic clusters for negotiations with candidate countries.

⁵ United Nations Albania (2025), Albania Progress Report 2024.

⁶ Albania's overall performance in relation to delivering on the SDGs, measured on the SDG Index global ranking, rose to a country ranking of 42nd in 2024 in terms of overall performance, from a position of 54th ranking in 2023.

⁷ Albania is an elected member on the Human Rights Council for the period 2024-2026. Albania undertook the fourth cycle of a Universal Periodic Review (UPR) via Council process during 2024. A total of 253 recommendations were made during the interactive dialogue, of which 239 enjoy the support of Albania, and 14 are noted by it.

⁸ Such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

insufficient.⁹ Gender discrimination, a gender divide in the labour market and occupational segregation, and gender-based violence are concerns. The 2024 Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Albania provided the country with specific recommendations linked to strengthening social protection, the promotion of social cohesion, social inclusion and human rights.¹⁰

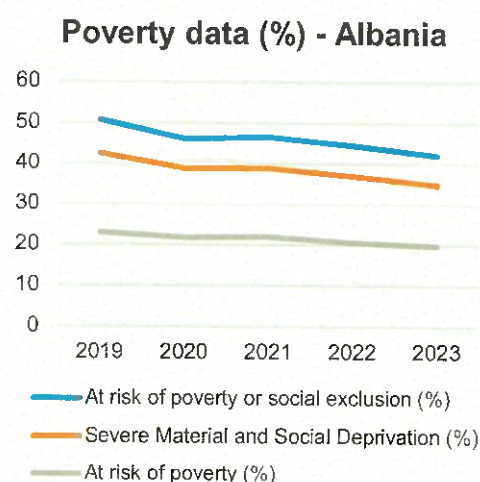
Poverty, vulnerability, deprivation and social exclusion in Albania

Since 2017, INSTAT has published statistical data to measure living conditions, relative poverty and material deprivation in Albanian households fully in accordance with EU Eurostat methodology. The Income and Living Conditions Survey (SILC) is conducted on an annual basis in all EU Members States as well as in the candidate countries for EU-accession. The survey is the basic source for statistics on income distribution and social exclusion at European level overall, and for comparable socioeconomic data at the level of individual European countries.

INSTAT published the results of the 2023 SILC survey in Albania in December 2024.

Inequality in the distribution of income in Albania, as measured by the Gini coefficient index, has progressively declined over the past years, from a ratio of 36.8 in 2017, to 30.2 in 2023.¹¹ The Gini index measure of inequality in Albania is now broadly comparable to that for the EU (29.6).

INSTAT data shows that, in 2023, approximately twenty percent (20%) of Albania's population was at risk of poverty (disposable income below the relative poverty line), and approximately forty-two percent (42%) was at risk of poverty or social exclusion. Approximately thirty-five percent (35%) of the population was living in households in severe material and social deprivation. The population at risk of poverty has declined by four percentage points (4%) since 2019. The population at risk of poverty or social exclusion has declined by approximately ten percentage points (10%) since 2019. The population living in households in severe material and social deprivation has declined by almost eight percentage points (8%) since 2019.



INSTAT: Income and Living Conditions in Albania

Comparative 2023 EU-SILC data¹² shows an estimated 14.3% of the EU's total population was at risk of poverty, 21.3% at risk of poverty or social exclusion, and 6.8% were in households in severe material and social deprivation. These represent the data for the EU overall, total EU population. The data at the level of the 27 EU Member States is variable. For instance, the population at risk of poverty or social exclusion, in 2023, ranged from approximately 11% (Czech Republic) up to 30% (Bulgaria), and 21% in the EU overall. The proportion of Albanian's living in severe material and social deprivation (35%) is notably higher than the EU average.

In Albania, the principal groups of people experiencing risk of poverty, i.e. statistically above the comparable country average for at risk of poverty, include: (1) Females, across all age

⁹ Government of Albania and the United Nations, Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2022-2026.

¹⁰ Of the 253 UPR recommendations, 18 were related to issues of the right to basic services (social security, health, and education), 37 related to issues of violence against women, 27 related to children, 15 related to persons with disabilities, 13 related to women and girls, 13 related to ethnic minorities, ten related to LGBTIQ+ persons.

¹¹ INSTAT, [Income and Living Conditions in Albania | Instat](#).

¹² Eurostat [Living conditions in Europe - Statistics Explained - Eurostat](#).

groups, as compared to males¹³; (2) Children and young people (age group 0-17)¹⁴; (3) Households with dependent children¹⁵; (4) Unemployed people¹⁶; and (5) Inactive people¹⁷.

Whereas Albania's at risk of poverty rate was 19.7% in 2023, the share of vulnerable people, or people at risk of being poor before social transfers is as high as 36.4% of the population, with rural and minority populations also more prone to hardships and vulnerabilities. Poverty, inequality and social exclusion disproportionately affect marginalized and vulnerable groups in Albanian society including women, children, youth, and persons with disabilities, older persons, the Roma¹⁸, and victims of domestic and gender-based violence, LGBTIQ+ individuals, people with intermittent employment, and those living in rural or remote areas.¹⁹ These groups experience disproportionate poverty due to lack of education and training, of social care services, housing, employment opportunities, and healthcare access, gender inequalities and multiple forms of discriminations perpetuating a cycle of poverty across generations.²⁰ Commonly, individuals face intersectional aspects of stigma, marginalization or exclusion.

1.2. Social Protection, Social Care, and Social Inclusion in Albania

While still with substantial challenges to be addressed in providing universal social protection of the population, notably related to the proportion of the population effectively covered by even one social protection scheme,²¹ and specifically linked to the provision of local social care and support services accessible to all people in need across Albania,²² it must equally be recognized that Albania has made clear progress during the past decade in the roll-out of its social protection, social care and social inclusion reforms and operational delivery systems.

The World Bank and the UN in Albania have been key partners supporting the Government's reform and development of an integrated social protection system – the World Bank supporting the reform of the social assistance cash payment benefit schemes (Economic Assistance and Disability Allowance), the UN supporting the reform of the social care and services system.

Prior to launching national roll-out of the reforms, commencing in 2017, the social assistance and social care service system in Albania was significantly fragmented, with limited public provision of social care to support vulnerable people, weak mechanisms for inclusivity, as well as overall low levels of coverage and weak allocative and technical efficiency of the system. According to data from the State Social Service (SSS), in year 2016 the vast majority of social care centres operating in Albania were run by non-governmental and civil society organizations

¹³ While the level of variance is not acute – approximately one percentage point higher for females as compared to males – the variance in terms of the level of females at risk of poverty, as compared to males, is higher in age groups 0-17 and 65 and over, a lower level of variance in age group 18-64.

¹⁴ Commonly experience risk of poverty at a level 6-7% higher than the national population average.

¹⁵ Commonly experience risk of poverty at a level 3-5% higher than the national population average.

¹⁶ Commonly experience risk of poverty at a level 14-18% higher than the national population average.

¹⁷ Commonly experience risk of poverty at a level 5-8% higher than the national population average.

¹⁸ The reference to 'Roma', as an umbrella term, encompasses different people of Romani and Egyptian origin.

¹⁹ Due to Albania's extensive mountain ranges in the north, east, and south, access to local social services is more challenging for people in remoter areas, and brings challenges for social providers to ensure service outreach.

²⁰ EU – UN – World Bank in Albania (2024), Strategic Paper on Human Capital.

²¹ SDG indicator 1.3.1: In 2020, the proportion of the population protected in at least one area by a social security scheme (contributory or non-contributory benefit) in Albania was 70%. The proportion of persons with disabilities receiving benefits was 95%. The proportion of older persons receiving a pension was 87%. The proportion of workers covered in case of work injury was 55%. The proportion of mothers giving birth covered by maternity benefits was 51%. The proportion of vulnerable persons receiving benefits was 36%. The proportion of children covered by benefits was 22%. The proportion of unemployed persons receiving benefits was 13%.

²² State Social Service / LNB (2025), Mapping of Social Care Services in Albania. Compared to year 2023 (the previous mapping exercise), the number of social care service providers has increased by 12% and the number of social care services provided has increased by 46%, reaching 7% more beneficiaries as compared to year 2023. However, the estimated need for social care services in Albania, in 2025, is met by current service providers and services at a rate of only 14% of need. Two municipalities in Albania do not currently provide any local social care services, while in 39 municipalities the extent of need for social care services is met at a rate of less than 10%.

(NGOs / CSOs), running 266 social care centres as compared to 27 publicly-run centres.²³ Social services were mostly targeted to specific groups of people only (e.g. children, persons with disabilities), and were primarily deployed in urban centres only; about 60% of services under the child protection or child rights category; about 90% of services provided in urban areas, and almost 75% of services provided in the western and central areas of the country. The predominance of NGOs/CSOs in the delivery of social care services, at that time, was a reflection of Albania’s challenging process of transition during the 1990s and 2000s. Due to a general view amongst donor partners, then operating in Albania, of the weakness of the state systems, donor partners commonly tended to deliver their small-scale social welfare initiatives via means of projects directly implemented by local CSOs. Initially such donor support was provided with limited involvement or coordination with either central or local government.

As evidenced in the table below, the extent of social care service provision in Albania has increased progressively over the period since the roll-out of the social care reforms in 2017. In 2025, there are 439 social care service providers (as compared to 293 in 2016), of which 59% are public institutions/-funded service providers (a significant increase from 9% in 2016). Collectively, the number of specific social care services provided has increased from 276 in 2019, to reach 1669 services provided in 2025. The number of beneficiaries of the social care services provided has increased from 11,000 people in 2019 to more than 39,000 in 2025.

Table: Mapping the extent of social care service provision in Albania (2019-2025)

Social Care	2019	2021	2023	2025
No. of social care service providers	276	339	391	439
-institution by type of funding source (No. / %)	149 Public (54%) 127 Non-public (46%)	122 Public (36%) 217 Non-public (64%)	117 Public (30%) 153 Non-public (39%) 121 Hybrid (31%)	259 Public (59%) 180 Non-public (41%)
-territorial scope of service provider			15% national 14% regional 71% local	13% national 10% regional 77% local
No. of social care services provided	276	493	1,147	1,669
-beneficiary target group of the services provided	27% children in need 25% people in need 25% PwD 18% elderly 5% women in need	20% people in need 17% children PwD 12% victims violence 12% child no parent 10% elderly 6% adult PwD 6% Roma	29% people in need 22% children PwD 13% elderly 8% victims of violence 8% children no parent 6% adult PwD 14% other groups	21% children PwD 18% elderly 16% people in need 11% adult PwD 8% victims of violence 8% children no parent 7% Roma
No. beneficiaries of social care services	≈11,000	≈42,550 (21% F, 79% M)	≈36,650 (53% F, 47% M)	≈39,100 (52% F, 48% M)
-beneficiaries of social care services by group of person served	27% people in need 19% children in need 17% elderly 16% PwD 13% women in need	63% people in need 9% children PwD 5% elderly 4% victims of violence 4% adult PwD 3% children no parent 2% Roma 10% other groups	42% people in need 10% elderly 9% children no parent 9% Roma 7% children PwD 6% victims of violence 6% adult PwD 10% other groups	44% people in need 15% elderly 10% children PwD 9% Roma 7% youth in need 6% adult PwD 6% victims of violence 3% children no parent
-beneficiaries of services by type of provider/ funding	40% Public 60% Non-public	53% Public 27% Non-public 20% Hybrid	20% Public 62% Non-public 18% Hybrid	44% Public 56% Non-public

State Social Service / LNB: Mapping of Social Care Services in Albania (2019, 2021, 2023, 2025)

F = Female, M = Male, PwD = Persons with disabilities

Note: the number of beneficiaries and the share of ‘people in need’ in year 2021 reflects the period of COVID-19

²³ Elira Jorgoni and Sabina Ymeri - ESA Consulting (2017), Governance of Social Services: The case of Albania.

Social care service providers cover the entire territory of the country with services. Regardless of their geographical location 59 provide services to individuals in need from all over Albania. National providers are mainly public institutions and financed from the state budget, through the SSS. There are 42 service providers at regional level, including specialized public services, often delivered in partnership with CSOs, with financing via the state budget, as well as non-public institutions financed from private sources. There are 338 local providers at municipal level. Local institutions are either public, financed by municipalities, state budget and/or mixed sources, or are non-public and financed from local NGOs, donors or mixed sources.

The growth in the number of social care service providers, 2025 compared to 2023, is entirely at the level of local social care service providers, which now account for 338 (77%) of the total number of service providers. This reflects the increased extent to which the municipalities have been successful in extending local public service provision, and in accessing support for this via the national financing mechanism, the Social Fund, managed by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection (MHSP). During the period 2023-2025, the role of the Social Fund has enabled the functioning of 78 social care service providers (18% of the total providers in 2025), which currently provide services to 5,457 beneficiaries in 2025 (15% of beneficiaries in 2025).

The Social Fund currently supports 38% (eight of 21) of the service providers in the regions Gjirokastrë and Vlorë, 33% in Elbasan, 31% in Fier, 29% in Berat and in Kukës, 27% in Dibër, 23% in Korçë, 17% in Lezhë, 12% in Durrës and in Shkodër, and 5% in the Tiranë region.

Table: Social care service providers (and No. supported by Social Fund) – year 2025

Region	Social Care Service Providers (No.)				Services Provided (No.)			Beneficiaries (No.)		
	Public	Non-public	Total	Social Fund	Public	Non-public	Total	Public	Non-public	Total
Berat	16	1	17	5	82	1	82	621	473	1094
Dibër	10	5	15	4	37	18	55	415	129	544
Durrës	13	19	32	4	48	84	132	1426	1495	2921
Elbasan	14	22	36	12	73	106	179	1194	1000	2194
Fier	18	11	29	9	79	25	104	1386	1114	2500
Gjirokastrë	18	3	21	8	86	19	105	797	109	906
Korçë	26	18	44	10	130	84	214	905	1983	2888
Kukës	5	2	7	2	24	5	29	256	34	290
Lezhë	5	13	18	3	38	44	82	534	1000	1534
Shkodër	31	21	52	6	128	77	205	2375	5136	7511
Tiranë	90	57	147	7	138	237	375	6181	8765	14946
Vlorë	13	8	21	8	68	36	104	921	842	1763
Total (Albania)	259	180	439	78	931	738	1669	17011	22080	39091

State Social Service / LNB: Mapping of Social Care Services in Albania (2025)

The beneficiaries of the social care services are listed in the Law on Social Care Services.^{24 25} The primary groups of beneficiaries (January 2025) of services received are people in need (individuals or families), at 44% of the beneficiaries, the elderly (15%), children with disabilities (10%), Roma (9%), youth in need (7%), adults with disabilities (6%), victims of violence (6%), and children without parental care (3%). All age groups are represented as beneficiaries of

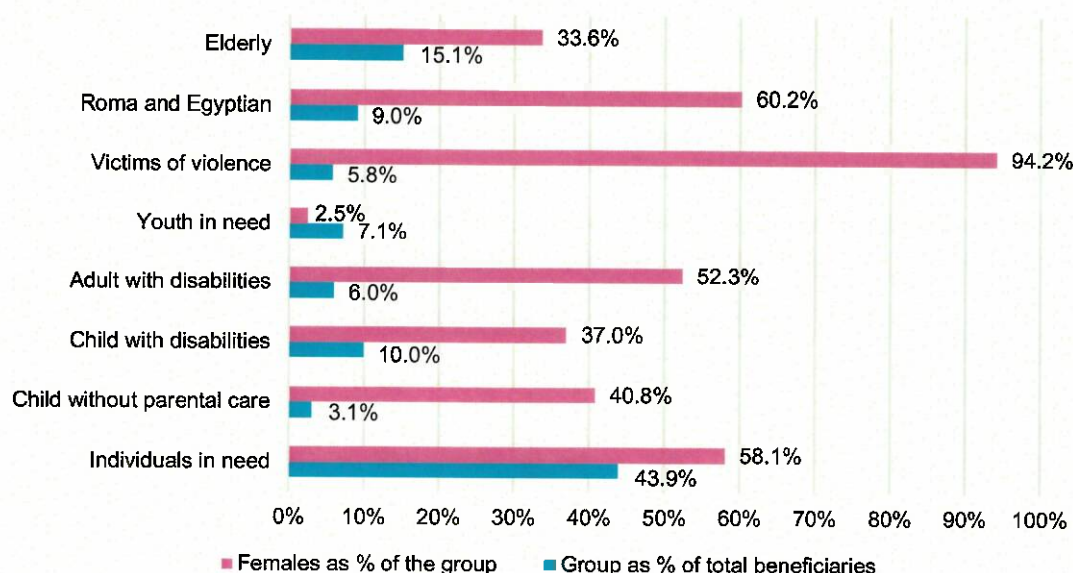
²⁴ Law No. 121/2016 on Social Care Services (adopted on 24.11.2016). Article 6.1: Beneficiaries of social care services shall include...: (a) families and children...; (b) disabled persons; (c) adults who have social problems, victims of violence, victims of trafficking, established drug and alcohol addiction; (ç) pregnant girls or single parent of a child up to one year old; (d) children and young adults in conflict with the law...; (dh) elderly people in need.

²⁵ Beside the beneficiary groups identified in the Law on Social Care Services, other groups of persons recognized by the Government as at risk of marginalization, discrimination or exclusion, and therefore in need of social inclusion and specific social support, include women/girls, the Roma, and LGBTIQ+ persons.

social services. Children aged 0-6 are 7% of the beneficiaries, children aged 7-15 are 28%, meaning that 35% of the beneficiaries are children. The remaining 65% of beneficiaries are broadly evenly spread between youth in age group 16-24 at 21% of the beneficiaries, adults aged 25-65 at 23% of the beneficiaries, and adults over 65 at 21% of the beneficiaries.

Females represent 52% of the total beneficiaries of social services. Female beneficiaries predominate over male beneficiaries mainly in the group individuals and families in need (58% female, 42% male), as well as in the groups of victims of violence (94% female), Roma (60% female), and adults with disabilities (52% female). In all other groups, the share of female beneficiaries is smaller than that of males. The share of female beneficiaries amongst the elderly is notably low at only 34% (whereas 51.6% of the elderly population are female).

Beneficiaries of social services by group of persons, and females as a share of beneficiaries per group



State Social Service / LNB: Mapping of Social Care Services in Albania (2025)

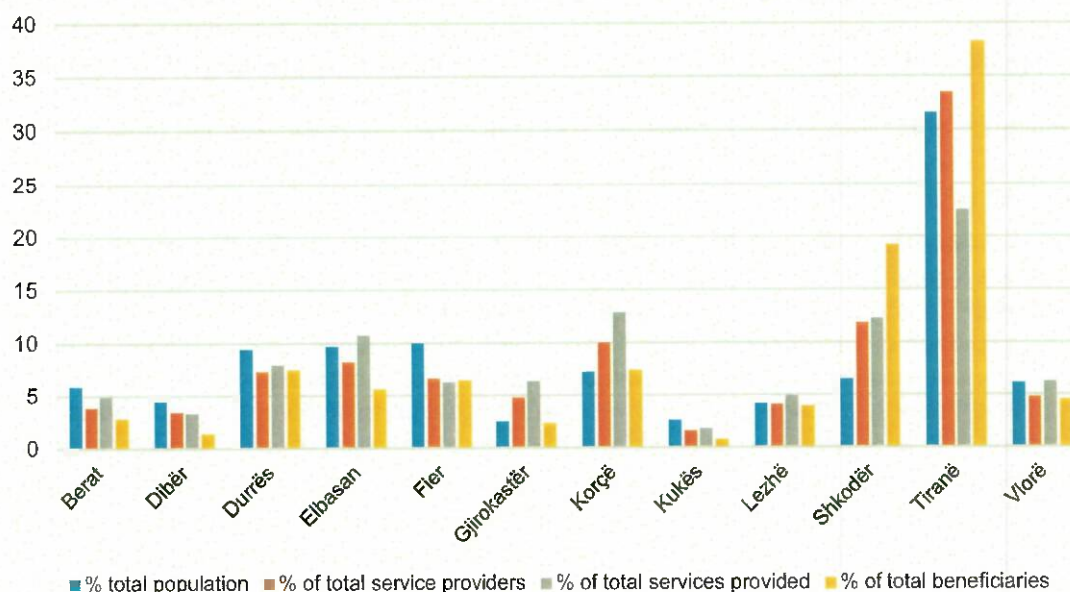
Despite the significant strides made in expanding the provision of public social care services, as evidenced by the increased number of social care institutions and services provided, substantial work remains to create a more equitable and effective system of social care that ensures all citizens, especially vulnerable groups, have access to essential local social services and opportunities. There are approximately 280,000 people in need of services in Albania, of which more than 60% are poor, 28% are adults with disabilities, 6% are children with disabilities, and all other groups are 6% collectively.²⁶ The need for social care services nationally is currently met at a rate of 14%. Further substantial expansion of the social care system and provision of local services, both in number and typology of providers and services, is essential if Albania is to establish an integrated system of social care services, responsive to the needs of all citizens irrespective of geographic location or of specific user-group need.

The distribution of the 439 social care service providers and the 1,669 social care services offered, at the level of the twelve regions of Albania, in comparison with the population share per region as reported in the 2023 Census, is shown below – in percentage terms as a share of the total. The chart shows that the ratio of service providers based in and the ratio of services

²⁶ State Social Service / LNB (2025), Mapping of Social Care Services in Albania.

offered in the region is lower than the population share of the region in Berat, Dibër, Durrës, Fier and Kukës. The ratio of service providers based in Elbasan, Lezhë and Vlorë is also lower than the population share of the region, but the ratio of services offered in the region is higher than its population share. The ratio of service providers based in Tiranë is higher than the population share of the region, but the ratio of services offered in the region is lower than its population share. The ratio of service providers based in and the ratio of services offered in the region is higher than the population share of the region in Gjirokastrë, Korçë and Shkodër.

Comparison of the distribution of service providers and services offered with the population distribution per region, 2025 - (%)



Data based on 2023 Census, and State Social Service / LNB Mapping of Social Care Services in Albania (2025)

In addition, the chart shows the distribution of the 39,091 beneficiaries of social care services (January 2025) in terms of the region that the service provider they accessed is operationally based. This cannot be directly compared with the population share of the regions – there are 59 service providers with national coverage, 25% based in Tiranë (15 of 59), 22% in Shkodër, 14% in Durrës and 14% Elbasan, the others based in Korçë, Vlorë, Berat and Fier. However, it is evident that the share of beneficiaries served by providers based in Berat, Dibër, Durrës, Elbasan, Fier, Kukës and Vlorë is markedly below the regions’ equivalent population share.

Social care services and support provision at the municipal (local) level in Albania

Responsibility for direct provision of local social care services, tailored to community-specific needs, rests with Albania’s local governments (the 61 municipalities). However, the distribution of social care services at municipal-level, even of basic public service provision, is significantly variable. In 39 municipalities the provision of social care services currently meets less than 10% of the needs. Only six municipalities meet more than 25% of needs for social care, namely Korçë (27%), Vlorë (27%), Gjirokastrë (31%), Lushnje (33%), Tirana (43%), and Shkodra (47%). Two municipalities – Himara and Konispol – currently lack any social care service provision (public or non-public). In a further two municipalities – Mirdita and Tropoja – there is no public service provider of services. Local provision of social care services is via non-public service providers only (two providers in each municipality). In seventeen municipalities there is only one social care service provider delivering services – in each case a public provider.

While in four municipalities there is no public provision of any social care services, in six municipalities the extent of public provision of different services is currently only three services offered, in five municipalities only four public services are offered, and in four municipalities only five public services are offered. In a further thirteen municipalities the number of different public social care services that are provided ranges between six up to nine services only.²⁷

The principal social services available at local-level, overall, by typology of service types, are pre-social services (22% of all services), followed by community centres (13%) and specialized services (13%), counselling (11%), emergency services (11%), day care centres (9%), homecare (6%), residential (5%), alternative care (3%), and shelters (3%). While pre-social, specialized and emergency services are mainly provided by public providers, residential and counselling services are mainly provided by non-public providers. The primary target groups of beneficiaries for the services provided are children with disabilities (21%), followed by services for the elderly (18%), the latter growing from 13% of services in 2023. Services for individuals of families in need, which in 2023 constituted the group with the most significant share of services, 29%, in 2025 now constitute only 16% of services offered. Services for disabled adults constitute 11% of services, significant growth from 6% of services in 2023.²⁸

The municipalities have, overall, made important progress in expanding the provision of public social care services over the past five-years, in tandem with the roll-out of the Social Fund by the MHSP via which the municipalities can submit their proposals for co-financing grant linked to the provision of new services. In addition, service provision has been expanded at the local level by municipalities in partnership with development donor partners, notably the UN and the EU. Nevertheless, further significant investment is required to scale-up proven models for the provision of local services, so as to address the uneven provision of public services accessible to those in need and to ensure that all beneficiary groups of people in need are supported.

In 2024, the number of municipalities providing community-based social services for at least three categories of vulnerable groups of people was only 38 out of the 61 municipalities.²⁹

Furthermore, at the level of the Social Services Department per municipality, challenges remain regarding the establishment, full staffing and operationalization of municipal structures to administer and coordinate the provision of social care services. Only fourteen municipalities having fully functional Needs Assessment and Referral Units (NARUs). In 41 municipalities the functions of the NARU are carried out by staff not solely designated to that specific function. In five municipalities there is not a designated person for the Child Protection Unit (CPU). The functions of the CPU are carried out by staff that cover a range of other functions also. In fifteen municipalities there is no designated person appointed to cover the functions of services for persons with disabilities. In sixteen municipalities there is no designated person appointed to cover the functions of services for victims of domestic violence. Only nine municipalities have a designated person appointed for services to the Roma communities.³⁰ Additionally, while all the municipalities have installed the national Management Information System (MIS) for managing social care services and social care recipients, and for reporting to the SSS, there are still challenges linked to systematically integrating MIS case management reporting processes into municipal workflows, with slow data population limiting its impact as a MIS.

