



UNIVERSITY "Ss. CYRIL AND METHODIUS" in SKOPJE
FACULTY OF PHILOSOPHY
International Relations and Conflict Management



**UNDP's CONTRIBUTION IN ACHIEVING SDG 10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES TOWARDS
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN KOSOVO AND NORTH MACEDONIA AT THE
CENTRAL AND LOCAL LEVEL**

Doctoral Dissertation

PhD Candidate:
VLORA ARIF ELSHANI

Mentor:
Prof. Dr. LIDIJA GEORGIEVA

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PhD candidate:
VLORA ARIF ELSHANI

Subject:
UNDP's contribution in achieving SDG 10 reduced inequalities towards sustainable development in Kosovo and North Macedonia at the central and local level

Mentor:
Prof. Dr. LIDIJA GEORGIEVA,
Professor at the Faculty of Philosophy and Head of the UNESCO Department for Intercultural Studies and Research

Defence Commission:
Prof. Dr. TONI MILESKI (Committee Chair)
Faculty of Philosophy - UKIM; IIS

Prof. Dr. BILJANA VANKOVSKA,
Faculty of Philosophy - UKIM; IIS

Prof. Dr. JOVAN PEJKOVSKI,
Faculty of Philosophy, UKIM; ISWSP

Prof. Dr. VIOLETA CVETKOVSKA,
Faculty of Economics - UKIM

Scientific field:
CORRESPONDING SCIENTIFIC FIELD - International relations and conflict management (interdisciplinary studies)

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Vlora Arif Elshani

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Doctoral thesis

– A b s t r a c t –

The focus of this research study is to review the UNDP's efforts in reducing inequalities in Kosovo and North Macedonia between 2015 to 2021. The study will utilize a combination of theoretical analysis and document review, including publications, reports, and national development strategies. The aim is to assess how well the UNDP's programs align with the objective of leaving no one behind. The study will cover both national and municipal levels in both countries to provide an understanding of UNDP's impact and its contribution to reducing inequalities. To evaluate progress in reducing inequalities from a sustainability perspective, the study will consolidate relevant information and report on the positive impact of UNDP's interventions in conflict prevention and management. The study will emphasize the importance of integrated approaches with SDGs. Additionally, the study will focus on the main structures and coordinated actions with which UNDP works in both countries to reduce horizontal inequalities. The approach will also assess the role of these actions in contributing to overall performance and stability of the countries and will analyse the risks associated with fragile community relations, with a focus on the role of UNDP's programs and projects in reducing inequalities and promoting peaceful situations through integrated approaches. In the third aspect, the study will compare specific interventions through projects implemented by UNDP in partner municipalities on both sides to assess their impact with results in reducing inequalities. The study will also check bottom-up approaches to social inclusion. To achieve these objectives, the study will employ deductive, analytical-synthetic, and comparative methods.

Keywords: UNDP, SDGs, inequalities, sustainable peace, peacebuilding, sustainable development.

– А п с т р а к т –

Фокусот на оваа истражувачка студија е да ги разгледа напорите на УНДП за намалување на нееднаквостите во Косово и Северна Македонија помеѓу 2015 и 2021 година. Студијата ќе користи комбинација од теоретска анализа и преглед на документи, вклучувајќи публикации, извештаи и национални стратегии за развој. Целта е да се процени колку програмите на УНДП се усогласени со целта да не се остави никој зад себе. Студијата ќе ги опфати и националното и општинското ниво во двете земји за да обезбеди разбирање за влијанието на УНДП и неговиот придонес за намалување на нееднаквостите. За да се оцени напредокот во намалувањето на нееднаквостите од перспектива на одржливост, студијата ќе ги консолидира релевантните информации и ќе известува за позитивното влијание на интервенциите на УНДП во спречувањето и управувањето со конфликти. Студијата ќе ја нагласи важноста на интегрираните пристапи со ЦОР. Дополнително, студијата ќе се фокусира на главните структури и координирани акции со кои УНДП работи во двете земји за намалување на хоризонталните нееднаквости. Пристапот, исто така, ќе ја процени улогата на овие активности во придонесот кон севкупните перформанси и стабилноста на земјите и ќе ги анализира ризиците поврзани со крвките односи со заедницата, со фокус на улогата на програмите и проектите на УНДП во намалувањето на нееднаквостите и промовирањето мирни ситуации преку интегрирани пристапи. Во третиот аспект, студијата ќе ги спореди конкретните интервенции преку проекти што ги спроведува УНДП во партнерските општини од двете страни за да се оцени нивното влијание со резултати во намалувањето на нееднаквостите. Студијата, исто така, ќе ги провери пристапите од долу нагоре кон социјалната вклученост. За да се постигнат овие цели, студијата ќе користи дедуктивни, аналитичко-синтетички и компаративни методи.

Клучни зборови: УНДП, ЦОР, нееднаквости, одржлив мир, градење мир, одржлив развој.

“If we do not put inequality at the heart of the global development agenda, we are doomed to failure.” (Oscar Auliq-Ice)

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my dad (Arif Veli Elshani) who didn't see the adventure but always told me and trusted I can do anything I chose in life. To my mom Naile who besides her illness always gives me love and is a source of motivation. Thank you both for raising me strong to become who I am. To my sister Fatmire, who is my endless inspiration, countless support, and a special person to me. Without her strong support, this journey wouldn't be possible. You all are my precious gift of love in my life. Thank you from the bottom of my heart!

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I declare that the doctoral thesis is an original thesis that I have prepared independently.

Signature of the doctoral student
(on the electronic version, signature and abbreviation s.r.)

(on the electronic version of the doctoral thesis)

I declare that the electronic version of the doctoral thesis is identical to the printed doctoral thesis.

Signature of the author, s.r

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List of Acronyms

AKM	Association of Kosovo Municipalities
ALMM	Active Labour Market Measures
CPF	Country Programme Framework
CPD	Country Programme Document
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GIZ	German International Cooperation
GMA	Guaranteed Minimum Assistance
INDEP	Institute for Development Policy
ISDG	Integrated Sustainable Development Goals
ILO	International Labour Organization
KAS	Kosovo Agency of Statistics
MGD	Millennium Development Goal
MLSG	Ministry of Local Self-Governance
MLGA	Ministry of Local Government Administration
NDS	National Development Strategy
PBF	Peacebuilding Fund
PSD	Partnerships for Sustainable Development
RCO	Regional Cooperation Office
RIA	Rapid Integrated Assessment
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SME	Small Medium Enterprises
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDSS	United Nations Development System
UNKT	United Nations Kosovo Team
WB	World Bank
WBG	World Bank Group
ZELS	Association of Units on Local Self Government

Introduction

What is the research topic? Inequalities around the world and the pressing need to act immediately to resolve them, urged the United Nations (UN) and its member states to create an action that helps to eradicate poverty and protect the vulnerable world. This commitment towards sustainable development globally was confirmed in 2015 from 193 member states. Poverty was the key message to convey, therefore it all started with the aim to address it in all forms, seeking a world to be a better for all by 'leaving no one behind'. Referring to the UN sources, the Sustainable Development Goals are defined as a 'global call for action by all countries – poor, rich and middle-income, which promote prosperity while protecting the planet. Most importantly, they recognize that ending poverty must go together with strategies that build economic growth and address a range of social needs among which education, health, social protection, and job opportunities, while tackling climate change and environmental protection. It also seeks to strengthen universal peace in larger freedom. All countries and all stakeholders, acting in collaborative partnership, are urged to implement the plan. The intention was to shift the world onto a sustainable and resilient path and the actions as part of the plan by 2030. There are 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets which were announced, that demonstrate the ambition of the universal Agenda or the agenda 2030 as it used to be called. The SDGs seek to build on the Millennium Development Goals and complete what these did not achieve. They seek to realize the human rights of all and to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. They are integrated and indivisible and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development: the economic, social and environmental'.¹

Therefore, the agenda 2030 obliges all member states and their governments to address inequalities since there is no time to lose. On this path, Kosovo and North Macedonia, based on the UN global commitment in their operating modalities, are expected to integrate the SDGs within the National Development Strategies to address all inequalities and start implementing through their strategic plans. Their efforts need to be aligned with the EU enlargement scheme as part of the integration process for the Western Balkan into the

¹ Retrieved from: <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>

European Union. All 17 SDGs are important in their structure and have specific targets with indicators, but among all, the SDG10 is somehow considered a complex one.

Although it has been documented through voluntary annual reports (SDG Progress Report 2021/global²), that there has been some progress in achieving the targets for SDG10 in a global level and more importantly at the regional level, the COVID-19 pandemic had its impact and still analysis on the contribution of UNDP in Republics of Kosovo and Republic of North Macedonia, isn't expounded specifically for this SDG at their central and local level. According to the SDGs' progress report 'some countries experienced a decrease in income inequality, while countries with low-income enjoyed the advantages of being granted preferential trade status. Despite the efforts to address it, inequality remains prevalent in various forms, such as income, wealth, and opportunities. Moreover, vulnerable groups often face discrimination based on multiple factors that intersect. Unfortunately, the ongoing pandemic was worsening existing inequalities both within and between countries, inequalities are affecting the most vulnerable individuals and the least developed countries.'³

Among many international government and non-government organizations, and UN agencies, the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) entirely around the world, has very active role and is implementing the agenda in partnership with governmental structures in countries and territories. In the context of inequalities, the high unemployment rate across the Western Balkan territory reflects from the limited job opportunities provided and stimulated by the governments combined with low development of the private sector as well.⁴ Why is this important? The SDG10 on reduced inequalities implicates the inequalities within and between the countries. It calls for nations to reduce inequalities in income as well as those based on age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status within a country. The goal addresses inequalities among countries, including those related to representation, and calls for the facilitation of orderly and safe migration and

² Accessible at: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2021/goal-10/>

³ Ibid.

⁴ Zsoka Koczan, *Being Poor, Feeling Poorer: Inequality, Poverty and Poverty Perceptions in the Western Balkans*, WP/16/31, IMF, February 2016. Accessible at: <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/wp/2016/wp1631.pdf>

mobility of people.⁵ The two countries that are in the light of this research, have gained independence in different decades. The Republic of North Macedonia ultimately declared its independence on 17 September 1991 following a referendum on independence held on 8 September 1991.⁶ In the other side, after the end of the War in 1999, Kosovo, in close coordination with international community (Martti Ahtisaari Plan), announced its Independence on February 17, 2008. To capture the missing part eventually that impact the progress achieved in decades, it was decided to check the period after 2001 respectively after 2008 in the two countries, to be able to review number of projects that contributed to reduced inequalities after the peace gained. Furthermore, the acknowledged efforts of both states towards the urgent call with SDGs, will be correlated with the impact in inequalities in post-conflict countries seeking sustainable development with initiation of 2030 agenda worldwide. Considering that Kosovo and North Macedonia, are ex-Yugoslav countries and post-conflict ones, the implementation of SDGs and in specific of SDG10, requires interventions, monitoring mechanisms and partnership efforts with governmental structures not just at the central level but also at the local level. In this context, inequalities in North Macedonia will cover the period after declaration of Independence on 17 September 1991, consequently in Kosovo after 17 February 2008, more precisely years 2015-2021.

For comparison at the local level there are two municipalities presented with mixed communities per country, where inequalities were addressed mostly (Dragash/Dragaš and Shtërpçë/Štrpce/Kosovo and Gostivar and Veles/North Macedonia) and in terms of the regional approach with emphasis in two countries, a project sample implemented in a Municipality per country will be showcased, to enable comparison through activities implemented (Gostivar - North Macedonia and Kamenicë/a - Kosovo). All this, for highlighting the progress made in two countries towards reducing inequalities and contributing to the agenda 2030, by considering the presence of horizontal inequalities between their communities as well as vertical inequalities that influences the potential for nonviolent and violent conflict. To be able to understand how UN agencies, in particular UNDP impacts in the

⁵ Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/SDG_10_-_Reduced_inequalities#Inequalities_between_countries

⁶ Matthew CR Craven, *What's in a Name? The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and issues of statehood*, p. 203.

performance of these two countries to reduce inequalities towards sustainability, there will be measurable actions provided in the countries' contribution for the selected indicators of specific targets (target 10.1 and 10.7). What kind of approach? To bring facts that inequalities are the root causes for instability mainly in the post-conflict societies, it will be highlighted the relevant critiques, which will seek to trace the forms of exclusion that instigate both - redistribution and recognition struggles and then identify the potential for progressive change inspired by immanent ideas, norms and practices. In specific, as part of theoretical approaches on inequalities, Thomas Piketty's vision is to be recognised and significant - accenting more equitable economic system based on the principles of 'participatory' socialism, categorized as social and economic by also considering the focus of development studies which turned towards third World and specifically on issues such as poverty, inequality, and growth. He analyzed global inequalities between 1980 and 2018, which rose significantly in various countries, including Europe, China, Russia, the United States, and India. In comparison to Marx, he focuses on wages, income, and wealth, aiming to balance these extremes and create a more humane form of capitalism, whereas Marx looks at commodities, labor, and alienation, aiming to reshape these connections and bring about a completely changed society.

Sustainable peacebuilding and Sustainable peace are concepts that describe efforts toward innovative approach and actions for transformation of societies affected by conflicts, violence or structural inequalities. Yet, inequality is not only weak state phenomenon, or s.c post-conflict one. The data about European countries inequalities, including EU countries showed rapid rise of different aspects of inequalities among nations but also within countries. Therefore, inequality and its perception should be high on the agenda not only for International Organizations (IO) but of public policy also. Since its endorsement by United Nations in 2015, the Sustainable development Goal 10 with emphasis in the target 10.1 aiming by 2030 to progressively achieve and sustain income growth of the bottom 40% of the population at a rate higher than the national average 'has been centred and given the attention by high policymakers. Its goal is to grow more rapidly the incomes of the poorest 40% of a population than those of the entire population. From the EU perspective, the European Pillar of Social Rights, introduced by the European Commission (2017), equally set out 20 key principles to enhance social justice in the EU, including gender equality, equal

opportunities, and the right to adequate minimum income benefits' (Lucas Chancel et al, 2019). There are critiques by David Chandler and Michael Pugh in identifying the post phase of peacebuilding in post conflict nations with emphasis on dealing practically with the outcome of peacebuilding and the liberal peace for war-torn countries/nations.

I Chapter

1. UNDP's contribution in achieving SDG 10 reduced inequalities towards sustainable development

Sustainable development and Sustainable peace

The link between peace and development is covered in the preamble of the 2030 Agenda declaring 'We are determined to foster peaceful, just, and inclusive societies which are free from fear and violence. There can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development.'⁷ International agencies and international community are treating with high priority and very carefully the peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction. Specifically, the focus and the attention of these international actors was established by the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund (PBF). The PBF's goal is to prevent a deterioration into violence in countries emerging from conflict by supporting the peacebuilding activities. These activities are designed to directly contribute to post-conflict stabilization with the aim to consolidate institutional structures at central and local level, provisional and other relevant authorities (A. Langer, G.K. Brown – 2016). Despite the increased attention on sustainable peacebuilding by international actors such as the UN, the World Bank, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), as well as the emergence of an extensive body of research which has analysed the challenges and complexities of economic reconstruction, institution building, democratization, transitional justice, and reconciliation in post conflict countries, the politicians and policymakers, both local and international, have found that their goal has remained intangible.⁸

⁷ UN, General Assembly, '*Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*', A/RES/70/1, 21 Oct. 2015, p. 2.

⁸ A. Langer and G. K. BROWN, *BUILDING SUSTAINABLE PEACE, Timing and Sequencing of Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Peacebuilding*, © Oxford University Press (First Edition, 2016).

Peace is considered a key factor for sustainable development in conflict-ridden communities, having in mind that operations are disrupted due to the unpredictable social services and the occurrence of social issues related to poverty, hunger and inequality. Traditionally, the notion of peace means the absence of conflict, but this doesn't support enough to have sustainable development.⁹ There are two types of peace distinguished, the negative peace and the positive peace, While the negative peace is defined and the absence of war and does not capture the society's tendencies for stability and harmony, the positive peace is defined as a more lasting peace that builds on sustainable development, institutions and societal attitudes that foster peace (Johan Galtung, Institute for Economics and Peace, 2018). Even from the beginning both concepts were considered theoretical, recent research on Global Peace Index and Index of Positive Peace are contribution for quantification of peace on different levels. Sustaining peace, it means to keep relevant actors away from the structural violence and working jointly to define common solutions and development towards the outcomes of positive peace. There are many examples in the world when a typical civil war lasts 7 years and it takes just double years to recover economically, and up to 25 years to rebuild the institutions and the governance.¹⁰ Balkan societies are exposed to inequalities, affected by various economic factors, caused by global and local crises, labour market, poverty, etc.¹¹

Inequality in Europe and the Balkans

Traditionally, inequalities in EU countries have been analysed at the country level or by taking the average of country trends. However, there is now a shift towards analysing inequalities between all citizens across individual member states for all EU citizens. By comparing income data, it has been shown that the inequality among EU citizens is considerably lower than that among US citizens but slightly higher than in countries such as Australia and Japan, which are considered to have well-established welfare models (Georg Fischer, Stefano Filauro - 2021). Narrowing down, checking the income data of EU citizens and

⁹ ADEC Innovations, September 26, 2017, The Link Between Peace and Sustainable Development. Accessible at: <https://www.adecesg.com/resources/blog/the-link-between-peace-and-sustainable-development/>

¹⁰ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Yearbook 2017, 6. Sustaining peace and sustainable development in dangerous places. Accessible at: <https://www.sipri.org/yearbook/2017/06>

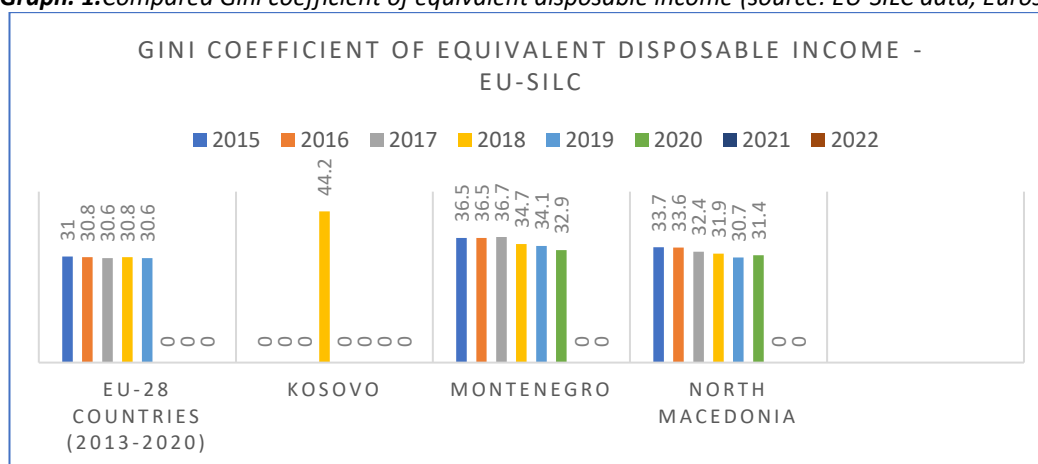
¹¹ Retrieved from: https://www.irenees.net/bdf_fiche-analyse-890_en.html

of three Western Balkan countries, there is different trend from country to country, depending on the country's economic or political developments which determinates the inequality line. The table below has data for Kosovo, North Macedonia and Montenegro, but this data is missing for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Table 1. Gini coefficient of equivalised disposable income - EU-SILC (Source of data: Eurostat)

	TIME	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
European Union - 28 countries (2013-2020)		31.0	30.8	30.6	30.8	30.6			
Kosovo						44.2			
Montenegro		36.5	36.5	36.7	34.7	34.1	32.9		
North Macedonia		33.7	33.6	32.4	31.9	30.7	31.4		

Graph. 1. Compared Gini coefficient of equivalent disposable income (source: EU-SILC data, Eurostat)



Furthermore, the latest GDP¹² (Gross Domestic Product) in 2021, with the trends in Kosovo and North Macedonia, is compared with two ex-Yugoslav countries – Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The figures below reflect the flow of this trend and a different line of development.

Figure 1: GDP compared in 4 countries (Source: Eurostat data)

Country	Most Recent Year	Most Recent Value
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2021	7,143.3
Kosovo	2021	5,269.8
Montenegro	2021	9,465.7
North Macedonia	2021	6,694.6

According to the GDPs provided, it is indicated that Kosovo has the lowest GDP among the analysed countries. Its GDP value is 5,269.8 (population of 1,786,038), followed by North

¹² GDP measures the monetary value of final goods and services—that is, those that are bought by the final user—produced in a country in a given period of time (say a quarter or a year). GDP per capita is just one measure of a country's economic well-being and there are other factors to consider such as income inequality, access to healthcare and education, and overall quality of life.

Macedonia with a GDP of 6,694.6 (population of 2,065,092), Bosnia and Herzegovina with a GDP of 7,143.3 (population of 3,270,943), and Montenegro with the highest GDP of 9,465.7 (a population of 619,211).

Figure 2. Population compared in 4 countries (source: EU-SILC data, Eurostat)

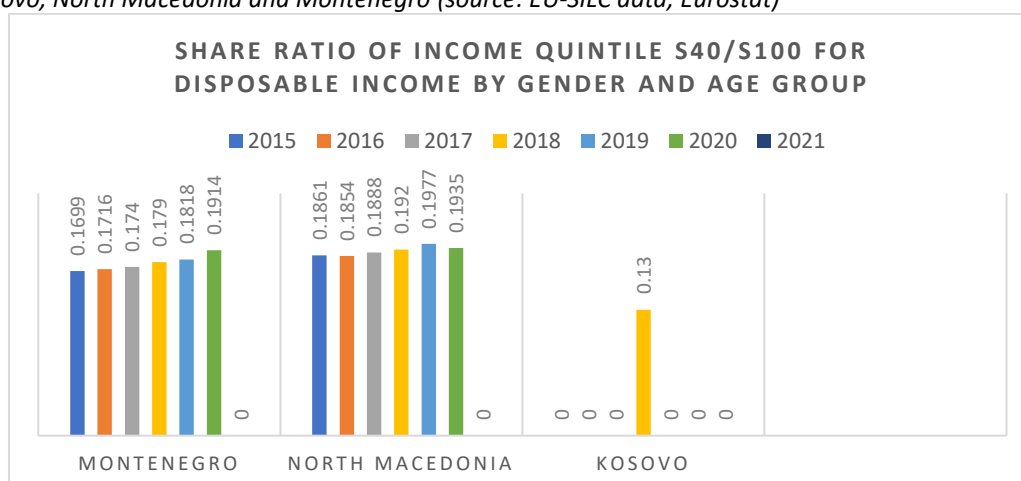
Country	Most Recent Year	Most Recent Value
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2021	3,270,943
Kosovo	2021	1,786,038
Montenegro	2021	619,211
North Macedonia	2021	2,065,092

The Eurostat data on income quintile share ratio S40/S100 for disposable income by sex and age group from 2015 – 2021 is limited to Kosovo, North Macedonia, and Montenegro, whereas for Bosnia and Herzegovina this data is not available. Based on this, there is an increase in income inequality in North Macedonia and Montenegro, with the income quintile share ratio S40/S100 rising from 0.1861 to 0.1935 in North Macedonia and from 0.1699 to 0.1914 in Montenegro throughout 2015 to 2020. Besides in 2018, where the income quintile share ratio S40/S100 has an increase for Kosovo with 0.13, the rest of the years have no available data throughout 2015 to 2021.

