



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

**Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC**



Health for All

through women empowerment



Finding your personal path beyond tough beginings!

“She is a woman. She knows nothing!” This was the narrative that bothered Dr. Irma Gishti, a young family doctor in Roskovec.

Dr. Irma was appointed as the director of Health Care Center in 2014 and confesses that the start was difficult. “Not because of my lack of experience in leadership or because I had to be a director as well as a doctor, - she says. - The most disturbing reason was connected to the fact that Albanian society is sceptic about the leading women.” Did she stop and just accepted her “fate” as a woman?

The same reality is hundred kilometres from Roskovec. We met in Dibra, Rovena, who is part of the anti-corruption unit at the Public Health Directorate. “The Dibra district where I live and work, -she says, - has the mentality that the woman must only take care of housework and child education, meanwhile the men must provide the financial support. I have faced many challenges as usually being a woman means that you must be ordered by men and you must not ask for your rights. You have just to be grateful for your workplace.”

Dr. Irma, whom we mentioned in the beginning, worked hard, asked for support and found out that

having the right tools, education, would be one of the most important keys to success. She notices: ‘The Health for All Project’ gave me the possibility to participate in trainings for health management. *Thanks to these trainings I learned what it meant to be a leader and what I should do to show people that we, women, are serious about our work and their scepticism is ill-founded. I understood the weak me and the strong me and I knew where I had to improve. And the result? I felt the change in the perception of my work as woman in the second meeting with the community and local government. They trusted me*’. Few months ago, she was awarded the monthly title as ‘The best doctor’ from the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare.

Similarly, Rovena tells us that now, she feels stronger: “I can express clearly any displeasure, raise my voice and being a woman is not a hardship anymore.”

Dr. Irma and Rovena are among the many women who have been part of the trainings, workshops and experience exchanges carried out by Health for All Project in the districts of Fieri and Dibra. As many other women who attended HAP’s several activities, they feel encouraged to change their way of work by changing their way of thinking.





HAP provides continuous support to health professionals at healthcare centers in districts of Fier and Dibër aiming their capacities enhancement in offering quality healthcare service.

Empowered women - better community service

“During the first months when I was appointed as a family doctor, nobody came in the health care center. We had only 20 - 30 patients every two months who came to get the reimbursed prescriptions and that was all” - remembers Dr. Tushe Qalliu, director of Health Care Center of Aranitas in Fier. “But I wanted to be better. After I was appointed as the director, I searched for and I participated in the trainings of HAP. In the health system, there are a lot of women, but being a man is different in our mentality. Thanks to HAP project I faced a lot of smiley faces and I decided that that was my road too: to smile and respect the people I work with. And so, we have grown up step by step. We face a lot of problems, but now we do not hide them. We discuss and find the proper solutions while giving our people a better quality of health service. One of the key activities of HAP was the ‘Per-SHENDETje’ campaign as all the staff got a proper training and 304 inhabitants got informed on healthy living”.

Dr. Albjona Lamaj, director of Health Care Center of Patos, is another woman whose story we'd like to share. *“I want to thank HAP for the collaboration and for what I am today: a leader capable of taking responsibilities, defending my position, offering*

our citizens better quality of service. When I firstly became a director, I had no experience in leading a team. The project was a wind of change: we improved our service and understood that being better is not only a matter of money or modern infrastructure. HAP taught me I had to be a leader in my team, not a boss. I learned the participatory approach which made possible for the men of my staff to be part of the changes I wanted to implement.”

But this was not all for Albjona. She reflected the skills won in HAP trainings in the Municipality Council, where she is a member: “Thanks to the new capacities I built through the trainings, I was able to improve the quality of life of the people of Patos. My ideas about promoting a healthy lifestyle were supported by the members of the council, 70% of which are men. It happened because I was capable to argue by means of facts. Now I am proud to say that we have a very good collaboration between the Municipality and the Health Care Center”.