The slow operationalization of NARUs and the underutilization of the MIS system are critical barriers to scaling up services effectively. The NARUs play a pivotal role in the implementation of Albania's social care strategy as they are responsible for identifying the needs of vulnerable

²⁷ State Social Service / LNB (2025), Mapping of Social Care Services in Albania.

²⁸ State Social Service / LNB (2025), Mapping of Social Care Services in Albania.

²⁹ Laurent Ruedin and Blerjana Bino (2024), Mid Term Evaluation UN Joint Programme “Leave No One Behind” (LNB2) in Albania – Phase 2. Commissioned by UNDP in Albania.

³⁰ State Social Service / LNB (2025), Mapping of Social Care Services in Albania.

groups, assessing those needs, and referring individuals to appropriate social services. Their establishment and functionality are crucial for ensuring that individuals receive timely and effective support. Additionally, NARUs facilitate coordination between various sectors, such as health, education, and employment, making them a key element of a comprehensive social protection system by ensuring that services are delivered in an integrated and efficient manner to address the diverse needs of vulnerable individuals. Their central role extends to the preparation of costed local social plans, which are essential for municipalities to effectively manage and implement social care services and to ensure that local resources are utilized optimally. Linked to NARUs, the integration of data management systems (the MIS) is also central for social inclusion as it plays a critical role in improving the collection, management, and utilization of data for decision-making and service delivery. It is essential for gathering accurate and disaggregated data on the social needs of various vulnerable groups. It is a platform for monitoring and evaluating social services, used to identify service gaps and ensure that social care services are tailored to meet the needs of different population groups.³¹

Due to these operational limitations, the uneven spread and low level of public social care service provision overall, key vulnerable groups of persons, including those specifically listed as beneficiaries in the Law on Social Care Services, are commonly underserved in terms of their accessing local social services suitable to and responsive to their specific needs. While specialized services may be provided for certain groups at the level of the region – for instance, shelters for victims of violence or centres for care services for persons with disabilities – accessibility to such services, where they exist, is not feasible for many vulnerable people, most notably those living in rural and remoter areas and/or with limited transportation options.

Within the regions of Dibër, Fier and Kukës, there are no specialized social services provided for children outside parental care, and within the regions of Durrës and Kukës no specialized services provided for youth in need. Furthermore, in the region of Kukës there are no residential, family, or alternative care services, in the region of Dibër there are no residential or alternative care services, and in the region of Lezhë there are no shelter care services.³²

Civil society engagement and empowerment to support policy delivery and outcomes

Good progress has been made in the recent years to build the capacities of lead CSOs directly supporting, representing, advocating for and empowering marginalized and vulnerable groups of persons in Albania. Reasonable progress has also been made in the establishment of local forums and mechanisms supporting participatory policy consultative and decision-making processes. The activities of the CSOs and citizen groups contribute to good governance, transparency, and to improving development outcomes in the pursuit of public policy goals. It remains important to strengthen the role of CSOs and policy dialogue processes going forward. This will be key to ensuring the efficient and effective further expansion of social care services.

Further efforts are needed to consolidate national CSO institutional and professional advocacy capacities (e.g. awareness raising, outreach, watchdog, and policy dialogue functions), and to consolidate CSO and citizen's capacity to participate actively in the planning, budgeting, and monitoring of the implementation of local and national social inclusion policies and strategies. Organizations and groups suffer, to varying degrees, from the lack of networks to ensure better coordination of their activities, to share knowledge, and build local-regional-national advocacy.

In addition, CSOs are directly involved in the delivery of client support services, which need further support to demonstrate new innovative approaches for public social service delivery.

³¹ Laurent Ruedin and Blerjana Bino (2024), Mid Term Evaluation UN Joint Programme “Leave No One Behind” (LNB2) In Albania – Phase 2. Commissioned by UNDP in Albania.

³² State Social Service / LNB (2025), Mapping of Social Care Services in Albania.

Professionalization of the social care service workforce and social care providers

In January 2025, there were 4,163 employees who plan, administer, provide and deliver social care services in municipalities and social care service providers, whether public or non-public. Compared with year 2023, the number of employees has increased by 11% (from 3,753). There are 3,187 employees (77% of the total) directly engaged in the functioning of social care services at the providers, while 23% or 976 employees support the functioning of the social care service system in the country's municipalities. The share of employees at the service providers and those in municipalities is generally the same as in 2023 (then 78% and 22%). The majority of employees are female, 79% of social care service provider staff and 77% of the administration of services in municipalities. Almost all (95%) the municipal staff has higher and post-university education, and 69% of the service providers' staff has higher education.³³

Approximately 65% of the social care service provider staff is engaged in providing social care services, 25% are support staff, while managers constitute 10% of all human resources. Staff are mainly engaged with a full-time contract (82%), the rest with a part-time contract. In addition to permanent staffs, a small number of people are engaged by social care providers as volunteers – 190 people, mainly in the region of Tiranë. This category is not counted in the total amount of human resources since it is engaged on a temporary and/or seasonal basis.

Staff of the municipalities responsible for the functioning of the social care service system have a diverse range of educational and professional backgrounds. Only 32% of the staff consists of social workers, 4% of psychologists, 1% of lawyers, and 14% of economists, while 49% of staff have different fields of training, such as engineers, teachers, agronomists, veterinarians.

Professionalization of the social care service workforce and of the social care providers is key to ensuring the quality and standards of social care services provided, and outcomes delivered. This is important not just for the existing workforce, but also for future growth of the workforce.

Professionalization, ethics and standards, licensing and re-licensing of the social care workforce is overseen by different associations (Orders) of professional occupation, e.g. Social Workers, Psychologists, and Teaching Assistants. The Ministry of Education and Sports (MES) establishes the educational standards for pre-service (Bachelor's and Master's) occupational education in the field of social work. The MHSP establishes the framework for the continuing professional education of the professionals of social care services, as the basis for re-licensing. The Quality Assurance Agency for Pre-University Education, and Quality Assurance Agency for Health and Social Care ensure accreditation of continuing education providers and courses.

Good progress has been made in recent years by leading Albanian universities³⁴ to upgrade curricula and to develop new educational and training curricula for pre-service education, and for in-service continuing professional education and training. Reflecting that the framework for continuous education and certification in regard to social care workers is currently in the first cycle for periodic certification of the profession, further development of continuous education and training courses and of the system for collecting credits is a priority for the next period.

A further priority to embed professionalization of the workforce relates to further strengthening of the networks and systems for peer learning, knowledge exchange and sharing of good practice. This will support municipalities and service providers to scale-up good practice and models for service provision, as part of their ongoing efforts to further expand local services. With an expanding workforce in the field of social care, social work and inclusive education, the need for such networks, knowledge learning and sharing of experiences is imperative.

³³ State Social Service / LNB (2025), Mapping of Social Care Services in Albania.

³⁴ Universities of Tirana, Shkodra and Elbasan – Faculties of Social Sciences.

National Government (system level)

At national-level, the main Ministries and Agencies with responsibilities in the field of social protection, social care, social services, social and economic inclusion include the following:

- Ministry of Health and Social Protection (MHSP) – lead ministry with responsibility for health, social protection, social care, social services, and social inclusion policy.
- Ministry of Education and Sports (MES) – lead ministry for inclusive education policy.
- Ministry of Economy, Culture and Innovation (MECI) – lead ministry for employment policy.
- Ministry of Finance (MF) – lead ministry for budgeting and public finance management.
- State Social Service (SSS) – lead agency, under MHSP, responsible to implement policies and legislation on social assistance payments and social services throughout the country.
- Institute of Statistics (INSTAT) – independent agency responsible for official statistics.

The Government has made solid progress over the past decade to develop the strategic, legal, policy and regulatory frameworks for social protection, social care and social inclusion reforms. In line with Albania's process of administrative and fiscal decentralization, essential public services, critical for reducing poverty and social exclusion, are delegated to both regional bodies and local governments. Municipalities are responsible for the direct provision of social care services tailored to community-specific needs, while regional bodies are responsible for employment and inclusive education, and to address broader, cross-municipal challenges. SSS is the principal agency responsible to oversee local implementation and delivery by the municipalities of social assistance payments and social care services. It is also responsible to provide technical assistance, advice and training to municipalities on the provision of services. MHSP is responsible to oversee implementation of the social protection and social inclusion reforms, policy delivery and further policy development, and the operation of national financing mechanisms, including the Social Fund that exists to co-finance social care service provision. MES is responsible to oversee implementation and financing of inclusive education. MECI is responsible to oversee implementation and financing of active labour market mechanisms.

Going forward, the key priority for Albania relates to scaling-up the financing mechanisms and sources targeted to the provision of social care services and social inclusion measures. This is essential in order to address the remaining sizeable gaps in the provision of local services and to ensure national coverage of social care services, social inclusion measures and policy outcomes. Increased financing for social care is planned in the Government's medium-term budget, with the national budget allocated to the Social Fund anticipated to increase by 7% on an annual basis.³⁵ In addition, the municipalities are now required to establish a Local Social Fund, with effect in budget year 2026, via which all local, national and donor funding for social care and inclusion is channelled, and reported to national Government (Ministry of Finance). Further capacity building of national and of municipality partners to plan for, to manage and to effectively absorb increased financing that will be accessible, over the medium-term, for the purpose of social care and inclusion services, from different funding streams, is essential.

Further capacity building and organizational development support of the MHSP and SSS is necessary, in order that they consolidate national delivery of social care and inclusion policies, and the monitoring and evaluation of policies and strategies (analysis of delivery and results so as to provide evidence-based input for policy and strategic decision-making purposes). Both institutions are currently in the process of institutional and organizational strengthening. Within MHSP, establishment of a Resources Team Facility is ongoing. It will oversee coordination of Albania's social inclusion policy framework and its specific national action plan pillars. This shall be undertaken in close cooperation with other Ministries and local partners in order to ensure cross-sectoral policy coordination and implementation of all social inclusion measures.

³⁵ European Commission (2024), Albania 2024 Report. Staff Working Document (2024) 690 final.

The SSS proposes to establish a Directorate for Training and Capacity Building, in order to better fulfil its function to provide technical assistance, advice and training to municipalities, including via strengthening the capacity of the SSS regional offices to support municipalities.

1.3. The drivers and constrainers of change

The drivers of change are multiple, and mutually supportive as to drive the process of change. All stakeholders recognize the need for Albania to expand the provision of local social services, of pre-social, community and specialized care services, to achieve national service provision.

The Government is committed to further advancing the reform of the social care and social services system, commenced in 2017, in order that all citizens have equal opportunities to benefit from a functioning and integrated system of social care services based on the principles of decentralization, deinstitutionalization and diversification of social care services. It is undertaken in parallel and in support of the Government's reform of the social assistance cash payment schemes to support the economic poor (Economic Assistance) and to support persons with disability (Disability Allowance). It is undertaken in parallel and with linkage to other Government reforms and policy priorities to combat economic or social exclusion, and to promote social inclusion and cohesion, such as in the areas of health, education, employment.

The goal is to empower individuals and households, throughout the lifecycle, to overcome situations of poverty, vulnerability and exclusion, and to enable reintegration – by providing all citizens with basic public services, fighting poverty, promoting employment, and strengthening the social protection system, supporting the well-being of people in society that are in need.

Beyond simply being driven by and responding to the fundamental rights of the citizens to basic protection and services, the Government is also driven by its awareness that the human and social dimensions of Albania are the ones that underlie economic growth and social cohesion. Furthermore, the Government is driven by its commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and to Albania achieving measurable progress in its delivering on the goals. In addition, within the context of Albania's goal to prepare itself for and to achieve membership of the EU, the Government is now strongly driven to realize progress in addressing Albania's economic and social exclusion challenges, and overcome basic public service provision gaps. The EU, in its annual reports on Albania's accession progress, highlights weaknesses in the country's implementation of social protection and inclusion systems overall and in respect for the fundamental rights of citizens in different groups (e.g. persons with disabilities, women, children, the Roma, and LGBTIQ+ individuals). Albania needs to address these challenges.

Citizens and representative groups, including CSOs supporting vulnerable or marginalized people, are also committed to further advancing the reform of the social care and social services system – to be achieved via significant further scaling-up of proven models for social service provision and the use of new innovative approaches for social care service delivery. Citizens and their groups have demonstrated strong interest to be engaged at the local level via public participatory dialogue and consultation forums, bringing together municipality staff and elected officials, local citizens and CSOs, to discuss the planning and the provision of local social care and services for social inclusion. These have been valuable forums to discuss local service provision and specific issues of concern or interest raised by local citizens. While not all issues raised result in change, a significant number of planning and operational issues are addressed by the municipality and incorporated into actions or updated local social care plans.

Albania's local governments (municipalities) are also committed to further advancing the reform of the social care and social services system. Municipalities are the key duty-bearers responsible for the local planning, budgeting and provision of social services and social care, and in the delivery of social assistance payments, and of social inclusion measures. In addition to the legal obligation to provide basic services, further expansion of local social care and

social services is in the interest of the municipalities in order to address the full range of needs and extent of demand of citizens for social services responsive to their need. In addition to enhancing the well-being of individuals and families, the services deliver increased social inclusion of vulnerable people at municipal-level, and offer routes out-of poverty and economic exclusion for vulnerable people of working-age and capacity. While recognizing that the organizational and administrative capacity of the 61 municipalities to provide social care services is still variable, as it was in 2016/17 when territorial and decentralization reform and social care reform commenced, all of the municipalities are committed to providing delivery of services. All of the municipalities have approved Social Care Plans – valid for a three-year period – setting the need, and their goals for the development of service provision. The vast majority of municipalities have applied for co-financing grant under the Social Fund, the national financing mechanism to support the expansion of local social care service provision.

The social service workforce, and their different associations of professional occupation, is also committed to further advancing the reform of the social care and social services system. This will both improve the delivery of quality services and support recognition of the profession.

Finally, as a key driver of change, there is a solid basis of experience and good practice as to proven models and innovative approaches for local social care and service provision in Albania – from multi-disciplinary services and approaches to specialized services and approaches oriented to the needs of specific groups in need. Such models and approaches exist at local and regional-level for both specialized and integrated services. The Government has adopted a range of decisions, instructions, and orders related to the standards for provision of services, covering different typologies of service and groups of beneficiaries. There is significant capacity to replicate local models for service delivery and to further scale-up regional models.

The principal constrainer to change relates to the extent of public financing to ensure further expansion of local social care service provision and integrated social service models to support the social and economic integration of vulnerable persons. Spending on social protection in Albania remains among the lowest in Europe, at less than 10% of GDP. Spending is dominated by contributory social insurance outlays, approximately 80-85% of costs. Spending on social assistance accounts for approximately 15% of costs, of which approximately 85% is for social assistance cash payments, 10.5% for baby bonus on birth payment, and 4.5% for social services. While the national budget allocation for the Social Fund is planned to increase by 7% per annum, the scale of national funding provided to social services grows from a low-level and is still limited. Local government expenditure (discretionary funding) for social services has significantly increased in the recent years. Collectively, municipalities' social budget accounted for 2.8% of their total discretionary budget in 2022, up from 1.5% in 2017.³⁶ Excluding costs for cash payment schemes, local government expenditure on social services has exceeded that of central government since 2021. However, local government expenditure is concentrated in a handful of relatively 'wealthier' municipalities. In 2022, over 70% of total discretionary spending on social care services was concentrated in ten out of 61 municipalities. Smaller municipalities continue to depend significantly on state budget resources to finance social care services. It is important that such municipalities receive an equitable level of state funding, and predictability of state resources, to address their limited capacity for local discretionary funding.

In the context of Albania's EU-accession process, there is clear potential for the country to access the EU's European Social Fund (ESF), the main EU-instrument for investment in human capital development (including socioeconomic integration of marginalized people, social inclusion, equal opportunities, education, skills, training, employment, etc.). The ESF

³⁶ LNB (2023), Public expenditure on social care services, Institutional and financing mechanisms in the social protection sector at the central and local level 2016 – 2022.

provides co-financing to support programmes undertaken by national and local authorities. It is therefore important that Albania strengthen its national and local capacity to finance social services, in order that it can effectively absorb potential ESF-support over the medium-term.

In addition, a constrainer to change relates to the organizational and operational capacity of the municipalities to administer and coordinate the provision of social care services. While staffing levels allocated for social services have been increased, the formation of structures for social services within the municipalities needs to be further strengthened. Most notably, the formation of NARUs by the municipalities remains a core challenge, as does the slow process of operationalization of the MIS for social care services to support decision-making and service delivery – these are significant weaknesses in local systems for service planning and delivery. It is essential that the SSS works closely with the municipalities to support their further development of organizational and operational capacities, and specified service structures.

1.4. Link to international/national policies/relevant legal and policy framework

Over the recent years the Government has updated a range of significant strategies and national action plans defining Albania's priorities for poverty alleviation, social protection and the promotion of social inclusion. Reflective of the complex nature and causes of economic or social exclusion, issues of social protection and inclusion are addressed via specific strategies (Social Protection, and Social Inclusion) and via a number of other sectoral policy documents, covering policy areas such as health, education, skills and employability, and gender equality. In addition, priorities for social protection and inclusion are defined addressing key population groups such as children, youth, the elderly, and persons with disabilities, Roma, and LGBTIQ+. Further to these, national development strategies establish how Albania's priorities for social protection and inclusion fit and link within the wider context and vision for development.

Albania's main national development strategies include:

- National Strategy for Development and European Integration 2022-2030;
- Economic Reform Programme 2023-2025;
- National Plan for European Integration 2024-2026;
- Cross-Cutting Strategy for Decentralization and Local Governance 2023-2030.

The principal national strategies and plans relevant to social protection and inclusion include:

- National Social Protection Strategy 2024-2030;
- Social Inclusion Policy Document 2023-2027;
- National Strategy for Gender Equality 2021-2030;
- National Agenda on the Rights of the Child 2021-2026;
- National Youth Strategy 2022-2029;
- National Action Plan on Aging 2020-2024;
- National Action Plan for Persons with Disabilities 2021-2025;
- National Action Plan for Integration of Roma and Egyptians 2021-2030;
- National Action Plan for LGBTI Persons 2021-2027;
- Strategy for Primary Health Care Services Development in Albania 2020-2025;
- National Action Plan for Prevention, Treatment & Harm Reduction from Drugs 2023-2026;
- National Education Strategy 2021-2026;
- National Employment and Skills Strategy 2023-2030;
- Cross-cutting Juvenile Justice Strategy 2022-2026.

A significant number of the above social protection and inclusion strategies, and predecessor strategies and plans, were developed by the Government with the support of the UN in Albania.

The principal legal instruments in Albania addressing social protection and inclusion include:

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| • Law no. 121/2016 “On Social Care Services” | • Law no. 163/2014 “On the Order of Social Workers” |
| • Law no. 57/2019 “On Social Assistance” | • Law no. 146/2015 “On Unemployed Jobseekers” |
| • Law no. 7889/1994 “On the Status of the Invalid” | • Law no. 40/2016 “On the Order of Psychologists” |
| • Law no. 8098/1996 “On the Status of the Blind” | • Law no. 18/2017 “On the Rights and Protection of the Child” |
| • Law no. 8153/1996 “On Orphan’s Status” | • Law no. 22/2018 “On Social Housing” |
| • Law no. 8626/2000 “On the Status of Paraplegic and Tetraplegic Invalids” | • Law no. 15/2019 “On Employment Promotion” |
| • Law no. 9669/2006 “On Measures against Violence in Family Relations” | • Law no. 75/2019 “For Youth” |
| • Law no. 9970/2008 “On Gender Equality in Society” | • Law no. 115/2014 “On the Territorial and Administrative division of Local Government Units in Albania” |
| • Law no. 10221/2010 “On Protection from Discrimination” | • Law no. 139/2015 “On Local Self-Government” |
| • Law no. 69/2012 “On Pre-university Education System” | • Law no. 68/2017 “On Local Finances” |
| • Law no. 93/2014 “On Inclusion and Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities” | |

(amendments to the basic laws not listed)

Albania’s development of its social protection and inclusion framework and policies, as well as delivery outcomes, is also guided by international and European policy frameworks and norms:

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| • Universal Declaration of Human Rights | • Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) |
| • Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) | • European Charter of Human Rights |
| • Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) | • European Pillar of Social Rights |
| • Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) | • European Care Strategy |
| • International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination | • European Child Rights Strategy and Child Guarantee |
| • UN Human Rights Council, Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process | • European Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities |
| | • EU Gender Equality Strategy |
| | • EU Roma Strategic Framework |

In the context of the UN’s 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the promotion of social protection and inclusion is directly relevant to the overall focus and approach to “leave no one behind”, and contributes directly or indirectly to the sustainable development goals (SDGs): SDGs 1-5 (no poverty, zero hunger, good health and well-being, quality education, gender equality), SDG 8 (decent work and inclusive economic growth), SDG 10 (reduced inequalities), SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities), and SDG 16 (peaceful and inclusive societies).

2. Results and Lessons Learnt

The “Leave No One Behind” (LNB) programme is a Joint Programme implemented by four UN partner agencies in Albania (UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, and UNWOMEN). UNDP is the lead UN agency for overall implementation and coordination of the programme. The LNB programme is financed by the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC). During the first phase of the LNB programme, from June 2017 to July 2021, SDC funded the programme at the amount of Swiss Francs (CHF) 8.0 million. The current, second phase of the LNB programme, from August 2021 to December 2025, is funded by SDC at the amount of CHF 8.0 million.

2.1. Results

LNB programme outputs and outcomes are closely linked to and support the national reforms, development goals and strategies of the Government of Albania regarding social care, social protection and inclusion, and the wider framework for human capital and social development. Specifically, the programme is focused on supporting the Government’s roll-out of the social care service reforms, commenced in 2017, and supporting Albania’s municipalities to fulfil their responsibility for the provision of local social services tailored to community-specific needs.

The programme’s target groups of final beneficiaries, who directly and indirectly benefit from improved access to social services, are (1) marginalized and vulnerable families and persons, of all genders and of all ages, and (2) persons with disabilities, the Roma, and the elderly. The improvement of their social inclusion is supported by programme interventions at macro level (central authorities), at meso level (municipalities and local social care service providers) and at micro level, actively involving the target groups into the programme’s implementation. The focus is on promoting national and local system building for the provision of social services.

The first phase programme focused on supporting central authorities in the further development of the policy (for instance the periodic update of strategies and action plans), the legal and regulatory framework (for instance by-laws, standards) and monitoring framework (for instance mechanisms for data-collection and reporting), and the state funding mechanisms (for instance the Social Fund) accompanying the roll-out of the social care service and social inclusion reforms. At municipality-level, the programme focused on capacitating municipality and service provider staff to undertake their obligations linked to the provision and the management of social care policy and services at the local level. This included support to benefit all of the 61 municipalities in Albania (for instance methodologies linked to the planning, the mapping and monitoring of local services, plus tools, guidelines and training materials to support detailed policy implementation), and support directly benefiting 36 municipalities (for instance to develop their Social Care Plan, organizational structures and capacities, or to pilot test different social service mechanisms at the local and/or regional-level). At the micro-level, the programme focused on strengthening the capacity of CSOs to fulfil their functions linked to information and awareness-raising and advocacy for vulnerable or marginalized groups, as well as on the establishment of mechanisms and forums at municipality-level for meaningful public consultation with local citizens and CSOs on social service provision. CSOs and vulnerable people were also engaged in the development and delivery of new service models.

Overall, the first phase LNB programme directly supported approximately 24,000 vulnerable people reached via access to services or information awareness-raising or via participatory policy forums, and also directly supported approximately 4,100 staff of municipalities and service providers in different social services, and approximately 1,000 staff of central government. Indirectly the programme results reached approximately 100,000 vulnerable people via CSO outreach efforts, and 63,630 people supported during COVID-19, while approximately 91,300 people are identified in the municipality Social Care Plans (of the 36 municipalities supported under the first phase) as persons at potential risk of vulnerability.

Building on the results of the first phase, the second phase programme aims to further improve the results-orientation by scaling-up the social protection and social inclusion reform roll-out, the local replication of proven service models, and increasing the capacities of municipalities to provide decentralized services for women, children, and men in their communities. The goal is that “vulnerable persons and groups have improved access to public services that support their social rights, social inclusion and well-being, and are empowered to have a voice in public policy decision-making affecting their lives, and to hold decision-makers accountable for policy implementation”. The outcomes of the second phase LNB programme are summarized as:

- Vulnerable persons empowered to request and receive adequate social services from local authorities that support their social inclusion,
- Municipalities effectively manage and deliver the provision of social services and the promotion of social inclusion,
- National institutions implement their policy framework for providing social services and promoting social inclusion, and adequately fund social services.

The LNB programme integrates gender equality and good governance as cross-cutting themes, ensuring a rights-based, inclusive approach across all activities. It has empowered vulnerable groups in Albania – such as persons with disabilities, Roma, the elderly, vulnerable children, youth, and families in need as well as women and girls at risk of gender-based violence – by establishing social care services tailored to their needs and raising awareness of their rights. The programme promotes gender-sensitive policies, supporting 15 municipalities in updating their Social Care Plans with a focus on women’s concerns, and has also strengthened the professional practice of social workers with human rights principles.

LNB has maintained efficient partnerships with a large number of CSOs supporting them with capacity and institutional building interventions including grants for the provision of services. Partnerships with CSOs representing vulnerable persons and groups have been highly effective to reach out to targeted communities, expand knowledge on rights and entitlements among the groups of interest, support the design and testing of new models of social care services, and holding the government authorities accountable. The triangular cooperation between the central and the local governments and the civil society promoted by LNB constitutes a great model of approach to a sustained social integration of vulnerable groups.

In view of scaling up of the reform roll-out, LNB 2 has supported the Government to strengthen the functionality of the national Social Fund mechanism facilitating broad consultative meetings (2022) and providing technical assistance in analysing the existing legal framework of the Social Fund (2023), in order to ensure that it enables the proper functioning of this mechanism and its goal to meet the social service needs of vulnerable groups throughout the country. The programme has also supported strengthen the social inclusion policy monitoring framework, and in the further periodic update of social protection and inclusion strategies and action plans.