Table 2. Income quintile share ratio S40/S100 for disposable income by sex and age group since 2015 – 2021 in Montenegro, North Macedonia and Kosovo (source: EU-SILC data, Eurostat)

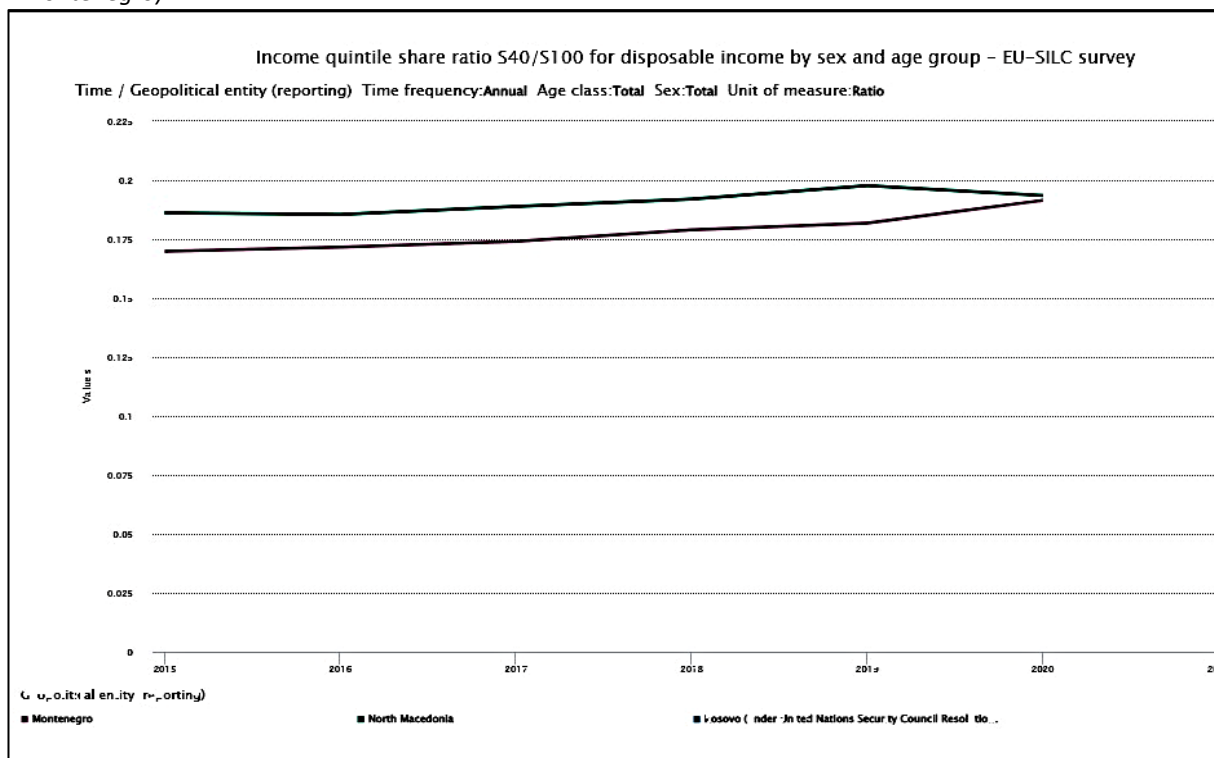
	TIME 2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Montenegro	0.1699	0.1716	0.1740	0.1790	0.1818	0.1914	:
North Macedonia	0.1861	0.1854	0.1888	0.1920	0.1977	0.1935	:
Kosovo	:	:	:	0.13	:	:	:

Graph. 2. Compared share ratio of income quintile S40/S100 for disposable income by gender and age group in Kosovo, North Macedonia and Montenegro (source: EU-SILC data, Eurostat)



The data on GDP, population, and income quintile share ratio (S40/S100) for Kosovo, North Macedonia, and Montenegro clearly illustrates that Kosovo is one of the poorest countries in the region. This data highlights the pressing need to address the high levels of unemployment and poverty in Kosovo through sustained efforts in the upcoming years. It is important to note that data for 2021 is currently unavailable for all three countries, and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and other economic factors may have significant impacts on these indicators. Nonetheless, the available data from previous years clearly demonstrates the need for continued efforts to address economic challenges and poverty in the region.

Graph.3 Line trend of income quintile share ratio S40/S100 since 2015 – 2021 (Kosovo, North Macedonia and Montenegro)



Kosovo and North Macedonia at the central and local level

North Macedonia

Although small and landlocked country, North Macedonia holds great geostrategic importance. According to the most recent census conducted in 2021, the country has a total resident population of 1,836,713, with an enumerated population of 2,097,319 individuals. Of this enumerated population, 54.21% identify as Macedonian, 29.52% as Albanian, 3.98%

as Turkish, 2.34% as Roma, 1.18% as Serbian, 0.87% as Bosniak, and 0.44% as Vlach. (North Macedonia, SSO)¹³.

North Macedonia stands out as the only republic to have achieved independence from former Yugoslavia in 1991 without resorting to violence. Regardless this achievement, the newly formed state struggled with several weaknesses, including underdeveloped institutions, and limited territorial control. The Albanian population, the second largest in the country, is mainly concentrated in the north-western border areas. The country also faced economic challenges, as it began its independence with a stagnant economy and was further impacted by the UN sanctions on former Yugoslavia from 1992 to 1996, as well as a Greek embargo due to a naming dispute.¹⁴ Even during former Yugoslavia, North Macedonia had a weak economy and social position compared to the other five republics. These vulnerabilities led to feelings of dissatisfaction and inequality. Together with wider political and ethnic issues, these sentiments fuelled growing tensions that eventually turned into violent conflicts. Among various factors, North Macedonia's economic and social challenges significantly contributed to the emergence and escalation of these conflicts. Important to emphasize, there was 'no violence in North Macedonia for decades, and it remained peaceful even at the height of the fighting in 2001. Yet it exhibits a diversity of economic and social patterns among its communities which seems programmed to generate inter-ethnic suspicion and fear.'¹⁵

North Macedonia has been identified as a potential candidate for European Union (EU) membership since 2003. The country signed the Stabilisation and Association Agreement, the first in the Western Balkan region, in 2004 and was granted candidate status in 2005. Despite the European Commission continuously recommending the opening of accession negotiations since 2009, progress was conditional on the implementation of "Urgent Reform Priorities". In 2019, based on the progress made, the recommendation for opening accession negotiations was reiterated, and in March 2020, the European Council

¹³ Population retrieved from: https://www.stat.gov.mk/PrikaziSoopstenie_en.aspx?rbrtxt=146 (The population from the census is different from the one taken from EU-SILC data, Eurostat).

¹⁴ Lars Jerker Lock, 'A Conflict Analysis Macedonia' (Publikationer.sida.se, 2003) https://publikationer.sida.se/contentassets/a4319f99cc124339800aecd53db36bfa/macedonia-a-conflict-analysis_936.pdf accessed 16 January 2021.

¹⁵ ESI Macedonia Security Project, Ahmeti's village, The political economy of interethnic relations in Macedonia, Supported by the Foreign Ministry of Switzerland, Skopje and Berlin, 1 October 2002.

members endorsed the General Affairs Council's decision to begin accession negotiations with North Macedonia (EC - European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations). North Macedonia has 84 municipalities which are assembled in 8 Regions (Polog Region, Skopje Region, North-eastern Region, Eastern Region, South-eastern Region, Vardar Region, Pelagonia Region and Southwestern Region).¹⁶ The latest available GDB in North Macedonia is in 2021 with 6,694.6. From migration point of view, it is considered a transit country, used as a corridor between Greece and Serbia. There were 131,175 immigrants in North Macedonia according to the UN, coming from the region around, such as from 'Albania (68,029), Turkey (19,991), Serbia (17,991), Montenegro (9,269), and Bosnia and Herzegovina (8,742). Most of the migrants were between 20 and 64 years old (56.8%), and 58.3% of them were women'.¹⁷ Regarding internal migration, which is predominantly rural-to-urban, individuals are primarily motivated by financial reasons. In 2020, there were 2,920 instances of people being displaced from one region to another, with a net migration of 150 individuals. The regions most affected by internal immigration during that year were Skopje, Vardar, Pelagonia, and the East, which accounted for 1,457 individuals. Over the past decade, there has been an increase in the number of female migrants (70%) and young residents/youth (between the ages of 15 to 29 years old) who have migrated internally.¹⁸ The Government of North Macedonia represents the central level authority which stems from various sources, including the citizens' expressed will in the last parliamentary elections held on July 15th, 2020, as well as the political and parliamentary backing of the majority of MPs. Additionally, the Government has gained trust in implementing the policies outlined in their Program for the period 2020-2024, along with the adoption of strategic documents to support their implementation in the recent past.¹⁹

ZELS (Zaednica na edinicite na lokalna samouprava), a non-governmental organization representing the Association of the Units of Local Self-Government in North Macedonia, serves as the local government's representative when engaging with the central government. A Memorandum signed in 2003 between ZELS and the MLSG - Ministry for Local Self-Government of the central government mandates that any regulation that impacts local areas

¹⁶ Nations online, accessible at: <https://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/macedonia-administrative-map.htm>

¹⁷ Retrieved from: <https://migrants-refugees.va/country-profile/north-macedonia/>

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Retrieved from: <https://vlada.mk/node/18031?ln=en-gb>

must consult with ZELS. Additionally, ZELS members are frequently invited to participate in parliamentary and governmental commissions/working groups. Finally, the Government and the governing board of ZELS meet on a yearly basis, indicating regular collaboration and communication between the two entities. As per the Law on local self-government, ZELS has the authority to collaborate with the central Government on matters that are locally relevant, exercise legislative initiative rights in areas of local interest, and evaluate the legal and administrative framework for local taxation and grants. ZELS also collaborates with State authorities on EU integration issues through the same channels.²⁰ The Ohrid Agreement has emphasized the significance of local self-governance for communities in North Macedonia. As a result, the local government in North Macedonia is structured around municipalities and the City of Skopje, each with their own unique forms of governance. To align with this approach, the number of municipalities was decreased from 124 to 84 in 2004 by the Law on Territorial Organization of Local Government in North Macedonia. Subsequently, in 2013, after the March 24 local elections, the number of municipalities was further reduced to 80, which remains the current number. The City of Skopje is a distinct unit of local government with an area of 571.46 km² and a population of 506,926 inhabitants. It comprises 10 municipalities, including Aerodrom, Kisela Voda, Karposh, Butel, Gazi Baba, Center, Saraj, Chair, Shuto Orizari, and Gjorche Petrov.²¹

Kosovo

Kosovo is a small and landlocked country, situated in Balkan Peninsula. According to the population census data conducted in 2011 “Kosovo has in total 1,739,825 residents excluding municipalities of Leposaviq, Zubin Potok, Zveçan and Mitrovica North’ which Serb population boycotted”.²² “The largest ethnic group are Albanians, amounting to 1,616,869 or 92.9% of the total population. The second and third largest ethnic groups are, respectively, Bosnians, with 27,533 inhabitants (1.6%), and Serbs with 25,532 inhabitants (1.5%). They are followed by Turks (18,738 or 1.1%), Ashkali (15,436 or 0.9%) and Egyptians (11,524 or 0.7%).

²⁰ Community of Self-Government Units of the Republic of North Macedonia, ZELS, accessible at: <https://zels.org.mk/Default?id=ef0a2aa1-28c2-4114-bd7a-9e1d023faa03>

²¹ M., Vejseli, K. Ferdi, *The Intercultural communication and community participation in local governance: The case of North Macedonia and Kosovo*¹, UP “Hasan Prishtina”, Kosovo, Journal of Liberty and International Affairs | Volume 7 · Number 3 · 2021 | eISSN 1857-9760, 2021.

²² Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 'ESTIMATION of Kosovo Population 2011' (KAS 2013), p.12.

Finally, Roma and Gorani, with 8,824 and 10,265 inhabitants, amount to 0.5% and 0.6% of the total population. A remaining 0.1% defined them as pertaining to other groups. It is characterised as a country with very young population, where the average age is 30.2 years”.²³

Kosovo was underdeveloped province within the broader context of the former Yugoslavia. Its economy faced obstacles that hindered its growth, including limited infrastructure, industry, and a lack of diversified economic sectors. Social development in Kosovo lagged compared to other areas within federation. Basic services such as education, healthcare, and social infrastructure were often deficient, hindering the overall progress of the population. The relatively low standard of living and limited access to opportunities also played a role in hampering social mobility and upward mobility for many residents. Back in the former Tito’s Yugoslav system “for the first time, ethnic Albanians were recognized as a distinct national group in which they were allowed to use their language and also gained the right to have education in their language as well as constitution of the autonomous Province in 1974”.²⁴ The student’ demonstrations afterwards during 1981 with the “main demand for Kosovo to be made a full republic, were put down by Serbian police forces with many killed or arrested and the ethnic Albanians’ rights were systematically eroded”.²⁵

The last country’s history chapter underlines the revoke of Kosovo’s autonomy in 1989 (Milosevic’s power), allied with protests and violence that impacted ethnic relations, and since then the interethnic inequality challenges between Albanians and Serbs still exist. The relations between Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo were progressively worsened and finally escalated into the armed conflict in 1999 between Yugoslav/Serbian army and KLA (Kosovo Liberation Army) as well as NATO interventions. This period is known with flagrant violation of human rights for ethnic Albanians and repression from the regime which “suspended legally formed Parliament and government, closed Albanian-language schools, and sacked Albanian workers in state institutions and state-owned enterprises”.²⁶ The Albanians

²³ Erasmus+: Higher Education - International Capacity Building (CBHE), 'Overview of The Higher Education System' (European Commission 2017) https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/sites/eacea-site/files/countryfiche_kosovo_2017.pdf accessed 27 January 2021, p.1.

²⁴ Minority Rights Group International, 'Minority Rights in Yugoslavia' (2000) <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/469cbfe40.pdf> accessed 27 January 2021, p.12.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid 13.

established an alternative education system, which functioned from 1992 until the onset of conflict. Following the conclusion of the war in 1999 and the establishment of the United Nations Administration in Kosovo (UNMIK), the country moved towards the need to establish effective centralized state institutions and to a necessity of having decentralized power and delegate responsibilities to the local level. On this path, the elections in 2001 at the central level, were a significant step towards Provisional Self-Government in Kosovo.²⁷

The prolonged definition of status produced another disbalance and dissatisfaction in society in interethnic relations that blow up in spring 2004 and again attacked the fragile relations between main ethnicities with the attacks towards minorities. Following four years of collaborative progress with the international community, Kosovo declared independence in 2008 and transformed into a multi-ethnic state. However, despite the fact there was development, the relationship between Serbs and Albanians remain delicate and strained. At the onset of independence, the newly formed state was faced with a stagnant and impoverished economy, a high unemployment rate, and tensions between two distinct communities. Although 23 EU Member States recognize the statehood of Kosovo, the EU does not. As of September 2012, the International Civilian Office concluded its international supervision, and Kosovo assumed full responsibility for its own governance.²⁸

Its population is known as the immigrant population due to various politico-economic circumstances in the past. According to the Kosovo Agency for Statistics Population assessment of 2018 (KAS), the causes of emigration in Kosovo are driven from various factors but dominantly by family reunification (46%), socioeconomic factors (35%), without ignoring the political factor and better education. In its history of migration, the number of emigrants of Kosovo origin (1969-2011) is estimated to be about 703.978 people whereas in 2017 it was estimated to be about 833,739 (net migration stock) people. Most of them live in Germany (39%), Switzerland (23%), Italy (7%), Austria (7%) and Sweden (7%) and 17% in other countries. Since 2017, a noteworthy number of residents changed their place of residence (municipality mainly) from rural settlements to urban and sub-urban areas for various

²⁷ Bernhard K., J M Kara, *A Rocky Path: Kosovo's Transition to Provisional Self-Government*, General Elections in 2001 and beyond, p. 132.

²⁸ Retrieved from: <https://portal.cor.europa.eu/divisionpowers/Pages/Kosovo.aspx>

reasons. The number of persons who have changed their place of residence from the previous municipality (from one municipality to another municipality within Kosovo) is estimated to be 9,376 inhabitants.²⁹

The war in Kosovo has led to the mass emigration in Europe and other countries between March and June 1999. An estimated 850,000 refugees fled into neighbouring Albania, North Macedonia, and Montenegro, intimidating regional instability.³⁰ After the declaration of independence, Kosovo faced irregular emigration in 2014 and 2015 towards EU countries. Furthermore, Kosovo became a country of asylum seekers and migrants in the last years.

The latest government in Kosovo, which originated from the national elections held on February 14, 2021, represent the country at a central level. This period was marked by political and institutional stability, creating a favourable atmosphere and opportunities to implement EU-related reforms and address overdue issues.³¹ During this time, Kosovo has achieved some advancements in the adoption and implementation of EU-related reforms. Specifically, Kosovo has approved both the National Programme for the Implementation of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (NIPSAA) and the European Reform Agenda (ERA) II Action Plan.³²

Kosovo has a unitary system of government with only one level of decentralization, which is at the municipal level. The decentralization process in Kosovo has been initiated back in 2008 through the 'Ahtisaari proposal,' which was accepted by Kosovo but rejected by Serbia. The proposal was implemented through the adoption of a Law on local self-government in the same year. Currently, Kosovo is comprised of 38 municipalities, and its governance system consists of two levels: the central and municipal levels.³³ The Ministry of Local Government Administration is responsible for ensuring vertical coordination between

²⁹ KAS -Estimation, Kosovo Population in 2017, accessible at: <http://ask.rks-gov.net/media/4174/estimation-kosovo-population-2017.pdf>

³⁰ Besim Gollopeni., *Kosovar Emigration: Causes, Losses and Benefits*, University of Mitrovica "Isa Boletini" Prishtina.

³¹ EC Kosovo* 2022 Report, accessible at: <https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-10/Kosovo%20Report%202022.pdf>

³² Ibid.

³³ Central and local level in Kosovo retrieved from: <https://portal.cor.europa.eu/divisionpowers/Pages/Kosovo.aspx>

the central and local levels of government and also has a supervisory role over municipal competencies. In terms of horizontal coordination, municipalities have the authority to engage in inter-municipal cooperation on matters of mutual interest within their competencies. The Association of Kosovo Municipalities (AKM) serves as a platform for facilitating municipal coordination. The primary objective of the Association of Kosovo Municipalities (AKM) is to establish a functional, lasting, and democratic system of local government by providing high-quality services that meet the needs of its citizens. The Association of Kosovo Municipalities (AKM) is committed to implementing the regulations outlined in the European Charter for Local Self-Government in Kosovo.³⁴ As of the most recent Positive Peace Index snapshot in 2022, North Macedonia is ranked 56th with 2.874 and a score of 1, reflecting the level of positive peace in the country. In contrast, Kosovo is ranked 77th with 3.136 and a score of 7. These rankings and scores provide a comparative assessment of the level of positive peace in both countries, with higher scores indicating higher levels of positive peace.³⁵

II Chapter

2. Methodological framework

Research topic

This is the interdisciplinary research in international relations and conflict management with an emphasis on the role of inequality as defined in development goal 10, and with indicator 10.1 and 10.7. The role of UNDP is to intervene to act on this goal in cooperation with governmental structures in a given social context. It analysed the social context through a conflict mapping model, and conflict perspective analysing model. In the absence and limitation of access to data, the analysis is down to the local level with 2 case studies taking 2 municipalities per state. We measure inequality by analysing interventions aiming to minimize disparities among communities at horizontal level. Further, it aims to describe the role of UNDP in Kosovo and North Macedonia in addressing inequalities as part of SDG 10, and how this contributes to sustainable peace and sustainable development at the central and local

³⁴ Association of Kosovo Municipalities (AKM), accessible at: <https://komunat-ks.net/sqper-noonper-nesrabout-us/?lang=en>

³⁵ 2022 Positive Peace Index Snapshot, retrieved from: <https://www.visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/PPR-2022-A3-map-poster.pdf>

government levels. UNDP's role in reducing inequalities worldwide is well-established. Therefore, comprehending its significance in ex-Yugoslavia and nearby countries is essential in gauging the preparedness of the central and local authorities to adapt to transformations and cater to the requirements of their inhabitants, thus aiding in their overall welfare. Given that UNDP has been operating in Kosovo and North Macedonia for over 20 years, it is crucial to observe the efforts in joint coordination to engage all levels of government in responding to the agenda 2030, as well as peaceful transformations to multi-ethnic societies.

United Nations Development Programme is present in Kosovo since years '99 and plays a crucial role to attain in explicit the SDG10, interrelated to reduced inequalities. Similarly, since years 2000, the similar approach has been promoted in North Macedonia where UNDP had its significant impact, too.

The SDG10 has been addressed from the UNDP global level and started being monitored on yearly basis with the progress that states are globally making, which is being presented in the language of results every year. Likewise, SDG10 is being addressed also regionally by UNDP - in Europe and Central Asia and are also being presented in the annual reports with the results achieved in every sphere of life undertaken to reduce inequalities in the countries. In regard to Kosovo and Macedonia, as part of the UNDP Europe and Central Asia, the SDG10/reduced inequalities, started being articulating in the parliamentary meetings underlying the progress achieved through various initiatives in support to reduce all inequalities at country level. Although the topic has started being elaborated at the national level, the local municipal levels in both countries haven't started articulating sufficiently the progress directly made at the grassroots level implemented in close coordination with relevant stakeholders, partners other donors that lead towards sustainable development with bottom-up approaches. One aspect related to importance of CSOs involvement in implementation of SDGs and with that the implementation of SDG10 in the Balkan countries, has been given by Simona Ognenovska and Aleka Papa³⁶. According to it, CSOs play an important role in alignment of national documents with SDGs among western Balkans, among which Albania

³⁶ Simona Ognenovska, Aleka Papa, Policy Brief, Are Western Balkans falling behind? Meaningful involvement of CSOs in SDGs, August 2017.

and Kosovo has positive approach compared to the engagement in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia and Macedonia. Although it has been documented through annual reports that there is progress made to achieving the targets for SDG10 in a global level and more importantly at the regional level, still analysis on the role of UNDP in Republics of Kosovo and North Macedonia, isn't elaborated specifically for this SDG.

In this research looked for the answer to the questions about what the key aspects are not reviewed for the contribution that UNDP is giving as part of implementation package specifically in Kosovo and North Macedonia to support addressing inequalities that may have an impact in creation of tensions towards potential aggressive actions between communities. We will aim to acknowledge the additional parts important to report for the achieved progress and recognise changes. The research will contain project-based practices for the outcomes achieved in this course. Must emphasize, there are many projects contributing to SDG10, and their impact needs to be recognized even if not mentioned in the regular dashboards and reported as significant since it supports all the initiatives undertaken under each SDG. This would help and accelerate reporting for the progress made from both countries on their path towards EU accession agenda as well.

Research subject

The subject of the research is to make scientific description and analysis about the role and contribution of UNDP in both ex-Yugoslav countries in contributing to SDG 10, by focusing on the sides reported and not reported since 2015 – 2021. The framework of the study will be constituted from the analysis of available resources and reports, including the reports from the central and local level institutions and information from the projects implemented with UNDP in close coordination with their relevant partners.

Must be outlined, there are many projects contributing to SDG 10, and their impact needs to be recognized and reported as significant since it supports all the initiatives undertaken under each SDG. As such, all initiatives, agreements, declarations etc. that directly are impacting the progress, where UNDP in Kosovo and North Macedonia are the lead actors, are subject of this research.