Albjona feels confident: “I feel more capable in my work and more professional. And it is not only me. Thanks to HAP Project, the women in my staff, especially nurses, have increased their role and their authority in the eyes of community increasing the quality of service for a better health for all”.



Majlinda Buçi, Mayor of Roskovec, Fieri district, noticed as well that the education provided by HAP has affected all the community: “*A woman can not lead successfully without support and professional preparation. HAP supported us professionally and morally. The project had a direct impact on the community. Now the doctors and nurses that work in the health care centers have better work conditions. These investments have influenced us positively*¹“.

“*HAP has helped us to empower the women role and personally I feel more professional as a nurse*” - says Entela Kaloshi who works at the Kastriot Health

Care (Dibra region). “*My colleagues, nurses who attended the training, also feel more self-confident regarding their role in the society and have spread the knowledge they gained into the community.*”

Rajmonda Balilaj, Mayor of Patos at Fieri district thinks that women leaders in a small city as Patos is, can do a lot for other women and girls. “*As a mayor woman, gender issues are in focus of the politics of our staff-says Rajmonda-evidencing and promoting the women potential, the social projects focused in women, investments dedicated for women and girls are some of the initiatives that we have put our heart on and where we work with devotion and love*”.

What doesn't glow inside, cannot shine outside

The women that participated in HAP project activities started their change from inside (inside themselves and inside the Health Care Centers). Ardiana Kola, head nurse of the Health Care Center of Roskovec says that the trainings and workshops by HAP Project made her understand better the work and built her knowledge on the organization of health service. “*HAP trainings “Communication, Work Group, Leadership, Problems’ solutions” made me understand better my role, - says Ardiana. - The communication between colleagues became easier and more professional, which brought a better collaboration for the work in the health center. The problems’ solutions were more efficient. The growth of self-esteem made me more open. Now I am more confident in the information I give to the patients, an explicit information, which brought me closer to the community*”.

Malvina Manga, director of Health Care Center of Melan, Dibra district feels to have grown professionally: “*I have gained better skills on leadership, the interaction with the community as well as the integrity of the woman in the society. My role as a Family Doctor Peer Review Group (PRG) facilitator improved my qualities as a leader and conveyed a model of the new woman, new doctor who can share information in a professional community. These, raised my confidence in my medical knowledge and the relationships with colleagues.*”

The same happened to Behare Kola, nurse at the Health Care Center of Komsi. She is pleased with the knowledge she got and thinks that it brought progress. “*I think that the knowledge of the rights and obligations empowers women. Because if you do not know your rights, you do not know how to defend yourself, - says Behare. - When talking about HAP Project, I can say*

that undoubtedly it brought progress. Thanks to their collaboration, we know how to transmit the knowledge to our colleagues and the community we work with. This project gave us trust, courage and the model to be successful at our work.”

Even Mbresa Dimo, nurse at Health Care Center of Portëz, feels braver. She confesses: “*Apart from the everyday work and family, I always wanted to do more. And I was trusted with being a facilitator during the HAP Project at the Health Care Center I work. The trainings offered by HAP Project built my capacities as a professional. They raised my self-confidence and made me braver to face different situation in our everyday work and to manage them professionally, ethically and correctly*”.

“*I wanted to change!*” This was the reason for Xhulietë Lika, a nurse in the Health Care Center no.2 of Lushnja, to participate in the HAP trainings. “*The public administration becomes rusty over the years. HAP taught me to trust myself and my colleagues, to improve the communication with them and the patients, to be eloquent, sincere and if I was wrong, to listen to others, regardless of age*”. Now she is convinced that because of the change, she is a better health service provider.

Eljona Troka, nurse at health care center of Frakull shares the same thoughts: “*I learned that women can lead successfully. As a woman, HAP project gave me the opportunity to lead a group of 7 women and 5 men. I think that I did a good job. HAP Project came and showed us by their experience how women can be successful leaders. This made us feel confident and as we had a good model in the trainings, we tried to be such good leaders in our roles as facilitators*”.