The programme has continued to directly contribute to improving the organisational and operational capacity of municipalities to set up and manage new social services, via means of further methodological guidance and tools, as well as support tailored to municipality needs. Since July 2023, LNB 2 also allocated 27 grants to local governments to set up and maintain new social services for vulnerable individuals and families, benefiting around 4,100 people (mainly elderly individuals, the Roma, children with disabilities, and vulnerable families).

To ensure the professionalization of the workforce, LNB 2 has continued to support the training of assistant teachers working with students with disabilities through the partnership with the Quality Assurance Agency of Pre-University Education (ASCAP), including collaboration with local community centres for children with disabilities. In addition, LNB 2 is supporting the social work faculties at the universities of Tirana, Elbasan and Shkodra in strengthening pre-service

social work curricula and further training courses of in-service professionals. LNB 2 has also supported the development of peer learning and exchange mechanisms to allow municipality staff and service provider staff to share knowledge and experience linked to the provision of social services. Good practices arising from LNB were scaled-up in 31 municipalities.

The LNB2 programme results reached approximately 178,000 vulnerable individuals - or 33% of the at-risk-of-poverty population³⁷ - through enhanced social care services introduced by municipalities, made possible by organizational and capacity-building support, and outreach efforts by civil society organizations. The programme, to date, has directly supported approximately 70,000 vulnerable people reached via access to services or information awareness-raising or via participatory policy forums, and also directly supported approximately 4,500 staff of municipalities and service providers in different social services, and approximately 1,000 staff of central government.

Major achievements under LNB 2 include the following, non-exhaustive list of direct results:

- 1,220 elderly people benefited via new established social services in target municipalities.
- 3,500 people, 40% of them Roma, received integrated social services in Tirane, Durrës, Lushnjë and Divjake.
- Around 4,000 vulnerable children have benefited from the Home Visiting Programme.
- 4,077 children with disabilities benefited from the capacity building of 2,055 trained assistant teachers.
- 90 professionals from 17 community centres strengthened their capacity to provide specialized services, especially for around 450 children and young people with disabilities.
- 10 organizations of persons with disabilities received grants and are currently implementing 12 advocacy activities.
- Improved local social planning – 17 municipalities updated and calculated their local Social Care Plan, emphasizing the inclusion of a gender perspective.
- Supported two municipalities develop community centres (infrastructure and services) to establish new models of community based social services for vulnerable groups.
- Provided 27 grants to 22 municipalities to establish and sustain new social services for vulnerable individuals and families, benefiting around 4,100 people (mainly children, the elderly, Roma, children with disabilities, and vulnerable families).
- Promoted the networking of 16 LNB-supported community centres with more than 80 professionals to improve the quality of services and accessibility to remote communities.
- 338 members of 60 professional networks of assistant teachers built their capacity in inclusive education for students with disabilities.
- Development and approval of the new Social Protection Strategy 2024-2030.
- Report analysing the legal framework of the Social Fund and its functioning, which led to its revision, and approval of the Decision of the Council of Ministers 582/5 on 11.04.2024 and the Decision of the Council of Ministers 613 on 2.10.2024.
- Development and approval of the new Social Inclusion Policy Document 2023-2027.
- Supported establishment and capacity development of the Order of Social Work.
- Established partnership with three Faculties of Social Sciences to improve scientific research, internship programmes and develop updated curricula for social work students.

2.2. Lessons Learnt

A comprehensive, independent Midterm Evaluation for the current LNB programme (LNB 2) was conducted in 2024 (Final Report issued on 18 December 2024).³⁸ It concluded that the overall performance of the LNB 2 programme is “satisfactory” (i.e. good). The relevance of the programme was rated as “highly satisfactory”, the effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability

³⁷ INSTAT, SILC 2023 report released on December 2024.

³⁸ Laurent Ruedin and Blerjana Bino (2024), Mid Term Evaluation UN Joint Programme “Leave No One Behind” (LNB2) In Albania – Phase 2. Commissioned by UNDP in Albania.

as “satisfactory”. Effectiveness of the programme was rated as “highly satisfactory” regarding progress linked to LNB 2 outcome one (vulnerable persons empowered) and LNB 2 outcome three (national institutions implement their policy framework), but with challenges linked to LNB 2 outcome two (municipalities effectively manage the provision of social services).

Additionally, the evaluation noted that the programme’s participatory approach has been crucial for fostering a high level of ownership among stakeholders. Empowering CSOs and beneficiaries to advocate for their rights has strengthened accountability mechanisms at the local level. Furthermore, the programme’s investment in professional development for social care workers and the establishment of knowledge-sharing platforms among municipalities have created a foundation for the long-term professionalization and sustainability of social care services. Municipalities’ commitment to covering ongoing operational costs for newly introduced services demonstrates their dedication to continuing these efforts. By embedding these practices within the national and local governance frameworks, the LNB 2 programme has set up a sustainable infrastructure for continued social service delivery and reform.

However, the evaluation also noted that, despite the positive strides made towards sustainability, the programme faces several challenges that could impact the long-term continuation of its results. A key challenge is the limited fiscal capacity of municipalities, which constrains their ability to sustainably finance and expand social services. While the Social Fund has provided critical support, its budget remains insufficient to meet the growing demand for social care, and many municipalities are heavily reliant on external funding. Additionally, high staff turnover, particularly in social care services, poses a significant threat to maintaining the skills and capacity developed through the programme’s training and capacity-building efforts. This is further exacerbated by lower wages for social care staff compared to other public sectors, such as education and healthcare. The reliance on international donor funding for CSOs that provide essential services also raises concerns about continuity of these services once external financial support ends. Lastly, administrative barriers, such as procurement laws, limit the ability of municipalities to form long-term partnerships with specialized CSOs, hindering sustained service provision for vulnerable populations. Addressing these systemic challenges will be crucial to ensuring the lasting impact of the LNB programme.

The evaluation provided valuable analysis and advice to guide the design of the final LNB consolidation/exit phase programme, and on possible interventions and activities for its focus.

The evaluation presented eight recommendations to the programme partners, summarized as:

- Recommendation 1: Develop a Comprehensive Sustainability Strategy in Preparation for a Potential Third “consolidation” Phase.
- Recommendation 2: Strengthen collaboration and build synergies with EU initiatives.
- Recommendation 3: Focus on Unfinished Businesses and Support Left-Behind Municipalities.
- Recommendation 4: Strengthen the Social Fund to Ensure Financial Sustainability of Social Care Services.
- Recommendation 5: Strengthen Cross-Sectoral Collaboration for Holistic Support.
- Recommendation 6: Strengthen the Role of NARUs in Social Service Delivery.
- Recommendation 7: Continue Professionalizing the Social Care Workforce.
- Recommendation 8: Strengthen the Role of Civil Society in Social Care Service Delivery.

All eight were fully accepted by UN / LNB programme partners. The evaluation Management Response sets out specific steps that the UN / LNB partners will undertake in follow-up.

3. Objectives (LNB 3 – exit phase)

3.1. Objectives and Intervention Logic

Building upon the progress achieved during the previous years in the roll-out of Albania’s social protection, social care and inclusion reforms, the strategic-orientation of LNB is further matured for its exit phase programme. The first phase programme focused on the initial capacitation of partners to implement and manage the policy for decentralized provision of social services, the second phase programme on scaling-up the reform roll-out and the further demonstration of local models for delivery of the basket of services. The exit phase LNB programme focuses on consolidation of the capacities of programme partners (a) to ensure the sustainable operation and utilization of the LNB programme results/systems and (b) to ensure further development of the policy, financial and operational systems for the delivery and further scaling-up of social services in Albania targeted to the needs of vulnerable persons and marginalized groups.

With its focus on the consolidation of partners’ capacities, the conceptual framework for the LNB 3 programme is guided by the demarcation between rights holders and duty bearers. It is essential that both sets of partners are capacitated to sustain the programme results and that the mechanisms for engagement between rights holders and duty bearers linked to policy planning and implementation are further strengthened, at the national and at the local level.

It is essential to ensure that national authorities are fully capacitated to sustain the results and the further operation of the systems, in line with their obligations and functions, to support the further expansion of the provision of social care services and the promotion of social inclusion. While the municipalities are directly responsible for the local provision of social services, the national authorities are responsible to support the decentralized regional bodies and local governments (municipalities) in their provision and delivery of essential public services critical for reducing poverty and social exclusion. The focus of LNB 3 is to ensure that the national authorities, within their remit, are capacitated to provide sustainable financial grant and technical support, advice and training for the municipalities on the provision of social services.

Under LNB 3 the provision of programme support at the level of the individual municipalities will primarily be focused on support to left-behind municipalities where public service provision is limited, and on municipalities where the range of beneficiary groups served can be extended via the introduction at local level of proven service models. Support will be provided in parallel to strengthen the municipality mechanisms for policy consultation and engagement with local citizens, vulnerable people and representative groups, along with measures to support CSOs.

Reflective of the growing size of the social care workforce in Albania, it is vital to consolidate the results and capacities of the programme partners supporting build social work skills (pre-service and in-service) and the further professionalization of the workforce, and to strengthen the mechanisms for peer learning, knowledge exchange, and the sharing of good practice.

The operations of CSOs representing vulnerable people or groups can be further enhanced at the local level via consolidation of municipal mechanisms for policy consultation, and via the strengthening of CSO networks/platforms for peer learning, policy monitoring and advocacy.

LNB exit phase programme (LNB 3) – programme objectives / expected results

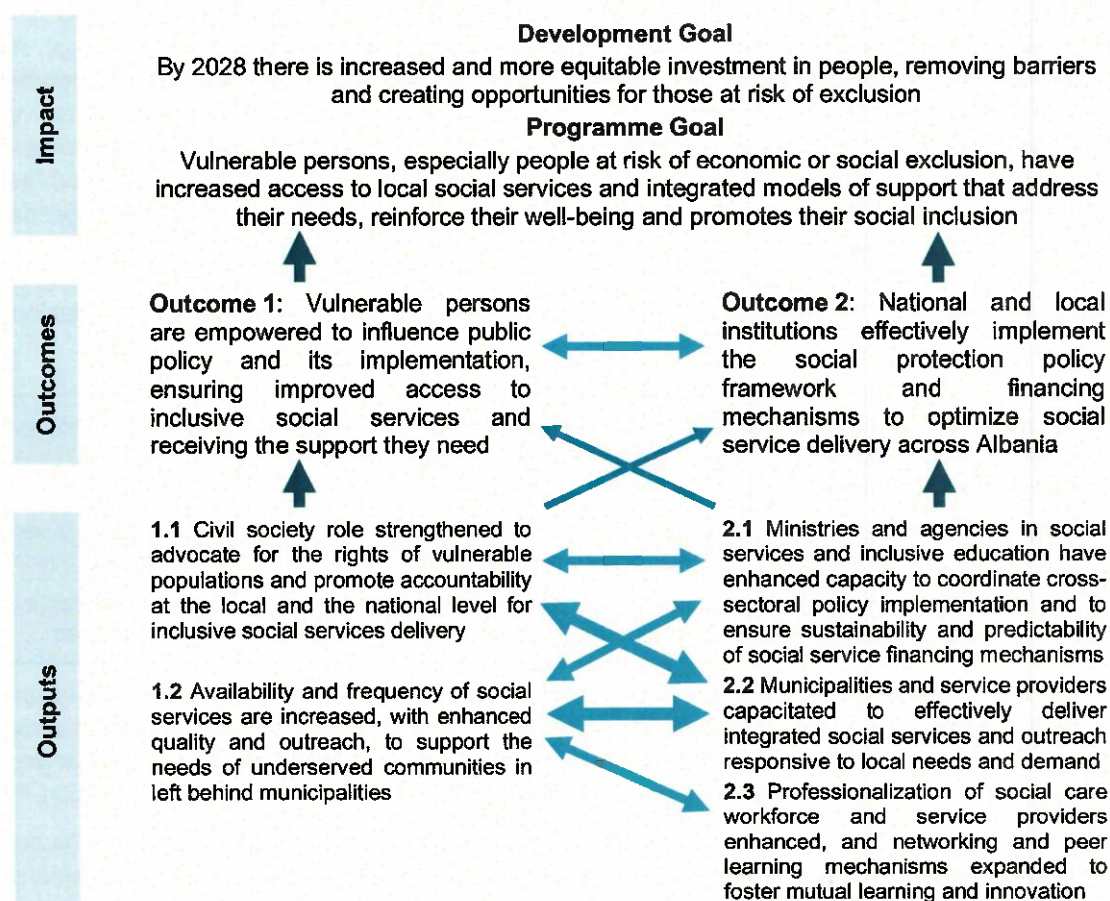
The **overall aim** of the exit phase LNB programme is for Albania to ensure scaled-up provision of social protection and social care services across the entire country contributing to increased social and economic inclusion and opportunities for vulnerable or marginalized persons.

The **programme goal** is that vulnerable persons, especially people at risk of economic or social exclusion, have increased access to local social services and integrated models of support that address their needs, reinforce their well-being and promotes their social inclusion.

Programme Document
“Leave No One Behind” – exit phase (LNB 3)

In order to achieve the programme goal LNB 3 is structured on the basis of its contribution to **two programme outcomes**, guided by the demarcation of rights holders and duty bearers. At intervention level of outputs LNB 3 is structured to deliver **five specific outputs**, demarcated corresponding to the different groups of programme partners, and their functions, that are supported or benefit from the programme. The results are inter-linked and mutually reinforcing.

The objectives / expected results of the exit phase programme (LNB 3) are defined below.



Key target groups: Individuals and Families in need, Elderly, Persons with Disabilities, Roma, Women/girls

Cross-cutting issues: Gender Equality, Governance with a human rights based approach

Main LNB intervention instruments: Capacity Building and Organizational Development, small-scale grants

As with the previous phases, the LNB 3 programme will be oriented by and mainstream two cross-cutting issues, **good governance** and **gender equality**, into analyses and into the design, implementation and monitoring of the programme and its results. They will do so as an articulation of human rights principles and delivering on the ethos to leave no one behind.

The improvement of governance systems of social service provision and social inclusion are central to LNB's goal. LNB mainstreams the key principles of participation, transparency and accountability, and applies a rights-based approach by empowering rights holders and building the capacities of duty bearers to fulfil their obligations. Participatory and inclusive approaches for policy dialogue between duty bearers and rights holders, empowering vulnerable groups to

directly engage in policy consultation and monitoring processes, are a core mechanism for improving current provision of and future targeting of social service provision, as well as promoting transparency of decision-making and for citizen's to hold duty bearers accountable. All LNB partners assisted through capacity building and organizational development are supported to improve their internal governance policies and actions, including transparency and integrity measures, enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of governance structures.

The improvement of gender equality and inclusion of all vulnerable people and marginalized groups, addressing the challenges vulnerable women and people face in accessing socially inclusive and gender responsive services and social outcomes, are central to LNB's goal. All interventions are gender responsive, informed by imbalances and inequalities that vulnerable and marginalized groups experience, promoting social inclusion from a gender perspective. Empowering women to engage via participatory and inclusive approaches for policy dialogue on social service provision and social inclusion is strongly anchored in the programme. Furthermore, an inclusive social protection system must go beyond addressing gender disparities to explicitly account for intersectionality – the overlapping and interconnected forms of discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, disability, and socioeconomic status – that women face and need to be effectively addressed to promote equity and sustainable social inclusion.

Outcome 1: Vulnerable persons are empowered to influence public policy and its implementation, ensuring improved access to inclusive social services and receiving the support they need

Output 1.1: Civil society role strengthened to advocate for the rights of vulnerable populations and promote accountability at the local and the national level for inclusive social services delivery

Output 1.2: Availability and frequency of social services are increased, with enhanced quality and outreach, to support the needs of underserved communities in left behind municipalities

LNB 3 intervention under Outcome 1 is geared towards empowering vulnerable people and marginalized groups to request/demand and to gain improved access to a range of local social care and support services responsive to their specific socioeconomic needs and challenges, and in line with their fundamental rights and entitlements to social protection and inclusion.³⁹

Core to this is further strengthening of the organizational and operative capacity of CSOs and citizens groups to actively engage in the process of framing public policy – at local, regional and national levels – linked to the provision and adequacy of social care services and integrated public social services to meet the demand and needs of vulnerable people/groups. This is essential to support the current operation and the further expansion of social service provision via the effective targeting and efficient roll-out of expanded services across Albania.

CSOs fulfil many valuable functions linked to the mobilization of and representation of their target group(s). This includes imparting direct awareness within the groups they represent of their social rights and entitlements, and how to access support services, and awareness-raising of the wider society and specifically of duty bearers as to the social rights of all citizens to protection and the suitable provision of care and support promoting their inclusion. It also includes supporting and representing their group's mobilization and advocacy in consultation forums linked to social policy planning and monitoring of policy and service delivery outcomes. For many, but not all CSOs, it also includes their engagement in the delivery of services, either

³⁹ The following categories of persons are highlighted as at risk to marginalization or vulnerability: Individuals and Families in Need; Persons with Disabilities; Women and girls, including at risk of violence; Older persons; Children; Youth; Roma; LGBTIQ+ persons; and 'Other' groups (e.g. homeless, drug-users, MSM, sex workers). Commonly, individuals face intersectional aspects of stigma or discrimination, marginalization or exclusion.

directly as a service provider in their own right, or via cooperation with municipalities to develop their design and the delivery of local service provision and approaches for engaging with users.

Strengthening the capacity of lead CSOs and networks to mobilize, support and advocate for their groups and for the promotion of social inclusion measures will be provided. Enhancement of policy influencing and advocacy skills of lead CSOs and the development of a national platform to advocate for the rights and interests of social care service users will be promoted.

LNB 3 will provide small-scale co-financing grant to a small number of municipalities and CSOs to set-up new local social services for vulnerable people and families, the elderly, other groups in need. Programme support to individual municipalities to strengthen their organizational and operational capacities or to introduce new social service provision is fully pre-conditioned on the formal establishment (where needed) and regularized operation of local mechanisms for the municipality to ensure policy dialogue with local citizens and stakeholders. The programme will also promote and advocate for national recognition of LNB models for local engagement.

Feedback from the LNB 3 planning and validation workshop (17 June 2025) working group session highlighted the following specific issues. (1) LNB models for participatory budgeting consultation and dialogue, and for CSO participation in the monitoring of policy implementation can be replicated / scaled-up. (2) Additional LNB support and guidance linked to how municipalities can institutionalize partnership and cooperation with local CSOs throughout the process of social service planning, implementation and monitoring would be useful.

LNB 3 interventions under Outcome 1 will be undertaken via three forms of activities:

- Partner CSOs inform and reach out to marginalized and vulnerable persons and groups on their rights and on the social services they are entitled to, and how they can influence local social care planning and delivery.
- CSOs and networks supported to engage in policy dialogue on social inclusion and its monitoring.
- Support to selected municipalities for establishment of comprehensive models for the delivery of new / additional social services at the local level.

Outcome 2: National and local institutions effectively implement the social protection policy framework and financing mechanisms to optimize social service delivery across Albania

Output 2.1: Ministries and agencies in social services and inclusive education have enhanced capacity to coordinate cross-sectoral policy implementation and to ensure sustainability and predictability of social service financing mechanisms

Output 2.2: Municipalities and service providers capacitated to effectively deliver integrated social services and outreach responsive to local needs and demand

Output 2.3: Professionalization of social care workforce and service providers enhanced, and networking and peer learning mechanisms expanded to foster mutual learning and innovation

LNB 3 intervention under Outcome 2 is geared towards institutional and organizational capacity strengthening of national and local institutions to implement and further develop the strategic and policy framework for the provision of social protection and social service delivery.

Central to this, for LNB 3, is further support to MHSP and the SSS to strengthen organizational and operative capacity in regard of social protection policy and social inclusion policy. LNB 3 will focus on consolidation of the capacity of the MHSP Social Protection Policies and Development Department and the Social Inclusion Department to utilize the results of LNB in

their further monitoring, analysis and development of social protection policy and social inclusion strategy. Both Departments are responsible to ensure annual reporting on the implementation of their strategies, as well as the periodic update of their strategies. In the area of social inclusion, priorities for LNB 3 link to capacitating the Technical Resource Facility to operate the system for monitoring and assessing social inclusion results across the policy domains of poverty and social protection, employment and skills, health, education, housing and deprivation of basic needs, and human rights. In the area of social protection and social care services, additional priorities for LNB 3 support link to the further development of the regulatory and the financial frameworks supporting social care service provision, as well as the mechanisms for cross-sectoral policy collaboration linked to social services delivery. In both areas (social services and social inclusion) MHSP coordinates its work with other line ministries and partners, which will therefore be involved, as relevant, via LNB 3 support to MHSP.

LNB 3 support to SSS will prioritize development of its systems for the provision of support to the municipalities to assist their planning, management and provision of local social services. In addition to methodological guidance and tools, the SSS plans to deliver training and capacity building support to the municipalities. LNB 3 will support the SSS develop its portfolio of guidelines and training products – all relevant LNB results and products will be transferred – and to establish an implementation plan for roll-out of SSS training provision to municipalities. LNB 3 will support SSS to pilot-test its provision of training courses and further methodological guidance and tools during 2026, and then support consolidate SSS capacities during 2027.

Linked to the Social Fund, LNB 3 will provide policy advice to support to the MHSP, and the Ministry of Finance (MF) as relevant, to effectively scale-up the Fund and the predictability of the financing to support municipalities in the planning and delivery of social care service provision. A priority for LNB 3 is to support municipalities in their establishment and operation of a Local Social Fund. This is to be operationalized by the municipalities effective from year 2026, a Fund via which all local, national and donor funding for social care and inclusion is channelled, and reported to national Government. LNB 3 capacity building support to a limited number of municipalities is foreseen, based on which generic methodological guidance and tools, and as necessary training modules will be developed, in cooperation with MF and MHSP.

The MES and ASCAP are LNB's primary partners linked to inclusive education policy and its operations. Significant progress has been achieved linked to the expansion of the Assistant Teacher workforce, and its professionalization, to provide support to children with disabilities and their inclusion in mainstream schools. Further expansion of the workforce is planned by the MES in order to ensure a ratio of one Assistant Teacher per child with disabilities. Priorities for LNB 3 link to further roll-out of professional training and continuous education for Assistant Teachers, strengthening of professional networks and peer learning mechanisms, and closer collaboration links of Assistant Teachers with local care services for children with disabilities.

Under LNB 3, the delivery of operational and capacity building support to the municipalities and local social service providers is intended to be provided, primarily, via the operations and functions of the SSS. As noted above, LNB 3 will directly assist SSS during its initial roll-out of training courses and capacity building support in 2026, and on a reduced scale during 2027. As noted in chapter 1 (Context / situation analysis), staffing and operationalization of structures to administer and coordinate the provision of social care services remain key challenges for the municipalities. A priority for SSS in the delivery of operational and capacity building support to the municipalities is linked to their establishment and staffing of NARUs and use of the MIS.

Under LNB 3, the provision of support at the level of individual municipalities will primarily focus on ten municipalities – seven in which public service provision currently lags, plus three more advanced municipalities to consolidate reform efforts and to act as champions of best practice transfer. This will include the provision of capacity building and organizational development

support to municipalities, on the basis of LNB’s already established products and tools, etc. LNB 3 will also provide small-scale co-financing grant to selected municipalities to set-up and maintain new local social services for vulnerable people and families, the elderly, other groups in need. Support will also be provided to strengthen the municipality mechanisms for policy consultation and engagement with local citizens, vulnerable people and CSOs, etc.

A key factor that will determine the longer-term quality of social services in Albania relates to the process to promote the professionalization of the workforce and of social service providers by developing the continuous education and workforce qualification and accreditation systems. Significant progress was achieved under LNB 2, in partnership with academia (Universities of Tirana, Elbasan and Shkodra, and in cooperation with the University of Applied Sciences of Lucerne) to strengthen pre-service social work curricula and to develop training courses for in-service professionals. Priorities for LNB 3 link to the further development of in-service training modules, notably to address specialized fields of social work, and the formal accreditation of such courses by the Quality Assurance Agency for Health and Social Care. LNB 3 will also work in collaboration with the different associations (Orders) of professional occupation to strengthen mechanisms for professionals to engage in peer learning exchange and networks. LNB 3 will also work in partnership with the University of Tirana in order to upgrade its “Knowledge Hub” Resource Centre linked to social care and social work – an online resource for managing and sharing knowledge, such as training and learning products, good practice models, formal standards, legal and regulatory tools, operational manuals and protocols, etc.

Feedback from the LNB 3 planning and validation workshop (17 June 2025) working group session highlighted the following specific issues. (1) Municipalities would like to receive formal guidance and potential models linked to municipality procurement of services or provision of small-scale grant to CSOs. (2) The expansion of mobile services and of home care services are key priorities for municipalities to extend local and alternative care services and service outreach. (3) Municipalities should define their training needs linked to social service planning, financing and implementation, and map/define the needs of local service providers. (4) SSS provision of training for municipal or service provider staff should be designed to ensure onward training by trainees at local level within their institution and services. Mechanisms to support this cascaded transfer of knowledge should be assured. (5) The promotion of peer exchange/learning networks amongst workforce professionals at a regional (county) level and potentially at national level is fully consistent with a life-long learning approach.

LNB 3 interventions under Outcome 2 will be undertaken via eight forms of activities:

- Strengthening government capacity to monitor implementation of the social services and social inclusion legal, policy, regulatory, and financial frameworks.
- Consolidating MES and ASCAP capacity to ensure quality inclusive education provision.
- Strengthening SSS capacity to oversee the implementation of social services delivery (at local, regional and national level) and the effectiveness of monitoring and reporting systems of social service provision.
- Strengthening SSS capacity to provide technical, methodological and capacity building support to municipalities and service providers.
- Support organizational development and capacities of ‘left-behind’ municipalities to strengthen planning, provision and monitoring of social services.
- Support to specific municipalities linked to the development of local financing and operation of the Local Social Fund.
- Support to university partners in the further development of continuous education training offer for the social care workforce in partnership with Swiss Centre of Excellence (HSLU).
- Support workforce partners to consolidate peer exchange networks and good practice sharing and support to universities in the consolidation of knowledge sharing mechanisms.