Research goals

The overall goal of this research is to define, understand and document how the UNDP in both countries performs in accomplishing the SDG10 on reduced inequalities, and how their approaches are guiding and establishing long-lasting impact into communities in partnership efforts.

The main objectives of the research, are:

- 1) To elaborate on the role of UNDP in implementing SDG10 in Kosovo and North Macedonia.
- 2) Shed light on the current programming activities, key areas, and partnership efforts of this UN agency to contribute towards achieving the agenda 2030 in Kosovo and North Macedonia.
- 3) Document the results achieved by UNDP in its crucial role in this course, focusing on the impact of its interventions and long-lasting efforts.

Expected results

The guiding hypothesis of the research is **UNDP's contribution in achieving SDG 10 reduced inequalities towards sustainable development in Kosovo and North Macedonia at the central and local level could facilitate peaceful transformation at central and local level.**

Variables from both countries of Kosovo and North Macedonia, are the following:

- Central level demographic; income, migration
- Local level demographic; income, migration

The research will use the general scientific research **method of deduction, combined with analytical-synthetic and comparative method.** The **deductive method** will enable drawing conclusions from a broader to a local context of UNDPs contribution, whereas **analytical-synthetic** method will ensure elaboration of findings in a more comprehensive and analytical level, whereas the **comparative method** will enable comparison of found facts and results for the two countries published as official documents of UNDP and other institutions for the period of research (2015-2021), to make conclusions and recommendations.

Furthermore, to analyse the situation and collect the data for testing the hypotheses of the research, the following approaches have been applied:


- Desk Review of Literature
- Collection of relevant documents and their analysis
- Data Interpretation, and
- Presentation of results and findings with recommendations

3. Theoretical framework

Previous research

Due to the complexity of the SDG10, only several previous data or research were available to be analysed from the academic point of view. Additionally, there is a lack of multidisciplinary research also. Thus, acknowledging the previous work, this part will cover the period from 2015 to 2021 and will be twofold; (1) in checking the preliminary review of documents to provide a summary of previous related researches done (although rare), acknowledging their strengths and weaknesses and justification for the actual research, typically responding to WH Questions (What is known so far, what has been done by the others and why this specific research is still necessary and what hasn't been checked that needs attention); and (2) in the progress achieved at the national and local level in Kosovo and North Macedonia through inclusion of Rapid Integrated Assessment (RIA) at the implementation side with impact in specific targets and results achieved to validate the level of progress completed as an accelerated tool. In the following table is presented the SDG10 with the 2 targets and 3 corresponding indicators in focus.

Table 1: SDG10 – Targets with indicators in focus

	10.1	By 2030, progressively achieve and sustain income growth of the bottom 40 per cent of the population at a rate higher than the national average	10.1.1	Growth rates of household expenditure or income per capita among the bottom 40 per cent of the population and the total population
	10.7	Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies	10.7.1	Recruitment cost borne by employee as a proportion of yearly income earned in country of destination
			10.7.2	Number of countries that have implemented well-managed migration policies

Till now, it has been noticed that the official progress reporting from UN on SDG10 is a challenging one due to the complexity of the targets and the reporting mainly concentrates in the targets that can be easily measured. The social, economic and ecological dimensions in

the studies rely mainly on the data from World Development Indicators Database of the World Bank.³⁷

Furthermore, the following, is what has been noted so far:

- The Project (UNU-WIDER): Inequalities – measurement, implications, and influencing change (2019 – 2023), aiming both to better understand inequality — how it varies, why it varies, and what the implications of this might be — and provide insight into how to address it.
- The World Bank Database Indicators,
- UNDP reports (Global, regional and country reports, project reports, evaluation reports etc.),
- UNDP transparency Portal, and
- Global peace and positive peace index.

Must be outlined here that the lack of data is a risk in this research and methodology, since both countries are not included in the big research programmes for various reasons. As the research work progressed, additional findings were considered in this section contributing specifically to reduced inequalities for the developing countries like Kosovo and North Macedonia. Compared to the previous years, in 2020 and 2021, number of research papers related to SDG10, were a bit in raise.

The **UNDP** has launched globally the **Human Development report in 2015** that was named as the work for human development. The report brought into the attention for the first time that if the human potential is being steered appropriately through strategies and suitable policies, there will be less human development deficits and enhanced human progress. The report states that the human development is connected to the quality of work. Furthermore, human development is prevented by the violence and discrimination which are preventing confident link between the work and human development. Issues such as child labour, forced labour and the labour of trafficked workers, which represent serious violation of human rights, are very damaging for the human development. The work under dangerous conditions faces serious risks of abuse, insecurity and the loss of freedom and autonomy for workers. The report outlines a strong case for women who are deprived in paid and unpaid

³⁷ H., Kuhn, *Reducing Inequality Within and Among Countries: Realizing SDG 10—A Developmental Perspective*, Conference Paper, 2019.

work. Sustainable work is being considered crucial in promoting human development while reducing negative side effects and unnecessary consequences, which are considered major building block for sustainable development. Creation of job opportunities, wellbeing of workers and development of targeted actions, are defined important three areas within required policies and strategies to enhance human development (Global HDR-2015).³⁸

German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) - The German Agency for International Cooperation (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit) is engaged in informing selected municipalities through projects about the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It aims to raise awareness and understanding of the SDGs among local governments. By providing essential information, it enables municipalities to align their policies, programs, and projects with the global sustainable development agenda. It has developed a handbook for practitioners for localizing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) titled “Agenda 2030 in my municipality”, which gives relevant information about SDGs, the EU accession and the Agenda 2030, the impact of SDGs in municipalities and how are they affected by SDGs, localizing SDGs, the municipal tasks towards SDGs and awareness raising about the SDGs. In this regard, the NGO “Nevo Koncepti” with Municipal Working Groups implemented a project for strengthening social rights of marginalized groups in Kosovo/Prizren Municipality aiming to improve their access in institutional services and support through mediation in access to social, health and educational services.³⁹ GIZ has funded a project in Kosovo through INDEP to help 7 municipalities to work on drafting local action plans to advance SDGs policies and related actions.⁴⁰ Furthermore, GIZ in Kosovo and North Macedonia is constantly giving support to accomplish the agenda 2030 through its programmes in governance & democracy, environment & climate change and economic development & employment with specific projects addressing migration, education, employment, youth issues etc. that are focused to reduce inequalities.

International Labour Organization (ILO) - Bringing together governments, employers and workers of 187 member states, the only tripartite UN agency is the one that sets the labour

³⁸ UNDP, *Human Development Report 2015*, Work for Human Development (p.4)

³⁹ Retrieved from: https://www.giz.de/en/downloads_els/Handbook_Agenda%202030.pdf

⁴⁰ Retrieved from: https://www.nachhaltigkeitsrat.de/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/SDG4SDGs-Project_Profile.pdf

standards, develops policies and devise programmes by promoting decent work for all equally (ILO-website). Their main focus area is SDG8 related to decent work & economic growth. More specifically within SDG10, ILO's approach contributes only to SDG indicator 10.4.1 - Labour income share as a percent of GDP (%), as part of the data catalogue worldwide.

World Bank - As one of the largest sources of funding and knowledge for developing countries with its five institutions, the World Bank Group shares a commitment to reducing poverty, increasing shared prosperity, and promoting sustainable development. Most importantly, the World Bank (WB) helps countries to share and apply innovative knowledge and solutions for challenges faced (WB-website). In this particular research, the data available related to SDG10 for Kosovo regarding the indicators in our focus (target 10.1 and 10.7) are available only for indicator 10.1.1 "growth rates of household expenditure or income per capita among the bottom 40 per cent of the population and the total population", and the analysed growth was in 2017 with the trend of 2,4% and this trend after 2017 isn't available. On the other side, for North Macedonia, the trend for the same indicator is 4.9% and is available for the year 2019. The rest of indicators which are in our focus, are not covered.

North Macedonia HDR (2004) - The National Human Development Report for North Macedonia in 2004, highlights the importance for decentralization for human development which is in line with the Ohrid Agreement (2001) for the decentralization of the government which was the precondition for integration into European Union. Since then, North Macedonia was committed to achieve the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), to address the pressing issues at the local and central level - imperative for the social wellbeing linked to reducing poverty, unemployment and enhancing access to quality of education and health. All these required clear understanding of the factors creating differences at the local level with ethnic, economic, geographic or social context (North Macedonia HDR – 2004). This is the latest Human Development Report for North Macedonia offers an analysis of the potential benefits and challenges associated with decentralization, along with key policy recommendations aimed at effectively addressing the decentralization challenge and minimizing potential risks. The later period of years is characterized by advancements in the Human Development Index.

Findings in North Macedonia - Retorting to the indicator 10.7 Migration and mobility policies, North Macedonia is part of the joint initiatives as of October 2020 with other member states, where the Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MMPTF) is the only UN financing mechanism that is fully dedicated to supporting joint initiatives of the member states. This initiative supports the adoption and implementation of the Global Compact to encourage the acceptance of migration approaches that benefit communities of origin, transit, and destination, as well as migrants and applies commitment towards safe and regular migration (MMPTF - 2019).⁴¹

Kosovo HDR (2016) – The Kosovo Human Development Report that “explores the causes of the labour market outcomes within Kosovo’s macroeconomic context and also assesses several aspects of labour supply and labour market functioning with a particular focus on women and youth is both groups display the most negative and pessimistic outcomes in the labour market whilst also simultaneously possessing the greatest potential for sustainable development.”⁴² Considering that Kosovo’s young population under age 30 is over 60%, the report became a reference document for the design of the labour market schemes from all relevant stakeholders to accelerate the youth employment with particular focus on women.

Findings in Kosovo (INDEP) - Worldwide, the SDGs are not legally binding, but still countries are expected to take ownership and establish a national framework for achieving them as part of the global agenda 2030. As specified in the INDEP report, to measure and monitor the progress in implementation of the SDGs by 2030, all countries, and in this case Kosovo, has the main responsibility to start monitoring and reviewing at the national level. Unfortunately, there is still no such framework in Kosovo and efforts to build it are at an early stage. Sustainable development policies, plans and programs in Kosovo are the basis of this framework. Monitoring the implementation of SDGs in Kosovo requires quality, accessible and up-to-date data. In order to achieve the highest possible implementation and to leave no one behind, it is important that all parties are involved in this process including the Assembly,

⁴¹ Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund (Migration MPTF), accessible at: <https://migrationnetwork.un.org/projects/migration-multi-partner-trust-fund-migration-mptf>

⁴² UNDP HDR 2016, accessible at: https://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/human_development_report_2016.pdf

the Government, the private sector and civil society. Given that Kosovo does not yet have an official report on the monitoring of SDGs, this shows that so far Kosovo has done very little in integrating objectives and indicators into national and sectoral strategies. In this regard, a positive development was the adoption of the Resolution on SDGs in 2018 by the Assembly of Kosovo. Furthermore, Kosovo has developed a National Development Strategy (2016-2021) but does not explicitly mention the harmonization or integration of CDP indicators in this strategy. This, in one hand explains that country has a lot on its way forward with coordination, division of responsibilities and reporting by each year to enable the access and measure the progress made.

Going back to the SDG10 has a total of 10 targets and 11 indicators. The findings of INDEP Report based on official statistics sources in Kosovo, show that out of a total of 11 indicators, there are data available only for 1 indicator according to the adequate methodology and 2 approximate indicators, but not according to the adequate methodology.

Furthermore, the targets of this objective require to:

1. Achieve progressively and steadily the income growth of the lower 40 percent of the population,
2. Strengthen and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all,
3. Equal opportunities are provided and inequalities are reduced,
4. Approve policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, that progressively achieve greater equality,
5. Improve the regulation and monitoring of global financial markets and institutions and strengthen the implementation of such regulations,
6. Facilitate regular, safe, and responsible migration and mobility of people,
7. The principle of special and differential treatment applies to developing countries, especially less developed countries, in accordance with WTO agreements,
8. Encourage financial development assistance, including foreign direct investment, and reduce to less than 3% the cost of the remittance transaction;
9. Delivery corridors with costs higher than 5% are eliminated.

For all 10 indicators of this goal, there are data missing according to the international methodology, therefore the implementation and monitoring is considered to be very low. In particular, very importantly data are missing, for the following: for the percentage of people living below 40% of average income, the percentage of the population reporting that they have felt personally discriminated against or harassed, the labour market share in GDP that includes wages and social protection transfers in the private and public sector, total revenues of development resources from donors and remittance costs as part of the amount sent. Being said this, it is almost impossible to refer to any institutional reports covering the period from 2015 – 2021 with the progress made in this direction.

Agenda 2030 and SDG integration

The main inquiry here would *be why is SDG integration into UNDP projects important?* Important to understand what is meant by integration from UN perspective. Hence, the explanation provided helps to understand that this is a guiding principle for the design and implementation of complex UN operations in post-conflict situations crucial for connecting diverse dimensions of peacebuilding, such as: political, development, humanitarian, human rights, rule of law, social and security aspects, into a coherent supportive strategy. This integrated approach is based on a common strategic plan and a shared understanding of the priorities and programme category interventions important to be undertaken at various stages of the recovery process (UN Policy on Integrated Assessment and Planning – 2013). Because one fact cannot be avoided that for the global issues such as climate change, COVID-19, to rising inequalities and prolonged conflict – the challenges cannot be dealt with in isolation and alone. The way countries respond and the solutions they develop, certainly need to be integrated.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development mirrors the reality through its seventeen indivisible Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), covering the social, economic and environmental dimensions of development. Therefore, SDGs must be implemented in an integrated way to help countries tackle complex challenges and lay out a more sustainable future.⁴³

⁴³ Retrieved from: <https://sdgintegration.undp.org/>

It is important to highlight that “with just less than a decade until 2030, the world will require new solutions and new ways of thinking, working, partnering, and financing — to push past old development frontiers. That is why UNDP is focusing on SDG integration, an approach to development that targets systems – not just thematic sectors – to address all aspects of a complex challenge, including its root causes and its ripple effects across economies, societies and natural ecosystems.” For this reason, the UNDP integration portfolio is mainly focused to support stakeholders with the approaches, methods, capabilities and spaces to go from knowing that complex development challenges that requiring integrated approaches to ‘doing’ integration and leading the systems change on a daily basis. UNDP is part of the UN development system (UNDS) and works with UN Resident Coordinators, and as a part of UN Country Teams, supports countries achieve the 2030 Agenda. The capacity to work across the SDG range, including on policy and programming, data and analytics, financing, and innovation, supports the UNDS to deliver an integrated and multidimensional approach to the SDGs globally. In this context, UNDP partners with national and sub-national governments, communities, civil society, academia and the private sector to build sustainable solutions that respond to people’s daily realities and needs (UNDP -SDG integration).⁴⁴

The process of SDG Integration recognises the **Integration Workstreams**, which is an approach that helps countries to develop the integrated solutions. It means that the approach doesn’t focus on a separate SDG but on the gaps and missing pieces of SDGs to make possible the hole Agenda 2030. For this reason, the main streaming the SDGs into national and local plans by countries is being done through the Rapid Integrated Assessment (RIA) that aims to support them and assess their readiness for SDG implementation. This is a tool that defines the roadmap for the countries with clear steps and templates suggested for the policy makers in conducting RIA for the SDGs to determine the relevance at the country context, national and subnational level, in which the interlinkages across the targets are defined.

Another important tool is the International Futures, which helps countries to understand how policy interventions affect development targets. The International Futures (IF) has a wide range approach model of 12 core systems: agriculture, demographics,

⁴⁴ Ibid

economics, education, energy, environment, government finance, governance, health, infrastructure, international politics and technology. The combined system facilitates forecasting for 186 countries and flexible country groupings with alternative scenarios through the SDG horizon of 2030 and 2100. The model includes more than 600 variables that cut across all SDGs. The tool's feature is especially valuable for assessing the long-term impact of interventions within countries and across regions.⁴⁵

Furthermore, there is the Integrated Sustainable Development Goals (ISDG) model which is inclusive policy tool that makes country-specific development scenarios to show the implications of policy on a country's progress towards achieving the SDGs. The model intends to help the policymakers to understand the interlinked SDG system and to design efficient pathways to meet the agenda 2030 as well as assess the positive and negative synergies through a platform by conducting on-the-spot simulation of a broad variety of policies simultaneously, and to assess their positive and negative synergies and conciliations. On the other side, UNDP does the innovation and learning which is considered a new way of doing development that builds UNDP and partners to navigate the challenges, translate the work towards development into a positive change and dealing with the pace of uncertainty. For this reason, UNDP sources local solutions, support experimentation and scaling, and inject approaches and methods such as systems design, sense-making, collective intelligence and solution mapping into development. In all this, financing is very important, therefore, UNDP helps to countries identify the innovative ways to expand and redirect public and private contributions towards sustainable development, and support businesses and investors to align investments with the SDGs. Below are the three main areas where this is being integrated: 1) Development Finance Assessment, 2) Integrating National Financing Framework for SD, 3) Biodiversity Finance Policy and Institutional Review. In terms of the data and analytics, UNDP leverages data and analytics to drive evidence-based policy making and systemic SDG investments.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Ibid

⁴⁶ Ibid

SDG integration in Kosovo

Being as a reference point, the agenda 2030 requires for national and international efforts aimed at solving global challenges. Although there is a commitment from the Assembly of Kosovo for the Agenda 2030, still there isn't a system set-up that would enable the measurement of the progress towards Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their targets and indicators. In order to support the development of such a system, there was a Rapid Integrated Assessment (RIA) conducted by the United Nations Kosovo Team (UNKT), for the alignment of strategic documents with the SDGs. The assessment conducted resulted with fully aligned 36 objectives to the SDGs, and 84 objectives which were partially aligned, whereas 8 objectives were not aligned at all.

It is known that the National Development Strategy 2016-2021 for Kosovo was developed before the SDGs were finalized, therefore despite some linkages, there are serious gaps found in NDS concerning the SDG framework, specifically the lack of vision for health and a narrow focus in the justice sector.⁴⁷ Therefore, more efforts are being made to ensure that the next NDS better reflects the whole of the 2030 Agenda. The Strategic Planning Office within the Prime Minister's Office developed the draft National Development Strategy 2030 (NDS 2030), to cover the years 2021-2030. It has intended to integrate the key principles of Agenda 2030 and the SDGs into its overall mission, specific objectives and impact indicators. NDS 2030 will be implemented and monitored through a smaller number of sectoral strategies and action plans with fixed budget codes to ensure better linkages with Kosovo's budget. Achieving the strategic goals is conditioned by the consistent link between the defined policies and the available budget in order to have effective implementation of public policies. Being said this, to ensure that this will happen, the strategy emphasizes the importance of increasing the strategic role of the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework in the preparation of the annual budget for Kosovo and increasing the internal and external control of public finances.

⁴⁷ UNKT, *Rapid Integrated Assessment: Policy alignment and data availability for the SDGs in Kosovo 2021*, accessible at: <https://kosovoteam.un.org/sites/default/files/2021-08/Kosovo%20SDG%20Report.pdf>

In order to address the challenges for the Kosovo development and to achieve the vision for Kosovo 2030, NDS is built on four pillars, as below:

- I. Sustainable Economic Development
- II. Equitable Human Development
- III. Security and Rule of Law and
- IV. Good governance⁴⁸

The overall responsibility for collecting, analysing and disseminating data for statistical purposes has the Kosovo Agency for Statistics (KAS). Their role is complemented by the line ministries. Since the data are very crucial it is highly important for Kosovo to further enhance coordination at technical level and improve the access to and use of the available administrative data sources. The barriers for having consistent and high-quality data for tracking the SDGs include the absence of standardized definitions and methodologies, and data that are incomplete or not disaggregated as needed.

SDG integration in North Macedonia

As explained, the Rapid Integrated Assessment (RIA), helps countries to assess the level of their preparedness and institutional capacity to mainstream the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into national and local development planning. The assessment was conducted for North Macedonia as well and helped the country to classify the gaps and the bottlenecks of sustainable development towards effective and efficient implementation. The assessment was conducted during the period October 2019 to February 2020 whereas the quality control was ensured by UNDP Development Programme Istanbul Regional Hub. The assessment covered in total 30 documents, out of which 21 were at state level, 2 were at the regional, 2 at city level and 1 at municipal level. The results suggest that the alignment related to SDGs for North Macedonia are at 83% with least integration found specifically for SDG 10 due to some targets which are tracked and measured by international community (10.a. Special and differential treatment developing countries; 10.b. ODA and other flows, 10.6. Developing countries representation and voice and 10.c. Remittances transaction cost).

⁴⁸ Republic of Kosovo, Government, Office of the Prime Minister, *Kosovo draft strategy and alignment with SDGs*, accessible at: <https://konsultimet.rks-gov.net/viewConsult.php?ConsultationID=41413>

Within the 17 targets which were completely missing on reviewed documents and require to be analysed for the remaining decade of SDG implementation is the indicator 10.7. Migration and mobility policies.⁴⁹ Considering that the new National Development Strategy (2021 – 2024), was not designed, it was proposed to address gaps through activities related to inequalities in all forms.

The Government in North Macedonia started with preparations of National Development Strategy (2021 – 2041), in early 2021, through a project supported by the British Embassy Skopje, Good Governance Fund and implemented by the UNDP. All in very close coordination with RCO of North Macedonia to ensure the utilization of joint UN expertise throughout the process.⁵⁰ The RIA for North Macedonia considered the SDG targets linked to five “Ps” People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, and Partnership from the 2030 Agenda. The national Agenda 2030 shows that it is very balanced across all 5 aforementioned areas. The SDG 10 is covered under Prosperity area and the number of matched targets total versus the number of targets, is 35 with 45.⁵¹ The State Statistical Office of North Macedonia strives to create and incorporate a collection of measures that offer statistical assistance in tracking the level of implementation of sustainable development principles. The indicators were established in 2019 in compliance with the European Sustainable Development Strategy and computed using European Statistics standards to ensure they can be compared internationally.⁵²

Theoretical approach - (International Relations and conflict management)

Nowadays it is a common trend among international organizations to overcome the long-term approach and practice that the development approaches towards underdeveloped or post-conflict countries are not related to security. This relation is demystified and acknowledged both in academic research and international or bilateral practice i.e

⁴⁹ UNDP North Macedonia, *Implementing Sustainable Development Goals: Rapid integrated assessment of key national policy development planning*, p.7. Accessible at: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/1578Rapid_Integrated_Assesment_North_Macedonia.pdf

⁵⁰ Retrieved from: <https://www.undp.org/north-macedonia/blog/mission-national-development-strategy>

⁵¹ Ibid

⁵² State statistical Office, North Macedonia, accessible from: https://www.stat.gov.mk/PrikaziPublikacija_1_en.aspx?rbr=774

development contributes for security and vice versa (Kaldor, M. 1999; Duffield, M. 2001; Bellamy, A. Williams, P. and Griffin, S. 2004;). The conceptual frameworks for understanding the relationship between conflict, security and development is possible across five specific themes: (1) sources and consequences of contemporary violent conflict, particularly intra-state conflict; (2) conflict prevention measures and disincentives for violence; (3) international intervention including peacekeeping, political and economic assistance and international aid; (4) post-conflict demilitarisation and reconstruction; (5) governance regimes, security and development, examining the role of international organisations, state and sub state actors in promoting and retarding development and security.⁵³ From Peacebuilding towards Sustainable peace, the concept of peace is understood as an interlinkage between peace, development, and human rights, by emphasizing the need for a comprehensive and holistic approach to preventing conflicts and promoting long-lasting peace. This approach is anchored in the principles of the 2030 Agenda, which places people at the centre of development efforts, and in the international human rights framework, which upholds the rights and dignity of all individuals. By embracing this multidimensional approach, sustaining peace seeks to address the root causes of conflicts and foster inclusive and sustainable peace at local, national, and global levels.⁵⁴ It is worth mentioning that UN General Assembly and Security Council passed identical resolutions on peacebuilding in 2016, concluding the 2015 review of the UN Peacebuilding architecture. These were the most inclusive ever made resolutions on the issue and represent an achievement in outlining a new ambitious agenda and approach for peacebuilding. Member States demonstrated their commitment to strengthening the UN's ability to prevent violent conflict from breaking out or escalating, addressing the root causes, and helping parties to conflicts to end hostilities, in order to uphold the UN Charter's objective of saving succeeding generations from the strike of war.⁵⁵

⁵³ University of Bristol, Unit and programme catalogues, Unit information: Conflict, Security and Development in 2022/23.