¹ Health centers in Roskovec and Steum (Roskovec Municipality) have been rehabilitated by HAP in 2018.



Xhulieta Lika is one of the facilitators of PRG Groups as a Continuous Medical Education tool that is initiated and continually supported by HAP.



47% of community member who participated at the ‘PërSHENDETje’ campaign were males and 53% females.

■ Gender approach as a transversal theme at HAP

The Health for All Project, funded by the Swiss Agency for Cooperation and Development (SDC) and implemented by a Consortium of three partners (Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute (Swiss TPH) with Terre des hommes and Save the Children), started its implementation in 2015. The project goal is: “The Albanian population, benefit from better health thanks to improved primary health care services and health promotion activities.” With the aim of reaching this goal, HAP has been investing in: strengthening healthcare management, improving infrastructure, enhancing transparency and accountability and Continuous Education (CE).

The gender equality and empowerment of women is one of the cross-cutting themes HAP aims to give attention and is seen as an integral part of all the project’s activities in line with SDC’s goals. HAP activities due to their breadth, extension and intensity have reached all primary health care providers (240 FDs and 1100 nurses) and community they served in both regions. Throughout the Swiss portfolio², projects seek to promote gender-sensitive policymaking and increase women’s representation in decision-making processes, as well as decrease

the burden of unpaid work among women and foster their participation in education and the official labor market.

In the Dibra and Fier regions where HAP operates, 80% of the health staff is made up of women and 50% of Primary Health Care Centers Managers are females. Considering such figures, HAP has intervened through several Continuing Education activities that enable female healthcare providers to boost their professional capabilities and skills, raise their self-confidence and self-esteem thus making them feel more professional and appreciated as cited in the statements of this paper. As mentioned in the ICPD³, “*Education is one of the most important means of empowering women with the knowledge, skills and self-confidence necessary to participate fully in the development process*”.

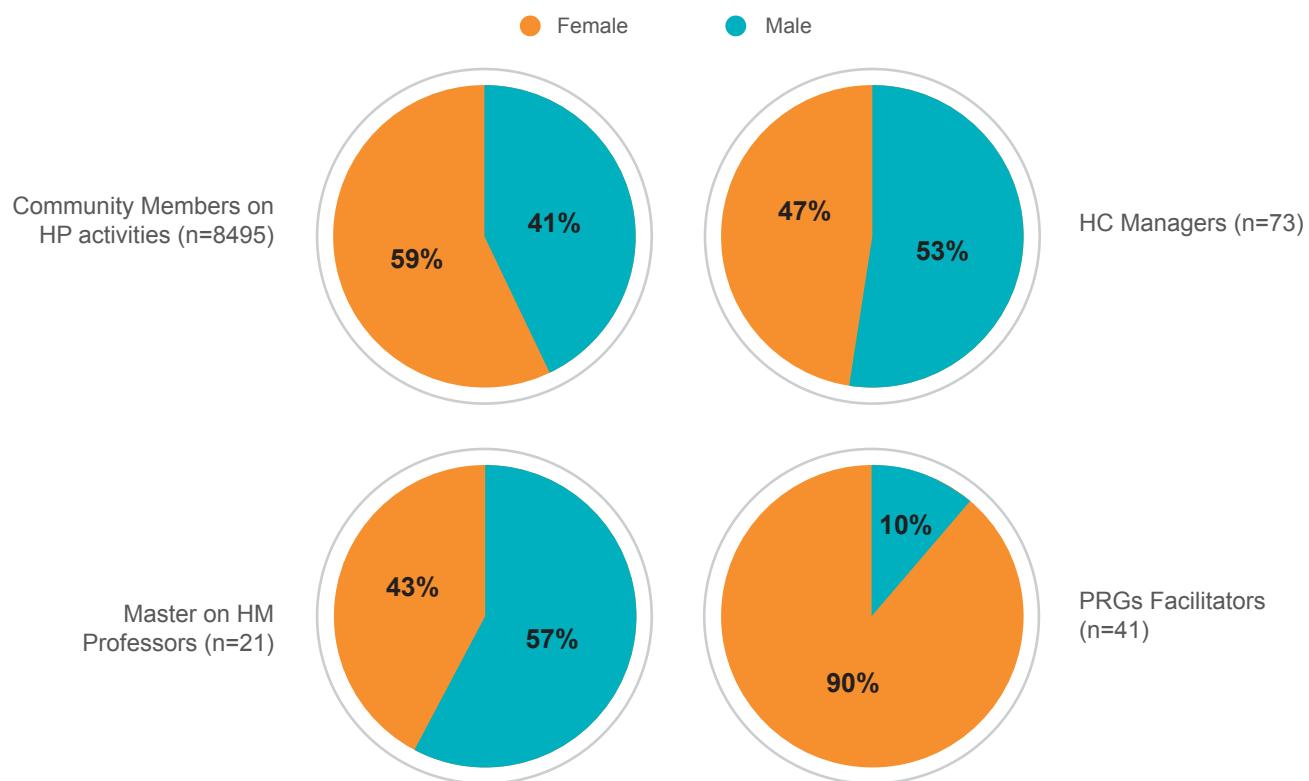
Peer Review Group (PRG) is a continuous medical education tool established and operational at health center level among family doctor and/or nurses. PRG has served as an effective entry point to the “life” of each health center and the service they provide to their community.

