NUMBERS AT A GLANCE

10
Albanian organizations have improved inclusion, empowerment, and accessibility for minority populations

4
Documentaries were produced to showcase and share the lives of individuals from minority populations

300+
People from minority groups, advocates, family members, and the public have been trained, have visited the drop-in center, and have seen the stories shared of several Roma people to improve the awareness and the situation for minority groups in Albania

8
Districts of Albania have more people from minority populations involved and aware of their rights and opportunities

BACKGROUND

Since the end of Communism in Albania in 1990, well-being has declined for the majority of Roma and Egyptians who live in communities throughout the country. Although the Egyptians are somewhat better off, both minority groups remain the most discriminated and socially neglected groups in the country. Over 40% of Roma and 12.7% of Egyptians over 8 years of age are illiterate.

Inclusion and access to opportunities for education or employment are often quite limited for such minority populations in Albania, further isolating individuals and communities. Many Roma children enter school without a basic knowledge of the Albanian language, which makes it increasingly difficult to succeed in the classroom and enter the formal economy. Additionally, children participating in the informal economy—picking through garbage for valuable recyclables, washing windows in the street, or begging—bring financial support for the family, leaving little incentive to attend school. With differing cultural mores and a government chronically short of funds, minority communities continue to feel the effects of exclusion.

While Roma and Egyptian populations face significant challenges, there are several organizations in Albania advocating for more rights, opportunities, and inclusion.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Despite the Decade of Roma Inclusion ending in 2015, much remains to be done focusing on education, employment and social protection, housing and social infrastructure, health, equal opportunities, and cultural heritage. Assist Impact played a significant role in efforts to build capacity, support education, and provide opportunities to get involved in the formal economy for minority populations through entrepreneurship or employment.

Through these activities, over 300 participants in 8 districts of Albania have been involved in discussion and action, capacity-building, and support spaces as follows:

- **Discussion and Action**: a series of roundtable conversations offered meaningful discussion on Roma integration, education, early marriage, discrimination, health, unemployment, and housing. These were followed by the creation of four 15-minute documentaries highlighting Roma role models (a doctor, a welder, several students, and a young women working in an exchange office) who overcame challenges and made exceptional efforts to succeed in life.

Documentaries of Roma individuals who overcame challenges and made exceptional efforts to succeed in life were aired on several Albanian television stations.
ACHIEVEMENTS continued

- **Capacity-building and Employment-creation:** several empowerment programs and vocational training courses around Albania led to greater employment and entrepreneurship in the Roma and Egyptian communities. Trainings were in cooking, sewing, hairdressing, hospitality, tourism, electrical work, plumbing, car mechanics, greenhouse agriculture, and entrepreneurship. Programs also focused on building life skills and preparing business plans. A course for footwear operators was developed for the first time in Albania and allowed people of modest educational background to earn well above the minimum wage making shoes. A young Roma man, who suffered unemployment and discrimination, expanded his micro-business repairing sewing machines after successfully completing a five-month garment machine maintenance course. For both the footwear and garment repair courses, Assist Impact developed the curriculum and created links with the garment and footwear manufacturing industry so that the course would result in employment.

- **Support and Spaces to Learn:** a drop-in center for both children and parents allowed kids to participate in fun and educational activities, provided vaccinations, and even assisted parents in starting small businesses. The center served as a tutoring space, a place to relax, as well as a place to get other resources such as clothing and medicine.

**GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE**

Inclusion and accessibility grant programs included participants in semi-urban and remote rural areas of the following districts:

- Tirana
- Berat
- Durrës
- Elbasan
- Fier
- Korçë
- Librazhd
- Pogradec