⁵⁴ UN Women, *Building and sustaining peace*, accessible at: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security/building-and-sustaining-peace#:~:text=Sustaining%20peace%20should%20be%20broadly,human%20rights%20laws%20and%20standards>.

⁵⁵ Peacebuilding Sustaining Peace, What does "sustaining peace" means?, accessible at: https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/documents/guidance-on-sustaining-peace.170117.final_.pdf

Speaking about peacebuilding, David Chandler and Michael Pugh are sceptical about the concept of "liberal/corporate peace," in which international organizations encourage privatization and liberalization, without necessarily prioritizing social justice and the recovery from conflict consequences.

David Chandler - Professor of International Relations at the University of Westminster/London, has interesting interpretation in identifying the post phase of peacebuilding in post conflict nations. His strong argument shows a change in how countries get involved in conflicts globally. Instead of just promoting liberal governance and peace models, there's now a greater emphasis on dealing practically with the outcome. Chandler indicates that this change represents the practical outcome of peacebuilding, as the line between building peace and policy intervention becomes less clear, considering the increasing trust on complexity theory, risk-based strategies, and the concept of 'resilience,' indicating a global shift towards effect management, and consequently, conflict management.⁵⁶

Michael Pugh Emeritus Professor at University of Bradford has similar spirit when arguing about promotion of liberal peace which has pushed war-torn countries towards becoming more market-oriented globally. This approach was unquestionably supported in providing economic assistance from outside. However, this plan faced problems because it didn't consider the social and economic issues in these countries, making things worse by increasing poverty and illegal economic activities. While some have tried to improve the UN's ability to build peace and achieve the MDGs (Millennium Development Goals), they haven't really questioned the basic ideas of liberal peace nor explored other possibilities.⁵⁷

Apart from the sustained peace, which is crucial in the world of inequalities, there is a need to clarify the conception of inequality in globalized world. While significant number of researchers correlates inequality with development, conflict and security, central theoretical approaches for conceptualising social identities and inequalities (such as class, ethnicity,

⁵⁶ Chandler David, *Rethinking Peace and Conflict Studies, Peacebuilding, The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1997-2017*, Series Editor Oliver P. Richmond University of Manchester, Manchester, United Kingdom.

⁵⁷ Pugh Michael (Editor), *Regeneration of War-torn societies*, Global issues, General Editor: Jim Whitman.

gender, sexuality, age and disability), and the relationships between them, as well as considering how social stratification contributes to the formation of recognisable social identities. Various inequalities manifest themselves, change and interrelate in different societal contexts (Bradley, H (1996), Devine, F., Waters, M. (eds) (2004); Hills, J., Stewart, K. (eds) (2004); Walby, S. (2009)).

Significantly, Thomas Piketty's theory concerning inequality holds great importance and serves as an enlightening perspective. It is based on a practical vision a more equitable economic system set on the principles of 'participatory' socialism. According to him, between 1980 and 2018, there was a notable rise in inequality across almost all regions of the world, except in countries that have historically been characterized by high levels of inequality. Interestingly, regions that experienced a period of relative equality from 1950 to 1980 are bring shifting back towards greater inequality, although the extent of this shift varies significantly from country to country and not only in the post conflict ones. He addresses the issues of escalating inequality, by proposing democratic socialism as the solution. Furthermore, he calls for extending voting rights to workers in all companies, suggesting that they should hold half the board seats in both large and small private firms. Additionally, Piketty advocates for real social ownership of capital. To accomplish these, a thorough reform of the labor code and legal system becomes imperative, with the aim of establishing fair wages for all and advancing more balanced distribution of economic power.⁵⁸

In international Relations, the bilateral relations among states remain important to peace and stability for the regions. In this context, within the process of integration to world of globalization, the positioning of states into development programmes, determinates their future. As such, belonging to the SEE region and also IPA beneficiary countries - Kosovo and North Macedonia are making vast efforts to become part of the EU under EU enlargement process (i.e. cross border cooperation, Acquis Communautaire in migration, reduce poverty/, maximize economic development etc.).

⁵⁸ Piketty Thomas, *Capital and Ideology*, Translated by Arthur Goldhammer, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts London, England, 2020.

The example of UNDP as a UN Agency in different country settings is worth of academic research as this Agency aims to facilitate transition from conflict or instability and decrease the sources of inequality and any potential for conflict. Inequality among and within the states with samples of these two countries in specific, is emerging conception within International Relations through the role of international organizations' interventions in reducing or at least addressing the needs of communities to equal access under the motto leaving no one behind towards resilient nations.

Apart from accessible online sources on global inequality indicators there are few analyses on the inequalities globally and the region - consequently are not accessible or hardly can be gathered in the case of Kosovo and North Macedonia.

Created in 1945, the United Nations (UN) came as a response to the destruction from the World War with one essential mission for the maintenance of international peace and security. Its mission is being accomplished by working to prevent conflict, deploying peacekeepers and creating conditions for peace to hold and thrive. The primary responsibility of the UN Security Council is international peace and security, whereas the General Assembly and the Secretary General (António Guterres), have a major, significant and complementary roles, along with other UN offices and bodies. Thus, the UN is considered as a place where the nations can discuss their mutual problems and find common solutions.⁵⁹ However, different views are presented when it comes to the international organizations and their role in supporting peace and stability for the states and nations, but from the main three theories, the two of them are in support of the crucial role of international organizations in peace and stability for the nations and states.

In international relations theories, specifically within Liberalism, in contrast to realism, it introduces additional elements to the perspective, such as the role of citizens and international organizations.⁶⁰ Oliver Richmond defines the concept of the liberal peace as a methodological and objective-oriented approach to peacebuilding. In this view, the liberal

⁵⁹ Retrieved from: UN Official website: <https://www.un.org/en/our-work/maintain-international-peace-and-security>

⁶⁰ Retrieved from: <https://www.e-ir.info/2018/02/18/introducing-liberalism-in-international-relations-theory/>

peace is characterized by the coexistence of like-minded liberal states, along with international, regional, and local actors, within a Western-oriented international society. Key features of the liberal peace include democratic governance within states, the observance of human rights to an acceptable degree, open and transparent markets, and a norm of multilateralism, except in extreme circumstances. Richmond's perspective suggests that this understanding of the liberal peace serves as a model for peacebuilding efforts in conflict zones.⁶¹ Yet, the constructivism theory argues in favour of international organizations, by highlighting the role of international organizations not just on regulating the state behaviour but also in modifying the identity and interest of the states, which guides the action of the states.⁶² Likewise, the neo-liberalism, argues that international organisations promote peace and stability and states that in a condition where states focus more on obtaining absolute gain, cooperation and collective security are more feasible. Apart from constructivism and neo-liberalism, the neo-realism or structural realists argue that organizations are the product of state interests, therefore, they cannot independently function. According to them, it is state interests, which control the decision whether states decide to cooperate or compete. All in all, the UN played significant role in resolving the violence between and within the states, the boundary conflicts, and there are cases when this was achieved with the permission by the states or based on the power of the Security Council, under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. This doesn't mean by any means that UN addresses all the issues, since the lack of commitment to provide necessary support and the veto powers make it difficult to operate in difficult circumstances.⁶³ Furthermore, the focus of development studies has turned towards third World and specifically on issues such as poverty, inequality, and growth. Björn Hettne has identified different categories of development theory, including the European (Orthodox) theory which emphasizes the replication of European industrialization in former colonies, and the structuralist theory which is concerned with the global structure of capitalism and incorporates the neo-Marxist/dependency paradigm that has been adopted by international relations.⁶⁴ The failure to include minority communities in larger governing

⁶¹ Oliver P. Richmond, *The Transformation of Peace*, London, Palgrave, 2005, p.121.

⁶² Bayeh. E., *Theories on the role of international organizations in maintaining peace and security*, Bahir Dar University, January 2014.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Anna K. Dickson, *Development and International Relations: A Critical Introduction*, 1997, reprinted 2004, (p. 1957), accessible at:

bodies is considered a major contributor to state fragility, conflict, and collapse on a global scale. In cases where power was heavily centralized and controlled by a dominant elite, efforts at governance reform have emphasized local governance and decentralization. According to Derick W. Brinkerhoff's "Governance in Post-Conflict Societies: Rebuilding Fragile States" (2007), there are four key reasons supporting this approach. Firstly, giving some degree of local autonomy can increase support for peace, particularly in resolving ethnic and inter-communal disputes. Secondly, by redistributing resources and authority away from the central government, some of the excessive concentration of power can be alleviated. Thirdly, creating multiple governance arenas can reduce the likelihood of one group dominating everything and sparking conflict. Fourthly, strengthening local governance can help prevent minor service delivery disputes from escalating and demonstrate that conflicts can be managed. Finally, establishing a learning laboratory to teach political and conflict resolution skills can be beneficial.⁶⁵ Regarding global governance for sustainable development, there is a need for a diverse range of strategies in institutional design, including strengthening individual organizations, advancing the law of sustainable development, establishing a high-level advisory body to advise the Secretary General, promoting the concept of decentralized network organizations, and exploring the possibility of clustering regimes. The success of these efforts largely depends on the support of civil society. To ensure that sustainable development efforts address the primary concerns of developing countries, institutions must be able to represent the diverse perspectives of their members and countries must develop effective domestic policies.⁶⁶

In the context of addressing inequalities, Thomas Piketty's contribution to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) stands out, especially in relation to SDG 10 and its prevalent global underperformance. Recently together with prominent global economists, political leaders, and inequality experts, have penned an open letter to the UN Secretary-General and the World Bank President for inclusion of the incomes and wealth of affluent individuals in

https://books.google.mk/books?hl=en&lr=&id=Y6D9AFM0AnMC&oi=fnd&pg=PA1941&dq=international+relations++and+development&ots=fAynTatf6Y&sig=AapLrVeYoDnCOhD8b4y2Ff_462I&redir_esc=y#v=snippet&q=orthodox&f=false

⁶⁵ Brinkerhoff, D. W. *Governance in Post-conflict Societies: Rebuilding Fragile States*, London: Routledge, 2007 (p.17).

⁶⁶ Joyeeta Gupta, *Global Sustainable Development Governance: Institutional Challenges from a Theoretical Perspective*, 2002.

inequality monitoring, employing Gini and Palma indices. They also stressed the need for annual tracking of inequality trends across all countries. By doing so, the true extent of escalating extreme inequality becomes visible, empowering the drive for anti-inequality policies supporting sustainable development globally.⁶⁷

4. Key concepts

Inequality

Inequality is attributed primarily to the absence of equal rights and opportunities and is positioned at the central part of social justice theories. Many authors distinguish it as economic inequality, which encompasses disparities in income as well as broader inequalities in living standards.⁶⁸ On a broader context, there are horizontal and vertical inequality concepts introduced (Stewart, Brown and Langer – 2007), which relate to different aspects of inequality. Vertical inequalities pertain to disparities among individuals across various dimensions, while horizontal inequalities cover inequalities across groups or communities, including economic, social, cultural status, and political standing.⁶⁹ Given the complexity of the issue, addressing the gap between equality and inequality will remain challenging for countries and regions, particularly in a globalized world with unpredictable challenges, primarily originate from horizontal inequalities of economic, social, and political nature.

The study of inequality within sociology is categorized into three primary traditions: quantitative, structural, and intermediate. The quantitative tradition originated from economics and was subsequently adapted within sociology by the school of Talcott Parsons. In contrast, the structural tradition finds its roots in the ideas of Karl Marx. While the quantitative tradition primarily focuses on descriptive analysis, the core of the structural tradition lies in theoretical frameworks. A third strand, which seeks to integrate theory with

⁶⁷ Press release, *A call to action to save SDG10: reduce inequalities*, 18 July 2023, accessible at: https://www.unaids.org/en/resources/presscentre/pressreleaseandstatementarchive/2023/july/20230717_save-SDG10-reduce-inequalities

⁶⁸ Development Strategy and Policy Analysis Unit Development Policy and Analysis Division Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *Concepts of Inequality Development Issues No. 1*, October 2015. Accessible at: https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/policy/wess/wess_dev_issues/dsp_policy_01.pdf

⁶⁹ Stewart., F. (Edited), *Horizontal Inequalities and Conflict*, Chapter 13: Major findings and conclusions on the relationship between horizontal inequalities and conflict, Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity, CRISE Department of International Development, Queen Elizabeth House, University of Oxford, 2007.

empirical research, can be traced back to Max Weber, but it lacks a cohesive and homogeneous school of thought.⁷⁰ Marx developed two distinct approaches to understanding inequality, which can be categorized as economic and social, as identified by Max Weber (1972). In Marx and Engels' *Communist Manifesto* (1959), Marx delineated various classes, including the capitalist class, the labouring class, the petty bourgeoisie situated in between, and the lumpenproletariat at the lowest stratum. However, in his work *Capital* (1963), Marx simplified the class structure to encompass only two classes: capital and labour. Over time, interpretations of Marx's ideas have often disregarded his earlier conceptualization of class in favour of the economic perspective presented in *Capital*, which primarily focuses on the economy and concludes with the notion of class in an economic context.⁷¹ Economic theories of inequality have predominantly taken a quantitative approach, focusing on the relationship between inequality and economic growth. Adam Smith, for instance, accepted inequality as a given and presented the concept of a free market for goods and labour, which leads to a growing division of labour and subsequently promotes economic growth. Building upon Quesnay's ideas, Smith illustrated that value added in the economy is distributed among three classes: rentiers, capitalists, and workers. Although his primary interest was economic growth, Smith also developed an incipient theory of income distribution, considering wages, profits, and rents. In subsequent years, Ricardo demonstrated that in a steady-state economic system, the rate of profit tends to diminish, and the output is distributed between rents and wages. Pasinetti emphasized the distributive conflict between wages and profits before the system reaches a steady state. Marx further expanded on this conflict within economic analysis by introducing the concept of surplus value. According to Marx, profits depend on the surplus value that capitalists extract from the productive activity of workers. Regarding income distribution, Wicksell demonstrated that, assuming a highly specific production function, wages and rent tend to align with their respective marginal productivity. In a scenario of perfectly competitive markets, the earnings of productive factors equal their productivity, resulting in income inequality being a direct outcome of each factor's contribution to income generation. This perspective shifted the

⁷⁰ Giovanni G., Rehbein, B., *Theoretical Approaches to Inequality in Economics and Sociology. A Preliminary Assessment*, 2014. Accessible at: https://www2.hu-berlin.de/transcience/Vol5_No1_2014_1_15.pdf

⁷¹ Boike Rehbein, *Critical theory and social inequality*, 2018. Accessible at: <https://www.scielo.br/j/ts/a/Hy9mRNDfHhkffFhpZ5cGcSC/>

analysis from functional income distribution to personal income distribution. Lucas argued that economic analysis should focus on growth and poverty rather than inequality or income distribution. Kuznets maintained that inequality tends to increase in the initial stages of economic development due to industrialization. There is a broad consensus that inequality can impede economic growth and understanding the channels through which inequality affects the pace of economic growth requires considering country-specific factors. Thomas Piketty a French Professor and Economist, argues that Kuznets' decision to employ an economic framework connecting growth to inequality is driven not only by scientific factors but also by political motivations. Similarly, Piketty's approach appears to offer a critique of the Marxist emphasis on historical materialism, suggesting that it oversimplifies matters. He argues that political and ideological discussion is more autonomous.⁷² While discussions in the 2000s, were primarily centred on whether the world has become more or less unequal, Branko Milanovic's classic study compares different measurement systems and earlier assessments of this question, ultimately settling on a global comparison of weighted household consumption. Approaches to understanding inequality also extend beyond purely economic perspectives. Goldthorpe categorized the entire population of a nation into seven to eleven classes, while stratification theories, following Weber's critique of Marx, developed intricate models of social structure wherein each societal group occupies a distinct position. Bourdieu demonstrated that dispositions can be significant for social structure, similar to economic capital. Michael Vester expanded on Bourdieu's approach by incorporating the historical dimension, where habitus becomes more relevant than capital. Wallerstein proposed a mediating class between capital and labour. A third type of systems theory, known as complexity theory, has contributed a new perspective on inequality. Walby suggests studying each system from the vantage points of economy, polity, civil society, and violence. Raphael Kaplinsky's book on inequality explores global inequality as a consequence of Western protectionism. Jessé Souza developed a theory of inequality in the global South, arguing that understanding societies in the global South necessitates considering the backdrop of colonialism and modernization programs.⁷³ Max Weber's conflict theory

⁷² Piketty Thomas, *Capital and Ideology*, Translated by Arthur Goldhammer, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts London, England, 2020.

⁷³ Giovanni G., Rehbein, B., *Theoretical Approaches to Inequality in Economics and Sociology. A Preliminary Assessment*, 2014. Accessible at: https://www2.hu-berlin.de/transcience/Vol5_No1_2014_1_15.pdf

proposes that conflict arises from three primary sources: economic, social, and political. This theory places its emphasis on the competition between social groups as opposed to individuals and seeks to explain both social stability and change as a result of this group conflict. According to this theory, social order is maintained by means of domination and power rather than through consensus and conformity.⁷⁴

Sustainable Development

Sustainable development is a theory that was formally introduced by the United Nations (UN) at a global level. It gained widespread acceptance among development experts and thought leaders, who have since made efforts to further develop and promote it worldwide. The UN's advocacy for sustainable development has led to its adoption by various countries and organizations, making it a widely recognized and influential concept in the realm of development. Sustainability refers to the capacity of a system to function indefinitely into the future, where the desirability of the system remains constant, and the resources needed by human systems, other biological species, and ecosystems do not diminish in their ability to perform essential functions. Sustainable development involves a series of actions guided by the principles of sustainability. It entails regularly reviewing, monitoring, and revising strategies, policies, programs, and activities in alignment with sustainability principles. To achieve integrated and balanced sustainable development, policies must be implemented at four levels: the local level, national level, regional level, and global level. Each level plays a crucial role in ensuring that sustainability is prioritized and pursued effectively.⁷⁵ The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), recognised as Global Goals also, are universally adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015. These goals present a comprehensive call towards eradicating poverty, safeguarding the planet, and ensuring universal peace and prosperity for all people in the planet by the year 2030. The SDGs build on decades of work by countries and the UN, including the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The SDGs recognize that the eradication of poverty and other deprivations should go jointly with strategies that enhance health and education, reduce inequality, stimulate economic growth,

⁷⁴ Charlotte Nickerson, *Conflict Theory According To Max Weber*, reviewed by Saul Mcleod, PhD, 2023. Accessible at: <https://simplysociology.com/max-weber-conflict-theory.html>

⁷⁵ Shamsalsadat Zahedi PHD., *Sustainable Development Theory: A Critical Perspective and an Integrative Model*, 2019. Accessible at: <https://www.iiste.org/Journals/index.php/JEDS/article/viewFile/50313/51969>

and simultaneously address climate change and preserve oceans and forests in the planet. They are built on decades of work by countries and the United Nations, including the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN - Department of Economic and Social Affairs Sustainable Development). There are 17 goals defined with a list of 169 targets agreed against the progress by 232 unique Indicators. For the goal 10 (Reduced Inequalities), the UN has defined 10 Targets and 11 Indicators. Targets specify the goals and Indicators represent the measurement on which the world aims to track the progress of targets are achieved (SDGs tracker). Thomas Piketty tackles global income inequalities and asserts that these inequalities, which shape the course of development, are deeply intertwined with ideology and politics. He opposes the use of GDP growth as the sole measurement for sustainable development, advocating for a broader perspective that cover not only economic factors but also social and environmental dimensions (Gini and Palma indices).⁷⁶

Peacebuilding

Lederach is recognized as the developer of the theoretical framework of peacebuilding, which was coined following Galtung's initial use of the term. According to Sandole, peacebuilding is a dynamic approach and framework aimed at strengthening positive peace through the involvement of various actors who perform different tasks either simultaneously or at different stages. Peacebuilding theory assumes the presence of a conflict that necessitates reactive or proactive intervention by a third party. Gawerc argues that peacebuilding must incorporate both conflict resolution and social justice as critical elements, while Longpoe suggests that peacebuilding theory addresses the root causes of violent conflict to minimize their likelihood in the future. Adenyi et al. assert that peacebuilding serves as both a theory and a practical strategy for resolving and transforming conflicts, leading to a significant reduction in social tension and unrest wherever it is adopted and implemented. This theory, which emphasizes a communitarian social perspective, holds great importance for researchers and policymakers in designing and implementing policies that

⁷⁶ Press release, *A call to action to save SDG10: reduce inequalities*, 18 July 2023, accessible at: https://www.unaids.org/en/resources/presscentre/pressreleaseandstatementarchive/2023/july/20230717_save-SDG10-reduce-inequalities

result in win-win outcomes.⁷⁷ As a concept within the UN, peacebuilding became familiar within the UN report of Boutros Boutros-Ghali in 1992, *An Agenda for Peace*, where peacebuilding was defined as an action to solidify peace and avoid relapse into conflict. Later in 2000, the Brahimi Report defined it as “activities undertaken on the far side of conflict to reassemble the foundations of peace and provide the tools for building on those foundations something that is more than just the absence of war.” Since then, the UN’s understanding of peacebuilding has continued to evolve.⁷⁸ (UN-peacebuilding an orientation). The UN Secretary-General's Policy Committee agreed on the following concept for peacebuilding: "Peacebuilding involves a range of measures targeted to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels for conflict management, and to lay the foundations for sustainable peace and development. Peacebuilding strategies must be coherent and tailored to specific needs of the country concerned, based on national ownership, and should comprise a carefully prioritized, sequenced, and therefore relatively narrow set of activities aimed at achieving the above objectives."⁷⁹ David Chandler provides critiques for the greater emphasis on dealing practically with the outcome of peacebuilding instead of just promoting liberal governance and peace models, whereas Michael Pugh similarly criticizes for the approach on promotion of liberal peace that aimed to make war-torn countries more globally market-oriented. It is easy to count the interventions to solve the social and economic problems in these nations, which led to an increase in poverty and illegal economic practices.