² Swiss Cooperation Strategy Albania 2018-2021, pg. 16

³ <http://www.un.org/popin/icpd/conference/offeng/poa.html>



ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT BY HAP



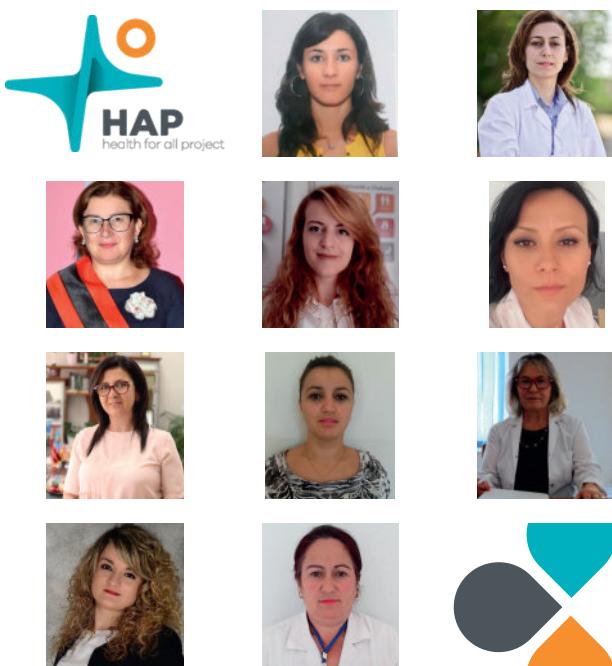
* Health Management Master is the Program that is being provided jointly by Faculty of Medicine and Faculty of Economy.

Additionally, according to SDC⁴, working with gender as a transversal theme is one of the strategies for mainstreaming gender. At a project and sector level, it implies that before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects on women and men respectively. It requires the participation of women as well as men throughout the planning cycle and the systematic integration of their respective priorities and needs.

HAP⁵ monitors systematically participation of both women and men in the project activities and capacity building for women is consistently promoted so to narrow prevailing gender gaps in Albania. In the following table, we have summarized the participation and involvement of women and men in different activities implemented in the frame-work of HAP. It is quite evident that women are predominant in many of HAP supported activities, and further more should be done in increasing their role as leaders, managers and decision makers.