3.2. Impact Hypotheses / Theory of Change

The programme's intention (development goal) is to bring about system change in the field of social protection and social inclusion in Albania via the expanded provision of quality integrated social services (social protection, social care, health, education, employment, vocational training, etc.), with a particular emphasis on social services provision reaching vulnerable persons and marginalized groups, which ensure the realization of their basic human rights, legal entitlements, well-being, dignity and livelihood, contributing to increased social and economic inclusion and opportunities for advancement of vulnerable or marginalized persons.

The programme's intervention is closely correlated to national reforms, development goals and strategies of the Government of Albania regarding social protection and social inclusion, and the wider framework for human capital and social development. It is recognized that Albania has made significant progress over the past years, including via support provided by the UN in Albania, to further develop its social care policy, regulatory and financing systems, including clear success in the adoption of standards for service operation and expansion of the basket of services, for which proven models for service delivery now exist. While challenges remain, the policy, legal, regulatory, financing, administrative, operational, and human resource frameworks for the provision of social care services are now in place. It is the responsibility of the Government, local governments, and other partners to ensure the scaling-up of services.

The primary focus of the LNB exit phase programme is therefore on the consolidation of partners' capacities to sustain and maintain the programme results, including the transfer of ongoing LNB interventions, and further strengthening of results from the previous phases via partners' scaling-up their operation. The LNB programme intervenes on three inter-related levels, (1) at the system level (national government), (2) at the service provision and delivery level (local government, public and non-public service providers), and (3) at the community level (citizen empowerment). Consolidation of the capacities of national authorities, notably MHSP and SSS, will be a core focus for LNB 3 in terms of achieving full transfer and long-term sustainable delivery and utilization by the partners of the key programme results and benefits. Via strengthening the capacities of national authorities to provide policy guidance, financing and technical support, the municipalities will be able to expand their local provision of services. Beyond its primary focus on the sustainability and further scaling-up of existing results, LNB 3 will also ensure focus to support municipalities where public service provision currently lags, delivering on its ethos to leave no one behind and to support social care service reform roll-out across the country, so that all municipalities ensure at least minimum service provision.

In order to achieve the programme's development goal the intervention approach combines measures to reinforce both the demand-side and the supply-side in respect to provision of social protection, social care services and social inclusion actions. This has been a core focus for each phase of the LNB programme. The overall goal of LNB is to ensure increased access for vulnerable people and groups to social services that address their needs and challenges. This is to be achieved by strengthening duty bearers' capacity to deliver on their obligations and responsibilities, and via empowering vulnerable people, supported by representative CSOs, to request and advocate for their access to improved local social service provision.

LNB 3's intervention approach is designed to ensure internal coherence and cross-linkage across the different programme intervention activities, outputs and outcomes. This shall maximize the synergy effects across the programme measures, in order to add value and concretely contribute to the achievement of the outcomes, the programme goal and impact.

The theory of change for the LNB 3 programme is composed of two interlinked pathways from outputs to outcomes that together contribute to the final impact hypothesis to achieve the programme goal and contribution to the medium-term development goal, as detailed below.

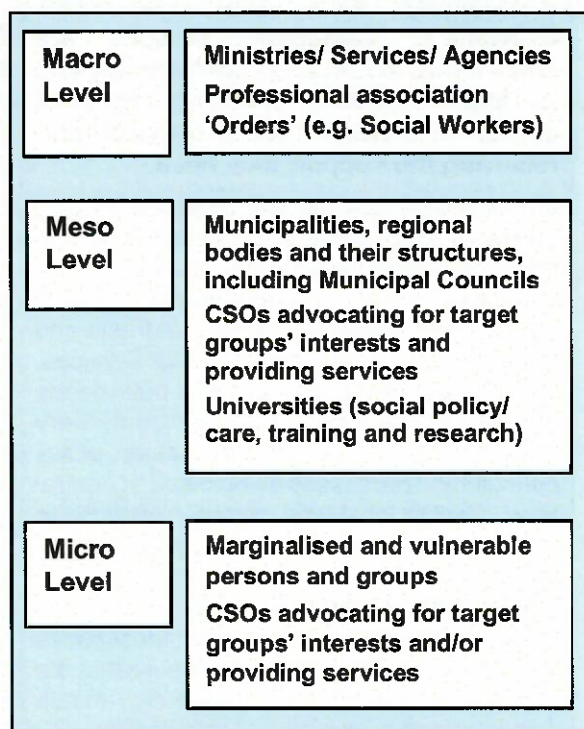
LNB exit phase programme (LNB 3) – Theory of Change	
Outcome 1: Vulnerable persons are empowered to influence public policy and its implementation, ensuring improved access to inclusive social services and receiving the support they need IF vulnerable people are informed of and aware of their rights and entitlements and how to access local services, and IF they are supported by representative CSOs advocating for their needs and interests and for improved access to local social services, and IF they are able to vocalize their needs and expectations as to how service delivery can be improved, via participatory policy consultation processes at local and at central level, THEN local and national institutions will be able to improve the targeting and the range/diversity of service provision and delivery, BECAUSE they will be informed by local demand and representation for services and therefore better placed to ensure that the supply-side offer can effectively match existing and future demand for services.	Outcome 2: National and local institutions effectively implement the social protection policy framework and financing mechanisms to optimize social service delivery across Albania IF the national and local institutions for implementing the social sector policy framework have increased capacity to guide policy implementation via evidence-based decision-making, and IF national institutions provide municipalities with sufficient tools, predictable funding, and further capacity and institutional building support in order to provide better quality social services, and IF the scaling-up and professionalization of the social workforce ensures higher quality and standards of service delivery, THEN local and national institutions will be able to improve the targeting and range/diversity of service provision and delivery, BECAUSE they can scale-up services on the basis of sustainable/predictable financing, proven service models, and evidence-based policy.
Programme Goal	
Vulnerable persons, especially people at risk of economic or social exclusion, have increased access to local social care services and integrated models of support that address their needs, reinforce their well-being and promotes their social inclusion IF civil society and vulnerable groups effectively advocate for improved access to and the provision of a wider basket of social services, and hold municipalities and central government accountable for it, and IF municipalities effectively scale-up the provision of and the diversity of social services offered, responsive to local needs, and IF the central government continues to prioritise and scale-up funding for the provision of adequate social services for vulnerable people, THEN vulnerable groups and persons will have increased accessibility to suitable local services and integrated support packages tailored to need, that reinforce their well-being and promotes their social inclusion, BECAUSE the provision of social services combined with innovative service models will be scaled-up across Albania.	

The programme assumes that the improvement of social services is in the public policy interest and in line with public demand, specifically of marginalized and vulnerable groups of people but more broadly of wider societal expectations linked to the right to and provision of social protection support throughout the life-cycle. The absence of adequate social services limits access to social, economic, and civic opportunities for vulnerable people and segments of the population, contributing to their wider challenges and exclusion from participating in society. While the programme assumes that the improvement of the social services supports social inclusion, it is also accepted that social services alone cannot guarantee social inclusion – the achievement of the latter depends on much larger efforts, not only to be undertaken by state actors but also by society, and a common understanding of why it is in the interest of society at large not to leave any one behind. The programme assumes that duty bearers, beyond public policy interest, are also driven by their legal obligations, and specific roles and functions in respect to social care planning, financing, implementation, monitoring, and quality control.

3.3. Levels of Intervention

The LNB programme intervenes on three inter-related levels, macro, meso, and micro, at the system level (national government and associations), the service provision and delivery level (local government, public and non-public service providers), and at the community level (citizen empowerment, local advocacy).

The programme interventions directly benefit the whole of Albania via the support provided to strengthen national systems to monitor implementation of and further develop the framework for delivering social service reform and social inclusion provision, including via national provision of technical support and of financing sustainability and predictability for municipalities to ensure the scaling-up of local social services provision responsive to local needs and demand. The programme directly and indirectly supports municipalities in scaling-up local provision.



In addition to the final beneficiaries (users) of the programme benefits, the direct and indirect institutional beneficiaries of the programme include the MHSP and SSS as the core and direct partners at macro level, plus the MES, MF, ASCAP, and the professional associations (Orders). At meso level, all of the municipalities indirectly benefit via strengthened national provision of policy guidance, financing and technical support provided to municipalities, while selected left-behind municipalities will be directly targeted for LNB 3 programme support to improve local social service provision. Existing partnerships with lead CSOs providing support and services to their group(s) of vulnerable people and national public advocacy to represent their interests, plus partnerships with university training providers promoting social care and service workforce professionalization and continuous education will be maintained. At micro level, vulnerable people, local citizens and local CSOs and networks will be directly engaged.

3.4. Target Groups of Beneficiaries and Outreach

The target group of beneficiaries of the programme – the final beneficiaries and users targeted to benefit from improved accessibility to and improved quality of local social services responsive to need – are vulnerable people and families in need in Albania.⁴⁰ The 2025 Mapping of Social Care Services, based on data per municipality, estimated that approximately 280,000 vulnerable people in Albania are currently in need of social service support – social service support beyond the provision of basic social insurance or assistance cash payments. Of these people more than 60% are classified as poor individuals and families in need of social service support (including children, working-age adults, and the elderly), 28% are adults with disabilities, 6% are children with disabilities, and all other category groups are 6% collectively.⁴¹ More broadly, approximately 36% of the Albanian population are at risk of poverty before social transfers, while 35% of Albanian's live in households in severe material and social deprivation.

⁴⁰ Individuals and Families in Need; Older persons; Persons with Disabilities; Women and girls, including at risk of violence; Children; Youth; Roma; LGBTIQ+; and 'Other' groups (e.g. homeless, drug-users).

⁴¹ State Social Service / LNB (2025), Mapping of Social Care Services in Albania.

Within the target group, and informed by awareness of the gaps and disparities that exist in terms of accessibility to appropriate local social services and social inclusion support, LNB 3 emphasizes improved social service provision for individuals and families in need – consistently the largest group of people in need of service support – plus the elderly, persons with disabilities, the Roma, women and girls, and people living in rural areas. The transition of Albania’s population towards a much older population structure, with almost 20% of people 65 years of age or older (2023 Census), combined with continued outward migratory flow of people of working-age, bolsters the need to further improve social services for the elderly.

The final beneficiaries and users will benefit from their improved accessibility to and improved quality of local social care services responsive to their needs, including via access to integrated packages of social services and supports to reinforce beneficiaries’ well-being, their social inclusion and their opportunities to overcome socioeconomic exclusion and vulnerabilities.

Their improved accessibility to and the improved quality of local social care services will be driven by the municipalities in Albania, scaling-up their provision of local social care services and support. Municipalities will be assisted in this process by means of policy, regulatory and operational guidance, financing and technical support provided via the national authorities.

To this end LNB 3 support benefits duty bearers such as central and local government partners, as well as the workforce and associations of professional occupation, and university partners. The focus of the support is to capacitate national and local authorities to scale-up implementation and local delivery of social care and integrated social service support.

The final beneficiaries will be directly targeted via LNB 3, primarily by measures undertaken by CSOs but also by government structures, to raise awareness of their rights and entitlements to social protection, how and where to access social services as needed and, as required, to facilitate their access to appropriate services. The programme will also support marginalized and vulnerable groups of persons and their representative groups of CSOs via measures to promote their empowerment to actively engage in participatory public policy consultative processes and advocacy linked to local service delivery planning, monitoring, and scaling-up.

LNB 3 programme will also provide specific support tailored to the needs of left-behind municipalities – where public social care service provision is currently non-existent or limited, or where service provision currently targets only one or two categories of vulnerable groups of persons. This will be achieved via the provision of capacity building and organizational development support to selected municipalities to enable their introduction of new social service provision, and for a limited number of municipalities also via provision of small-scale direct co-financing grant for the introduction at local level of new services for categories of vulnerable groups of persons. LNB 3 support will be provided to municipalities in line with the priorities of their local Social Care Plan, local demand as evidenced via consultation, and the municipality’s establishment of a Local Social Fund to ensure long-term service sustainability.

LNB 3 will directly support approximately five central government ministries and agencies, plus associations of regulated professions, three universities, and approximately forty leading CSOs via specific capacitation effort to ensure the transfer and further operation by them of the LNB results. LNB 3 will directly support approximately ten municipalities via direct co-financing grant or other partnership support to establish and introduce the operation of new local social services, and via means of tailored organizational development and/or capacity building support to enhance their management of social service provision. All municipalities will benefit via LNB 3 support to develop national policy and operational guidance and tools.

4. Implementing Strategy (LNB 3 – exit phase)

4.1. Intervention Approach

The programme's intervention approach is designed to support implementation and further development of Albanian policies and strategies relevant for the social protection and social inclusion of vulnerable persons and marginalized groups, and support further expansion of social care and services provision in Albania targeted to address the needs of the vulnerable.

This will be realized by contributing to the transfer and further scaling-up of the results and the sustainability of the social service reform process via consolidation of partners' capacities to sustain and further operate the systems and results of the LNB programme. The exit phase programme will achieve this by supporting national and local institutions and civil society partners implement actions strengthening capacity, policy and operational frameworks for the delivery of social services in Albania. The end goal is that partners utilize and further develop the results and benefits going forward, as further roll-out of the social care reform process and the expansion of social service provision progresses over the medium- and longer-term. There is significant scope to scale-up and locally replicate the results and proven models for services.

Whereas the vast majority of the output results and products of the programme are already fully transferred to the relevant Albanian partners – taken-on and utilized by the CSOs, the municipalities, service providers, universities, regional bodies, and national partners – further effort is needed ensure the full transfer of results and products, notably at the level of central government. Specifically, a range of training products and associated methodological guides and tools provided by the programme to build capacity of municipalities and local service providers need to be fully transferred to SSS and MHSP. In addition, products (methodologies and tools) linked to the monitoring and periodic update of strategies is to be fully transferred. In addition, a range of more recently developed outputs, such as those linked to social care workforce networks and peer learning mechanisms, and the sharing of good practice, need to be further consolidated as part of the process of final transfer to and adoption by the partners.

Linked to ensuring that partners are capacitated to sustain and utilize the results, notably at the level of central government, it is essential that operational plans be put in place setting out how the results will be managed and applied, including scaled-up, over the medium-term. While the municipalities are directly responsible for the local provision of social services, the national authorities are responsible to support the decentralized regional bodies and local governments (municipalities) in their provision and delivery of essential local public services. Via strengthening the capacities of national authorities to provide such guidance, financing and technical support, the municipalities will be enabled to develop their local provision of services.

The implementing strategy for LNB 3 is also fundamentally driven by the 24-months period for implementation of the LNB exit phase programme. It is essential that a detailed Work Plan for the two-year period of the LNB 3 programme is prepared under LNB 2, by December 2025 at the latest. Whereas the LNB 3 Programme Document identifies the key programme activities planned and the results to be delivered, and the logic that underlies such intervention, it is prepared in mid-2025. Further detailed discussion on concrete actions that need to be undertaken, notably supporting key central government partners and left-behind municipalities to take-on full transfer of the results of the LNB programme will be completed in autumn 2025.

Intervention Instruments

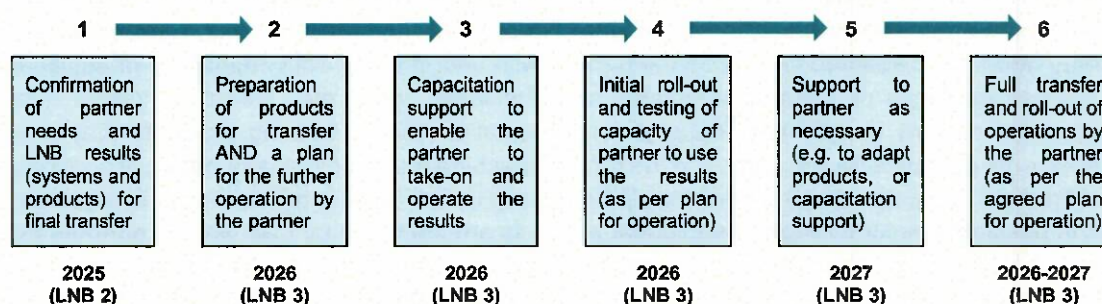
The principal intervention instruments to be deployed by the programme to support system building and capacity development of the partners are capacity building and organizational development. This will be complemented by policy advice to support national authorities linked to policy implementation and development of the regulatory and financing frameworks. Small-

scale direct co-financing grant to municipalities to introduce new services will also be provided. The programme will also intervene to support knowledge sharing processes and partnerships. The programme is supported by continuous policy dialogue, notably with central government.

Intervention Methodology

While recognizing that the LNB programme cooperates with a wide range of Albanian partners, with different functions, roles and responsibilities, the overall methodological approach underlying the exit phase programme is structured to follow a standard, generic process for the delivery of institutional capacity development and organizational change. The process is adaptable to respect the different roles and functions of the partners, as well as the different extent to which partners need further capacitation, and the modalities by which this is provided. LNB 3's specific outputs are demarcated according to the different groups of partners that are supported or benefit from the programme, namely national authorities, municipalities and service providers, workforce professionalization partners, and CSOs. The final beneficiaries of the programme, vulnerable people, are supported to engage and benefit under two outputs.

The six phases of the process for results transfer and capacitation of partners are as follows:



The **first phase** of the process is to be completed under LNB 2 during 2025. The process was initiated by LNB 2 at the start of 2025, in follow-up to the Mid-Term Evaluation recommendation to LNB to develop a comprehensive sustainability strategy in preparation for a potential third phase programme. The process is supported by the LNB 3 programming exercise and its planning and validation workshop undertaken with the programme partners in June 2025. The development of the sustainability strategy is guided by the initial scoping exercise by the LNB programme of the output results and products and the current status of their transfer and further operation by partners. Further to this, the pathway for integrating the results into national and local policies and actions and for potential scaling-up of the results was defined. Initial scoping of the needs of programme partners – linked to their capacities to absorb the results, and to sustain and further operate the systems and results of the LNB programme, as well as their other potential needs and emerging priorities – was undertaken in April 2025, via a series of interviews held with partners as part of the LNB 3 programming exercise. A more detailed scoping of partners' needs and the pathways for integrating the results into national and local actions resulted from the planning and validation workshop. The workshop also agreed further steps to be completed in autumn 2025, by LNB 2, in order to concretely define key partners' specific needs and detail how LNB 3 will precisely support the different partners.

- Meetings with MHSP and SSS, and other national authorities as relevant, to discuss the transfer of the core LNB results, systems and products, and the institutional need for specific further capacitation support in order to utilize, sustain and integrate the results.
- Survey of municipality Social Services Department in order to ascertain their priorities for and the extent of demand for further capacity building training and technical support to assist their management, implementation and monitoring of social services provision – under LNB 3 such support will be provided via SSS, capacitated to do so via LNB 3.

- Meetings with left-behind municipalities – where public social care service provision is currently non-existent or limited to one public provider only, or where service provision currently targets only one or two categories of vulnerable groups of persons – to discuss how LNB 3 programme can most appropriately assist the expansion of service provision. Such municipalities may benefit from LNB 3 capacity building and organizational support or via LNB 3 provision of small-scale co-financing community-based social services grant.
- Meetings with partners supporting professionalization of the workforce to confirm specific actions that LNB 3 undertake to support further build continuous education provision and empowerment of the workforce via peer learning and knowledge sharing of good practice.
- Meetings with lead CSOs to discuss collective actions for policy influencing and advocacy.

LNB's comprehensive sustainability strategy, to be completed by December 2025 at latest, will define LNB 3's Work Plan for the two-year period of the programme. The Work Plan will cover actions linked to the transfer of results and capacitation of partners, as well as additional programme actions linked to unfinished business and support for left-behind municipalities, and other emerging priorities of the partners that support consolidation of partners' capacities.

Under the **second phase** of the process for results transfer and capacitation of partners the programme will work with partners to finalize LNB products for formal transfer. Certain products may need to be adapted to provide the partner with user-friendly documentation, or additional process guidance or updated templates and checklists, tools, etc., linked to how to utilize products or how to fulfil key tasks of implementation. Some training products may need additional guidance for the partner in the form of teaching methodology and notes, or a training-of-trainers component, some may benefit from being converted into online tools and resources. It is possible a limited range of additional products are identified by LNB and its partners that the LNB 3 programme could support partners develop, to complement LNB's existing portfolio. The extent to which LNB systems or products need to be adapted prior to formal transfer, rather than handed-over immediately, will be scoped by LNB 2 with partners in autumn 2025. It is assumed the need for adaptation of products to ensure user-friendly documentation or additional process guidance etc., primarily relates to LNB results to be transferred to the SSS and MHSP. In addition, LNB knowledge sharing and good practice products need to be further developed prior to their transfer to local partners and online Knowledge Hub resource centre.

The transfer of LNB results shall be accompanied by an action plan for the further operation of the systems and results by the partner over the medium-term, for instance key milestones and outputs. If the partner needs further capacitation support to take-on and operate the results, the plan shall also indicate the forms of LNB 3 support plus the key milestones and outputs.

LNB 3 support for left-behind municipalities linked to unfinished business, and other emerging priorities that enhance consolidation of partners' capacities will also be initiated during the first quarter of 2026, via the detailed preparation of LNB 3's support, in cooperation with partners, so that the start-up of actions can subsequently be delivered starting from the second quarter. The extent and focus of LNB 3 support for such unfinished business, notably at the level of support to individual municipalities, will be fully scoped by LNB 2 with partners in autumn 2025.

Under the **third phase** of the process for results transfer and capacitation of partners the programme will deliver the specific LNB 3 capacitation supports envisaged – capacity building and organizational development – tailored to the needs of the individual partner institutions, so as to enable the partners' to integrate the LNB results and processes within their operational systems for the implementation and sustainable delivery of the social service reform process. LNB 3 support will also be delivered for left-behind municipalities – including via small-scale direct co-financing grant to municipalities – and other emerging priorities (such as the operation by municipalities of the Local Social Fund), as well as support to CSOs and workforce professionalization partners to further develop capacity and advance social service reforms.

Under the **fourth phase** the partners will take-over the operation and management processes for implementation of the systems and the production of results linked to social service reform and the delivery of social care services and social inclusion measures. The key milestones and outputs to be delivered (for instance, annual monitoring reports, number of training courses offered and staff trained, participatory consultation meetings and policy dialogue conducted between duty bearers and rights holders, provision of new social care services) will be set-out in the action plan for the further operation of the systems and results by the partner. Whereas the purpose of the fourth phase is to test the capacity of partners to use and operate the systems and results, LNB 3 mentoring support may be provided to partners as requested.

Under the **fifth phase** of the process, further capacitation support will be provided to partners as necessary. It is assumed the focus of such support during 2027 will primarily be on ensuring the capacities of the SSS and MHSP to fully utilize and operate the systems and results and to integrate these into national and local policies and practices, as well as their generation of evidence-based policy analysis to support further scaling-up of the social service results. Focus will be set on aspects of the sustainability of financing at the local and national level. In addition, LNB 3 will continue to focus on the further development and consolidation of LNB programme good practice models and the institutionalization of peer learning mechanisms.

The **final phase** of the process of results transfer and capacitation of partners represents the full transfer of the LNB results, with the results sustained and further operated and delivered by the partner via their full integration into their organizational and management systems.

In order to achieve the programme’s objectives and to bring about change, continuous policy dialogue is required, especially with the central government representatives, but also with the authorities at local level. The dialogue is to create awareness about the programme and its support provided to the social protection and inclusion reforms, and, in more general terms, the necessity and the interest of all to promote social inclusion and the ways to go about it. Continued advocacy is an important policy dialogue tool in favour of increasing funding for the social protection system and to coordinate efforts to pool and maximize available resources.

4.2. Sustainability, Scaling-up and End of programme vision/ exit strategy

Sustainability of the results/ benefits

Ensuring sustainability of the programme results, via their transfer to and their further operation and scaling-up by programme partners, has been a consistent priority across the different LNB programme phases. For the exit phase programme the focus on long-term sustainability and the scaling-up of the LNB results by the programme partners over the medium-term, beyond the timeline of the LNB programme, is central to the programme purpose – reflecting that the reform and expansion of social services in Albania will still be ongoing after the end of LNB.

In order to ensure consolidation of partners’ capacities to take-on full transfer and sustainability of the results the LNB 3 intervention approach follows a structured pathway for the operational transfer of the results and the capacitation of partners to institutionalize and further utilize the results, including support to plan how results are applied and scaled-up over the medium-term.

Sustainability of the results is significantly supported due to their full alignment with national policies and strategies, municipality and local demand for the scaling-up of social services. Sustainability will be ensured via a multifaceted approach that encompasses issues of governance, community participation, institutional, organizational, policy and financial aspects.

At LNB-partner level the sustainability of the results is promoted via strengthening of partners’ operational capacity, ownership and commitment to utilize the results based on the existence of an enabling policy and financial environment for their continued operation and scaling-up.

At systemic level the sustainability of the results is promoted via ensuring effective demand across the partners for ongoing reform and expansion of social services in Albania, including demand from the final beneficiaries of services, demand and commitment of municipalities and service providers to expand services and outreach, commitment of the workforce professions to improving service delivery quality and outcomes, and demand and commitment of central government to provide policy lead and financial support for further expansion of social services. The sustainability of the results is also ensured via the strengthening of systems for the sharing of knowledge and good practice linked to social service policy management and delivery. The sustainability of the results is also promoted via ensuring continuous policy dialogue with central government partners linked to promoting an enabling policy and financial environment, and via the promotion of coordination with other donor programmes to maximize synergies.