Sustainable peace

The agenda 2030 acknowledges the fact that peace and development are ongoing processes and require continuous effort that may take several decades to achieve the desired outcomes. Besides the sustainable development agenda there is the UN's new concept of

⁷⁷ Okechukwu Ndeche, O.I. Samuel, Key theories in peace and conflict studies and their impact on the study and practice. Accessible at: http://nijpcr.nou.edu.ng/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/NIJPCR-VOL-2-NO-2-CHAPTER-TWO_NDECHE-AND-IROYE.pdf

⁷⁸ *UN Peacebuilding: An Orientation*, Peacebuilding Support Office September 2010. Accessible at: https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/documents/peacebuilding_orientation.pdf

⁷⁹ Introduction to Peacebuilding, accessible at: <http://www.peacebuildinginitiative.org/index34ac.html?pagelD=1764#:~:text=In%20May%202007%2C%20the%20UN,at%20all%20levels%20for%20conflict>

sustaining peace, which emphasizes the need for stronger connections between the UN's three fundamental pillars: peace and security, development and human rights, and humanitarian action. This replaces the sequential approach to conflict, which often led to silos of prevention, humanitarian action, peacekeeping, peacebuilding, and development, and calls for better collaboration and sharing of resources across these different areas of response. The development of the sustaining peace framework of UN was induced by violence in various parts of the world, ongoing complex humanitarian crises, and limited capacities to prevent, respond to, manage, and recover from conflict. Sustaining peace is also closely linked to the principles of national ownership and inclusivity and affiliates with the concept of positive peace. By encouraging collaborative solutions and development, sustaining peace aims to move away from structural violence and towards positive peace outcomes (SIPRI, Yearbook 2017). Johan Galtung, who established the Journal of Peace Research and held significant influence as a peace researcher at the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), made a distinction between two types of peace results: 'positive peace' and 'negative peace.'⁸⁰ One of the biggest challenges in understanding and implementing sustaining peace is defining the specific actions that will contribute to its effectiveness. Concept of sustaining peace is traced back to Johan Galtung's innovative work on "positive peace." Positive peace is achieved by building and strengthening the factors that promote peace, including those that enable "everyday peace" such as solidarity and compassion between different ethnic groups, and systemic factors such as equitable distribution of resources, well-functioning institutions, tolerance for diversity, respect for the rights of others, security from physical harm, and access to basic necessities such as food and clean drinking water.⁸¹ When at liberal institutions, Roland Paris claims that exporting liberal institutions isn't a quick fix when societies aren't ready for liberalism. Such export doesn't lead to 'liberal' peace and stability unless societies receive greater attention and inclusivity. Furthermore, Oliver Richmond explains that 'the institutional peace is to anchor states within a specific set of values and a shared legal context through which they agree multilaterally how to behave and also the

⁸⁰ Sustaining peace and sustainable development in dangerous places, accessible at: <https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/SIPRIYB17c06.pdf>

⁸¹ International Peace Institute, Sustaining Peace: What Does It Mean in Practice?, accessible at: https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/1704_Sustaining-Peace-final.pdf

development of international institutions to stabilize international order went hand-in-hand with the growing belief in liberal democratic peace.⁸²

5. Hypothesis

The guiding hypothesis is: UNDP's contribution in achieving SDG 10 reduced inequalities towards sustainable development in Kosovo and North Macedonia at the central and local level could facilitate peaceful transformation at both levels.

The two other complementary hypotheses are:

- UNDP is a great key implementer for reduced inequalities at the central and local level in South-East European countries of Kosovo and North Macedonia;
- The results of accomplished SDG 10 on reduced inequalities in selected countries, rely on central and local synchronized approaches with strategies of country governments and other relevant stakeholders.

6. Methodological approach

Primary and secondary sources - UNDP projects and reports on national and local level

Creating Job Opportunities for all – main phase (UNDP project in North Macedonia)

This project represents one of the main pillars at UNDP in North Macedonia that is still helping to address the SDG1 associated very closely with SDG10. Implemented for over a decade, the project aims to reduce unemployment by offering opportunities to gain working experience and improve professional skills while providing services for those who are most at risk of social exclusion (mainly Roma population).⁸³ The actual phase January 2019 with planned end date in January 2023, has a budget of USD 5,451,310. The project has been implemented in many phases, and is a funding source of Swiss Development Cooperation, UNDP and the Government of Macedonia. In regard to SDG 10, the project supported the following targets: Target 10.1: By 2030, progressively achieve and sustain income growth of the bottom 40 per cent of the population at a rate higher than the national average; 10.2 By

⁸² Richmond Oliver P., (2014) Peace: A Very Short Introduction, Oxford, Oxford University Press. (p. 305)

⁸³ Retrieved from: <https://www.undp.org/north-macedonia/projects/creating-jobs-all>

2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status; and 10.3 Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard. In terms of its relevance, the project is of a high relevance to core development challenges of North Macedonia and supportive of the major social reform. The project was fully in line with its strategic, policy, and programmatic environment, and very supportive of National development priorities, SGDs, UNDP CPD and Strategic Plan.⁸⁴

The disparities among communities are being addressed by a designed operational plan in steps as part of the Labour Market Services and Active Employment Measures. The approach has been identified as essential part of the country's employment strategy within national development strategy and the national active labour market measures aiming to promote smart, sustainable and socially inclusive growth for people in North Macedonia since it was interlinked with the most pressing issues such as unemployment is. Consequently, the objective was to decrease unemployment by encouraging the creation of small businesses/start-ups that would provide living through income generation. There were several groups of beneficiaries who were part of the programme, starting from pre-school children, elderly people, adults and children with disabilities as well as citizens of rural areas, non-majority community (Roma), allowed to receive health and educational services. The programme supported beneficiaries to open their own businesses and formalize their jobs. The programme had the highest success rate, prompting great interest among the beneficiaries. Most importantly the programme managed to reduce national unemployment rate by 3% (2007 – 2012) with high percentage of women engagement in the project activities, and engagement of long-term unemployed individuals in providing care services for vulnerable end-beneficiaries (elderly, preschool children and people with disabilities on 63 municipalities).

The following were the steps as part of the operational plan:

- Capacity building training on entrepreneurship aiming to develop business skills,

⁸⁴ Thomas Vasseur Independent Consultant, *Evaluation Report, Evaluation of the Project CJOA – Main Phase*, January 2019 - November 2022. Accessible at: <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/documents/detail/22140>

- Support to develop a business plan for the business ideas,
- Support for business registration to formalize the activity,
- Provision of start-up grants through an open call in the form of equipment and/or required materials,
- Coaching and mentorship support throughout the process.

The main donor of the project was Swiss Development Agency, whereas among the key stakeholders involved were Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP), Employment Service Agency (ESA), Izbor CSO, REHA Center (Center for work-oriented rehabilitation of persons with disabilities), PwD CSO network, NGOs supporting Roma integration: SEGA Roma Mentorship network, NGOs supporting Roma integration: SEGA Roma Mentorship network, Youth CSOs and Municipality of Gostivar.⁸⁵

The table below has yearly (USD) budget of UNDP projects in North Macedonia that tackled SDG10 apart from other SDGs, since 2015 to 2021⁸⁶.

Table 2: UNDP projects in North Macedonia addressing SDG10 (2015-2021)/ consolidated UNDP dashboard

Year	Project Title	Description	SDG	Budget (USD)
2015	Self-employment Programme	Active labour market measures targeting the socially excluded developed and implemented	1, 10	4,280,625.00
2016	Creating job opportunities for all	Creating job opportunities for all - Technical expertise and implementation of active labour market measures to support generation of new jobs	1, 10, 8	3,957,571.00
	Self-employment Programme	Active labour market measures targeting the socially excluded developed and implemented	1, 10	1,010,687.00
	Services for Persons with Disabilities	Deriving Data to Design Better and More Inclusive Social Services for Persons with Disabilities	10, 3	1.00
2017	Creating jobs for all- II	Creating job opportunities for all II - Technical expertise and implementation of active labour market measures to support generation of new jobs	1, 10, 4, 8	6,177,926.00
	Creating job opportunities for all	Creating job opportunities for all - Technical expertise and implementation of active labour market measures to support generation of new jobs	1, 10, 8	695,838.00
	Self-employment Programme	Active labour market measures targeting the socially excluded developed and implemented	1, 10	227,524.00
	Services for Persons with Disabilities	Deriving Data to Design Better and More Inclusive Social Services for Persons with Disabilities	10, 3	84,083.00
2018	Creating job opportunities for all	Creating job opportunities for all III - Technical expertise and implementation of active labour market measures to support generation of new jobs	1, 10, 4, 8	5,411,524.00
	Creating jobs for all- II	Creating job opportunities for all II - Technical expertise and implementation of active labour market measures to support generation of new jobs	1, 10, 4, 8	4,300,318.00

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Data consolidated and retrieved from official UNDP website: <https://open.undp.org/>

	Building a local model for deinstitutionalization	Building a local model for DI in Banja Bansko Institution for rehabilitation of PWD	10	20,000.00
	Creating job opportunities for all	Creating job opportunities for all - Technical expertise and implementation of active labour market measures to support generation of new jobs	1, 10, 8	8,368.00
	Self-employment Programme	Active labour market measures targeting the socially excluded developed and implemented	1, 10	3,220.00
	Services for Persons with Disabilities	Deriving Data to Design Better and More Inclusive Social Services for Persons with Disabilities	10, 3	507.00
2019	Creating job opportunities for all- IV	The project supports creation of sustainable start-up businesses, economic reintegration of long-term unemployed and socio-economic inclusion of vulnerable people through community-based services and building stronger partnership with the private sector	10, 4, 8	4,532,800.00
	Creating job opportunities for all	Creating job opportunities for all III - Technical expertise and implementation of active labour market measures to support generation of new jobs	1, 10, 4, 8	4,065,951.00
	Roadmap Study for the EU Pathway of North Macedonia	The study will assist policy makers, economic agents and society at large in developing a strong body of evidence and analytics for understanding EU accession impact on the country's aspirations for accelerated, inclusive and sustainable growth	10, 16, 4	107,601.00
	Creating jobs for all- II	Creating job opportunities for all II - Technical expertise and implementation of active labour market measures to support generation of new jobs	1, 10, 4, 8	68,185.00
	Building a local model for deinstitutionalization	Building a local model for DI in Banja Bansko Institution for rehabilitation of PWD	10	60,000.00
2020	Creating job opportunities for all- IV	The project supports creation of sustainable start-up businesses, economic reintegration of long-term unemployed and socio-economic inclusion of vulnerable people through community-based services and building stronger partnership with the private sector	10, 4, 8	5,099,834.00
	Creating job opportunities for all	Creating job opportunities for all III - Technical expertise and implementation of active labour market measures to support generation of new jobs	1, 10, 4, 8	2,356,725.00
	Roadmap Study for the EU Pathway of North Macedonia	The study will assist policy makers, economic agents and society at large in developing a strong body of evidence and analytics for understanding EU accession impact on the country's aspirations for accelerated, inclusive and sustainable growth	10, 16, 4	96,498.00
	Building a local model for deinstitutionalization	Building a local model for DI in Banja Bansko Institution for rehabilitation of PWD	10	51,911.00
2021	Creating job opportunities for all- IV	The project supports creation of sustainable start-up businesses, economic reintegration of long-term unemployed and socio-economic inclusion of vulnerable people through community-based services and building stronger partnership with the private sector	10, 4, 8	2,082,303.00
	Creating job opportunities for all	Creating job opportunities for all III - Technical expertise and implementation of active labour market measures to support generation of new jobs	1, 10, 4, 8	1,634,448.00
	Roadmap Study for the EU Pathway of North Macedonia	The study will assist policy makers, economic agents and society at large in developing a strong body of evidence and analytics for understanding EU accession impact on the country's aspirations for accelerated, inclusive and sustainable growth	10, 16, 4	18,537.00
	Empowerment and Participation of OPDs	Reducing inequality and exclusion for all persons with disabilities, through multi-stakeholder capacity building; recommendations to improve existing legislation and policies; and facilitating contribution of OPDs to national planning and development	10, 8	-
Grand Total:				46,352,985.00

The table provides information on projects implemented in North Macedonia from 2015 to 2021 with designed interventions to address SDG 10 (Reduced inequalities)

accompanied with other SDGs, such as: SDGs 1 (No Poverty), SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions). Important to highlight, that the “Creating job opportunities for all” in phases, is the main project that addressed the SDG10 country wide.

The interventions aimed to create job opportunities, promote self-employment, provide services for persons with disabilities, and build a local model for deinstitutionalization. Additionally, some projects were focused on deriving data for designing better and more inclusive social services.

The allocated budget for the projects implemented are different - with the highest budget in 2017 at USD 6,177,926.00 and the lowest budget in 2015 (USD 1.00 most probably the leftover from the spending of the total budget). The projects with the highest budget were the projects Creating job opportunities for all-IV in 2019 and in 2020, with a budget of USD 5,099,834.00 and USD 5,411,524.00, whereas the lowest budget project was Services for Persons with Disabilities in 2016 and 2018, with a budget of USD 1.00 and USD 507.00, as per the dashboard.

Integrated Territorial Development – two phases (UNDP Project in Kosovo)

Considering specific challenges faced by all, but mostly from communities in rural areas of Kosovo, UNDP facilitated the preparation of a Territorial Employment Pacts (TEP) for specific municipalities (Dragash/š, Shtërpçë/Štrpce, Viti/Vitina), by supporting the leading role of the local authorities and local employment office (through the Local Action Group) and mobilized the support of relevant central and local partners. This approach has strengthened the local coordination of activities, programmes, and interventions of UNDP and had a human and economic development orientation as well as provided employment opportunities for all - most importantly to those with unequal and limited access for job opportunities. It was a synergic approach with ALMP programme funded by the Austrian Development Agency, co-financed with partner municipalities and UNDP. The approach applied an “employment lens” to the initiatives from the communities in order to bring into focus employment generation. The TEP was a partnership of local actors based on the consolidation of interests expressed by the multiple forces of the Municipal local authorities, business associations, civil society

organizations, professional bodies, financial institutions, Employment Offices, Vocational Education Centres etc. It provided the ownership process to all and gave them a chance to analyse and design the actions to better implement them as a multistakeholder initiative. Considering that youth and women were a disadvantaged group, there were specific interventions designed and supported by Municipalities and the Employment Offices to facilitate the transition of vulnerable individuals into decent employment by providing them access to the Active Labour Market Measures (ALMMs). When it came to evaluation of applications by evaluation committees, the profiling table was tailor made to support these categories from all communities in the municipalities and gave them priority during selection process. The trust of local communities with the local authorities, partners in the process and UNDP has been increased and the approach is being used as an example to be followed. Most importantly, the disparities within the communities were decreased and the percentage of joint community initiatives for the benefit of local communities were increased. The common interest for all groups of communities related to unemployment was addressed resulting with increase of income generation and job creation. Through this model, in coordination with local and central level partners, UNDP enabled a better living environment for all and addressed the most pressing issue for the local communities by contributing to reconcile relations between them.

The designed profiling table used during the review of applications from the evaluation panels, was designed to give priority to community members facing unemployment challenges and to those being at risk of social exclusion (long-term unemployed, low-skilled or unskilled, non-majority communities, people with disabilities, women and youth). The approach used by UNDP and local stakeholders, and the design of the new actions in participatory manner with the local stakeholders such as Municipal Local Action Group (LAG), local entrepreneurs and municipal directorates, was in favour of the local needs, and resulted with creation of the new jobs for members of local communities (Albanians, Serbs, Gorani, Bosnians and Roma). Accordingly, there was a job creation and income generations from the green jobs⁸⁷, social entrepreneurship, tourism, and vocational professions. Engagement and empowerment of vulnerable groups is considered a vital

⁸⁷ Green jobs refer to the jobs created in agriculture sector.

element for a healthy society and the economy. Therefore, the project has successfully managed to reach out to these individuals, working with central level and local level institutions in understanding the needs of their citizens by addressing social exclusion and the disparities among communities - supporting entirely the society integration process. The project directly contributed to the UN Common Development Plan for Kosovo 2016-2020, in particular the Priority Area 2: Social Inclusion (Outcome 2.1: Education & employment policies and programmes enable greater access to decent employment opportunities for youth and women, and Outcome 2.2: Women in Kosovo increasingly enjoy their economic rights).⁸⁸ Apart from SDG1, SDG5, SDG8 and SDG16, the project addressed SDG10, by closing the income gap, skills and opportunity gaps among communities, specifically for women and men representation and rural vs. urban.⁸⁹ The approach helped to increase income generation for communities and supported cooperation and recuperation of relations between communities. However, although InTerDev’s project activities are aligned with SDG10, it wasn’t part of the dashboard for UNDP Kosovo, therefore the progress in this area is obviously in the partner municipalities and their direct beneficiaries as well as reflected in the final project reports.

The below table reflects the UNDP Kosovo projects tackling only SDG10 since 2015 to 2021, disaggregated by yearly budgets.

Table 3: UNDP projects in Kosovo addressing SDG10 (2015-2021)/ consolidated UNDP dashboard

Year	Project Title	Description	SDG	Budget (USD)
2015	/	/	/	/
2016	Kosovo Missing persons initiative to increase stability	Support the Governments of Kosovo and Serbia on dealing with the past and missing persons	10,16	-
2017	Kosovo Missing persons initiative to increase stability	Support the Governments of Kosovo and Serbia on dealing with the past and missing persons	10,16	188,522.00
2018	Inter-community Dialogue through Inclusive Cultural Heritage	Cultural heritage aims to build trust between the communities in Kosovo, through improved inter-community acceptance and respect for the cultural identity and heritage of all Kosovo communities	10, 11	663,634.00
	Kosovo Missing persons initiative to increase stability	Support the Governments of Kosovo and Serbia on dealing with the past and missing persons	10, 16	136,458.00
	Empowering Youth for Peaceful	The project aims to provide a space for youth from all backgrounds in the selected localities in Kosovo to work	10, 8	-

⁸⁸ UNDP Kosovo, *Project documents, Integrated Territorial Development 2 (InTerDev 2)*, accessible at: <https://info.undp.org/docs/pdc/Documents/KOS/Project%20Document%20INTERDEV2%20.pdf>

⁸⁹ Ibid.

	Prosperous Future in Kosovo	together to address shared challenges and become more active changemakers that will catalyse peacebuilding efforts in Kosovo		
2019	Inter-community Dialogue through Inclusive Cultural Heritage	Cultural heritage aims to build trust between the communities in Kosovo, through improved inter-community acceptance and respect for the cultural identity and heritage of all Kosovo communities	10, 11	1,398,798.00
	Empowering Youth for Peaceful Prosperous Future in Kosovo	The project aims to provide a space for youth from all backgrounds in the selected localities in Kosovo to work together to address shared challenges and become more active changemakers that will catalyse peacebuilding efforts in Kosovo	10, 8	708,044.00
	Kosovo Missing persons initiative to increase stability	Support the Governments of Kosovo and Serbia on dealing with the past and missing persons	10, 16	518,935.00
2020	Empowering Youth for Peaceful Prosperous Future in Kosovo	The project aims to provide a space for youth from all backgrounds in the selected localities in Kosovo to work together to address shared challenges and become more active changemakers that will catalyse peacebuilding efforts in Kosovo	10, 8	694,571.00
	Kosovo Missing persons initiative to increase stability	Support the Governments of Kosovo and Serbia on dealing with the past and missing persons	10, 16	550,496.00
	Inter-community Dialogue through Inclusive Cultural Heritage	Cultural heritage aims to build trust between the communities in Kosovo, through improved inter-community acceptance and respect for the cultural identity and heritage of all Kosovo communities	10, 11	249,993.00
	CH as a driver for Inter community dialog and social cohesion	Cultural heritage can be instrumental in enhancing social inclusion, developing intercultural dialogue, creating jobs, community empowerment, broadening opportunities for learning, skills development, enhancing the feeling of safety and belonging	10, 11	10,000.00
2021	CH as a driver for Inter community dialog and social cohesion	Cultural heritage can be instrumental in enhancing social inclusion, developing intercultural dialogue, creating jobs, community empowerment, broadening opportunities for learning, skills development, enhancing the feeling of safety and belonging	10, 11	1,021,791.00
	Kosovo Missing persons initiative to increase stability	Support the Governments of Kosovo and Serbia on dealing with the past and missing persons	10, 16	459,795.00
	Empowering Youth for Peaceful Prosperous Future in Kosovo	The project aims to provide a space for youth from all backgrounds in the selected localities in Kosovo to work together to address shared challenges and become more active changemakers that will catalyse peacebuilding efforts in Kosovo	10, 8	140,290.00
	Youth Develop, Gender Norms and Human Security in Kosovo	Youth Development, Gender Norms and Human Security in Kosovo: Supporting youth as drivers of gender equality, development and positive peace. Country-led measures accelerated to advance gender equality and women's empowerment	10, 5	13,456.00
	Cultural Heritage Janjevo	Preserving historic identity of restoring the unique architecture of Janjevë/Janjevo would help to revive interest in and appreciation of local culture, collective memory and historic identity through revitalizing tangible and intangible heritage assets	10	12.00
			Grand Total	6,754,795.00

The information in this table is related to the projects accomplished in Kosovo between 2015 and 2021, their alignment with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the budgets in USD. Overall, the projects in this table had a grand total budget of USD

6,754,795. The SDGs that the projects aimed to address were SDG 10, mainly associated with SDG 11, 8, 16 and 5.

Important to emphasize, there is no data available for the year 2015 for any project addressing SDG 10 and other SDGs but the years after until 2021 possess data. The "Kosovo Missing Persons Initiative" project was implemented in 2016 and 2017 to assist the governments of Kosovo and Serbia in addressing missing persons, with SDG 10 and 16 as the main focus. In 2016, the project had no allocated budget, but it received USD 188,522 in 2017.

In 2018, there were three projects. The first project was "Inter-community Dialogue through Inclusive Cultural Heritage," which aimed to build trust between communities in Kosovo through cultural heritage, with an SDG focus of 10 and 11 and a budget of USD 663,634. The second project was the "Kosovo Missing Persons Initiative," with an SDG focus of 10 and 16 and a budget of USD 136,458. The third project was "Empowering Youth for a Peaceful Prosperous Future in Kosovo," with an SDG focus of 10.8 and no budget specified.

In 2019, there were three projects. The first two projects were the same as those in 2018. The third project was the "Empowering Youth for a Peaceful Prosperous Future in Kosovo," with an SDG focus of 10 and 8 and a budget of USD 708,044.

In 2020, there were four projects. The first project was the same as in 2018 and 2019, with an SDG focus of 10 and 11 and a budget of USD 249,993. The second project was the "Cultural Heritage as a driver for Inter-community dialog and social cohesion," with an SDG focus of 10 and 11 and a budget of USD 10,000. The third and fourth projects were the same as those in 2018 and 2019.

In 2021, there were five projects. The first project was the same as in 2020. The second project was the "Kosovo Missing Persons Initiative," with an SDG focus of 10 and 16 and a budget of USD 459,795. The third project was the "Empowering Youth for a Peaceful Prosperous Future in Kosovo," with an SDG focus of 10 and 8 and a budget of USD 140,290. The fourth project was "Youth Develop, Gender Norms and Human Security in Kosovo," with

an SDG focus of 10 and 5 and a budget of USD 13,456. The fifth and final project was "Cultural Heritage Janjevë/Janjevo," with an SDG focus of 10 and a budget leftover of USD 12.

Table 4. Compared budgets with associated SDGs in both countries (Source: Own source)

2015 – 2021	Country	Associated SDGs apart from SDG 10	Budget in USD
	North Macedonia	1,3,4,8,16	46,352,985.00
	Kosovo	5,8,11, 16	6,754,795.00

According to this data, North Macedonia has a larger budget spent compared to Kosovo, with a total of USD 46,352,985.00 allocated for the associated SDGs apart from SDG 10 between 2015 and 2021, whereas Kosovo has a budget of USD 6,754,795.00 for the same period with over six times less. Additionally, North Macedonia has SDG 10 associated with SDGs 1, 3, 4, 8, and 16, while Kosovo SDG 10 is associated with SDGs 5, 8, 11, and 16. It is important to note that the associated SDGs for each country may vary depending on their specific strategic development priorities and needs.