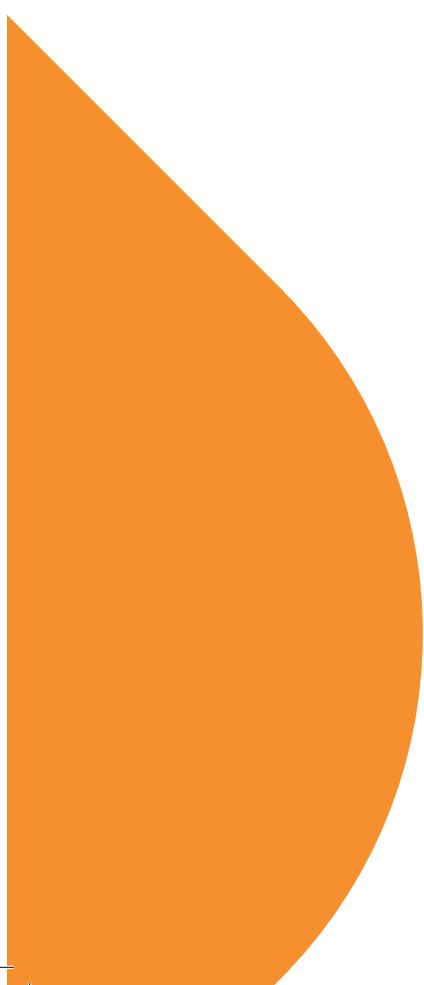
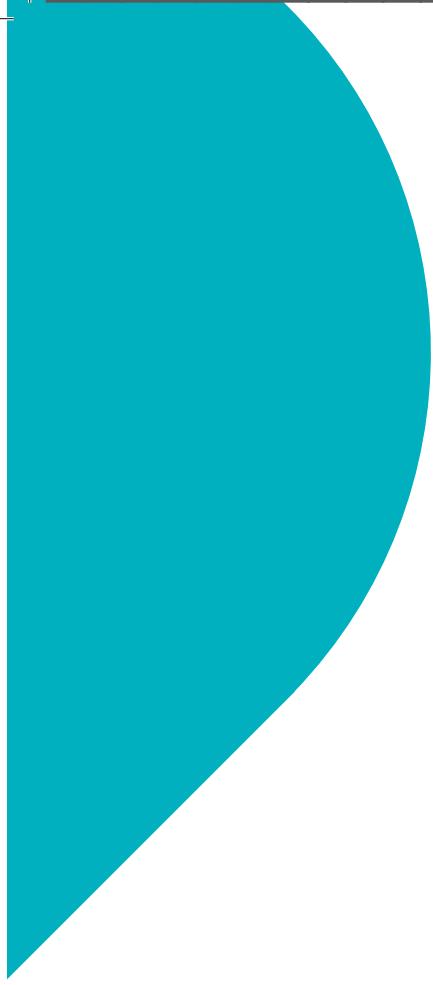
Gender equality is not just a human right, it is a precondition for the development and reducing poverty. Empowered women contribute to the health and productivity of whole families and communities, and they improve prospects for the next generation.

Gender and human resources in health in Albania is a field that should be further studied and analyzed. SDC through HAP has contributed to offer a model on how to narrow gender gaps and change realities. HAP will continue to enlarge its interventions on health system with a focus on reducing gender gaps, not only in human resources in health but also in the framework of service provided, aiming at offering better gender tailored needs services for the Albanian population.



⁴ SDC Gender in practice toolkit

⁵ HAP Intermediate progress report, September 2018



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC

Health for All Project

📍 Ruga Themistokli Gërmenji
Pallati 10, Kati II, Apt. 1
Tirana, Albania

✉️ info@hap.org.al

We are in Social:

facebook Health for All Project-HAP

linkedin Health for All Project (HAP)

instagram health.for.all.project

twitter hap_project

www.hap.org.al