At the level of the core central government partners (MHSP and SSS) and the individual municipalities directly supported under LNB 3, the operational plans linked to the process for capacitation and results transfer during 2026-2027, including initial roll-out and testing of the capacity of partners to operate the results prior to full transfer, will be key elements in ensuring operational sustainability of the results. For the core central government partners the detailed operational plans linked to how the results will be utilized and scaled-up over the medium-term, to be finalized during 2027, will be vital elements for instituting sustainability of the results.⁴²

Scaling up of the results/ benefits

There is significant scope to locally replicate and to nationally scale-up the LNB results and models for the assessment of social needs, for social services planning and monitoring, and models for delivery of the basket of services across typologies of services and target groups of beneficiary users. Replicating and scaling-up the results by the partners over the medium-term will be a core component to maximizing the impact of the programme. While substantive replication and scaling-up of the results is dependent on the sustainable provision of expanded financial means for the municipalities to introduce new and expanded local service provision, notably grant via the Social Fund, the LNB results and models can already be replicated as the operational and financial capacity of individual municipalities and service providers allows. Furthermore, replication or scaling-up of models for public policy consultation processes, or the formal establishment of internal functional organizational structures within municipalities, or innovative approaches for the delivery of services or outreach, are in part achievable at the local level without necessitating the formal establishment of new local social service providers.

In order to facilitate the sharing of knowledge and expertise and the replication/ scaling-up of results, LNB 3 support under Output 2.3 focuses on strengthening the mechanisms for peer exchange and good practice learning between professionals, as well as the development of a Knowledge Hub resource centre as a platform for knowledge exchange and learning linked to issues of social care and social work practice in Albania. The online Knowledge Hub, primarily aimed at social science students and workforce professionals in social services and care, is currently being developed and renewed by LNB's partner universities led by the University of Tirana. It will ensure that LNB models, methodological tools and products and identified good practices are accessible to all online. LNB identified good practices and models for service delivery will also be divulged via way of workshops/conferences and brochure publications.

Beside the specific focus on knowledge exchange and learning under Output 2.3, planning for the replication/ scaling-up of the results is central to LNB 3 programme purpose – most notably linked to the transfer of LNB results to the core central government partners (MHSP and SSS).

⁴² While the municipalities are directly responsible for the local provision of social services, the national authorities are responsible to provide significant policy, operational and financial support to the decentralized regional bodies and municipalities in their provision and delivery of essential local public services, including local social services.

End of programme vision/ exit strategy

The end of programme vision is that the programme partners are technically and financially capacitated to implement and further scale-up the pace of roll-out of social protection (social services) reforms and social inclusion measures in Albania, to ensure continued annual growth in the provision of local social services and integrated service packages targeted to the needs of the different categories of vulnerable people and marginalized groups across the country. The end of programme vision assumes continued commitment of the Government to scale-up the pace of roll-out of the reforms – including via policy and technical guidance and capacity building support to the municipalities and service providers, and the continued growth of budgetary means allocated to the Social Fund and for other social inclusion measures – in line with the Government’s commitment to address the challenges of poverty or social exclusion in Albania, to deliver progress on the SDGs, and progress toward Albania’s accession to the EU. The latter, including progress in Albania’s preparations to manage and administer EU-funds via the ESF, will be a key longer-term factor to consolidate scaled-up social service provision.

4.3. Programme Partners and Cooperation

LNB 3 Programme Partners

The programme will be implemented by the four participating UN organizations (UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNWOMEN) in cooperation with a diverse range of Albanian partners. UNDP is the leading UN agency for overall implementation and coordination of the programme.

The principal Albanian partner for the LNB programme is the MHSP (the Social Protection Policies and Development Department and the Social Inclusion Department), plus the SSS (government agency under the MHSP responsible to implement policies and legislation on social assistance payments and social services throughout the country). In the area of inclusive education policy, the MES and ASCAP are the key partners for LNB. Other line ministries or agencies that are partially engaged via the programme actions include the MF and INSTAT.

Albania’s municipalities (primarily via the Social Services Department) are the key government partners for LNB at the local level, with direct responsibility for local social service provision. All 61 municipalities benefit from the programme as a result of the support targeted to capacitate the MHSP and SSS in their delivery of policy and technical guidance and capacity building support to the municipalities and service providers. Municipalities and service providers also benefit as a result of the programme’s support to promote professionalization of the workforce via continuous education, peer exchange learning networks, and knowledge management resources and tools. Reflecting the implementation period for LNB 3, the exit phase programme will only directly support a limited number of municipalities, primarily those lagging in provision of local services for at least three categories of vulnerable people/groups.⁴³

Other public service institutions or entities that LNB 3 will continue to partner with include the leading Albanian universities (Tirana, Shkodra and Elbasan – Faculties of Social Sciences), and the professional associations (Orders) involved in social services and social inclusion.

Albanian CSOs at national and local level representing the interests of vulnerable persons and marginalized groups will be the key partners for the programme linked to empowering people (rights holders) to access services, as necessary, and in mobilizing people to engage in local policy consultation forum. LNB will continue to work with its existing set of lead CSO partners, including capacitating lead CSOs to engage in national policy advocacy and dialogue actions.

⁴³ Scoping of the needs of the left-behind municipalities, in terms of potential LNB organizational development, capacity building or small-scale direct co-financing grant support, will be completed via LNB 2 in autumn 2025.

In addition to SDC, the University of Applied Sciences, Lucerne, is a Swiss partner for the programme. It will be engaged in the context of Output 2.3 (Workforce Professionalization), as a continuation of the existing partnership between it and Albanian universities under LNB 2.

Cooperation and coordination between the partners under the LNB 3 programme

The involvement of specific programme partners under the LNB 3 programme is shown below.

Table: Programme partners engagement under the LNB 3 programme

LNB Output	Main partners	Key activities
1.1. Empowerment of vulnerable people / CSOs	UNDP, UNFPA, UNW CSOs / citizens	Partner CSOs inform and reach out to marginalized and vulnerable persons and groups on their rights and on the social services they are entitled to, and how they can influence local social care planning and delivery via engagement in local policy consultation forum. CSOs and networks supported to engage in policy dialogue on social inclusion and its monitoring.
1.2. New social service provision	UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA Municipalities and CSOs / citizens	Support to selected municipalities for establishment of comprehensive models for the delivery of new / additional social services at the local level.
2.1. Ministries and agencies	UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNW MHSP, SSS, MES, ASCAP	Strengthening government capacity to monitor implementation of the social services and social inclusion legal, policy, regulatory, and financial frameworks. Consolidating MES and ASCAP capacity to ensure quality inclusive education provision. Strengthening SSS capacity to oversee the implementation of social services delivery (at local, regional and national level) and the effectiveness of monitoring and reporting systems of social service provision. Strengthening SSS capacity to provide technical, methodological and capacity building support to municipalities/ service providers.
2.2. Municipalities and service providers	UNDP, UNICEF Municipalities and CSOs	Support organizational development and capacities of ‘left-behind’ municipalities to strengthen planning, provision and monitoring of social services. Support to specific municipalities linked to the development of local financing and operation of the Local Social Fund.
2.3. Workforce professionalization / Knowledge learning, sharing	UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNW Universities and workforce / Orders	Support to university partners in the further development of continuous education training offer for the social care workforce in partnership with Swiss Centre of Excellence (HSLU). Support workforce partners to consolidate peer exchange networks and good practice sharing and support to universities in the consolidation of knowledge sharing mechanisms.

The principal roles, tasks and responsibilities of the four UN implementing agency partners under the LNB 3 programme, and their partners for cooperation, are summarized below. The participating UN organizations will ensure internal coordination and sequencing of their provision of support to the leading programme partners, guided by the agreed LNB 3 programme Work Plan and operation of the modalities of the Delivering as One mechanism. Joint work between the UN agency partners to ensure coherence of LNB-effort will be notably important linked to consolidation of the capacity of the MHSP and the SSS to utilize the LNB results and tools within their implementation and monitoring of policy and in their support to guide further scaling-up of social services. It will also be important linked to the provision of support via LNB 3 to municipalities to develop their local services and financing. Close coordination and collaboration between the UN agency partners will also be vital in regard to promoting professionalization of the workforce, notably linked to promoting peer learning networks and systems to support the sharing of knowledge and good practice models.

Building on the results of the previous programme phases, **UNDP** will focus its work on: (1) Support to consolidate the capacity of lead CSOs to inform and empower their target groups, and the capacity of lead CSOs engage in national policy consultation dialogue; (2) Support to consolidate the capacity of lead CSOs to model social services for vulnerable groups in line with the implementation of National Action Plans; (3) Provision of co-financing grant to support the introduction of new social services in at least five left-behind municipalities; (4) Support for volunteer engagement and community initiatives to develop and deliver services; (5) Support to the MHSP to strengthen implementation and monitoring of the Social Inclusion Policy Document; (6) Support to the MHSP in preparation of the new National Action Plan for Persons with Disabilities, and to develop monitoring capacity of Action Plans; (7) Support to the MHSP linked to implementation of the Social Fund including the review of regulatory frameworks; (8) Support to the MHSP linked to leading and coordinating EU legal approximation requirements as regards Chapters 19 and 23 of the EU-acquis; (9) Support to the SSS to adopt the methodology for data collection and to conduct regular mapping exercises of social services; (10) Support to the SSS to ensure monitoring the implementation of social service standards at the local level; (11) Support to the SSS to utilize LNB training models and tools for partners at the local level; (12) Support tailored to the need of left-behind municipalities on planning, budgeting and implementation of local social services and the local Social Fund; (13) Further partnership with Albanian universities and the HSLU to provide continuous education and professional development of in-service professionals; (14) Strengthening capacity of social service providers and the network of professionals working at community centres; (15) Cataloguing good practice models and evidence for knowledge sharing via conferences and Knowledge Hub centre.

Building on the results of the previous programme phases, **UNICEF** will focus its work on: (1) Support to transform development centres for children with disabilities into specialized local social service centres supporting children and families in the community, providing early interventions; (2) Support to the MHSP and to the SSS to strengthen implementation and monitoring of the Social Protection Strategy, data collection and analysis; (3) Support to the MHSP linked to EU legal approximation requirements as regards Chapters 19 and 23 of the EU-acquis; (4) Support to the SSS to utilize LNB training models and tools, and capacitating SSS in the roll-out its roadmap for the provision of capacity building and mentoring support to municipalities and monitoring of social services; (5) Support to MES to enhance delivery of inclusive education policy; (6) Support development of a roadmap for the rollout of the local Social Fund and NARU accompanied with the package of guidelines, tools, capacity building plan; (7) Further partnership with the University of Tirana in the transformation of its existing online knowledge platforms to a Knowledge Hub resource centre; (8) Further partnership, as necessary, to consolidate the functioning of the Order of Social Workers; (9) Cataloguing good practice models and evidence for knowledge sharing.

Building on the results of the previous programme phases, **UNFPA** will focus its work on: (1) Support to consolidate the capacity of lead CSOs to inform and empower their target groups, and the capacity of lead CSOs engage in national policy consultation dialogue; (2) Support to the MHSP to develop monitoring capacity of the National Action Plan on Older Persons; (3) Support to the MHSP to review the social protection policy and legislative framework for compliance with UN Conventions; (4) Consolidation of UNFPA guidance, tools and models, etc., and support to capacitate MHSP and SSS to take-over and utilize these in their provision of technical and training support to municipalities and service providers; (5) Cataloguing good practice models and evidence for knowledge sharing via the Knowledge Hub resource centre.

Building on the results of the previous programme phases, **UNWOMEN** will focus its work on: (1) Support to consolidate the capacity of lead CSOs to inform and empower their target groups, and the capacity of lead CSOs engage in national policy consultation dialogue; (2)

Support to consolidate capacity of the MHSP to enhance cross-sectoral policy coordination and monitoring linked to delivering gender-responsive and gender-sensitive social services; (3) Support to MHSP to improve data collection and analytical systems to inform social protection and service reform policy monitoring/ formulation; (4) Consolidation of UNWOMEN guidance, tools and models, etc., and support to capacitate MHSP and SSS to take-over and utilize these in their provision of technical and training support to municipalities and service providers; (5) Collaboration with Faculty of Social Sciences and Social Work to finalize a dedicated teaching and reference material resource on gender equality and gender-sensitive social services; (6) Cataloguing good practice models and evidence for knowledge sharing.

4.4. Coordination and Synergies with other donor assistance actions

In addition to LNB, UN agencies in Albania also contribute in the area of social protection and social inclusion via a number of other specific programmes (financed through own resources and/or via other donor funding). Other notable partners contributing in the area include the EU. Aspects of social inclusion are also addressed via complementary programmes on issues of skills development and employment opportunities, notably targeted to youth and women. A coordination platform with UN agencies, SDC and EU programmes targeting social inclusion will be utilized to coordinate interventions, to avoid overlapping and maximize synergies.

Particular focus will be provided to ensure that LNB 3 programme interventions at the level of the municipalities are demarcated to avoid overlapping with the effort of other programmes. The ten municipalities with which LNB 3 partners to provide direct technical support, to enhance their management of social service provision and to introduce the operation of new local social services, will not be the municipalities supported via UN programme actions listed below. Higher-level coordination of donor programmes overall will be facilitated by the MHSP.

The following programmes are ongoing in the specific area of social protection and services:

- UN Joint Programme “Lifelong Empowerment and Protection in Albania” (LEAP) – funded by the UN Joint SDG Fund. LEAP is a strategic intervention designed to enhance social protection systems and employment opportunities for marginalized populations in Albania. With a focus on children, youth, women, elderly and families, LEAP aims to implement a Universal Child Benefit and integrated care and economic empowerment management strategies to improve the quality and accessibility of employment and protection services.
- UN Joint Programme “Ending Violence Against Women in Albania” (EVAW) Phase II”– funded by Sweden. EVAW is a strategic intervention designed to ensure women and girls enjoy effective preventive measures against violence, and survivors and those at risk are better protected from all forms of violence and have equitable access to services, via strengthened local coordination to ensure effective implementation of laws and policies.
- UNICEF “EU for Social Care” – funded by the EU. The programme works on enhancing and expanding the current social care services, while fostering an enabling environment for partnerships between local governments and CSOs. The programme works in 14 targeted municipalities to extend social care services: Cërrik, Durrës, Elbasan, Gjirokastra, Kamza, Kavaja, Korça, Kruja, Kukës, Kurbin, Librazhd, Pogradec, Vlorë and Vora.
- EU “Action for Employment and Social Inclusion” (IPA 2019): The action aims at contributing to strengthening social inclusion by increasing coverage, inclusiveness and effectiveness of social care services, the provision of inclusive education and employment opportunities. The action supports populations at risk of poverty and social exclusion, including youth, men and women at risk, people with disabilities and minorities. The programme works in 19 targeted municipalities – the 14 municipalities noted above under “EU for Social Care” plus Mallakaster, Prrenjas, Shijak, Shkoder, and Tirane.

- EU “Action for Employment and Social Inclusion” (IPA 2024): The action aims at (a) enhancing governance systems and delivery instruments for better jobs and employability of the labour force, including skills development for young people and adults, in line with the European Skills Agenda, and (b) improving the adequacy of social protection measures and accessibility and quality of integrated social care measures.
- UNDP EQUALS “Enhanced quality legal aid services” project will build on the successes of EFLAS, scaling best practices not only within Albania but also in North Macedonia. “EQUALS” project – funded by Austria will focus on improving the quality of legal aid services for vulnerable groups, strengthening institutional capacity, and enhancing public trust in justice systems.
- The project “Reduce Gender-based Violence and Harmful Practices through Gender Responsive Governance” implemented by UNFPA and funded by Italy aims to address and mitigate gender-based violence (GBV) through community-based interventions and services and capacity-building efforts across key stakeholders. Support will target local government response to GBV through well informed support to the survivors of GBV and help re-integrate in everyday life.

5. Organisation, Management and Administration

5.1. Management and Organisation

Programme timeframe and tentative yearly breakdown of costs

The timeframe for implementation of LNB 3 is twenty-four months, from January 2026 to the end of December 2027. The detailed Work Plan for the two-year period of the LNB 3 programme will be prepared under the LNB 2 programme, by December 2025 at the latest.

Organizational and programme management structure

The proposed intervention is a Joint Programme (JP) that will be implemented through the modalities of the Delivering as One (DaO) mechanism, under the framework of the Government of Albania-UN Programme of Cooperation for Sustainable Development 2022-2026,⁴⁴ with the joint participation of four UN agencies of UNDP, UNICEF, UNWOMEN and UNFPA and in close partnership with relevant governmental bodies at central and local level. The implementation modality of the JP will be affiliated within the overall architecture of the DaO approach, ensuring that activities are coordinated with the strategic deliverables as presented biannually in support of the Government of Albania-UN Cooperation Programme. UNDP is the leading UN agency for overall implementation and coordination of the JP. Each participating UN agency will implement activities and outputs as defined in the respective joint work plans agreed for the respective roles and responsibilities in line with their mandate and expertise. The JP will ensure a cohesive coordinated UN approach through internal coordination mechanism to ensure a critical mass of support to LNB 3 partner institutions, and the sequencing of actions to consolidate partners' capacities to utilize and sustain further operation of the LNB results. The JP will ensure a strategic integration and cohesion with other UN agencies as well as with development partners working in Albania in the area of social inclusion and protection, and local governance. A coordination platform with UN agencies, SDC and EU programmes targeting social inclusion will be utilized to coordinate interventions, avoid overlapping and maximize synergies and scaling-up results. In this context, higher-level coordination will be facilitated by MHSP, the lead ministry for social protection and inclusion including coordination with Integrated Policy Management Group (IPMG) and related thematic groups

The programme will be managed by a core team of three dedicated staff, supported by a variety of activity-specific specialist team members of the participating UN agencies. The core team are the Programme Coordinator, Project Specialist, and Finance and Admin Assistant. UNDP programme specialist, Head of Social Inclusion Cluster, acts as the principal interlocutor on programme management issues between LNB, the UN agencies and UN Country Team.

Technical Committee

To ensure a coordinated approach in implementation of the programme a Technical Committee (TC) will be established, consisting technical experts of the participating agencies (UNDP, UNICEF, UNWOMEN and UNFPA) Its main mandate is to guide implementation of the programme, to coordinate the practical implementation of programme interventions by the UN agencies and to ensure that results are delivered timely and efficiently. The TC will meet on a quarterly basis to assess progress realized, to review risks and constraints to results transfer and achievement, and to review the factors positively contributing to the realization and take-up of the results. Meetings of the TC will be called by the LNB Programme

⁴⁴ Under the Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2022-2026, the LNB programme is implemented in the context of Outcome A “Human Capital Development and Social Inclusion” under Output 1 (Social Protection).

Coordinator, who will also be responsible for documenting the proceedings of the meetings. Progress updates will be provided by UN agencies one week prior to the quarterly TC meeting.

Steering Committee

A Steering Committee (SC) will oversee and coordinate the operations of the programme. The SC oversees the programme's implementation and takes all necessary strategic decisions. It will provide policy guidance and recommendation regarding the programme strategy and objectives, receive and comment semi-annual reports, approve annual plans of operation and reports, and leadership in ensuring the full transfer of the LNB results during the exit phase.

The SC will be co-chaired by SDC, MHSP and UN Resident Coordinator senior representatives. The SC will unite at least annually, and upon necessity. The SC chairs can request a meeting within a week if need be.

The SC will be composed of SDC representative, the UN Resident Coordinator, senior representative of the MHSP, senior representatives of the participating UN agencies, senior representatives from other selected ministries, selected municipality representatives benefiting from the programme, and at least two representatives of CSOs.

The SC will invite EU and other donor representatives with the status of observers for building synergies of the interventions in the area of social inclusion. Every effort will be made to link the SC to both the Government-led coordination structures under State Agency for Strategic Programming and Aid Coordination (SASPAC) leadership and the UN DaO structures.

5.2. Administration of Funds

Funds for the implementation of the programme will be allocated through the UN Albania SDG Acceleration Fund structure. The four participating UN Organizations (UNDP, UNICEF, UNWOMEN and UNFPA) have agreed to utilize the ongoing UN Albania SDG Acceleration Fund structure where the UNDP Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office acts as the Administrative Agent (AA). Funds assigned to the organizations under the programme document will be channelled for the programme through the Fund. When making the final decision for allocation Joint Executive Committee requests the signed joint annual work-plans and request for funds.

The Administrative Agent will:

- Prepare and sign Standard Administrative Arrangement with the SDC.
- Charge standard administrative agent fee of one per cent (1%) of the total contributions made to the SDG Acceleration Fund for this joint programme, for its costs of performing the AA's functions.

The participating UN Organizations will:

- Assume full programmatic and financial responsibility and accountability for the funds transferred by the One UN SDG Acceleration Fund for this JP.
- Each UN Organization is entitled to deduct their indirect costs on contributions received according to their own regulations and rules, taking into account the size and complexity of the programme. Each UN Organization will deduct 7% overhead costs of the total allocation received for the agency.

6. Resources

6.1. Human Resources

LNB 3 will be managed by a programme team of three core dedicated staff – the Programme Coordinator, Project Specialist, and Finance and Admin Assistant. The core team will be supported by the experts and a variety of activity-specific specialist team members of the participating UN agencies, which will implement specific activities and outputs as defined in the joint work plans utilizing their significant in-house expertise to deliver and achieve specific programme results. National technical experts and consultants of different specializations will also be hired, as per needs, to complement the programme team and UN agencies' expertise.

As the leading agency for the JP, the UNDP's Head of Social Inclusion Cluster will continue to play a core role in providing technical backstopping support to the LNB-team, and also in terms of ensuring regular oversight of the JP implementation and its management coordination within the UN. In addition, technical backstopping support to the LNB-team will be provided, as required, via the responsible programme coordinator(s) of each participating UN agency.

6.2. Financial Resources

The overall budget for this programme is CHF 2 million, funded 100% by SDC, receivable in 2026-2027, which will be allocated through the UN Albania SDG Acceleration Fund. The programme Logical Framework Matrix (see Annex A) provides for the general framework and indicative deliverables (activities and results) that will be funded only by the SDC contribution.

As under the previous phases of the LNB programme, funded 100% by SDC, the UN in Albania will ensure mobilization of additional funding, through own resources and via other donor funding, to complement SDC's support to the UN's implementation of the Government of Albania-UN Cooperation Programme within the framework of social inclusion and cohesion.

During the LNB 3 period (2026–2027), projects contributing to Outcome A of the UNSDCF are expected to total USD 30,533,959. Additionally, participating UN agencies are projected to mobilize an extra USD 1,750,000 in funding to advance social inclusion and cohesion. The LNB SC will serve as the authority to provide strategic direction and oversight of the programme and provide advice to the One UN Joint Executive Committee for fund allocation decision making. The Lead Agency (UNDP) is responsible for coordinating the programmatic aspects. The Administrative Agent, in this case UNDP, is responsible for administering funds received in the UN Albania SDG Acceleration Fund. Each Participating UN Organization has programmatic and financial responsibility on the use of funds allocated from the Fund.

6.3. Economic and Financial Analysis (economic worthiness)

The goal of the LNB 3 programme is that vulnerable persons and marginalized groups in Albania have increased accessibility to suitable local social services and integrated support packages tailored to need that reinforce their well-being and promotes their social inclusion.

Approximately 42% of Albania's population is at risk of poverty or social exclusion, while 35% of the population live in households in severe material and social deprivation, and 20% of the population is at risk of poverty (i.e. with disposable income below the relative poverty line). The 2025 Mapping of Social Care Services in Albania estimated that there are approximately 280,000 vulnerable or marginalized people in Albania in need of social service support beyond the basic provision of social transfers (social insurance or social assistance cash payments).

Clear progress has been made by Albania in the roll-out of social protection and social service reforms since 2017, as evidenced by the increased number of social care service providers and the number of social services now offered, and the increased number of beneficiaries of

the available services.⁴⁵ However, the distribution of social care services at municipal level, even of basic public service provision, is still significantly variable. Currently the need for social care services in Albania is met at a rate of 14%. In 39 municipalities the provision of social services meets less than 10% of needs. Only six municipalities meet more than 25% of needs.

Since July 2017, the LNB programme, financed by the SDC, has provided support to the Albanian programme partners – central and local governments, service providers, workforce professions, CSOs and vulnerable or marginalized people/groups – to roll-out the social care service reforms. The first phase programme (2017-2021) focused on the initial capacitation of partners to implement and manage the policy for decentralized provision of social services. The second phase programme (2021-2025) focused on scaling-up the reform roll-out and the further demonstration of innovative local models for delivery of the basket of social services.

After eight years of LNB programme implementation, and roll-out of the reforms by the Albanian authorities, there is now a solid basis of experience and good practice as to proven models and innovative approaches for local social care service provision in Albania. There is significant capacity to replicate and to further scale-up local models for social service delivery. In order to support municipalities in the establishment of new social service provision, the Government is also increasing the extent of funding allocated via the national Social Fund.

Rather than a continuation of “business as usual”, the focus of the exit phase LNB programme shifts from hands-on support to partners to develop, implement and manage policy and from support for the piloting of further innovative local service models, toward a focus on the consolidation of programme partners’ capacities (a) to ensure the sustainable operation and utilization of the LNB programme results and systems and (b) to ensure further development of the policy, financial and operational systems for the delivery and further scaling-up of social services targeted to the needs of vulnerable persons and marginalized groups in Albania.

The LNB 3 intervention logic is that: **IF** civil society and vulnerable groups effectively advocate for improved access to and the provision of a wider basket of social services, and hold municipalities and central government accountable for it, and **IF** municipalities effectively scale-up the provision of and the diversity of social services offered, responsive to local needs, and **IF** the central government continues to prioritise and scale-up funding for the provision of adequate social services for vulnerable people, **THEN** vulnerable groups and persons will have increased accessibility to suitable local services and integrated support packages tailored to need, that reinforce their well-being and promotes their social inclusion, **BECAUSE** provision of social services combined with innovative service models will be scaled-up across Albania.

The key assumptions linked to the achievement of the programme results and development impact are: (1) Government (central and local) continues to prioritize the provision of adequate local social service solutions to address the needs of all vulnerable people, (2) the availability of sufficient financial means to sustain the extent of and the quality of services and their further scaling-up, and (3) that vulnerable or marginalized people/groups are empowered to seek access to and to advocate for the enhanced provision of quality social services and support, (4) assisted and represented by CSOs that engage with government via formal policy dialogue.