National and Local level reports

North Macedonia began its first National Volunteer Report in 2020, in the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, with the motto of 'leaving no one behind' through fighting poverty, inequality and social exclusion. The report highlights the main achievements towards agenda 2030 for the country by strongly emphasizing social inclusion, supporting employment, inclusion in the labour market schemes, gender equality, protection, and quality education for all. Based on the data from the available National Volunteer Report of North Macedonia in 2020, it was announced the Guaranteed Minimum Assistance (GMA) as part of the Law on Social Protection, which integrated the categorical benefits into general cash benefits by applying simplified administrative procedures to GMA beneficiaries within the family package for the child allowances and education allowances in primary and secondary education. When comparing the allowances in 2019 for April and May 2019, they had higher coverage of beneficiaries with total payments increased up to 63%.⁹⁰ North Macedonia began preparing the UN volunteer report in 2020, while Kosovo has not yet reached that level. The reports

⁹⁰ Sustainable Development Goals, North Macedonia, *Voluntary National Report*, July 2020. Accessible at: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26388VNR_2020_Macedonia_Report.pdf

referenced in this research proposal are those prepared by UNKT, GIZ, and other organizations that examine the implementation of SDGs and progress in Kosovo. However, both countries lack data from the local level in their municipality reports. It should be noted that progress is being directed through the efforts of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) as part of donor-funded projects addressing the SDGs.

In Kosovo, the Municipal Performance Management System (MPMS) operates as a tool under the Ministry of Local Government Administration (MLGA), aiming to evaluate the performance of municipalities in the areas of administrative services, public services, and governance. The tool utilizes a set of 119 performance indicators that are reviewed annually by the MLGA to assess the municipalities' performance. Nonetheless, SDG 10 is not included in the measurement of other SDGs and their indicators at the local level in Kosovo (MLG – Local Government in Kosovo and SDGs).

The Ministry of Local Self-Government in North Macedonia had an Action Plan established to execute the 2015-2020 Programme for Sustainable Local Development and Decentralisation for the 2018-2020 timeframe. The plan was a framework for integrating the sustainable development in planning and managing development at a local level and mobilising, joining and coordinating all factors at national and local levels on topics that could contribute for achieving the United Nations sustainable development goals (MLSG - 2015-2020 Programme for Sustainable Local Development and Decentralisation). Despite the action plan serving as a valuable planning tool, there is no progress report available for this timeframe that demonstrates the involvement of the local level in achieving the SDGs.

Compared municipalities

In terms of UNDP interventions, two municipalities on the Kosovo side, namely Dragash/Dragaš and Shtërpçë/Štrpce, are being taken to acknowledge interventions addressing inequalities. These municipalities are primarily situated in remote rural areas and comprise mixed communities. Similarly, in North Macedonia, two municipalities, Gostivar and Veles, with mixed communities are examined for comparison. All four municipalities belong

to the medium-sized category and serve as examples of UNDP interventions through projects that tackled SDG 10 and have improved their living conditions and fostered positive peace.

Dragash/Dragaš Municipality

The municipality of Dragash/Dragaš is in southern region of Kosovo. It covers an area of approximately 435 km² and includes Dragash/Dragaš town and 35 villages. According to the 2011 Kosovo Population and Housing Census, the total population is 33,997.⁹¹ It is located approximately 22 km southwest of Prizren and it shares a border with the Prizren municipality to the north, as well as Albania to the west and North Macedonia, with many families working abroad and only returning home during the summer. Approximately two-thirds of the residents are Kosovo Albanian, while the remaining one-third consists of Kosovo Gorani/Bosniak individuals.⁹²

Shtërpçë/Štrpce Municipality

The municipality of Shtërpçë/Štrpce is in the south-eastern part of Kosovo. It covers an area of 247 km² and includes the town of Shtërpçë/Štrpce and 16 villages. According to the 2011 Kosovo Population and Housing Census, the total population is 6,949 (Albanians: 3,757 (54%), 3,148 (45.5%) Serbs; other communities: Roma (24), Bosniaks (2), Ashkali (1), Other (17) and not specified (10). The municipality is predominantly based on agriculture, mainly raspberry production, tourism, and small businesses.⁹³

In terms of the UNDP's support to municipalities in Kosovo, it firstly started in Dragash/Dragaš municipality with the project: Sustainable Land Use Management and Conservation of Biodiversity in Dragash/š Municipality (2010 – 2013), with the budget of USD 4,037,685 – funding from government of Finland. Due to poor agricultural resources and geographical isolation, Dragash/Dragaš was among the most underdeveloped regions in Kosovo. The economic situation has been dominated by a high rate of unemployment,

⁹¹ OSCE, *Municipal Profile Dragash/Dragaš*, 2018. Accessible at: https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/4/0/13114_1.pdf

⁹² OSCE, *Municipal Profile Dragash/Dragaš*, 2006. Accessible at: https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/1083040/225_tmpphpYGorBl.pdf

⁹³ OSCE, *Municipal Profile, Shtërpë/ Štrpce*, 2018. Accessible at: https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/1/6/13130_1.pdf

suffering from population loss resulting from large-scale emigration, and limited access to public transportation, modern forms of energy services, education, phone lines, health facilities and markets. The project, aimed at improving the lives of the citizens with the following specific objectives:

- protection of natural resources and biodiversity;
- promotion of local resources and competitive advantages;
- raise capacities of farmers and producers to reach markets and improve quality of their products;
- improve energy efficiency and promotion of renewable energy sources;
- improve good governance and gender equality in the municipality.

The results of the programme are the following:

- The programme has developed the Municipal Development Plan, including strategies for settlements, roads and infrastructure, forestry, health, education, biodiversity and nature protection, agriculture, cultural heritage & tourism, economic development, human resources development, water and wastewater, waste management and energy;
- It has completed the sustainable development Atlas for the Sharr/Šar national park (mapping resources, forestry, biodiversity, potential for tourism);
- Developed management plan for the Sharr/Šar National Park; and
- Created employment opportunities and support for local SME's in Dragash/Dragaš (through Ecoprofit training, recycling business opportunities), an action supporting in building their skills and providing employment for 10 women of Dragash/Dragaš in the shoe factory through Regional Development Agency South.

Furthermore, the funded Austrian Development Agency and third parties (MLSW and partner Municipalities), Integrated Territorial Development (InTerDev), was a six-year project implemented in two phases by UNDP in Kosovo throughout years 2014 to 2020, which has been expanded firstly to two municipalities (Dragash/Dragaš and Shtërpçë/Štrpce) and later on during the second phase included the third municipality of Viti/Vitina but with less support than these two. The project which is implemented in synergy with ALMP project (Active Labour Market Project) by including the ALMM (Active Labour Market Measures), is an example of addressing many SDGs within sustainable development portfolio. It contributed directly to UN Common Development Plan for Kosovo 2016-2020, in particular its Priority Area

2: Social Inclusion, and its associated outcomes Outcome 2.1: Education & employment policies and programmes enable greater access to decent employment opportunities for youth and women, and Outcome 2.2: Women in Kosovo increasingly enjoy their economic rights.⁹⁴ The overall objective of the project was to improve inclusive and sustainable income generation and job creation for women and men in partner municipalities. 'The project directly promoted and contributed to, specifically:

SDG1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere - *through income generation and socioeconomic empowerment of women and men at risk of social and economic exclusion.*

SDG5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls - *via specific measures to empower women through skills development, access to employment opportunities, and strengthened participation in public processes.* SDG8: Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all - *a key element of the project, creating decent and targeted skills development, employment, and productivity enhancement opportunities.*

SDG9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote sustainable industrialization and foster innovation - *through strengthening access of smallholder farmers and micro and small enterprises to value chains and markets in the area and beyond, and providing access to financial grants as well as basis for access to credit or agricultural subsidies in Kosovo.*

SDG10: Reduce inequality within and among countries - *via closing the income gap as well as skills and opportunity gaps among the municipal communities, particularly with regards to women and men representation and rural vs. urban communities.*

SDG12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns - *by fostering sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources in the partner areas, sustainable agriculture and other production methods.*

SDG16: Promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies - *through improved public service delivery and streamlining of participatory approaches of local governments vis-à-vis local population, civil society, or the private sector, as well as inter-ethnic dialogue and peaceful cohabitation on the local level'.⁹⁵*

⁹⁴ Integrated Territorial Development 2 Project_Project Document, Accessible at: https://www.ks.undp.org/content/kosovo/en/home/operations/projects/poverty_reduction/integrated-territorial-development-2--interdev-2-.html

⁹⁵ Ibid.

Figure 7. InTerDev Project Snapshot with expected results⁹⁶



The following are the expected results from the project: 1) Municipal officials have enhanced capacities in provision of services in rural development; 2) Local micro and small enterprises and farmers have been supported to upgrade their businesses; and 3) Bottom-up approaches and local-level concertation for employment generation in the form of Territorial Employment Pacts operate at the municipal level.⁹⁷ Till the end of the project’s lifespan by January 2020, from the direct support by the project, the capacities of municipal officials in the partner municipalities have meaningfully improved, demonstrated by increase in pro-activeness and initiative taking, in areas of recognition for an importance of approaches and a need for a dialogue, stronger understanding about the needs of the communities (Albanians, Serbs, Gorani, Bosniak and Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian), and their role in addressing them and improved understanding of administrative processes.

Territorial Employment Pacts (TEPs) – which have been designed based on the territorial auditing and in close coordination with relevant stakeholders and Local Action

⁹⁶ Retrieved from:

https://www.ks.undp.org/content/kosovo/en/home/operations/projects/poverty_reduction/integrated-territorial-development-2--interdev-2-.html

⁹⁷ UNDP Kosovo, *Final Evaluation Report*, Integrated Territorial Development – InTerDev 2 project, accessible at: <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/detail/12362>

Groups, proven to be an important programmatic tool in contributing to a cultural change in respect to planning, service delivery and participatory approaches and most importantly were the accelerators of jobs creation and income generation. The equitable and gender sensitive smallholder farmers' rural grant schemes – increased number of women direct beneficiaries and contributed to expansion of economic activity of local micro and small businesses. The Inter-municipal cooperation of partner municipalities (Dragash/Dragaš, Shtërpcë/Štrpce and Viti/Vitina), through municipal Local Action Groups (LAGs) – actively contributed to enhance municipal public service provision in rural development by sharing experiences and applying various joint initiatives.⁹⁸

As a result of the first phase of the project interventions there were 57 micro and small rural businesses in Dragash/Dragaš and Shtërpcë/Štrpce upgraded through the Local Development Fund grant scheme (35 in Shtërpcë/Štrpce and 22 in Dragash/Dragaš); the total amount disbursed for grants has reached 99% of dedicated funds for this purpose, increasing productivity, creating more income, and generating additional jobs. Furthermore, 750+ jobs were created mainly in agriculture, 2600+ family members benefited from improved livelihoods and 325 rural microenterprises were upgraded, supporting and increasing the family income generation.⁹⁹

During the second phase, the project created 700+ jobs (50% women, 40% non-majority communities), as well as around 265 rural micro-enterprises upgraded.¹⁰⁰ The project activities supported in closing the income gap besides the skills and opportunity gaps within different categories of society (i.e. regardless age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status within a country), living in rural and para-urban areas. In combination with ALMP measures, with cooperation from LAGs and Employment Offices through VET (Vocational Education Training) and on job training, local communities/vulnerable groups of different age, religion, majority or/and minority groups,

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ InTerDev Results 2014-2017 Booklet, accessible at: <https://www.undp.org/kosovo/publications/interdev-results-2014-2017-booklet>

¹⁰⁰ Project infographic, accessible at:

https://www.ks.undp.org/content/kosovo/en/home/operations/projects/poverty_reduction/integrated-territorial-development-2--interdev-2-.html

were provided skills and better positioning in the labour market. The action directly contributed to accomplishing SDG10 among other SDGs (SDG1, SDG5, SDG8 and SDG16). According to the final project evaluation of first phase, high return on investment was in Shtërpçë/Štrpce through Territorial Employment Pact just in 2016, up to EUR 376,000.00 of income were generated through raspberry farming supported by the project.¹⁰¹

Gostivar Municipality

Gostivar is a municipality in North Macedonia, situated in Polog region of the country, with population of 59,770, and an area and area of 513.4 according to the census in 2021. It is mainly inhabited with Albanians (33,076), Macedonians (12,807), Turks (7,597), Roma (2,237), other (644), and persons whom data are taken from administrative sources (3,409).¹⁰² The city is located in over 500 m above the sea level, across the Vardar River, in the west of North Macedonia, surrounded by Sharri and Dry Mountain.¹⁰³

As a city with mixed communities, Gostivar played an important role in establishing the mechanisms towards sustainable jobs. The project “Creating Job Opportunities for all” is one of the projects that helped its mixed communities integrating and building their skills for jobs at their living areas. Municipality was involved in the project through its support to the Ican center as well as the development of other social services (Autism Center) and commitment to PPP through a kitchen that was established in the multifunctional training center for people with disabilities.¹⁰⁴

Veles Municipality

Veles is a municipality located in the in the central part of the country, in the middle course of the river Vardar. It lies on the main road of the Balkan Peninsula along the Moravian-Vardar Valley. Veles has a very favourable geographical position because it is a crossroad of

¹⁰¹ InTerDev Results 2014-2017 Booklet, accessible at: <https://www.undp.org/kosovo/publications/interdev-results-2014-2017-booklet>

¹⁰² Retrieved from:

https://www.citypopulation.de/en/northmacedonia/poloski/polo%C5%A1ki/403318_gostivar/

¹⁰³ Retrieved from: <https://gostivari.gov.mk/pozita-gjeografike/>

¹⁰⁴ Thomas Vasseur, *Evaluation Report, Evaluation of the Project CJOA – Main Phase January 2019 - November 2022* A project implemented by UNDP North Macedonia, January 2023. Accessible at: file:///C:/Users/vlora.elshani/Downloads/MKD_CJOA%20Evaluation%20Report_Final%20(3).pdf

international road and rail routes and one of the major transit centres in North Macedonia. Veles is the sixth city by number of inhabitants in Macedonia with a total population of 48,463 inhabitants.¹⁰⁵ According to the latest census in 2021, the population in Veles is mixed, with majority Macedonians (36,825), Albanians (2,736), Turks (1,037), Roma (507), Serbs (267), Bosniaks (1,825), Vlachs (270) and other group (271).¹⁰⁶

Within the “Create Job Opportunities for all”, the project the city of Veles has been engaged with Association of persons with cerebral palsy and other disabilities. The model of the association offered strong sustainability job perspective in particular for women being employed in the centre and offering services for the people with disabilities. This form of support showcased the significant potential for the aging population, who often face limited employment opportunities, as well as offering promising assistance to individuals who rely on these services in their daily lives.

The primary objective of the main phase of the “Create Job Opportunities for all” project, was to enhance employment opportunities and enhance living conditions for unemployed individuals, particularly those belonging to vulnerable groups. This initiative served as a contribution to an ongoing UNDP program called "Creating Job Opportunities for All," which received funding from the Government (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy) and UNDP. The program aimed to address unemployment by assisting institutions in implementing Active Labor Market Measures (ALMMs). The UNDP's "Creating Job Opportunities for All" program primarily concentrated on generating employment opportunities for the overall unemployed population in North Macedonia. It had several key areas of intervention, such as self-employment, support for SMEs to foster growth and job creation, community projects, etc. The Swiss contribution to this project focused on addressing the needs of underrepresented vulnerable groups in the labour market, such as youth, Roma, and individuals with disabilities.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Retrieved from: https://macedonia-timeless.com/chi/cities_and_regions/cities/veles/

¹⁰⁶ Population, retrieved from:

https://www.citypopulation.de/en/northmacedonia/admin/vardarski/809_veles/

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

The project aimed to achieve its objectives by delivering the following outcomes:

- Better usage of market measures by young individuals, Roma community members, and people with disabilities, leading to improved outcomes for these groups;
- Enhanced employment opportunities for members of vulnerable groups through the engagement of a diverse workforce, including the private sector and social enterprises; and
- Development and implementation of policies and services by relevant institutions to facilitate access to the labour market for individuals from vulnerable groups.

As part of the cooperation with UNDP and the private sector within the project 'Creating Job Opportunities for all', municipality of Gostivar established a professional kitchen for healthy food and a Center for the training of differently abled persons. The Preparation of pastry products (PPP) project includes several trainings in the field of hospitality, kitchen for food production and locations for healthy food in primary and secondary schools of Gostivar. The first training is "Preparation of pastry products", which is financed by UNDP, dedicated to persons with primary education and persons with special needs who wish to be trained. The training includes 280 hours in which candidates can learn about the production of sweets, while at the end of the training, certificates issued by the Center for Adult Education and the Ministry of Education and Science will be issued.¹⁰⁸ Apart from this, The SEEU (South-East European University) in Tetovo, is engaged in the project as a supervisor of the "Ican" Youth Center. The Center has been supported by the project and provides a range of educational programmes, small business development, internship and labour inclusion support, as well as networking of the Youth with private sector actors and other local actors. The action helped youngsters to connect with labour offerors and had good positive impact to reduce youth migration.¹⁰⁹ The project helped to address the most pressing issues of local communities in specific for youth, Roman and People with Disabilities, by integrating them into the labour market sector. The models used in the project are considered innovative as they provide long-

¹⁰⁸ Retrieved from: <https://gostivari.gov.mk/2023/05/formohet-qendra-per-trajnimin-e-personave-me-aftesi-ndryshe/>

¹⁰⁹ Thomas Vasseur, *Evaluation Report, Evaluation of the Project CJOA – Main Phase January 2019 - November 2022* A project implemented by UNDP North Macedonia, January 2023. Accessible at: file:///C:/Users/vlora.elshani/Downloads/MKD_CJOA%20Evaluation%20Report_Final%20(3).pdf

term perspective of employment; therefore, an expansion has been proposed to other geographic areas within recommendations, considering good return on investment.¹¹⁰

Addressed inequalities through aligned programmes

The first common question in this part would be: *Does inequality breed the conflict?* Searching about the links between inequality and conflict we understand that this relation is among the oldest concerns in the past studies related political economy (Christopher Cramer, 2005). At least since Aristotle, political theorists have proposed that political discontent and its consequences – protest, instability and violence – depend not only on the absolute level of economic wealth, but also on its distribution, or in other words the inequality between the rich and poor.¹¹¹ As interconnected, the instability as a consequence of misbalanced distribution of economic wealth, stimulating the social reactions in a form of protest, rebellion and other forms of resistance, often escalates in a violent conflict.

In the economics literature, inequality is often “decomposed” into a “between-group” and a “within group” component.¹¹² These concepts turn out to be important for relating inequality to conflict. Inequality can foster resentment that stokes conflict, the precise nature of the causal linkages is not quite so evident. There are poor societies that are remarkably peaceful, and richer societies that are mired in violence. The counter examples of Northern Ireland or the Balkans are a useful antidote to the view that high incomes are necessarily a deterrent to conflict. Moreover, within countries it does not seem that the wealthier areas are any less immune from low intensity communal violence.¹¹³ Kosovo and North Macedonia, are countries where “between-group” and “within group” conflict was present because of the horizontal and vertical inequalities among communities for a longer period.

The second common question would be: *How UNDP contributes to reduce inequalities in Kosovo and North Macedonia?* With its presence in more than 170 countries, and proven

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ø., Gudrun, *Inequality and political conflict*, World Social Science Report, UNESCO and the ISSC, Paris, 2016, p.126.

¹¹² R., Kanbur, *Poverty and Conflict: The Inequality Link*, *Coping with Crisis Working Paper Series*, International Peace Academy June 2007, p.2.

¹¹³ Ibid. p.3.

ability to coordinate and support efforts which address inequality, exclusion and protect vital ecosystems, UNDP as a UN Agency facilitates the process of transition from instability towards stable, prosperous and peaceful situation. The presence of inequality in the aspect of economic development and human development/investment (within and between Kosovo and North Macedonia), are stipulating integration processes within EU structures. Although both countries derive from ex-Yugoslavia, the escalation of violation to genocide and war in Kosovo, declaration of independence late in 2008 and the reconciliation process among its communities, has prolonged the process of development; in the case of North Macedonia, as one of the successor states of Yugoslavia, from which it declared independence in 1991 with no war, although the SAA was signed in 2004, the enlargement discussion could not start until it was resolved the country's name with Greece to "Republic of North Macedonia", that entered into force in 2019.¹¹⁴

Deriving from two variable realities, the integrated UNDP approaches with relevant stakeholders are translating national development priorities into the common UN agenda 2030, whereas the EU accession process is accelerating the achievement of the UN objectives and contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). To acquaint the level of UNDP's programme/projects equally disbursed budget in Kosovo and North Macedonia that have been addressing the needs of the residents towards achieving the agenda 2030, the information by relevant implemented programmes/projects in collaboration with local authorities in both countries has been consolidated.

Based on these discussions, the guiding Hypothesis: UNDP's contribution in achieving SDG 10 reduced inequalities towards sustainable development in Kosovo and North Macedonia at the central and local level could facilitate peaceful transformation at central and local level; can be presented, whereas the 2 associated hypothesis will complement it.

Through its programmatic approach towards sustainable development, democratic governance & peacebuilding and environment, climate and disaster resilience, UNDP is

¹¹⁴ Koneska., C, *The Macedonia name dispute: A few drivers and spoilers of success*, 2019. Accessible at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26776073>

working to decrease the sources of inequality and potential for conflict anywhere present. The occurrence of inequality in the aspect of economic development and human development/investment in the neighbouring countries of Kosovo and North Macedonia, are impacting the perspective of the EU integration accession also. Given its impartiality globally as a UN agency, whenever seeking to rapid changes and meaningful progress for the countries, UNDP is considered a guaranteed strong partnership facilitator with the local stakeholders from the donors. With the motto of leaving no one behind, its approach through long-lasting changes is successfully translating the national development priorities towards reaching the agenda 2030 for Kosovo and North Macedonia.

These two neighbouring countries are examples of how UNDP translated its impact into tangible results in partnership with national and local stakeholders and built trust as committed partners in sustainable development. The programmatic approaches of UNDP are inclusive, coherent and match with the needs of the residents, consequently, contribute significantly to EU accession process and addressing the SDGs for the states. Although the agenda 2030 is a call for states equally, the progress in this course is different from country to country given their development circumstances and the same applies in the case of the two example states elaborated as below.

UNDP programme and the SDG approach at the country levels

Kosovo's approach to SDGs

In Kosovo, the National Development Strategy (NDS) 2016 – 2021 released in 2016, is a guiding document that defines the development path for the country for the five years.¹¹⁵ While the country strategy was assessed to neglect completely the health sector and dealing to certain extent with the justice sector (INDEP, 2019), it was also noted to lack the elaboration of the agenda 2030 pledged to implement as a country, this way ignoring the importance of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Even though, Kosovo is not a member of United Nations (UN) neither a member of European Union, the accomplishment of the agenda 2030 would help the country towards integration in both systems. In October

¹¹⁵ Republic of Kosovo, *National Development Strategy 2016 – 2021 (NDS)*. Accessible at: http://www.kryeministri-ks.net/repository/docs/National_Development_Strategy_2016-2021_ENG.pdf

2018, the Assembly of Kosovo established the Council for Sustainable Development comprised on the MPs who lead this process. Currently, the country is in a critical stage of economic development, struggling to reduce unemployment, create equal opportunities for everyone as well as efficient use of resources.¹¹⁶ In all this, the role of the World Bank Group (WBG) is a pioneering role, guiding the UN system in reaching the SDGs as the goals are aligned with the WBG's objectives. In the member countries, the WBG (World Bank Group) is working to deliver on the 2030 Agenda through three key areas of finance, data, and implementation; important in facilitating countries to accomplish the SDGs. Its goals align with the SDGs, remarkably the poverty and inequality related to SDG targets. The role of the WB remains crucial since it provides funding opportunities for the economic and social sustainable development, whereas the role of the Human Development Report articulates the goals and improvement in people's wellbeing by ensuring an equitable, sustainable and stable planet.¹¹⁷ All in all, the SDG10 on reduced inequalities remains the most complex one also for Kosovo and while other WB countries report on volunteer basis for the accomplishment of the SDGs, Kosovo still lacks the functional system that could accelerate the implementation and meaningful coordination among relevant actors.

UNDP's Country Programme alignment and outcome areas of intervention in Kosovo

After a conflict in 1999 and prolonged definition of status, Kosovo reached independence in a close coordination with international community by 17th of February 2008. The provisional government started independence with stagnant and very poor economy, high unemployment rate and tensions among communities.

The engagement of the United Nations (UN) in Kosovo, remains under the UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999). Subsequently, the access of Kosovo is limited in the global UN development platforms, trust funds and international conventions for reporting on achieved development and human rights standards. Kosovo's top priorities is to attain the European Union (EU) membership and currently is considered a potential candidate (5 EU states did not recognise its independence yet). The UNDP programme for Kosovo is an

¹¹⁶ Hermonda Kalludra, Ejupi Burim., *Kosovo and 2030 Agenda: From Political Rethoric to Concrete Actions*, Institute for Development Policy (INDEP), supported by Rockefeller Brothers Fund, July 2019 (page 4).

¹¹⁷ Ibid (page 5)

appendix in the country programme document for Serbia (2016-2020). Within United Nations Kosovo Team (UNKT), the UNDP in Kosovo plays a crucial role and has a wide range of projects implemented under the CPD 2016-2020 with the indicative budget amounted to USD 46.7 million addressing three outcome areas: i) Good governance and rule of law/32.5%, ii) Inclusive and sustainable growth/ 44.4% and iii) Resilience and environmental sustainability/ 23.1%, including the harmonized outcomes of UNDP's Strategic Plan (2014 – 2017) with MDGs, SDGs and other internationally agreed development goals.¹¹⁸ As the theory of change is based on the two assumptions: i) Kosovo has middle-income status and is hampered by poverty, corruption and discrimination, and ii) Kosovo's population is striving not just for better education and employment systems but for stronger social cohesion, the country programme has these transformative elements required for producing change: i) a profound shift in Kosovo's institutional accountability and the promotion of equality of opportunities for all Kosovars, and ii) cross-sectoral cooperation across Kosovo to accelerate the inclusion of the most vulnerable people within Kosovo's society by linking authorities to communities, and communities to their own development.

It has been noted that UNDP has successfully implemented effective interventions that are benefitting government institutions and contributing to improved living standards for its citizens especially in areas benefiting from long-term involvement. It strengthened the strategic, legal and institutional anti-corruption framework, safety and security, employment policy (although with a weak capacity of Employment Offices), has taken an inclusive approach to implementing disaster risk reduction activities and has achieved good results in mainstreaming gender equality in programme design and implementation, contributing to improving gender equality and women's empowerment.¹¹⁹ As the resource mobilization opportunities from international donors diminish, must be highlighted that UNDP has increasingly turned to Kosovo's central level institutions to finance its programme, representing 30% of the top-10 donors throughout 2016 -2018. In the CPD 2016- 2020, more integrated implementation of the programme was sought by UNDP along with interventions at the municipal level including the integrity plans for anti-corruption, service delivery for

¹¹⁸Independent Evaluation Office, *Independent UNDP Kosovo Programme Evaluation*, July 2020 (page 8).

¹¹⁹ Evaluation Brief: Kosovo, Independent Evaluation Office, July 2020.

business promotion, jobs through the engagement of municipal administration, employment services, vocational training and civil society organizations, community drills under disaster risk reduction, and access to justice for rural communities and marginalized groups.¹²⁰ Important to note that collaboration with the EU is limited with just four EU-funded projects implemented, but such partnership is foreseen to only increase in importance as European integration continues, and as bilateral donors continue to scale down their assistance in the region. In contrast to this, the Regional Programme on Local Democracy in the Western Balkans (ReLOaD)¹²¹, is a regional project that is implemented in WB6 counting Kosovo too.¹²²

Fact: Good governance and rule of law

The programme focuses on strengthening the key institutions which are responsible to ensure a functional democracy and peace in Kosovo, strengthening institutional capacities in policymaking and delivery to assure peace and stability for its citizens, and paving the way for Kosovo to meet EU integration conditionalities. The Anti-corruption support is pursued through Support to Anti-Corruption Efforts in Kosovo Project (SAEK)¹²³ project. The work on safety and security concentrated on small arms and light weapons, focused the activities in strengthening legislative and policy frameworks, in training the police officers and civil servants, oversight of private security services, community policing, protection of critical infrastructure, crime prevention, school safety, and the prevention of violent extremism and cyber security. There are also projects aiming at strengthening the capacities of specific institutions to address issues such as missing persons and cultural heritage, which contributed to strengthen the capacities of Kosovo Institutions and promoted inter-ethnic cooperation and built trust in institutions.¹²⁴

Fact: Inclusive and sustainable growth

The portfolio addresses the sustainable development objectives through integrated programmes and projects by ensuring the balanced and inclusive economic growth in Kosovo

¹²⁰ Independent Evaluation Office, *Independent UNDP Kosovo Programme Evaluation*, July 2020 (page 11).

¹²¹ Project ReLOaD. Accessible at: <https://www.ks.undp.org/content/kosovo/en/home/projects/regional-programme-on-local-democracy-in-the-western-balkans--re.html>

¹²² Ibid (page 26)

¹²³ Project: SAEK II. Accessible at: <https://www.ks.undp.org/content/kosovo/en/home/projects/support-to-anti-corruption-efforts-in-kosovo--saek-ii-.html>

¹²⁴ Ibid (page 13)

through improvement of institutional capacities of central and local level in policymaking and service delivery, and by promoting the inclusion of marginalized/vulnerable groups in society. The projects have developed gender-responsive policy and deliver integrated services focusing on the most vulnerable groups among the unemployed. The interventions through ALMP¹²⁵ project (Active Labour Market Programme), aim to strengthen and balance the links between labour market actors, (i.e. employers, jobseekers, policymakers, public employment services, VTCs) and educational institutions. Furthermore, the Integrated Territorial Development project 2¹²⁶ aimed to improve sustainable income generation and job creation for women and men while enhancing municipal public service provision for rural development.¹²⁷ The project supported successfully long-term unemployed people at risk of socioeconomic exclusion through skills development and job creation, as well as through supporting local smallholder farmers and micro business initiatives.¹²⁸ The project also supported inter-municipal initiatives from different communities in agriculture and rural development.

Fact: Resilience and environmental sustainability

The programme under this portfolio aims to improve the capacities of the Ministry of Environment and local authorities to further integrate the environmental protection into development strategies, counting support for SDG achievement in specific for SDGs 3, 6 and 11. The support has been provided on the regional integrated river basin management, and the DRR (Disaster Risk Reduction). Kosovo was supported to advance in the climate change sector with creation of the Climate Change Strategy and with the Action Plan as well as its consideration into the policies and relevant sectors. The urban nationally appropriate mitigation actions (Urban NAMA)¹²⁹ were initiated at the local level in Prizren municipality, supporting the overall reduction of greenhouse gas emissions through cross-sectoral

¹²⁵ Project: ALMP. Accessible at: <https://www.ks.undp.org/content/kosovo/en/home/projects/active-labour-market-programmes-2.html>

¹²⁶ Project: InTerDev 2. Accessible at: https://www.ks.undp.org/content/kosovo/en/home/operations/projects/poverty_reduction/integrated-territorial-development-2--interdev-2-.html

¹²⁷ Eva Otero, Loshi Krenar, *Integrated Territorial Development Project 2 (InTerDev 2) Final Project Evaluation*, January 2020 (page 4).

¹²⁸ Independent Evaluation Office, *Independent UNDP Kosovo Programme Evaluation*, July 2020 (page 13).

¹²⁹ Project: Urban NAMA. Accessible at: <https://www.ks.undp.org/content/kosovo/en/home/projects/support-for-sustainable-prizren--initiating-urban-namas--nationa.html>

interventions. Lobbying with relevant partners UNDP participated in the Transboundary Drin River Basin Management Programme, funded through the Global Environment Facility. Furthermore, under this portfolio are improved also capacities for disaster emergency response.¹³⁰

Progress with SDG10 as a result of integrated approach: In Kosovo, the National Development Strategy (2016-2021), has 12 goals and 22 targets in line with the programme, out of all 17 SDGs and 169 SDG targets. In relation to SDG10, Kosovo has only aligned the Indicator 10.B *Encourage official development assistance and financial flows, including foreign direct investment, to states where the need is greatest, in particular least developed countries, African countries, small island developing States and landlocked developing countries*, in accordance with their national plans and programmes. The NDS measure no. is 19. *Promoting FDI and increased role of diaspora in economic development.*¹³¹ In this regard, the acknowledged contribution of UNDP in Kosovo is the completed project of DEED (Diaspora Engagement in Economic Development), whose purpose was to enable the Kosovo diaspora to enhance their contribution to poverty reduction by facilitating and encouraging investment and saving behaviour among migrants and remittance-receiving households.¹³²

North Macedonia's approach to SDGs

In the Government's Programme 2017 – 2020 for North Macedonia, it is clearly mentioned that the parliamentary majority will work with dedication on building good interethnic relations based on the principles of mutual respect and tolerance and the implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement reached in 2001. The agenda on the reforms integrates the goals shared by all citizens; greater wellbeing for all citizens, economic development, reinstatement of democracy, rule of law and justice, equality of all citizens, efficient institutions, high-quality education and health system as well as improvement of the

¹³⁰ Independent Evaluation Office, *Independent UNDP Kosovo Programme Evaluation*, July 2020 (page 14).

¹³¹ Republic of Kosovo, The Office of the Prime Minister, *First report on the implementation and results of the National Development Strategy 2016–2021*, October 2018.

¹³² Project DEED. Accessible at:

https://www.ks.undp.org/content/kosovo/en/home/operations/projects/poverty_reduction/DEED.html

international reputation and standing of the country.¹³³ This way, the 17 SDG goals are cohesive in the programme and can be easily monitored as they progress in implementation.

The fact shows that North Macedonia is fully committed to the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the EU integration process, and the commitment is demonstrated in the government reform agenda focusing on key development objectives meant for all the citizens. In line with this, the National Council for Sustainable Development identified SDG 1, SDG4, SDG8, SDG 13 and SDG16 as five priority goals for the period 2018-2020. North Macedonia's existing policy framework addresses several aspects of sustainable development while the Rapid Integrated Assessment conducted in 2019 assessed the alignment of 83 % with the overall Agenda.¹³⁴ Working across the goals requires valuable expertise and integrated efforts, therefore, this is being done in partnership with the government, the private sector, civil society and its citizens. Being a candidate country since 2005, the EC endorsed the Council's decisions on 26th of March 2020, to open accession negotiations with North Macedonia. The authorities continued to demonstrate publicly their commitment to advance on their EU path¹³⁵, consequently in accomplishing the agenda 2030 also. Considering that the transition to a well-functioning and inclusive market economy isn't complete yet for North Macedonia, the role of the World Bank Group remains crucial for the country, as it developed Country Partnership Framework (CPF) aiming to support ability to achieve faster, inclusive, and sustainable growth and provide its citizens with greater opportunities for a better life. The CPF presents the vision of accelerated economic growth with better employment opportunities, social cohesion and inclusion, and a plan to tackle persistent bottlenecks, and directly supports the programme of the government and medium-term strategy.¹³⁶ Advancing rapidly in the area of EU integration, North Macedonia reports voluntarily for the accomplishments of the SDGs related to the global agenda 2030. Hence, the complex SDG10 on reduced inequalities remains a challenging goal also for North

¹³³ Programme of Government 2017-2020, accessible at: https://vlada.mk/sites/default/files/programa/2017-2020/Programa_Vlada_2017-2020_ENG.pdf

¹³⁴ Voluntary National Review 2020, Republic of North Macedonia. Accessible at: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/memberstates/macedonia>

¹³⁵ EC, *North Macedonia 2020 Report* (page 3). Accessible at: https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/north_macedonia_report_2020.pdf

¹³⁶ World Bank Group, *North Macedonia: Country Partnership Framework 2019-2023*. Accessible at: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/northmacedonia/publication/country-partnership-framework-cpf-2019-2022>

Macedonia, although, the country is making remarkable progress to reduce poverty (within Roma population also), decrease unemployment rate, generate economic growth, reduce gender inequalities and accelerating decentralization at the local level.

UNDP's Country Programme alignment and outcome areas of intervention in North

Macedonia

North Macedonia is the only country that gained independence in a peaceful way from former Yugoslavia in 1991, and two years later joined the UN (United Nations). The longstanding dispute over the county's name has been resolved in the Prespa's agreement with Greece in June 2018, which opened prosperity for integration of North Macedonia into Euro-Atlantic structures, invited to start NATO accession talks (July 2018). From the IPA funding mechanism for candidate countries, North Macedonia received EUR 1.3 billion of development aid.¹³⁷ The Government in North Macedonia is supported by UNDP for over two decades to pursue economic and social reforms and building capacity for sustainable management of natural resources. The Programme is shaped over the years by the development priorities and challenges of the country.¹³⁸

The CPD (Country Programme Document) of UNDP for 2016- 2020, is based on the PSD (Partnership for Sustainable Development), established between the UN and the Government of North Macedonia since October 2016. The programme is articulated around four outcomes deriving from the PSD with the five-year indicative CPD budget (2016 – 2020) of USD 56.3 million shared among the following output areas: Employment and Livelihoods (37%), Democratic Governance (24%), Social Inclusion (2%) and Environment Sustainability and Resilience (37%).¹³⁹

Fact: Employment and Livelihoods

UNDP has closely worked with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP) on designing and implementing employment policies important to raise private sector

¹³⁷ Independent Evaluation Office, *Independent Country Programme Evaluation North Macedonia*, October 2020 (page 5).

¹³⁸ Independent Evaluation Office, *Evaluation Brief: North Macedonia*, October 2020.

¹³⁹ Independent Evaluation Office, *Independent Country Programme Evaluation North Macedonia*, October 2020 (page 9).

employment and promotion of new and better paid jobs, one of the top government priorities. The Self-Employment Programme¹⁴⁰ and Creating Jobs for all, aimed at reducing unemployment rate by building the qualifications and skills of the labour force in line with the labour market needs and promotion the growth of micro and small enterprises. In a higher rate for women with 35% and 30% for men, the Self-employment scheme resulted with 11,000 residents opening their own business. The Community Work Programme involved unemployed persons in providing social services to the elderly, children, and adults with disabilities at the local level, as well as training and licencing to the persons employed. At the policy level, UNDP supported also in development of adult primary education. ¹⁴¹ Must be highlighted that the higher amount of the budget has been concentrated under this output area (48% of total country office programme expenditures in the last three years).

Fact: Democratic Governance

The efforts of UNDP in the outcome area for democratic governance targeted the local level, with several interventions aiming at enhancing the administrative capacities of local self-governments in delivering effective policies and services to the residents, such as ‘Innovative Solutions for Improved Access to Services’¹⁴², ‘Improving Municipal Governance’¹⁴³, ‘Municipal Councils Support’, ‘Empowering Municipal Councils’, and ‘Regional Programme on Local Democracy in Western Balkans’(ReLOaD)¹⁴⁴. There is no direct support in the field of anti-corruption and transparency, but an important intervention addressing the needs of two border municipalities in dealing with the consequences of the migrant crisis through ‘Support to Local Government Response to Migration Crisis’, and less attention with a much smaller intervention targeting youth ‘Giving a voice to Youth’ and

¹⁴⁰ Project: Self-employment Programme. Accessible at: <https://www.mk.undp.org/content/north-macedonia/en/home/projects/self-employment-programme.html>

¹⁴¹ Independent Evaluation Office, *Independent Country Programme Evaluation North Macedonia*, October 2020 (page 11).

¹⁴² Project Innovative Solutions for Improved Access to Services. Accessible at: <https://www.mk.undp.org/content/north-macedonia/en/home/projects/Innovative-Solutions-for-Improved-Access-to-Services-at-Local-Level.html>

¹⁴³ Project: Improving Municipal Governance. Accessible at: <https://www.mk.undp.org/content/north-macedonia/en/home/projects/Improving-municipal-governance.html>

¹⁴⁴ Project: ReLOaD. Accessible at: <https://www.mk.undp.org/content/north-macedonia/en/home/projects/Regional-Programme-on-Local-Democracy-in-the-Western-Balkans.html>

cooperation between municipalities and the civil society promoted through the ‘ReLOaD’ regional project.¹⁴⁵

Fact: Social Inclusion

Defined as the least endowed in the country programme, there are two projects addressing the needs of people with disabilities. ‘Deriving Data to Design Better Services for Persons with Disabilities’ generating proxy data to better understand the population size and locations of people with disabilities and the prevalence of specific disabilities, and the project ‘Working bottom up – building a local model for deinstitutionalization’¹⁴⁶ promoting the integration of persons with disabilities into the community by enhancing access to services. The assistance was given by UNDP in the effort of North Macedonia to prepare for the ratification of the Istanbul Convention through specific intervention in coordination with the Government. In this regard, the ad hoc intervention was implemented in the municipality of Shuto-Orizari¹⁴⁷ to rebuild the municipality’s only kindergarten for its predominantly Roma population.¹⁴⁸

Fact: Environmental Sustainability and Resilience

UNDP in North Macedonia contributed to improve the capacities for environment policies at central and local levels, strengthening disaster risk reduction, promoting the protection of natural resources and clean environment, as well as the fight against climate change. In the area of disaster risk reduction (DRR), UNDP was involved in flood recovery and prevention through specific interventions aiming to reconstruct the damaged water/flood control and transport infrastructure and building maintenance capacities, but also by supporting to develop mapping and flood risk assessment (i.e. management of river basins and protected

¹⁴⁵ Independent Evaluation Office, *Independent Country Programme Evaluation North Macedonia*, October 2020 (page 12)

¹⁴⁶ Project: Working bottom up – building a local model for deinstitutionalization. Accessible at: <https://www.mk.undp.org/content/north-macedonia/en/home/projects/Working-bottom-up-building-a-local-model-for-deinstitutionalization.html>

¹⁴⁷ Project: Rebuilding Kindergarten in Shuto Orizari. Accessible at: <https://www.mk.undp.org/content/north-macedonia/en/home/projects/Rebuilding-Kindergarten-in-Suto-Orizari.html>

¹⁴⁸ Independent Evaluation Office, *Independent Country Programme Evaluation North Macedonia*, October 2020 (page 13).

areas with the set of comprehensive measures to improve Lake Prespa¹⁴⁹ and the Strumica river basin¹⁵⁰). Most importantly, a comprehensive survey was conducted on how people in Skopje heat their homes, as a first of its kind on such a scale in the country, associated by specific studies that analyse policy options to overcome the problem. In addition to supporting national authorities with monitoring and reporting obligations under international agreements, UNDP provided policy advice to the city of Skopje in the development of its first climate change strategy as part of the climate change. These specific actions helped significantly to raise environmental awareness within local self-governments, with UNDP as an actor of promoting the energy efficiency in the city of Skopje and three other municipalities of North Macedonia.¹⁵¹

Progress with SDG10 as a result of integrated approach: Responding to the SDG10 set indicators country wide, the following are the results consolidated according to the Volunteer National Review Report 2020 for the set indicators in which UNDP had its work portion as well along with other key actors including the national authorities:

Result Indicator 10.2.1 The proportion of people living below 50 percent of the median income has increased slightly in recent years, particularly for those aged 15 to 24 (rising from 20 percent in 2015 to 25 percent in 2018). This rate for the general population was 16 percent in 2015 and 17 percent in 2018.

Result Indicator 10.3.1- The Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination has professionalized the Commission for Protection against Discrimination, which now has its own Professional Service, intending to be more efficient in the prevention and protection against discrimination. The Commission's competences have been enhanced – it can now act ex officio upon obtaining information through rumours, has to act on all filed applications and may perform field inspections. 12.5%, is the percentage of women age 15-49 years having personally felt discriminated against or harassed within the previous 12 months on the basis of a ground of discrimination prohibited under international human rights law (survey 2018/2019).

¹⁴⁹ Project: Restoration of the Prespa Lake Ecosystem. Accessible at: <https://www.mk.undp.org/content/north-macedonia/en/home/projects/Restoration-of-the-Prespa-Lake-Ecosystem.html>

¹⁵⁰ Project: Strumica River Basin. Accessible at: <https://www.mk.undp.org/content/north-macedonia/en/home/projects/Restoration-of-Strumica-River-Basin.html>

¹⁵¹ Independent Evaluation Office, *Independent Country Programme Evaluation North Macedonia*, October 2020 (page 14)

Result Indicator 10.7.1 - To facilitate the orderly, safe, and responsible migration and mobility of people, the Government has adopted the Resolution on Migration Policy 2015-2020. This new resolution covers improved synergies and coordination among national institutions, supported by relevant international organizations.¹⁵²

Understanding Inequalities

Based on the evidence, the connection between inequality and conflict is subtle. The relationship between standard measures of interpersonal inequality and conflict is weak and not well established as an independent causal phenomenon. However, theory and evidence support the view that it is the between-group dimension of inequality that is crucial. Given structural cleavages such as caste, religion, ethnicity, race and region, if income disparities align with these splits, they exacerbate tension and conflict. Even quite small shifts in the distribution of income between groups the difference in-group average incomes, for example can lay the foundations for group conflict. Polarization of society into a small number of groups with distinct identities is an incubator of conflict on its own. But add to this the dimension of average income differences between the groups, and a combustible mix is created.¹⁵³ The approach to balance inequalities within and between countries, is becoming a requirement with 2030 agenda and state governments are obliged to look beyond their boundaries and maintain the relations with their neighbours.

Measured at US\$ 5.5/day, the poverty rate in Kosovo is approximately 19.8% in 2018, but the labour force participation remains constantly low at 38.7%. The net job creation rate is faster in low-skilled sectors, but the unemployment rate remains high, especially for youth. The annual consumption growth of the bottom 40% of the population has been increased to 2.4% points, and rural areas experienced a shared prosperity of 0.9%. The Gini coefficient reached a new peak of 0.29 in 2017 and rising of inequality in urban areas has suspended reductions in inequality in rural areas. While Kosovo has made some progress in reducing

¹⁵² Sustainable Development Goals, *Voluntary National Review, North Macedonia*, July 2020.