Linked to the first and the second assumption, the commitment of government (central and local) remains strong as evidenced by central government’s continued adoption of decisions, instructions, and orders related to the standards for provision of services, covering different typologies of service and groups of beneficiaries, and the above inflation increases in the

⁴⁵ The 2025 Mapping of Social Care Services shows that the number of service providers has increased by 59% as compared with the baseline mapping exercise undertaken in 2019, with the number of publicly funded providers up by 74% (from 149 in 2019 to reach 259 public service providers in 2025). The number of beneficiaries of the social services in January 2025 was approximately 39,100 people, up from approximately 11,000 in the 2019 mapping.

budget allocated per annum via the Social Fund, for which 57 of the 61 municipalities in Albania had submitted an application for funding up to year 2024, thus evidencing their real demand for such support in the expansion of local social services. The commitment of government to further expand and improve service provision is also clearly driven by Albania's goal to prepare for and to realize accession into the EU. Linked to the third and fourth assumptions, it is evident that vulnerable people/groups are increasingly empowered to seek and access services and to be engaged in local social service policy dialogue, planning and monitoring, supported by and/or represented by CSOs. LNB programme data confirms the increased number of people and CSOs engaged in local policy consultation with municipalities and service providers. The principal area of weakness, and thereby a risk to the achievement of outcomes and impact, links to the fourth assumption in so far as the extent to which central government (led by the MHSP in regard to social protection and inclusion policy) currently engages with representative CSOs via a structured process for policy consultation and dialogue on social inclusion issues. LNB 3 will seek to address this weakness via strengthening the functionality of MHSP mechanisms and capacity to engage with lead CSOs in the annual monitoring of action plans.

The expected financial costs for this programme phase is CHF 2 million, financed by SDC. Financial costs linked to Outcome 1 are estimated at 36% versus 64% for Outcome 2. The higher share of funding linked to Outcome 2 is primarily due to the increased focus for LNB 3 on the consolidation of partners' capacities ('soft' factors) rather than further piloting of additional, new innovative local service models. In particular, it is essential that LNB 3 ensure a solid focus on consolidation of the capacities of the MHSP and the SSS to take-on full transfer and further operation of the LNB results and to ensure adequate support to the municipalities. Overall, approximately 82% of the programme funds are focused on 'soft' measures, with 18% for the provision of direct co-financing grant (under Output 1.2) to support selected municipalities (approximately ten) where public social service provision is currently limited, or where service provision currently targets only one or two categories of vulnerable persons.

LNB 3 will directly support approximately five central government ministries and agencies, plus associations of regulated professions, three universities, and approximately forty leading CSOs via specific capacitation effort to ensure the transfer and further operation by them of the LNB results. LNB 3 will directly support approximately ten municipalities via direct co-financing grant or other partnership support to establish and introduce the operation of new local social services, and via means of tailored organizational development and/or capacity building support to enhance their management of social service provision. All municipalities will benefit via LNB 3 support to develop national policy and operational guidance and tools.

LNB 3's focus on the consolidation of programme partners' capacities to sustain and further utilize, and scale-up the LNB results in the continued process of social service reform will indirectly benefit all vulnerable people in Albania over the short-, medium- and longer-term, as the financing from national government is progressively scaled-up. Albania needs to significantly scale-up social service and social inclusion measures and outcomes within the context of the country achieving progress on its pathway to EU membership, including in building its capacities to manage, administer and to absorb EU-funds via the ESF, which will be a key longer-term factor to consolidate scaled-up and sustainable social service provision.

In terms of incremental benefits (Impact) to which the programme results directly and indirectly contribute, the target group of final beneficiaries of the programme are vulnerable people and families in need in Albania,⁴⁶ whom will benefit from improved accessibility to and improved quality of local social services responsive to their needs. Currently the need for social services in Albania is met at a rate of 14% only. Their improved accessibility to and the improved quality

⁴⁶ Individuals and Families in Need; Older persons; Persons with Disabilities; Women and girls, including at risk of violence; Children; Youth; Roma; LGBTIQ+; and 'Other' groups (e.g. homeless, drug-users).

of local social care services will be driven by the municipalities in Albania scaling-up their provision of local social care services and support. Municipalities will be assisted in this process by means of policy and operational guidance, financing and technical support provided via the national authorities. As noted above, the Government is committed to expanding its budgetary allocation via the Social Fund, indicatively at a rate of 7% increase per annum. The 2025 Social Fund allocation will support the establishment of eleven service providers offering new social services in eight municipalities to support to an estimated 11,650 final beneficiaries.

Based on data linked to the Social Fund during its first six years of operation (2020-2025), the total budget allocated was Albanian Lek 1,500 million (approximately EUR 15 million) via which services have been provided to approximately 56,575 people in total. On the basis of this data, the approximate cost to the Social Fund was Albanian Lek 26,500 (EUR 265) per beneficiary. However, this is only partial financial data, as municipality financing costs are not included.

The programme proposal cannot provide a detailed analysis of costs and benefits of the proposed programme itself. Social services and social inclusion measures are an economic investment in human capital and social development, ensuring essential services and support to vulnerable people, at risk of poverty or social exclusion, to receive suitable assistance to address their immediate vulnerability challenges and needs, and opportunities for their advancement and their socioeconomic inclusion. It increases people's resilience and agency and empowers them to make their own choices by building self-reliance, not dependency. Social protection is a human right, and addresses the structural causes of poverty, exclusion and inequality in line with the UN's 2030 Agenda and its core principle to leave no one behind.

With the principal focus of LNB 3 on the consolidation of partners' capacities ('soft' factors), the incremental benefits of the programme will largely be indirectly realized, i.e. by the programme partners utilizing the LNB results and models for services to support their scaling-up of local services over the medium-term period, including after the completion of LNB 3. Policy advocacy will be an important tool for the UN linked to promoting dialogue in favour of increased funding for social services and inclusion, and scaling-up of Social Fund resources.

7. Risk Analysis

The main assumptions and risks linked to implementation of the LNB 3 programme intervention and the achievement of the intended programme results and development effect are summarized in the programme Logical Framework Matrix (see Annex A). Assumptions represent potential risks to the programme if they are not realized by the partners as foreseen.

This section provides analysis of the core risks identified related to the intervention. It provides an assessment of the likelihood of a given risk occurring, plus an assessment of the impact of the risk should it occur, and of potential risk treatment options and measures to be applied.

Overall, the LNB 3 programming team assess that the identified risks to the programme are unlikely to occur. The country’s political and development policy context, including in the specific area of social service and social inclusion policy, is stable. But, the consequences (impact) of the risks, if they do occur, would be significant in terms of achieving the intended programme objectives (i.e. to ensure that partners are capacitated to utilize and sustain LNB’s results, and scaling-up over the medium-term, in the ongoing process of social service reform).

Risks to the timely delivery of the programme activities and outputs, and achievement of the intended outcomes will be constantly monitored by the participating UN implementing agencies and the LNB management team. Risks to the sustainable transfer and operation of the LNB results by the programme partners will be assessed against progress achieved by partners to institutionalize the results and to ensure their further implementation and utilization. Potential risks identified to the successful implementation and delivery of the programme results will be communicated by the implementing agencies to the LNB management team. The LNB TC meetings will also ensure that risk analysis linked to the programme results and their sustainability is undertaken as a fixed entry in the agenda of all meetings. Risks to the delivery of the programme results will also be constantly assessed by the Lead Agency and by the LNB management team – based on reporting from the implementing partners, observation in the field, and feedbacks from the programme partners – to assess progress against programme targets. The results of the assessment of risks, and the preliminary identification of suitable mitigation measures, as necessary, is regularly communicated to the LNB SC to ensure that risk analysis and mitigation is always undertaken as a fixed entry in the agenda of all meetings.

Table: LNB 3 programme – Risk assessment and risk treatment measures/ strategy

Risk description	Risk Category	Likelihood	Impact	Risk treatment measures
Changes in national or municipal policy priorities, or fiscal constraints, may delay or limit the scale-up of local social services and solutions for vulnerable and marginalized groups.	Political	Low	Medium	The UN will continue advocacy to uphold government commitment and budgetary support for scaling up local social services targeting vulnerable and marginalized groups.
Central authorities may not be fully committed to providing local partners with technical policy guidance and capacity-building support to assist in policy implementation and the delivery of local social services.	Operational	Low	Medium	Continued advocacy, sustained dialogue and support, especially to the MHSP, also in the programme’s steering is an important instrument for policy dialogue. Coordination of advocacy with key donors.

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Risk description	Risk Category	Likelihood	Impact	Risk treatment measures
Partners have insufficient capacity (staffing and technical) to effectively absorb external support and sustain results.	Operational	Low	Medium	LNB will undertake consultations with all key LNB 3 programme partners in autumn 2025 to confirm LNB results for transfer and extent of support action under LNB 3. This will include assessment of partner capacities (staff, technical) to utilize, absorb and sustain programme results, what partners can expect and what they are to contribute to programme delivery. Should there be doubts about a partner's capacity, senior consultative negotiations will be undertaken to remedy concerns. As necessary, UN/LNB management may take the decision to cease cooperation.
Authorities do not durably integrate innovations introduced by the programme into their operations	Strategic	Medium	Medium	Continued advocacy and sustained dialogue, alongside tailored support, especially to the MHSP and SSS, is an important instrument for policy dialogue.
Partners lack financial capacity to sustain service operations longer-term	Financial	Medium	Medium	LNB 3 programme partners are required to confirm the basis for longer-term financial sustainability of any new services introduced by them supported by LNB 3. Should there be doubts about a partner's capacity, senior consultative negotiations will be undertaken to remedy concerns.
Limited cooperation between partners to guide cross-sectoral policy formulation and delivery of services	Organisational	Low	Medium	MHSP is the lead ministry to ensure cross-sectoral coordination of policy targeted to the social inclusion of vulnerable people. As practical, LNB/UN will assist partners overcome obstacles to policy coordination, including via policy dialogue.
Cooperation of civil society and CSOs with municipalities / service providers is fragmented within the 'project-cycle' and fails to ensure service outreach	Organisational	Medium	Medium	To address the risk, LNB 3 will develop further guidance on how municipalities can institutionalize partnership and cooperation with local CSOs throughout the process of social service planning, service implementation and monitoring.
CSOs are unable to build and promote effective coordination of national policy dialogue and advocacy efforts	Organisational	Medium	Medium	As practical, LNB/UN will assist partners overcome obstacles to understanding the mutual benefits of coordination across groups, and building a national platform & advocacy effort for social service users.
Limited cooperation between workforce professional partners to engage in peer learning and sharing	Organisational	Low	Medium	LNB will consult with the professional bodies (Orders) and/or other partners in order to assess and overcome obstacles.

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Risk description	Risk Category	Likelihood	Impact	Risk treatment measures
Fraud or corruption in the use of public funds, or failure to suitably report on the use of funds	Financial	Low	High	Strict UN management of financial resources used internally and invested in all activities, including the fund for programmes, prevents financial mismanagement. Annual audits further ensure the quality of the programme's financial management. Any potential deviations will be investigated by the UN, and as necessary reported to the donor.
Social support services and policy measures fail to improve the social inclusion and well-being of the target groups of vulnerable people	Reputational	Low	High	Demonstrated successes obtained in the field of improving social protection and social inclusion, as a basic human right accessible to all citizens / people in need across the lifecycle, are communicated.

8. Monitoring and Evaluation

8.1. Monitoring and Evaluation System and Plan

Monitoring and evaluation of LNB 3 will be conducted in accordance with the Government of Albania-UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework. As an integral part of the Framework, the monitoring and reporting processes linked to the programme will involve gathering of information to make timely informed judgment and assessment of progress including among others the identification of strengths and weaknesses of the programme.

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of programmes, utilizing a results-based management and managing for development results approach, are integral parts of programme management across UN programmes. In principle M&E consists of the following dimensions or functions, that are closely interlinked: (1) to track results progress, (2) to monitor and manage risks, (3) to ensure quality assurance, (4) to support learning and the identification of good practice, (5) to support programme steering, and (6) to provide accountability in the use of public funds.

The LNB management team (led by the Programme Coordinator) is responsible for operation of the programme Management Information System (MIS). The team will make use of structures, processes and tools that allow for collecting reliable data, for processing it into evidence and questions to be answered, and for utilizing this evidence and the questions in view of the six M&E functional purposes. Monitoring data will be collected, processed and provided to the LNB-team mainly by the UN organizations involved in the programme's implementation. But all other stakeholders will be involved in the programme's monitoring – as observers of context and implementation. This especially applies at the level of local service provision, but also CSOs involved in the monitoring of central government performance.

LNB 3's M&E plan foresees utilization of the following instruments and actions – including the definition of responsibilities, purpose and outputs – linked to M&E of the LNB 3 interventions.

Table: LNB 3 programme – Monitoring and Evaluation Plan, instruments and actions

No.	Instrument	Timing	Description	Responsibility
1	LNB Technical Committee (TC)	Quarterly	Meeting to plan upcoming interventions, to assess progress realized, to review risks and constraints and factors positively contributing to results. Review of results progress per LNB Output and Outcome, lessons, good practices, etc.	-LNB-team -UNDP Head Social Inclusion Cluster -Technical experts of UN agencies for LNB programme
2	LNB Progress Report	Quarterly	Summary of technical & financial progress realized per Output and Outcome, risk assessment/ mitigation planning, lessons.	-LNB-team -Input from LNB TC
		Mid-year	Detailed technical & financial report on progress realized per Outcome and Output, results transfer to partners, implementation challenges and mitigation measures.	-LNB-team -Input from LNB TC -Quality assurance, UNDP Head Social Inclusion Cluster
		Annual	Detailed analytical report on programme context/environment, and contribution to achievement of Impact, technical & financial progress realized per Outcome and Output, results transfer to partners, implementation challenges and mitigation measures, lessons, good practices, etc.	-LNB-team -Input from LNB TC -Quality assurance, UNDP Head Social Inclusion Cluster
3	LNB Steering Committee (SC)	Annual	<i>LNB mid-year and annual Progress Reports are provided to SC members minimally one-week prior to potential SC meetings.</i> The SC oversees LNB 3's implementation and takes all necessary strategic decisions.	-LNB-team / UNDP Head Social Inclusion Cluster -UN Albania (Resident)

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No.	Instrument	Timing	Description	Responsibility
			It will provide policy guidance and recommendation regarding the programme strategy and objectives, receive and comment semi-annual reports, approve annual plans of operation and reports, and leadership in ensuring the full transfer of the LNB results during the exit phase.	Representative, UN agency senior representatives) -SDC -MHSP -Other partners
4	On site visits	Periodic	Periodic field visits by LNB-team and/or LNB UN agency experts or representatives to make first hand observations of actions.	-LNB-team -LNB TC experts / other UN experts
5	Working Group meetings with key LNB partners per Output	Periodic	Periodic review of LNB 3 implementation and progress realized - conducted between LNB-team/TC with key partners per Output. For example, with MHSP, with SSS, with LNB 3 supported municipalities, and focus group review with CSOs, universities, etc.	-LNB-team -LNB TC experts -UNDP Head Social Inclusion Cluster -Key partner(s)
6	End-of-phase external evaluation (indicative)	Second half 2027	A brief summative evaluation to determine the extent to which Outcomes were realized and contribution to Impact plausibly made, with recommendations on the short-term actions necessary to consolidate results. In a formative nature, analysis of the pathway over the medium-term to further improve social services and social inclusion results in Albania, incl. potential for UN actions.	-UNDP Head Social Inclusion Cluster -SDC -LNB-team -External evaluator (indicatively national expert(s))

8.2. Results-oriented Reporting System

Monitoring is a continuous task of programme management. It provides both quantitative and qualitative data based, whenever possible, on predefined indicators relating to a programme's lifecycle results-chain and specific intended development effects. The LNB 3 programme Logical Framework Matrix (see Annex A) provides the general framework and the indicative deliverables (activities, outputs, outcomes, impact) that will be achieved by SDC contribution. Indicators and target values defined for the different outcomes and outputs are the main means for assessing the programme's effectiveness, including its contribution to development impact.

The frequency of formal reporting at the output level is 6-monthly, outcome and impact level annually. In addition to the semi-annual reporting, an end of phase report will provide a comprehensive overview of the achievements and lessons learned. Synopsis and key results of LNB 3 will be included in the UN Albania mid-year update and the Annual Progress Report.

The fields of observation covered by the programme's monitoring framework are:

- **Context:** The institutional, social and economic conditions under which the programme is being implemented will be observed in order to allow for seizing opportunities (for involving additional actors, for supporting interesting local initiatives, etc.), for reacting to newly emerging risks, for adapting the policy dialogue led with authorities, etc.
- **Results:** The regular monitoring of and reporting on achievements is based on evidence provided by monitoring data, mainly the indicators defined in the logical framework.
- **Efficiency:** The programme's efficiency will mainly be assessed mainly financially, comparing budget with expenditures. Additional dimensions of efficiency (but not only) can be observed by also monitoring the quality of cooperation between involved actors and of processes necessary for implementing the programme.
- **Cooperation:** The many actors involved in the programme at different levels require intense, continued, sometimes punctual cooperation between them. The monitoring of the quality of these types of cooperation (in the field, at the level of the Steering Committee,

among the implementing actors (UN organizations, CSOs, municipal services, etc.) can support the understanding of the programme also regarding qualitative dimensions.

- **Processes:** The quality of processes of the programme's implementation, e.g. the introduction of new practices for providing social services at local level, will be monitored in order to have a more complete, and again, also qualitative understanding of the programme's implementation.

In addition to LNB programme specific monitoring results, and that of the wider UN in Albania, the LNB-team will also utilize monitoring reports generated by other actors (directly involved in the programme's implementation or not). These actors include Albanian authorities, CSOs, bilateral and multilateral organizations. Their observations of the general context or of specific sectors (e.g. economy, social inclusion, social services, the performance of authorities' service delivery, etc.) can provide information that may generate interesting insights for LNB 3.

A summary list of the LNB 3 programme result indicators to be monitored and reported include:

- **Impact indicators include:**
 - Population at risk of poverty or social exclusion (%).
 - Total government expenditure on Social Protection (as a % of GDP).
 - Number of municipalities providing local social services for at least three 'at risk' categories.
 - Number of vulnerable persons receiving social services by municipalities/ providers per annum.
 - Proportion of estimated population in need of social services accessing services support (%).
- **Outcome indicators include:**
 - Number of people reached per annum via LNB-partner CSO awareness raising and outreach events.
 - Number of vulnerable persons and number of CSOs engaged per annum in municipality social inclusion and social service policy consultation events.
 - Number of CSOs engaged per annum in MHSP national social protection and social inclusion policy dialogue and national strategy and National Action Plan(s) monitoring events.
 - MHSP / government annual budget allocated for the Social Fund.
 - Number of municipalities that have applied to and the number supported by the Social Fund.
 - Number of municipalities with functional NARUs in place.
 - Number of social workers trained on universities' in-service continuous education courses.
- **Output indicators include:**
 - Number of CSOs supported to enhance communication awareness raising & outreach capacity.
 - Number of vulnerable persons trained on policy planning, monitoring and advocacy.
 - Number of CSOs supported to engage in national policy dialogue, monitoring and advocacy.
 - Number of municipalities supported by LNB to introduce new/expanded local services.
 - Number of vulnerable persons targeted by new local social services delivery (due to LNB 3).
 - Number of government staff/ employees trained in development, implementation, monitoring, analysis of social protection (social services), social inclusion, inclusive education policies.
 - Number of operational guidance notes, protocols, tools and training courses developed and transferred to partners to support policy planning, implementation, monitoring, or analysis.
 - Number of annual monitoring reports on social protection and social inclusion issued via MHSP.
 - Number of operational plans and roadmaps adopted by key central government partners (MHSP, SSS, MES, ASCAP) to operate and scale-up LNB results post-2027.
 - Number of municipalities supported by LNB organizational or capacity building support.
 - Number of municipality and social service provider staff trained on social service provision.
 - Number of professional training / continuous education programmes and modules developed.
 - Number of workforce peer exchange and good practice learning networks and tools supported.

As LNB 3 is an exit phase programme, with a 24-months implementation period only, focused on the consolidation of partners' capacities to take-on full transfer and further operation of the

LNB programme results, it is recognized that LNB 3 will primarily continue to work with its existing cohort of programme partners (for instance existing CSO partners), rather than add new partners (with exception of new municipalities to which LNB 3 will directly provide support). As such, rather than reporting cumulative data linked to the output indicators (across LNB programme phases), the output performance of LNB 3 will be reported with specific reference to the extent of LNB 3 outputs only (i.e. the LNB 3 baseline is zero). This will reflect the direct outputs delivered via LNB 3 to ensure results transfer to the partners. In its annual reports, LNB will also provide total cumulative data for the key LNB output indicators.

For the LNB 3 outcome indicators the baseline data provided is from year 2024 or 2025, and for impact indicators baseline data, latest set of data, is from years 2022 to 2025. In its annual reports, LNB will also provide historic data (trends) for key LNB outcome and impact indicators. Baseline data is currently to be finalized linked to one of the LNB 3 indicators of outcome. The baseline data will be collected via LNB 2 in autumn 2025, in cooperation with CSO partners.

All LNB 3 programme indicators have identified target values for achievement.

All indicators will be disaggregated for gender, when applicable. Disaggregation for additional characteristics (in terms of vulnerable categories/groups) will also be provided as appropriate.

8.3. Planned Reviews and Evaluations

Internal assessments of programme progress are regularly realized at specific moments, (e.g. quarterly meeting of the TC, semi-annual meetings of the SC). Should problems with programme implementation arise, specific internal assessments will be carried out quickly in order to prepare adaptations to improve the course of implementation. Internal assessments will be based on monitoring data and previous reports, and they will be important moments for taking decisions on the necessity for adapting the programme approaches to results delivery.

A final evaluation involving the input of all key programme stakeholders, including the primary and secondary beneficiaries will be organized in the final half-year of the programme. The evaluation will be carried out by independent external consultants, the respective terms of reference as well as the subsequent reports will be submitted to the Steering Committee. The evaluation will focus on the impact, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the programme. It shall provide pertinent lessons learned and recommendations on the short-term actions necessary to consolidate results, and analysis of the pathway over the medium-term to further improve social services and social inclusion results in Albania, including on the future orientation of potential UN actions to support the promotion of social inclusion in Albania.

Annexes

Annex A: LNB 3 Programme – Logical Framework Matrix

Impact

Impact (Overall Goal)	Impact Indicators	Data Sources Means of Verification
Development Goal: By 2028 there is increased and more equitable investment in people, removing barriers and creating opportunities for those at risk of exclusion	1. - Population at risk of poverty (%) Baseline: 2023 = 19.7% (20.2% Female, 19.3% Male) / Target: <19.7% 2. - Population at risk of poverty or social exclusion (%) Baseline: 2023 = 42.1% / Target: <42.1% 3 - Human Development Index (HDI value) Baseline: 2022 = 0.789 / Target: >0.789 4 - Gender Development Index (GDI value) Baseline: 2022 = 0.977 / Target: >0.977 5 - Gender Inequality Index (GII value) Baseline: 2022 = 0.116 / Target: <0.116	1. - INSTAT / SILC 2. - INSTAT / SILC 3. - UNDP / HDR 4. - UNDP / HDR 5. - UNDP / HDR
Programme Goal: Vulnerable persons, especially people at risk of economic or social exclusion, have increased access to local social services and integrated models of support that address their needs, reinforce their well-being and promotes their social inclusion	1 - Total government expenditure on Social Protection (as a % of GDP) Baseline: 2022 = 9.6% / Target: >9.6% 2. - # of municipalities providing local social services for at least three ‘at risk’ categories (e.g. elderly, people with disabilities, women, children and youth at risk) Baseline: 2024 = 38 (of 61) / Target: Minimum 42 municipalities 3. - # of vulnerable persons receiving social services ⁴⁷ by municipalities and other service providers per annum Baseline: 2025 = ≈39,100 (52% Female, 48% Male) / Target: Minimum 43,000 beneficiaries 4. Proportion of the estimated population in need of social services accessing social services support (%) Baseline: 2025 = 14% / Target: Minimum 16%	1. - Ministry of Finance, MHSP 2. - SSS 3. - SSS 4. - SSS

⁴⁷ As per definitions in Law 121/2016 and DCM No. 518, dated 04.09.2018 (does not include cash benefits)

Outcomes

Outcomes	Outcome Indicators	Data Sources Means of Verification	External Factors (Assumptions & Risks)
Outcome 1: Vulnerable persons are empowered to influence public policy and its implementation, ensuring improved access to inclusive social services and receiving the support they need	1.1. - # of people reached per annum via LNB 3-partner CSO awareness raising and outreach events Baseline: 2024 = XXXXX / Target: +5% 1.2. - # of vulnerable persons and number of CSOs engaged per annum in municipality social inclusion and social service policy consultation events Baseline: 2024 = ≈740 individuals and 36 CSOs / Target: 800 individuals and 40 CSOs 1.3. - # of CSOs engaged per annum in MHSP national social protection and social inclusion policy dialogue and national strategy and NAP monitoring events Baseline: 2024 = 0 CSOs / Target: Minimum 5 CSOs	1.1. - LNB-partner CSOs 1.2. - Municipalities official records / minutes of meetings / CSO feedback (Focus Groups) 1.3. - MHSP	<i>Assumptions</i> -Effective cooperation of civil society / CSOs with municipalities and service providers to identify local priorities and needs and to promote service outreach -Target groups participate in policy dialogue forum and advocacy for rights -Improved access to social services contributes to improved social inclusion <i>Risks</i> -Policy consultation and dialogue (at local or national level) does not result in improved service access or provision
Outcome 2: National and local institutions effectively implement the social protection policy framework and financing mechanisms to optimize social service delivery across Albania	2.1. - # of pieces of policy/ legislation/ regulation/ instructions/ national standards on social care, social services, social inclusion or inclusive education adopted Baseline: 2024 = 4 in total / Target: Minimum 5 2.2. - MHSP/government annual budget for Social Fund Baseline: 2025 = 280 million ALL (≈2.8 million EUR) / Target: +7% per annum 2.3. - # of municipalities that have applied to Social Fund and # supported by the Social Fund Baseline: 2024 = 57 (of 61) have applied, 51 have been supported / Target: 61 applied and 61 supported 2.4. - # of municipalities with functional NARUs in place Baseline: 2025 = 14 (of 61) / Target: 20 municipalities 2.5. - # of municipalities with established Local Social Fund and operational procedures in place/ functional Baseline: 2024 = 0 (of 61) / Target: 61 municipalities 2.6 – cumulative # of (a) social workers trained on in-service continuous education courses developed by LNB-partners, (b) students of social sciences trained on pre-service university programmes developed (via LNB) Baseline: 2024 = (a) 400 social workers, (b) 1665 students / Target: (a) 1000, (b) 2500	2.1. - MHSP and data on the legal framework and Decisions of the Council of Ministers 2.2. - MHSP 2.3. - MHSP / SSS 2.4. - SSS 2.5. - SSS 2.6. - Order of Social Workers / LNB-partner universities	<i>Assumptions</i> -Government (central & local) continues to prioritize the provision of adequate local social service solutions to address the needs of all vulnerable people -Availability of sufficient financial means to sustain the extent of and the quality of services and their further scaling-up <i>Risks</i> -Policy consultation and dialogue (at local or national level) does not result in improved service access or provision, as municipalities or service providers lack technical or financial capacity -Central authorities fail to effectively scale-up financing for basic services and/or building capacity for local social service delivery and service expansion

Outputs

Outputs (per outcome) and costs		Output Indicators	Data Sources Means of Verification	External Factors (Assumptions & Risks)
For outcome 1: Vulnerable persons are empowered to influence public policy and its implementation, ensuring improved access to inclusive social services and receiving the support they need				
Output 1.1	Civil society role strengthened to advocate for the rights of vulnerable populations and promote accountability at the local and the national level for inclusive social services delivery	1.1.1. - # of CSOs supported to enhance their communication awareness raising & outreach capacity Baseline: 0 / Target: 40 CSOs 1.1.2. - # of vulnerable persons trained on policy planning, monitoring and advocacy Baseline: 0 / Target: 200 people 1.1.3. - # of LNB-partner CSOs supported to engage in national policy dialogue, monitoring and advocacy Baseline: 0 / Target: 30 CSOs	1.1.1. - LNB Annual Survey of CSOs / CSO Progress Reports 1.1.2. - LNB Annual Survey of CSOs / CSO Progress Reports 1.1.3. - LNB / CSO Progress Reports	<i>Assumptions</i> -Vulnerable persons are empowered to request/access social service support -CSOs effectively communicate with and mobilize their groups to participate in local policy consultation and dialogue -CSOs effectively build coordination of national policy dialogue/advocacy effort <i>Risks</i> -Policy consultation and dialogue (at local or national level) does not result in improved service access or provision, as municipalities or service providers lack technical or financial capacity
Output 1.2	Availability and frequency of social services are increased, with enhanced quality and outreach, to support the needs of underserved communities in left behind municipalities	1.2.1. - # of municipalities directly supported by LNB 3 to introduce new/expanded local services Baseline: 0 / Target: 10 municipalities 1.2.2. - # of vulnerable persons targeted by new local social services and models for social service delivery (introduced by municipalities as a direct result of LNB) Baseline: 0 / Target: 500 people (50+% Female)	1.2.1. - LNB 1.2.2. - Municipalities official records / LNB	<i>Assumptions</i> -Municipalities sustain long-term operation of integrated social services -Municipalities, service providers and CSOs cooperate to promote social service outreach and service quality -Improved access to social services contributes to improved social inclusion <i>Risks</i> -Partners lack financial capacity -Cooperation of civil society and CSOs with municipalities / service providers is fragmented within the 'project-cycle'
Costs of outputs for outcome 1:				
Output 1.1	343,660 CHF	(1) in % of total cost: 37%	(2) Total cost: 670,900 CHF + fee	
Output 1.2	327,240 CHF			

Outputs (per outcome) and costs		Output Indicators	Data Sources Means of Verification	External Factors (Assumptions & Risks)
For outcome 2: National and local institutions effectively implement the social protection policy framework and financing mechanisms to optimize social service delivery across Albania				
Output 2.1	Ministries and agencies in social services and inclusive education have enhanced capacity to coordinate cross-sectoral policy implementation and to ensure sustainability and predictability of social service financing mechanisms	2.1.1. - # of LNB tools and mechanisms (incl. guidance notes, protocols, systems, training courses) developed/ transferred to support policy planning, implementation, monitoring, analysis of social protection (social services) or social inclusion Baseline: 0 / Target: 30 products 2.1.2. - # of staff/employees trained in the development, implementation, monitoring, analysis of (a) social protection (social services) or social inclusion, (b) inclusive education Baseline: 0 / Target: 375 people, (a) 75, (b) 300 2.1.3. - # of monitoring reports on social protection, social inclusion and NAPs issued via MHSP Baseline: 0 / Target: At least five reports 2.1.4 # of operational plans and roadmaps adopted by key central government partners (MHSP, SSS, MES, ASCAP) to operate and scale-up LNB results post-2027 Baseline: 0 / Target: At least three plans/roadmaps	2.1.1. - LNB / MHSP / SSS / MES / ASCAP 2.1.2. - LNB / MHSP / SSS / MES / ASCAP 2.1.3. - MHSP / LNB	<i>Assumptions</i> -Partners can absorb LNB results and support to direct policy implementation, monitoring and the scaling-up of results -Cross-sectoral coordination results in scaling-up of integrated social services -Central authorities ensure technical and financial support to municipalities -Effective donor coordination <i>Risks</i> -Partners lack financial capacity
Output 2.2	Municipalities and service providers capacitated to effectively deliver integrated social services and outreach responsive to local needs and demand	2.2.1. - # of municipalities directly supported by LNB 3 organizational development or capacity building support Baseline: 0 / Target: 10 municipalities 2.2.2. - # of municipality and social service provider staff trained on standards/processes for needs assessment, case management and referral, social service planning and social service provision Baseline: 0 / Target: 200 staff of municipalities and local social service providers 2.2.3 - # of municipalities equipped with tools/ guidance to ensure functional NARUs are in place Baseline: 14 / Target: All municipalities 2.2.4 - # of municipalities equipped with tools/ guidance to ensure functional Local Social Fund is in place Baseline : 0 / Target: All municipalities	2.2.1. - LNB 2.2.2. - LNB / SSS / Municipalities	<i>Assumptions</i> -Partners receptive to and can absorb LNB support to develop/extend services -Central authorities effectively provide technical and financial support to the municipalities to deliver local services -Effective donor coordination <i>Risks</i> -Partners lack financial capacity

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Output 2.3	Professionalization of social care workforce and service providers enhanced, and networking and peer learning mechanisms expanded to foster mutual learning and innovation	2.3.1. - # of professional training / continuous education programmes, course modules, online tools developed Baseline: 0 / Target: 8 courses/products 2.3.2. - # of (a) students of social sciences and (b) workforce professionals trained on new/revised courses Baseline: 0 / Target: (a) 200 students, (b) 400 existing workforce professionals 2.3.3. - # of peer exchange and learning networks supported Baseline: 0 / Target: 5 networks (≈2000 participants) 2.3.4 - Knowledge Hub functional by the end of first year of LNB 3 programme, with online forums in 2027 Baseline: 0 / Target: 2 online forum every 6 months with the participation of at least 70 students/ professionals	2.3.1. - LNB / public service & university training providers / Quality Assurance Agencies 2.3.2. - Public service & university training providers / Professional Orders / Quality Assurance Agencies (QAAs) 2.3.3. - LNB / universities / Professional Orders / QAAs 2.3.4. - LNB / University of Tirana	<i>Assumptions</i> -New continuous education training courses accredited and delivered -Social care workforce engage in peer learning exchange networks as a form of continuous professional education -Knowledge Hub resource centre updated and promoted by universities <i>Risks</i> -Limited cooperation between partners															
Costs of outputs for outcome 2: <table> <tr> <td>Output 2.1</td> <td>597,256 CHF</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Output 2.2</td> <td>286,871 CHF</td> <td>(1) in % of total cost: 63%</td> <td>(2) Total cost: 1,179,567 CHF + fee</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Output 2.3</td> <td>295,440 CHF</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>					Output 2.1	597,256 CHF				Output 2.2	286,871 CHF	(1) in % of total cost: 63%	(2) Total cost: 1,179,567 CHF + fee		Output 2.3	295,440 CHF			
Output 2.1	597,256 CHF																		
Output 2.2	286,871 CHF	(1) in % of total cost: 63%	(2) Total cost: 1,179,567 CHF + fee																
Output 2.3	295,440 CHF																		

Activities

Activities (per output)
Outcome 1: <i>Vulnerable persons are empowered to influence public policy and its implementation, ensuring improved access to inclusive social services and receiving the support they need</i>
<i>List of activities for output 1.1: Civil society role strengthened to advocate for the rights of vulnerable populations and promote accountability at the local and the national level for inclusive social services delivery</i>
1.1.1 Partner CSOs inform and reach out to marginalized and vulnerable persons and groups on their rights and on the social services they are entitled to, and how they can influence local social care planning and delivery
1.1.2 CSOs and networks supported to engage in policy dialogue on social inclusion and its monitoring
<i>List of activities for output 1.2: Availability and frequency of social services are increased, with enhanced quality and outreach, to support the needs of underserved communities in left behind municipalities</i>
1.2.1 Support to selected municipalities for establishment of comprehensive models for the delivery of new / additional social services at the local level
Outcome 2: <i>National and local institutions effectively implement the social protection policy framework and financing mechanisms to optimize social service delivery across Albania</i>
<i>List of activities for output 2.1: Ministries and agencies in social services and inclusive education have enhanced capacity to coordinate cross-sectoral policy implementation and to ensure sustainability and predictability of social service financing mechanisms</i>
2.1.1 Strengthening government capacity to monitor implementation of the social services and social inclusion legal, policy, regulatory, and financial frameworks
2.1.2 Consolidating MES and ASCAP capacity to ensure quality inclusive education provision
2.1.3 Strengthening SSS capacity to oversee the implementation of social services delivery (at local, regional and national level) and the effectiveness of monitoring and reporting systems of social service provision
2.1.4 Strengthening SSS capacity to provide technical, methodological and capacity building support to municipalities and service providers
<i>List of activities for output 2.2: Municipalities and service providers capacitated to effectively deliver integrated social services responsive to local needs</i>
2.2.1 Support organizational development and capacities of 'left-behind' municipalities to strengthen planning, provision and monitoring of social services
2.2.2 Support to specific municipalities linked to the development of local financing and operation of the Local Social Fund
<i>List of activities for output 2.3: Professionalization of social care workforce and service providers enhanced, and networking and peer learning mechanisms expanded to foster mutual learning and innovation</i>
2.3.1 Support to university partners in the further development of continuous education training offer for the social care workforce in partnership with Swiss Centre of Excellence (HSLU)
2.3.2 Support workforce partners to consolidate peer exchange networks and good practice sharing and support to universities in the consolidation of knowledge sharing mechanisms

Annex B: LNB 3 Programme – Detailed Budget

Annex B1: Detailed Budget per Intervention (Outcome; Output; Activity)

Description	Total SDC Contribution Budget (CHF)
Outcome 1: Vulnerable persons are empowered to influence public policy and its implementation, ensuring improved access to inclusive social services and receiving the support they need	
Output 1.1: Civil society role strengthened to advocate for the rights of vulnerable populations and promote accountability at the local and the national level for inclusive social services delivery	343,660
Activity 1.1.1: Partner CSOs inform and reach out to marginalized and vulnerable persons and groups on their rights and on the social services they are entitled to, and how they can influence local social care planning and delivery	162,710
Activity 1.1.2: CSOs and networks supported to engage in policy dialogue on social inclusion and its monitoring	180,950
Output 1.2: Availability & frequency of social services are increased, with enhanced quality and outreach, to support the needs of underserved communities in left behind municipalities (grants for services)	327,240
Activity 1.2.1: Support to selected municipalities for establishment of comprehensive models for the delivery of new / additional social services at the local level (social fund)	327,240
Subtotal Outcome 1	670,900
Outcome 2: National and local institutions effectively implement the social protection policy framework and financing mechanisms to optimize social service delivery across Albania	
Output 2.1: Ministries and agencies in social services and inclusive education have enhanced capacity to coordinate cross-sectoral policy implementation and to ensure sustainability and predictability of social service financing mechanisms	597,256
Activity 2.1.1: Strengthening government capacity to monitor implementation of the social services and social inclusion legal, policy, regulatory, and financial frameworks	243,975
Activity 2.1.2: Consolidating MES and ASCAP capacity to ensure quality inclusive education provision	180,581
Activity 2.1.3: Strengthening SSS capacity to oversee the implementation of social services delivery (at local, regional and national level) and the effectiveness of monitoring and reporting systems of social service provision	45,430
Activity 2.1.4: Strengthening SSS capacity to provide technical, methodological and capacity building support to municipalities and service providers	127,270
Output 2.2: Municipalities and service providers capacitated to effectively deliver integrated social services responsive to local needs	286,871
Activity 2.2.1: Support organizational development and capacities of 'left-behind' municipalities to strengthen planning, provision and monitoring of social services	130,071
Activity 2.2.2: Support to specific municipalities linked to the development of local financing and operation of the Local Social Fund	156,800
Output 2.3: Professionalization of social care workforce and service providers enhanced, and networking and peer learning mechanisms expanded to foster mutual learning and innovation	295,440
Activity 2.3.1: Support to university partners in the further development of continuous education training offer for the social care workforce in partnership with Swiss Centre of Excellence (HSLU)	154,560
Activity 2.3.2: Support workforce partners to consolidate peer exchange networks and good practice sharing and support to universities in the consolidation of knowledge sharing mechanisms	140,880
Subtotal Outcome 2	1,179,567
Total programme expenditure (outcomes, outputs, activities)	1,850,467
Administrative Agent fee (1%)	20,000
Management fee (7%)	129,533
Grand Total (LNB 3 budget contribution from SDC)	2,000,000

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Annex B2: Detailed Budget per Year

Description	Total SDC Contribution Budget (CHF)	Year 2026	Year 2027
Outcome 1: Vulnerable persons are empowered to influence public policy and its implementation, ensuring improved access to inclusive social services and receiving the support they need			
Output 1.1: Civil society role strengthened to advocate for the rights of vulnerable populations and promote accountability at the local and the national level for inclusive social services delivery	343,660	171,830	171,830
Activity 1.1.1: Partner CSOs inform and reach out to marginalized and vulnerable persons and groups on their rights and on the social services they are entitled to, and how they can influence local social care planning and delivery	162,710	81,355	81,355
Activity 1.1.2: CSOs and networks supported to engage in policy dialogue on social inclusion and its monitoring	180,950	90,475	90,475
Output 1.2: Availability & frequency of social services are increased, with enhanced quality and outreach, to support the needs of underserved communities in left behind municipalities (grants for services)	327,240	163,620	163,620
Activity 1.2.1: Support to selected municipalities for establishment of comprehensive models for the delivery of new / additional social services at the local level (social fund)	327,240	163,620	163,620
Subtotal Outcome 1	670,900	335,450	335,450
Outcome 2: National and local institutions effectively implement the social protection policy framework and financing mechanisms to optimize social service delivery across Albania			
Output 2.1: Ministries and agencies in social services and inclusive education have enhanced capacity to coordinate cross-sectoral policy implementation and to ensure sustainability and predictability of social service financing mechanisms	597,256	298,628	298,628
Activity 2.1.1: Strengthening government capacity to monitor implementation of the social services and social inclusion legal, policy, regulatory, and financial frameworks	243,975	121,988	121,988
Activity 2.1.2: Consolidating MES and ASCAP capacity to ensure quality inclusive education provision	180,581	90,291	90,291
Activity 2.1.3: Strengthening SSS capacity to oversee the implementation of social services delivery (at local, regional and national level) and the effectiveness of monitoring and reporting systems of social service provision	45,430	22,715	22,715
Activity 2.1.4: Strengthening SSS capacity to provide technical, methodological and capacity building support to municipalities and service providers	127,270	63,635	63,635
Output 2.2: Municipalities and service providers capacitated to effectively deliver integrated social services responsive to local needs	286,871	143,436	143,436
Activity 2.2.1: Support organizational development and capacities of 'left-behind' municipalities to strengthen planning, provision and monitoring of social services	130,071	65,036	65,036
Activity 2.2.2: Support to specific municipalities linked to the development of local financing and operation of the Local Social Fund	156,800	78,400	78,400
Output 2.3: Professionalization of social care workforce and service providers enhanced, and networking and peer learning mechanisms expanded to foster mutual learning and innovation	295,440	147,720	147,720
Activity 2.3.1: Support to university partners in the further development of continuous education training offer for the social care workforce in partnership with Swiss Centre of Excellence (HSLU)	154,560	77,280	77,280
Activity 2.3.2: Support workforce partners to consolidate peer exchange networks and good practice sharing and support to universities in the consolidation of knowledge sharing mechanisms	140,880	70,440	70,440
Subtotal Outcome 2	1,179,567	589,784	589,784
Total programme expenditure (outcomes, outputs, activities)	1,850,467	925,234	925,234
Administrative Agent fee (1%)	20,000	10,000	10,000
Management fee (7%)	129,533	64,766	64,766
Grand Total (LNB 3 budget contribution from SDC)	2,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000

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Annex B3: Detailed Budget per Agency

Description	Total SDC Contribution Budget (CHF)	UNDP	UNICEF	UNFPA	UNW
Outcome 1: Vulnerable persons are empowered to influence public policy and its implementation, ensuring improved access to inclusive social services and receiving the support they need					
Output 1.1: Civil society role strengthened to advocate for the rights of vulnerable populations and promote accountability at the local and the national level for inclusive social services delivery	343,660	203,670	0	45,450	94,540
Activity 1.1.1: Partner CSOs inform and reach out to marginalized and vulnerable persons and groups on their rights and on the social services they are entitled to, and how they can influence local social care planning and delivery	162,710	90,900	0	27,270	44,540
Activity 1.1.2: CSOs and networks supported to engage in policy dialogue on social inclusion and its monitoring	180,950	112,770	0	18,180	50,000
Output 1.2: Availability & frequency of social services are increased, with enhanced quality and outreach, to support the needs of underserved communities in left behind municipalities (grant for services)	327,240	272,700	36,360	18,180	0
Activity 1.2.1: Support to selected municipalities for establishment of comprehensive models for the delivery of new / additional social services at the local level (social fund)	327,240	272,700	36,360	18,180	0
Subtotal Outcome 1	670,900	476,370	36,360	63,630	94,540
Outcome 2: National and local institutions effectively implement the social protection policy framework and financing mechanisms to optimize social service delivery across Albania					
Output 2.1: Ministries and agencies in social services and inclusive education have enhanced capacity to coordinate cross-sectoral policy implementation and to ensure sustainability and predictability of social service financing mechanisms	597,256	209,090	289,661	44,358	54,147
Activity 2.1.1: Strengthening government capacity to monitor implementation of the social services and social inclusion legal, policy, regulatory, and financial frameworks	243,975	118,200	27,270	44,358	54,147
Activity 2.1.2: Consolidating MES and ASCAP capacity to ensure quality inclusive education provision	180,581	0	180,581	0	0
Activity 2.1.3: Strengthening SSS capacity to oversee the implementation of social services delivery (at local, regional and national level) and the effectiveness of monitoring and reporting systems of social service provision	45,430	45,430	0	0	0
Activity 2.1.4: Strengthening SSS capacity to provide technical, methodological and capacity building support to municipalities and service providers	127,270	45,460	81,810	0	0
Output 2.2: Municipalities and service providers capacitated to effectively deliver integrated social services responsive to local needs	286,871	205,071	81,800	0	0
Activity 2.2.1: Support organizational development and capacities of 'left-behind' municipalities to strengthen planning, provision and monitoring of social services	130,071	130,071	0	0	0
Activity 2.2.2: Support to specific municipalities linked to the development of local financing and operation of the Local Social Fund	156,800	75,000	81,800	0	0
Output 2.3: Professionalization of social care workforce and service providers enhanced, and networking and peer learning mechanisms expanded to foster mutual learning and innovation	295,440	195,450	45,450	18,180	36,360
Activity 2.3.1: Support to university partners in the further development of continuous education training offer for the social care workforce in partnership with Swiss Centre of Excellence (HSLU)	154,560	118,200	0	18,180	18,180
Activity 2.3.2: Support workforce partners to consolidate peer exchange networks and good practice sharing and support to universities in the consolidation of knowledge sharing mechanisms	140,880	77,250	45,450	0	18,180
Subtotal Outcome 2	1,179,567	609,611	416,911	62,538	90,507
Total programme expenditure (outcomes, outputs, activities)	1,850,467	1,085,981	453,271	126,168	185,047
Administrative Agent fee (1%)	20,000				
Management fee (7%)	129,533	76,019	31,729	8,832	12,953
Grand Total (LNB 3 budget contribution from SDC)	2,000,000	1,162,000	485,000	135,000	198,000

Annex C: LNB 3 Programme – Exit Strategy

The programme’s intervention approach is designed to support implementation and further development of Albanian policies and strategies relevant for the social protection and social inclusion of vulnerable persons and marginalized groups, and to support further expansion of social care and services provision in Albania targeted to address the needs of the vulnerable.

This will be realized by contributing to the transfer and further scaling-up of the results and the sustainability of the social service reform process via consolidation of partners’ capacities to sustain and further operate the systems and results of the LNB programme. The exit phase programme will achieve this by supporting national and local institutions and civil society partners implement actions strengthening capacity, policy and operational frameworks for the delivery of social services in Albania. The end goal is that partners utilize and further develop the results and benefits going forward, as further roll-out of the social care reform process and the expansion of social service provision progresses over the medium- and longer-term. There is significant scope to scale-up and locally replicate the results and proven models for services.

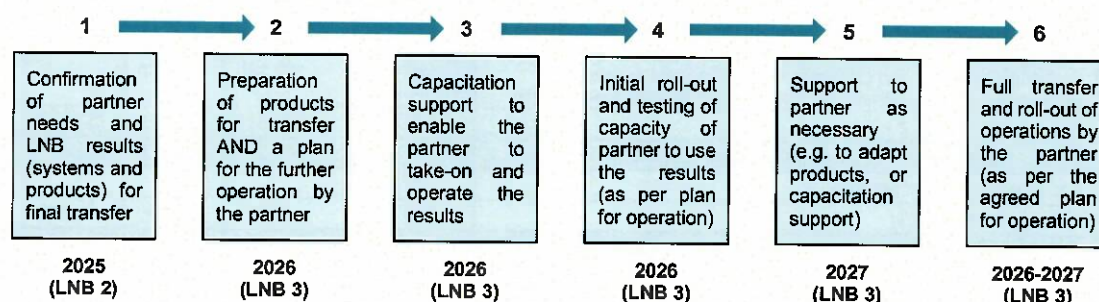
Linked to ensuring that partners are capacitated to sustain and utilize the results, notably at the level of central government, it is essential that operational plans be put in place setting out how the results will be managed and applied, including scaled-up, over the medium-term. While the municipalities are directly responsible for the local provision of social services, the national authorities are responsible to support the decentralized regional bodies and local governments (municipalities) in their provision and delivery of essential local public services. Via strengthening the capacities of national authorities to provide such guidance, financing and technical support, the municipalities will be enabled to develop their local provision of services.

The timeframe for implementation of LNB 3 is twenty-four months, from January 2026 to the end of December 2027. The detailed Work Plan for the two-year period of the LNB 3 programme will be prepared under the LNB 2 programme, by December 2025 at the latest.

The principal intervention instruments to be deployed by the programme to support system building and capacity development of the partners are capacity building and organizational development. This will be complemented by policy advice to support national authorities linked to policy implementation and development of the regulatory and financing frameworks. Small-scale direct co-financing grant to municipalities to introduce new services will also be provided. The programme will also intervene to support knowledge sharing processes and partnerships. The programme is supported by continuous policy dialogue, notably with central government.

The overall methodological approach underlying the exit phase programme is structured to follow a standard, generic process for the delivery of institutional capacity development and organizational change. The process is adaptable to respect the different roles and functions of the partners, as well as the different extent to which partners need further capacitation.

The six phases of the process for results transfer and capacitation of partners are as follows:



The **first phase** of the process is to be completed under LNB 2 during autumn 2025, in follow-up to the LNB 3 Planning and Validation Workshop with programme partners in June 2025. At the workshop the specific goals and intervention approach of the programme were reviewed and validated by the partners. The workshop agreed further steps to be completed in autumn 2025, by LNB 2, in order to concretely define key partners' specific needs and detail how LNB 3 will support the different partners to take-over the transfer and sustainable operation of LNB programme results and systemic processes. LNB 3's Work Plan for the two-year period of the programme will cover actions linked to the transfer of results and capacitation of partners, plus programme actions linked to unfinished business and support for left-behind municipalities, and other emerging priorities of the partners that support consolidation of partners' capacities. Alongside the annual workplan, the visibility and communication plan will be developed, with input from all UN agencies.

Under the **second phase** of the process for results transfer and capacitation of partners the programme will work with partners to finalize LNB products for formal transfer. Certain products may need to be adapted to provide the partner with user-friendly documentation, or additional process guidance or updated templates and checklists, tools, etc., linked to how to utilize products or how to fulfil key tasks of implementation. Some training products may need additional guidance for the partner in the form of teaching methodology and notes, or a training-of-trainers component, some may benefit from being converted into online tools and resources. It is possible a limited range of additional products are identified by LNB and its partners that the LNB 3 programme could support partners develop, to complement LNB's existing portfolio. The extent to which LNB systems or products need to be adapted prior to formal transfer, rather than handed-over immediately, will be scoped by LNB 2 with partners in autumn 2025. It is assumed the need for adaptation of products to ensure user-friendly documentation or additional process guidance etc., primarily relates to LNB results to be transferred to the SSS and MHSP. In addition, LNB knowledge sharing and good practice products need to be further developed prior to their transfer to local partners and online Knowledge Hub resource centre.

The transfer of LNB results shall be accompanied by an action plan for the further operation of the systems and results by the partner over the medium-term, for instance key milestones and outputs. If the partner needs further capacitation support to take-on and operate the results, the plan shall also indicate the forms of LNB 3 support plus the key milestones and outputs.

Under the **third phase** of the process for results transfer and capacitation of partners the programme will deliver the specific LNB 3 capacitation supports envisaged – capacity building and organizational development – tailored to the needs of the individual partner institutions, so as to enable the partners' to integrate the LNB results and processes within their operational systems for the implementation and sustainable delivery of the social service reform process. LNB 3 support will also be delivered for left-behind municipalities – including via small-scale direct co-financing grant to municipalities – and other emerging priorities (such as the operation by municipalities of the Local Social Fund), as well as support to CSOs and workforce professionalization partners to further develop capacity and advance social service reforms.

Under the **fourth phase** the partners will take-over the operation and management processes for implementation of the systems and the production of results linked to social service reform and the delivery of social care services and social inclusion measures. The key milestones and outputs to be delivered (for instance, annual monitoring reports, number of training courses offered and staff trained, participatory consultation meetings and policy dialogue conducted between duty bearers and rights holders, provision of new social care services) will be set-out in the action plan for the further operation of the systems and results by the partner.

Whereas the purpose of the fourth phase is to test the capacity of partners to use and operate the systems and results, LNB 3 mentoring support may be provided to partners as requested.

Under the **fifth phase** of the process, further capacitation support will be provided to partners as necessary. It is assumed the focus of such support during 2027 will primarily be on ensuring the capacities of the SSS and MHSP to fully utilize and operate the systems and results and to integrate these into national and local policies and practices, as well as their generation of evidence-based policy analysis to support further scaling-up of the social service results. Focus will be set on aspects of the sustainability of financing at the local and national level. In addition, LNB 3 will continue to focus on the further development and consolidation of LNB programme good practice models and the institutionalization of peer learning mechanisms.

The **final phase** of the process of results transfer and capacitation of partners represents the full transfer of the LNB results, with the results sustained and further operated and delivered by the partner via their full integration into their organizational and management systems.

In order to achieve the programme’s objectives and to bring about change, continuous policy dialogue is required, especially with the central government representatives, but also with the authorities at local level. The dialogue is to create awareness about the programme and its support provided to the social protection and inclusion reforms, and, in more general terms, the necessity and the interest of all to promote social inclusion and the ways to go about it. Continued advocacy is an important policy dialogue tool in favour of increasing funding for the social protection system and to coordinate efforts to pool and maximize available resources.

The end of programme vision is that the programme partners are technically and financially capacitated to implement and further scale-up the pace of roll-out of social protection (social services) reforms and social inclusion measures in Albania, to ensure continued annual growth in the provision of local social services and integrated service packages targeted to the needs of the different categories of vulnerable people and marginalized groups across the country. The end of programme vision assumes continued commitment of the Government to scale-up the pace of roll-out of the reforms – including via policy and technical guidance and capacity building support to the municipalities and service providers, and the continued growth of budgetary means allocated to the Social Fund and for other social inclusion measures – in line with the Government’s commitment to address the challenges of poverty or social exclusion in Albania, to deliver progress on the SDGs, and progress toward Albania’s accession to the EU.

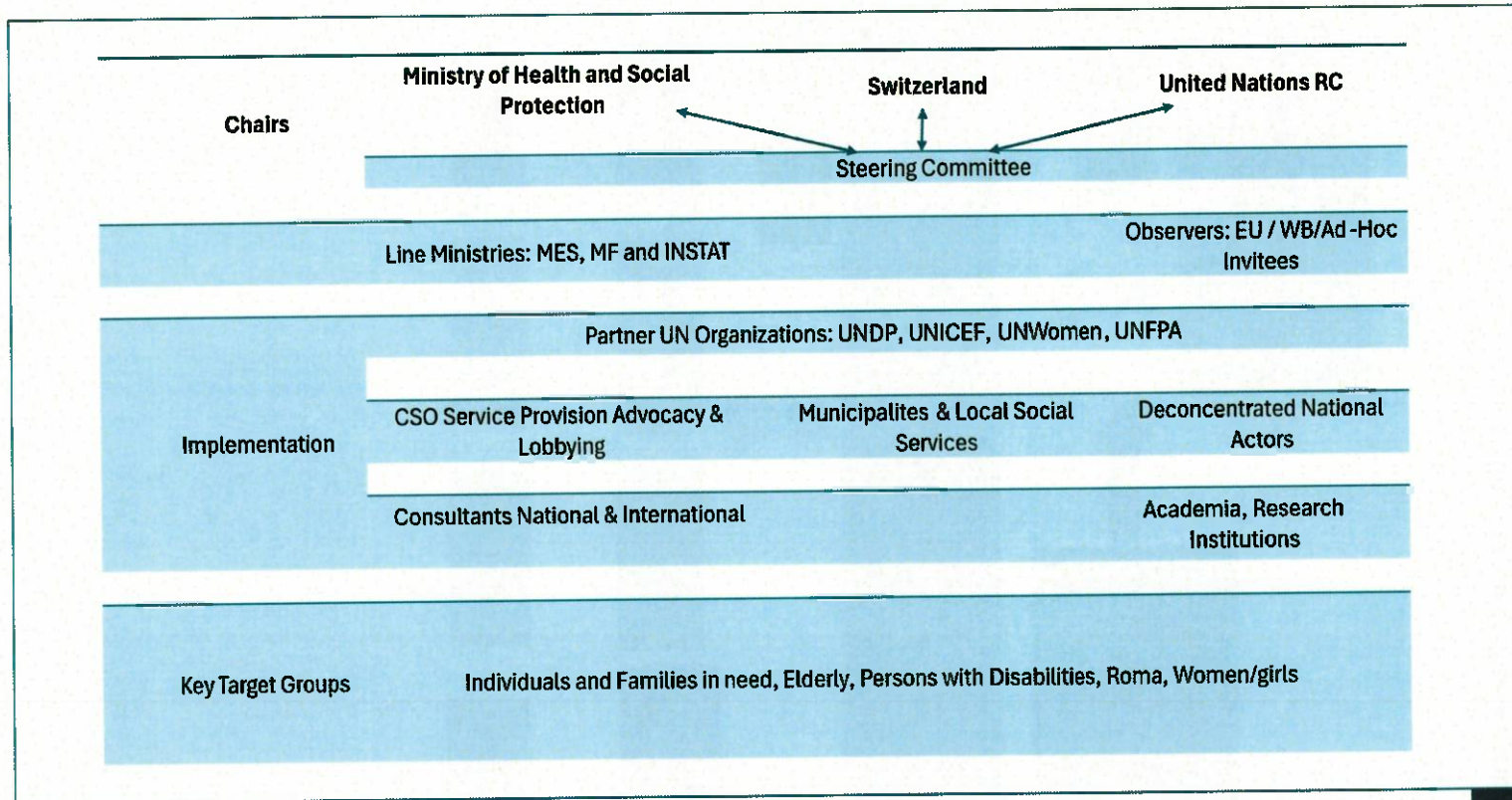
Annex D: LNB 3 Programme – M&E instruments and actions

Monitoring Category	Purpose	Activity	Responsible Parties	Frequency	Expected Follow-up Action	Templates/ Tools to Use
Track Results Progress	Collect and analyze data against indicators in the Logical Results Framework (LRF) to assess progress toward outputs.	Field mission reports, joint field visits	LNB Team, Quality Assurance M&E Analyst, UNDP Social Inclusion Cluster Specialist, UN Agencies, SDC	Semi-annually or as needed	Address delays or bottlenecks through adaptive management and coordination	Logical Results Framework
Analyse Evidence	Assess progress against baselines, milestones, and targets; analyse alignment with the Theory of Change; identify enabling and hindering factors.	Program me meetings (TC/SC), progress reporting, results reviews	LNB Team, Technical Committee (TC)	Semi-annually	Inform management decisions and strategic adjustments	Programme Reports, Logical Results Framework, AWP
Monitor and Manage Risk	Identify and monitor risks affecting results achievement. Track mitigation measures using the Risk Log.	Program me meetings, Progress reports	Programme Specialist, LNB Team	Semi-annually	Update risk log regularly; escalate significant risks; adjust strategies accordingly	Risk Log
Capture Lessons Learned	Systematically document lessons, good practices, and knowledge for use in programme management and future design.	Steering Committee (SC) meetings	LNB Team	Annually	Integrate lessons into planning, implementation, and reporting	Programme Reports

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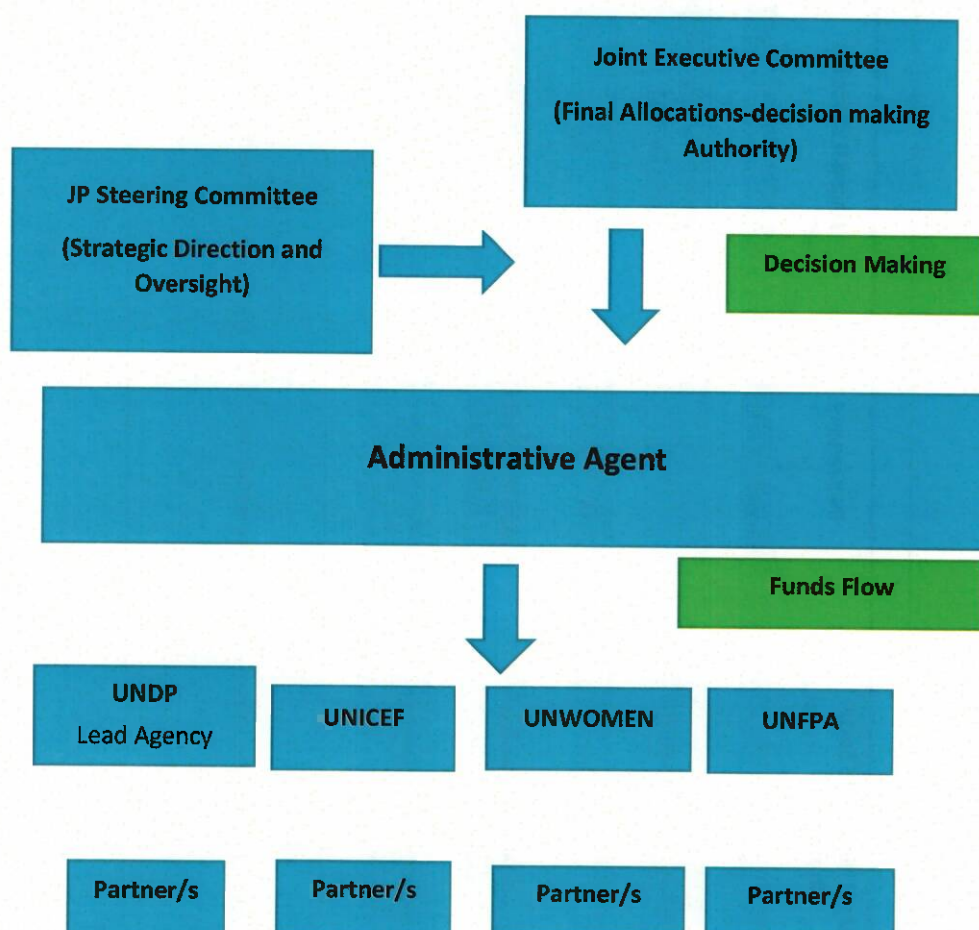
Monitoring Category	Purpose	Activity	Responsible Parties	Frequency	Expected Follow-up Action	Templates/ Tools to Use
Project Quality Assurance	Assess project quality against UN agency standards to identify strengths, gaps, and opportunities for improvement.	Quality assurance reviews	Programme Coordinator, Quality Assurance M&E Analyst	Annually	Improve performance, efficiency, and effectiveness of delivery	UNDP Quality Assurance Tools
Review and Corrections	Internal review of performance data and monitoring outputs to inform programme decisions.	TC/SC meetings	LNB Team, Programme Specialist	Annually or as needed	Enable timely course corrections and ensure strategic alignment	AWP, Programme Reports
Programme Reporting	Provide stakeholders with comprehensive updates on achievements, risks, and lessons.	Progress reports	LNB Team, UNDP Social Inclusion Cluster Specialist	Semi-annually, annually, and final report	Inform decision-makers, steering committees, and donors; ensure transparency and accountability	Programme Reports
Programme Evaluation	Conduct a summative evaluation of results and impact contribution, with recommendations for sustainability and next steps. Include a formative review of pathways for improving social services and inclusion.	End-of-phase external evaluation	LNB Team, Quality Assurance M&E Analyst, UNDP Social Inclusion Cluster Specialist, SDC, External Evaluator (national expert/s)	End of phase	Inform future programming and support evidence-based decision-making	UNDP Evaluation Guidelines

Annex E: LNB 3 Programme – Institutional Set-up



Annex F LNB 3 Programme – Governance Architecture

SDG Acceleration Funding Mechanism⁴⁸



⁴⁸ The funds for the implementation of this Joint Programme will be allocated through UN Albania SDG Acceleration Fund.

Annex G LNB 3 Programme – Terms of Reference of the Steering Committee for the joint programme “Leave No One Behind” (LNB)

Introduction

The “Leave No One Behind” (LNB) programme is a Joint Programme implemented by four UN partner agencies in Albania (UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, and UNWOMEN). UNDP is the lead UN agency for overall implementation and coordination of the Joint Programme. The LNB programme is financed by the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC). The first two phases of the programme (since June 2017), are funded by SDC at the amount of Swiss Francs (CHF) 8.0 million each. The exit phase of the programme is planned to be implemented over a 24-months period, from January 2026 to December 2027, with SDC funding at the amount of CHF 2 million.

The LNB programme aims to support the national roll-out of the reform of social care services in Albania, commenced in 2017, in line with the government’s strategic priorities to improve the coverage and targeting of social protection, social care and social inclusion measures targeting vulnerable persons and marginalized groups at risk of poverty or exclusion. The programme intervenes on three inter-related levels, the system level (national government), the social service provision and delivery level (local government, public and non-public social service providers), and at the community level (citizen empowerment, civil society advocacy).

Building upon the progress achieved during the previous years in the roll-out of Albania’s social care service and social inclusion reforms, the exit phase LNB programme focuses on the consolidation of programme partners’ capacities (a) to ensure the sustainable operation and utilization of the LNB programme results/systems and (b) to ensure further development of the policy, financial and operational systems for the delivery and further scaling-up of social services in Albania targeted to the needs of vulnerable persons and marginalized groups.

The principal partners for the LNB programme are the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, the State Social Service, the Ministry of Education and Sport (in the area inclusive education), Albania’s municipalities (with direct responsibility for local social service provision), local social service providers, workforce profession partners and academia, civil society organizations representing vulnerable persons and groups, and vulnerable persons as the final beneficiaries.

The conceptual framework for the LNB 3 programme is guided by the demarcation between rights holders (Outcome 1) and duty bearers (Outcome 2). The overall aim of the exit phase LNB programme is for Albania to ensure scaled-up provision of social care services across the entire country, contributing to increased social and economic inclusion and opportunities for the advancement of vulnerable or marginalized persons. The programme goal is that vulnerable persons, especially people at risk of exclusion, have increased access to local social services and integrated models of support that address their needs, reinforce their well-being and promotes their social inclusion. The programme outcomes are: (1) Vulnerable persons are empowered to influence public policy and its implementation, ensuring improved access to inclusive social services and receiving the support they need; (2) National and local institutions effectively implement the social protection policy framework and financing mechanisms to optimize social service delivery across Albania.

The role of the Programme Steering Committee

The overall objective of the Programme Steering Committee (SC) is to oversee and coordinate the operations of LNB programme. Based on the programme’s initial plan and budget as well as on monitoring data, the SC oversees the programme’s implementation and takes all necessary strategic decisions. It will provide policy guidance and recommendation regarding the programme strategy and objectives, receive and comment semi-annual reports, approve

annual plans of operation and reports, and participate in the possible realization of a mid-term and end of phase evaluation.

Structure of the Steering Committee

The SC will be co-chaired by the Embassy of Switzerland, Ministry of Health and Social Protection and UN Resident Coordinator. It shall consist of members from key stakeholders involved in the programme and will include representatives from:

Members:

1. Ministry of Health and Social Protection

- Deputy Minister of Health and Social Protection (**co-chair**) one vote
- Senior staff (director) assigned to Social Protection Policies and Development portfolio
- State Social Services

2. Senior representatives from other selected Ministries (no vote)

- Senior staff of Ministry of Education and Sports
- Senior Staff of Ministry of Finance

3. Embassy of Switzerland in Albania

- Ambassador / Head of Cooperation (**co-chair**) one vote with veto
- National Programme Officer

4. United Nations in Albania

- The UN Resident Coordinator (**co-chair**) one vote
- Heads of Participating UN Organizations: UNDP, UNICEF, UN Women, UNFPA

5. Local government no right to vote

- At least two Municipalities representatives benefiting from the programme

6. Other Members: no right to vote

- INSTAT
- At least two representatives of civil society organizations

Observers:

- EU Delegation in Albania
- World Bank

Ad-hoc members and observers can be invited to any SC meeting as requested by SC members and they may include other multilateral organizations, interested donors, development partners, academia, and representatives of projects working in the area of social inclusion and protection.

Secretariat:

The LNB Technical Committee serves as the Secretariat of the Steering Committee. It is composed of:

- Participating UN agencies (UNDP, UNICEF, UN Women and UNFPA)
- LNB Programme coordinator and key staff

The SC will be linked to both the Government-led coordination structures and the UN DaO structures. The Steering Committee will serve as a sub-set of the Outcome A Group of the Government of Albania and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework - UNSDCF 2022-2026.

Specific tasks of the Programme Steering Committee:

The Steering Committee meeting is organized into two sessions: the first focusing on progress reporting of the LNB programme and presentation of the upcoming annual workplan; the second dedicated to strategic steering and decision-making. More specifically:

- Review highlight reports at each meeting which are prepared by the Programme Staff and submitted to members of the Steering Committee 5 to 10 working days before each meeting;
- Review and approve the Annual Workplan of the Programme based on the programme's initial plan and budget
- Take stock at regular annual intervals of the progress of work by the Programme team in line with an agreed work plan the programme for its entire duration.
- Oversee and monitor indicators of progress, major milestones, evaluations and their follow-up;
- Comment on risks analysis and be an important instrument for policy dialogue to prevent them and come up with mitigation measures;
- Provide policy guidance and recommendation regarding the project strategy and objectives; guarantee cooperation and coordination;
- Review and endorse any strategic issues brought forward for the consideration of the SC.
- Participate in field visits in the project sites (SC members individually or jointly) to make first hand observations which will feed into the steering capacities;
- Ensure the observance of and address recurrently the two cross-cutting themes: governance and gender equality.

Strategic Steering

Only the co-chairs of the Steering Committee and the heads of the participating UN Agencies remain in the room for the final session of the Steering Committee meeting. The purpose of this session is to provide the co-chairs and the representatives of the UN organizations with the opportunity to discuss all topics presented in the SC, agree on next steps, and formally approve the annual report, the AWP, and any other key decisions.

Decision Making

Decisions of the SC shall be reached by consensus. If no consensus can be reached during a meeting, a negotiation process is started, and a second meeting is called. If no consensus can be reached in the second meeting, then the three co-chairs shall take the decision.

Frequency of meetings

As a rule, the SC will meet at least once a year, and upon necessity. The SC co-chairs can request a meeting of the SC within a week, if need be.

Quorum

For a SC to be held a quorum of 8 members must be present. This quorum should include the co-chairs, the representative of lead implementing agency, one representative from civil society and one representative from the municipalities. If a quorum is not reached when first request for meeting is announced, the SC may go ahead (in its second call for meeting) with co-chairs, lead implementing agency and other members present.

Annex I UN Programme Interventions in Social Protection and Social Inclusion in Albania

Government of Albania and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), 2022-2026

NATIONAL PRIORITY A: Human capital development & social inclusion

Outcome A: By 2026 there is increased and more equitable investment in people, removing barriers and creating opportunities for those at risk of exclusion

Output 1: Social protection systems and mechanisms are strengthened to increase the coverage, quality, and monitoring of cash benefits and social care services and housing for vulnerable groups.

The projects/programmes/interventions presented below show operational projects contributing to Outcome A of UNSDCF. Financial data show approximate values in USD*.

UN Agency	Projects	Project Acronym	Donor	Funded*	In pipeline	Status Ongoing/ completed
UNDP, UNICEF, UNW, UNFPA	Leave No One Behind (second phase)	LNB2	Switzerland	8,700,000		Ongoing
UNDP	Strengthen national and local systems 4 socio-economic integration of returnees in Western Balkans” - RRR	RRR	EU	1,350,000		Completed
UNDP, UNICEF, UN Women, UNFPA, WHO, ILO	Municipal Social Protection Service Delivery	IMSPSD	SDG fund	1,800,000		Completed
UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA	Support to Joint SDG Financing	SDG Financing	SDG fund	800,000		Completed
UNW	Regional GRB “Transformative Financing for Gender Equality in the Western Balkans”	Regional GRB	Sweden	884,320		Ongoing
UNDP	Expanding Free Legal Aid Services to Vulnerable Women and Men	EFLAS	Austria	2,200,000	1,500,000	Ongoing
UNDP	Legal aid support through e-services	GRoL	UNDP	200,000		Ongoing
UNDP, UNICEF, UNW	Earthquake recovery support - Social Protection, gender equality & child protection.	Earthquake, CP	Albania SDG Acceleration Fund	3,345,000		Completed
UNICEF	Support to recover from COVID	Covid-19	USAID & EU	450,000		Completed
UNICEF	Child and social protection	CP	regular	535,012		Ongoing
UNDP	Improving Community Resilience	ICR	USAID	3,000,000		Completed

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UNICEF	EU for Social Care	EU4SC	EU	1,969,627		Ongoing
UNICEF	Qendro Project	Qendro	Italian Embassy	3,500,000		Ongoing
UNDP, UNICEF, UNWomen, ILO	LEAP Albania - Lifelong Empowerment and Protection in Albania	LEAP	SDG Fund	1,800,000		
UNDP, UNICEF, ILO, UNWomen	Accelerating the transition towards a disability inclusive social protection system and the integration between the social assistance, social services and social insurance systems		SDG Fund		250,000	
Sub Total in USD	32,283,959			30,533,959	1,750,000	
UNDP, UN Women, UNFPA	Ending Violence Against Women in Albania- EAWIA II	EAWIA II	UK	175,000		Ongoing
UNW	Regional EAW programme "Implementing Norms, Changing Minds" - phase II	EAW	Sweden	400,000		Completed
UNDP, UNFPA, UNW	Ending Violence Against Women in Albania- EAW II	EAWIA I	Sweden through Albania SDG Acceleration Fund	3,155,000	1,200,000	Ongoing
UNW	End Violence Against Women in Albania Phase II	EAWIA II	Sweden through SDG Acceleration Fund	2,374,000		Ongoing
UNFPA	Increased access to SRH services in crisis and emergency situations	MISP	regular	100,000		Ongoing
UNFPA	Gender-Responsive Family Friendly Workplaces	GRFFW	Austria	315,000		Ongoing
UNFPA	Reduce Gender Based Violence and Harmful Practices through a Gender Responsive Governance		Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs	1,000,000		Ongoing
Sub Total in USD	8,719,000			7,519,000	1,200,000	
Total in USD	41,002,959			38,052,959	2,950,000	

*approximant amounts as of July 2025

Legend

Closely related to the Leave No One Behind programme

Related to Leave No One Behind programme

Annex B3.A: Detailed Budget per United Nations Development Group Category

UNDG Categories	UNDP	UNICEF	UNFPA	UNWomen
Categories				
1. Staff and other personnel	\$823,970.04	\$37,453.18	\$18,726.59	\$56,179.78
2. Supplies, Commodities, Materials	\$5,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
3. Equipment, Vehicles & Furniture (including Depreciation)	\$11,000.00	\$0.00	\$3,121.10	\$0.00
4. Contractual Services	\$98,606.74	\$276,480.65	\$22,696.63	\$61,182.27
5. Travel	\$12,000.00	\$9,987.52	\$7,490.64	\$2,496.88
6. Transfer and Grants to Counterparts (LoA)	\$374,531.84	\$230,724.09	\$105,478.15	\$111,161.05
7. General Operating and Other Direct Costs	\$30,672.91	\$11,235.96	\$0.00	\$0.00
Sub-Total Project Costs				
8. Indirect Support Costs	\$94,904.71	\$39,611.70	\$11,025.92	\$16,171.40
TOTAL	\$1,450,686.24	\$605,493.10	\$168,539.03	\$247,191.37

*UNORE November 2025 - CHF 0.801

UNDG Categories	UNDP	UNICEF	UNFPA	UNWomen
Categories				
1. Staff and other personnel	CHF 660,000.00	CHF 30,000.00	CHF 15,000.00	CHF 45,000.00
2. Supplies, Commodities, Materials	CHF 4,005.00	CHF 0.00	CHF 0.00	CHF 0.00
3. Equipment, Vehicles & Furniture (including Depreciation)	CHF 8,811.00	CHF 0.00	CHF 2,500.00	CHF 0.00
4. Contractual Services	CHF 78,984.00	CHF 221,461.00	CHF 18,180.00	CHF 49,007.00
5. Travel	CHF 9,612.00	CHF 8,000.00	CHF 6,000.00	CHF 2,000.00
6. Transfer and Grants to Counterparts (LoA)	CHF 300,000.00	CHF 184,810.00	CHF 84,488.00	CHF 89,040.00
7. General Operating and Other Direct Costs	CHF 24,569.00	CHF 9,000.00	CHF 0.00	CHF 0.00
Sub-Total Project Costs				
8. Indirect Support Costs	CHF 76,018.67	CHF 31,728.97	CHF 8,831.76	CHF 12,953.29
TOTAL	CHF 1,161,999.67	CHF 484,999.97	CHF 134,999.76	CHF 198,000.29