¹⁵³ R., Kanbur, *Poverty and Conflict: The Inequality Link, Coping with Crisis Working Paper Series*, International Peace Academy June 2007, p.3.

poverty and improving shared prosperity, significant challenges remain, especially in the labour market, where unemployment rates remain high, particularly among young people.¹⁵⁴

The poverty rate in North Macedonia has fallen steadily from 35.1 % in 2009 to 18.2 % in 2017, mainly by improvements in job opportunities and increases in labour income. Sustained improvements in employment and real wages indicate that poverty has declined further in 2017-2019. Although tackling the still high levels of unemployment and recent improvements, unemployment in North Macedonia remains among the highest in the Europe and Central Asia (ECA) region. The positive poverty reduction since 2009 has been accompanied by a solid increase in incomes for the bottom 40 percent. Gini index declined from about 42 in 2009 to 34.2 in 2017. The impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the economy is negative.¹⁵⁵

Table 5. Inequality and Poverty data for Kosovo and North Macedonia (WB data)

Country name	North Macedonia		Kosovo	
	Year	Rate (%)	Year	Rate (%)
Gini index	2019	21.9	2017	29
National Poverty Line	2018	21.9	2015	17.6
International Poverty Line US\$1.90 (2011 PPP) per day per capita	2017	4.4	2017	0.2
Lower Middle Income Class Poverty Line US\$3.20 (2011 PPP) per day per capita	2017	8.6	2017	2.6
Upper Middle Income Class Poverty Line US\$5.50 (2011 PPP) per day per capita	2017	18.2	2017	21.6
Shared Prosperity Premium = Growth of the bottom 40 - Average Growth	2012 - 2017	2.75	2012 - 2017	0.47

In the case of Kosovo, according to the UCDP (Uppsala Conflict Data Program), the conflict in Kosovo between the government of Serbia (Yugoslavia) and the UÇK (Kosovo Liberation Army) is categorized as an intrastate conflict within Serbia (Yugoslavia). The conflict originated in 1996 when Kosovo-Albanian resistance, fuelled by the perception of Serbian dominance, turned violent after a prolonged period of peaceful opposition.

¹⁵⁴ WBG, *Poverty & Equity Brief Kosovo Europe & Central Asia* October 2019. Accessible at: https://databankfiles.worldbank.org/public/ddpext_download/poverty/95142451-550D-4C1B-A389-26FD74C6B018QA-2019/Global_POVEQ_XKX.pdf

¹⁵⁵ WBG, *Poverty & Equity Brief North Macedonia Europe & Central Asia* April 2020. Accessible at: https://databankfiles.worldbank.org/public/ddpext_download/poverty/33EF03BB-9722-4AE2-ABC7-AA2972D68AFE/Global_POVEQ_MKD.pdf

The revocation of Kosovo's autonomy by the government in 1990 led to the need for independence. The conflict reached a critical point in 1998, marking another intrastate conflict within ex-Yugoslavia. Yugoslavian security forces engaged in fighting with the UÇK (Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës) and also made one-sided violence against Kosovo-Albanian civilians from 1998 to 1999. The conflict ended in 1999 when a NATO bombing campaign forced the government of Serbia (Yugoslavia) to sign a peace agreement and withdraw its forces from Kosovo. Important to note that according to UCDP data, Kosovo itself does not have any recorded conflicts. Instead, the conflict between Yugoslavia and Kosovo is classified as an intrastate conflict within Serbia (Yugoslavia).¹⁵⁶ According to the same source, it is evident that North Macedonia separated from the former Yugoslavia in 1991, joining the ranks of other republics that pursued independence. Unlike the conflicts of independence faced by Slovenia and Croatia, North Macedonia's journey towards independence was relatively peaceful. While Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina experienced armed conflicts during their secession processes, North Macedonia managed to achieve its independence through peaceful means. Characterized by two major ethnic groups of ethnic Macedonians with approximately 67% of the population, and ethnic Albanians, with around 23% of the population, North Macedonia adopted parliamentary democracy system. Considering that the initial constitution didn't provide equal status to for Albanian minority, as only ethnic Macedonians were recognized as the constituent people of the republic, this led to growing sentiments of discrimination among Albanians, feeling as second-class citizens. The tensions escalated in 2001, leading to an armed conflict between the government of North Macedonia and the UÇK (Ushtria Çlirimtare Kombëtare, National Liberation Army). The UÇK, representing the Albanian population, demanded constitutional revisions to address perceived discrimination against the Albanian people, which led to a conflict lasting from January to August of 2001 and was eventually resolved through a peace agreement that included constitutional revisions. As part of the peace agreement, a NATO-led peacekeeping force was deployed to North Macedonia to ensure the implementation of the agreement and maintain stability in the region. By 2005, the Macedonian government declared that the peace agreement, which was reached in 2001, had been fully implemented. This indicated that the provisions and obligations outlined in the agreement had been successfully fulfilled.

¹⁵⁶ UCDP, Kosovo in conflict view. Retrieved from: <https://ucdp.uu.se/country/345>

In terms of international involvement, North Macedonia provided secondary support to the government of Iraq during the intrastate conflict that took place in 2004. This implies that North Macedonia contributed some form of assistance or aid to the government of Iraq during that period. It is worth mentioning that since 1946, North Macedonia has experienced intrastate organized violence according to the categorization of the UCDP (Uppsala Conflict Data Program). This indicates that instances of organized violence within the country have been classified as intrastate conflicts by the UCDP throughout this period.¹⁵⁷

Research sample

Horizontal inequalities & UNDP's approach

According to the literature the conventional wisdom holds that inequality as a structural characteristic of the society triggers conflict and violence. Initially this literature focused primarily on vertical inequality. However, the inability to explain how and why inequality mobilizes certain groups for violence has plagued the existing literature. Theories of horizontal inequality are better placed to address this question and there is an increasing convergence around the conclusion that horizontal inequality is associated with armed conflict.¹⁵⁸ The concept of horizontal inequalities includes inequalities between culturally defined groups, such as ethnic, religious, racial or caste-based groups and encompass economic, social, cultural status and political dimensions. It differs from the 'normal' definition of inequality or vertical inequality, which measures the inequality over the range of individuals rather than groups.¹⁵⁹ Kosovo and North Macedonia have mixed communities. Considering that the communities are also divided based on their culture, ethnicity and religion, it is close to mind that they are exposed to horizontal inequalities. In this context, the difference is from the social and power/political background that not far in the past in decades, resulted with escalation of violation with armed conflict and the ethnic relations are fragile (i.e. Albanians and Serbs in particular in Kosovo). UNDP in both countries, have mirrored their programmes towards contributing to the local communities by involving

¹⁵⁷ UCDP, North Macedonia in conflict view. Retrieved from: <https://ucdp.uu.se/country/343>.

¹⁵⁸ Karim Bahgat et al, *Inequality and Armed Conflict: Evidence and Data*, Peace Research Institute Oslo, 2017.

¹⁵⁹ S., Frances. (Edited), *Horizontal Inequalities and Conflict*, Chapter 13: Major findings and conclusions on the relationship between horizontal inequalities and conflict, Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity, CRISE Department of International Development, Queen Elizabeth House, University of Oxford, 2007.

central and local level, responding to the horizontal inequalities between the groups performed to nourish sustainable development.

Based on discussion, the **Hypothesis 1:** UNDP is a great key implementer for reduced inequalities at the central and local level in South-East European countries of Kosovo and North Macedonia; can be discussed here with emphasis in horizontal inequalities.

The relevant question here would be: *Does horizontal inequality stimulate violations and damages sustainable peace?* The Balkan societies are diverse in terms of ethnicities which represents an opportunity but also a great challenge when it comes to building sustainable peace and tolerance as well as democratic institutions. Observing that ethnic relations exemplify a serious issue with a focus in various levels of the modern societies - impacting the attitude between people and different communities as well as escalation into the armed conflicts, it is of high importance to analyse the disparities effecting this violation. In this context, in most of the scholarly articles, in the theories describing ethnic group relations (ethnic group inequalities and categorical inequalities), but also in the fragile relations revealed between different communities in a post conflict and former Yugoslav countries, the misbalance between the groups can be attributed mostly to the horizontal intercommunity inequalities. In contrast to the studies that alleviate the relation between vertical inequalities, in this part the focus will be in the form of inequalities between the ethnic groups, that enlightens the aspects of disparities in between by potential cause of violation and conflict escalation. To analyse the communities' in-between horizontal inequalities is a challenge, as it entails analysis on the groups' situation for a longer period; subsequently, the intercommunity horizontal inequalities of the two post-Yugoslav countries (North Macedonia and Kosovo), are presented through "conflict analysis tools"¹⁶⁰, relying on crucial facts of the past by suggesting few avenues for a future conflict prevention and further analysis as necessary as a result of horizontal inequalities.

Considering that inequalities between ethnicities are a source of instability and escalation of violation, there are studies conducted and theories developed aiming to describe from where they primarily originate. Witnessing the disparity trend in rise of

¹⁶⁰ 'Conflict Analysis Tools Tip Sheet' (Ciss.ethz.ch, 2005) <https://ciss.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/pdfs/Conflict-Analysis-Tools.pdf> accessed 10 October 2020.

inequality curve between different communities in the world, the horizontal inequalities lately were brought into attention and additionally examined which were left apart and almost lost their attention in contrast to the vertical ones or individual inequalities. Must be underlined that the theoretical approaches of horizontal inequalities reveal the prominence of the community and group relations in societies as well as alert their impactful control in the way forward of countries towards integration processes, in particular those with fragile community relations like Western Balkan countries are for instance. As a new concept, horizontal inequalities generate “synergies between this and other approaches to understanding multidimensional inequalities and the dynamics of violent group mobilization in ethnically heterogeneous countries.”¹⁶¹

Just two decades ago, “in civil war literature, shifting the focus of understanding inequalities among groups with the lens of horizontal inequalities, has been recognised as an innovative approach that of beyond vertical inequalities or inequalities between individuals. The idea for inequalities between groups as an explanation for political violence was floating around for some time under the guise of several alternative terminologies: ethnic group inequality (Barrows 1976), ranked ethnic groups (Horowitz 1985); relatively deprived groups (Gurr 1993a, Gurr 1993b, 2000); categorical inequalities (Tilly 1998); and cross-cutting (Gubler and Selway 2012, Selway 2011, Siroky and Hechter 2016).”¹⁶² The “Gurr’s (1970) work on relative deprivation as a source of political violence remains a classic today, since at the core of his theory is the notion that when people get less than they originally expected, frustration will arise and their willingness to participate in political violence to rectify the perceived injustice will increase.”¹⁶³

At a later stage, inequalities have been transformed based on the Frances Stewart (2002, 2008) theory of horizontal inequalities. Based on this actual theory “defining horizontal inequalities as inequalities in economic, social or political dimensions or cultural status

¹⁶¹ Gudrun Østby, 'Inequality and Political Violence: A Review of The Literature' (2013) 16 International Area Studies Review, 16 (2), p. 214.

¹⁶² Bagdad, K. and others, 2017. *Inequality and Armed Conflict: Evidence and Data*. Peace Research Institute Oslo, p.4.

¹⁶³ Elise Must, 'When and How Does Inequality Cause Conflict? Group Dynamics, Perceptions and Natural Resources' (PhD, The London School of Economics and Political Science 2016), p.55.

between culturally defined groups, it is argued that group inequality matters more than individual inequality, and that inequality becomes an important source of conflict when it overlaps with salient group identities.”¹⁶⁴

In a wide range it is close to mind that “inequality triggers violation and conflict. Initially the literature focused primarily on vertical inequality, but due to inability of explaining how and why inequality mobilizes certain groups for violence, has overwhelmed the existing literature. Therefore, the theories of horizontal inequality are better placed to address this question and show an increase of convergence around the conclusion that horizontal inequality is associated with armed conflict. It is also noted that there are several gaps evident in the literature. First, while the evidence is strong of a positive relationship between horizontal inequality and violent armed conflict, and that political context plays an important role in this relationship, the conditions under which certain group identities become relevant for mobilizing people for violence is still unclear. Second, any interactions between different types of horizontal inequality, as well as interactions between within-group and between group inequality, are under-studied.”¹⁶⁵

Being said this, the examples analysed through conflict analysis tools, would be of interest to brighten up some facts for the interethnic or intercommunity relations and the momentums in which the violence has escalated to conflict, in apprehension of circumstances that led to violent situation wedged by internal and external political, economic and cultural influences. Must be outlined that the two cases of post-conflict communities with potential for violation, analysed through conflict analysis tools do not yield the best model in generalising the connection between horizontal inequalities and violent conflict, but they confirm that in specific social circumstances of heterogeneous societies, the horizontal inequalities feed violation and they cause conflict. Moreover, the fragile relations and the lack of democratic participatory process afterwards in building of state and consolidation of institutions, may easily replicate the aggressive steps and generate conflict.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Bagdad, K. and others, 2017. *Inequality and Armed Conflict: Evidence and Data*. Peace Research Institute Oslo, p.4.

The dynamics of inter-community disappointment became visible initially from the mistrust of Albanian community in public institutions and inability of using Albanian language as official one, as well as have the right to higher education in their language – this way the feeling of being unequal with the Macedonian majority population in the country followed with an expression of revolt for being considered second-class citizens and unequal. Although, the usage of language for other ethnicities has been defined under the constitution of North Macedonia (Article 7) specifying that “in the units of local self-government where there is a considerable number of inhabitants belonging to a nationality, their language and alphabet are also in official use, in addition to the Macedonian language and Cyrillic alphabet, under conditions and in a manner determined by law”¹⁶⁶, in practice this didn’t appear satisfactory for Albanians and was considered insufficient, thus deepened the disbalance of dissatisfaction between these two main ethnicities. As a consequence, the exasperation reached the to the level of segregation and creation of their own system (i.e. boycott of referendum, establishing their university outside of the institutional procedure and in parallel with the establishment of the University for Southeast Europe, both in Tetovo, then the National Liberation Army actions and escalation of armed conflict); the disbalance that diverged the two core communities in North Macedonia so high, that Ohrid Peace frame Agreement had to be reached (August 2001), and indicate the future landmark. The agreement recognised formally the rights of ethnic Albanians, turned the society of North Macedonia into a society with multi-ethnic and multicultural character, consequently a multicultural state.

The education and the language are in focus in the Framework of Ohrid Agreement dated 13.08.2001 in the point 6. respectively in point 6.1. outlining primary and secondary education and the support required stating that “with respect to primary and secondary education, instruction will be provided in the students' native languages, while at the same time uniform standards for academic programs will be applied throughout Macedonia”¹⁶⁷ then point 6.2. elaborating the funding from the state in relation to largest minority group, decisively saying that “state funding will be provided for university level education in

¹⁶⁶ (Legislationline.org, 2019)

https://www.legislationline.org/download/id/8221/file/North_Macedonia_Constitution_1991_am2019_en.pdf accessed 23 January 2021.

¹⁶⁷ UN DPPA (Peacemaker.un.org, 2001) <https://peacemaker.un.org/fyrom-ohridagreement2001> accessed 25 January 2021.

languages spoken by at least 20 percent of the population of Macedonia, on the basis of specific agreements”¹⁶⁸ and point 6.3. referring to positive discrimination of enrolment to state universities, citing “the principle of positive discrimination will be applied in the enrolment in State universities of candidates belonging to communities not in the majority in the population of Macedonia until the enrolment reflects equitably the composition of the population of Macedonia”.¹⁶⁹

It is crystal clear that in North Macedonia the transformation to multi-ethnic society was awkward and the Ohrid agreement was primarily focused on the relations between the two ethnicities in conflict without considering soberly the rights of other communities and the analyses on causes of the conflict were absent as well. Yet, after the parties signed the Ohrid Framework Agreement, still the Annex A did not find complete implementation related to Article 7 in the points 2 and 3 for the official usage of Albanian language and issuance of personal official documents of citizens speaking that language. Two decades now the progress measures that “the inter-ethnic relations remain calm overall, and an agency is created, along with an inspectorate to oversee the overall implementation of the law on the use of languages”.¹⁷⁰

In regard to education “there are number of encouraging and equitable initiatives implemented across ethnic groups; at the school level, the Ministry of Education and Science formally accepted the Concept for Intercultural Education in 2016 - a normative document promoting diversity in education and has partnered with USAID (2017-2022) to strengthen inter-ethnic integration, by upgrading curricula and textbooks and renovating schools. Within efforts of improving minorities’ access to higher education is included the quota ethnic minorities in 2003, (amounting to 23% of total enrolment), and in 2004, recognising the State University of Tetovo, an Albanian-language university”¹⁷¹. As part of public universities,

¹⁶⁸ Ibid

¹⁶⁹ Ibid

¹⁷⁰ 'North Macedonia 2020 Report' (*Ec.europa.eu*, 2020) https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/north_macedonia_report_2020.pdf accessed 25 January 2021.

¹⁷¹ Hannah Kitchen and others, *OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education: North Macedonia*, *OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment In Education* (OECD 2019) <https://doi.org/10.1787/079fe34c-en>. accessed 25 January 2021, p.75.

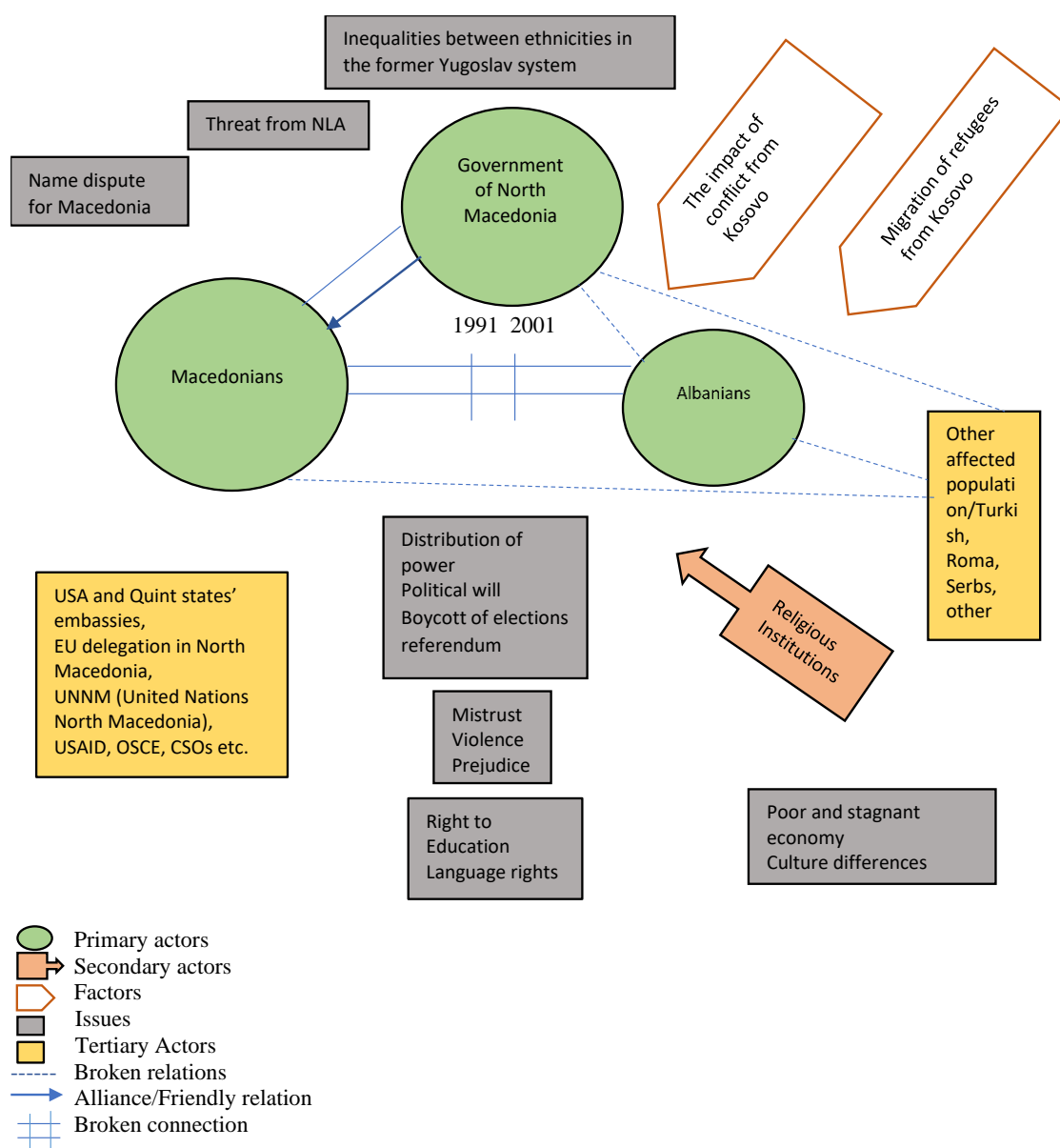
furthermore in 2016, the Mother Teresa University has been established in Skopje with 5 faculties.

Being at this point, to brighten up the clashes and link moments of situation, the following conflict analysis tools will provide illustration and inputs to streamline how and by when the gaps were present at horizontal level with inequalities. Additionally, through the tools it will be easier to capture and simplify the moments of causes in conflict, main issues diverging ethnicities and understand the interaction feeding the violation that can further predict possible circumstances of interethnic relations that may disrupt and escalate to potential conflictual situations for the community relations.

The **Conflict Mapping** used to demonstrate the conflict between two main ethnicities coming from the different culture in North Macedonia between Macedonians and Albanians, is given through positioning of each actor with influence and power in the following scheme including the conflict main issues, the relationships between actors, as well as specific conflictual situation as a result of horizontal disparities.

The evidence from the disparities have originated back in the past as a result of the conflicts and polarization in the Balkan societies during World War II and lately in former Yugoslav system, when Albanian ethnicity was considered a minority population in the federation system, counting the Republic of Macedonia. The shift between two situations, shaped by political, cultural, and economic elements in nearby countries, has given rise to a new dynamic. Within this context, there has been a growing expression of discontent regarding unequal opportunities for all ethnic groups, particularly those with greater representation.

Figure 3: Visualization of community relations in North Macedonia



Considering that the focus was mainly on the recuperation and consolidation of state that reached independence in non-violent way, the issue that the internal inequalities between the main majority community and the second ethnic group with higher representation would increase and become violent.

The non-treatment of issues (i.e education, official language), non-dialogue combined with poor economic situation and the impact from the war in neighbouring Kosovo, further worsened the situation and diverged the groups to the level of deep separation, violation and escalation to the armed conflict. The respect for culture was transformed into the difference

between communities, and it spread up fast to further diverge the groups and elevate differences.

One important element is that the conservative approach of religious institutions during the social crises further worsened the relations between all communities and amplified the level of inequalities and the religious social teaching towards respect on diversity in culture, was left aside from religious representatives. In such circumstances, when horizontal inequalities are profound, the only visible and detrimental action is the violation and conflict between communities, because the convergent lines do not affiliate with each other at all.

The **Conflict Perspective Analysis (CPA)** is selected aiming to illustrate macro view of the situations explaining what happened in the case of horizontal inequalities causing conflict between Macedonians and Albanians and what parts were missing that could help to overcome it/ the vacuum zone, that usually is not used by communities involved in the conflict. The wind of violation and change is by nature unstoppable and without any other explanation, North Macedonia went through such a phase in order to transform into a multi-ethnic society, that is, to politicize multi-ethnicity. The conflict is presented based on different perspectives from the involved parties (Albanians and Macedonians).

While the perspective of each ethnicity during the conflict is presented with facts, interests, motivation and options, the reality box in the end confirms the presence of conflict escalation as a result of the existing elements as visualised below. In all similar circumstances, the ethnicities are motivated by actions prioritising the differences rather than similarities.

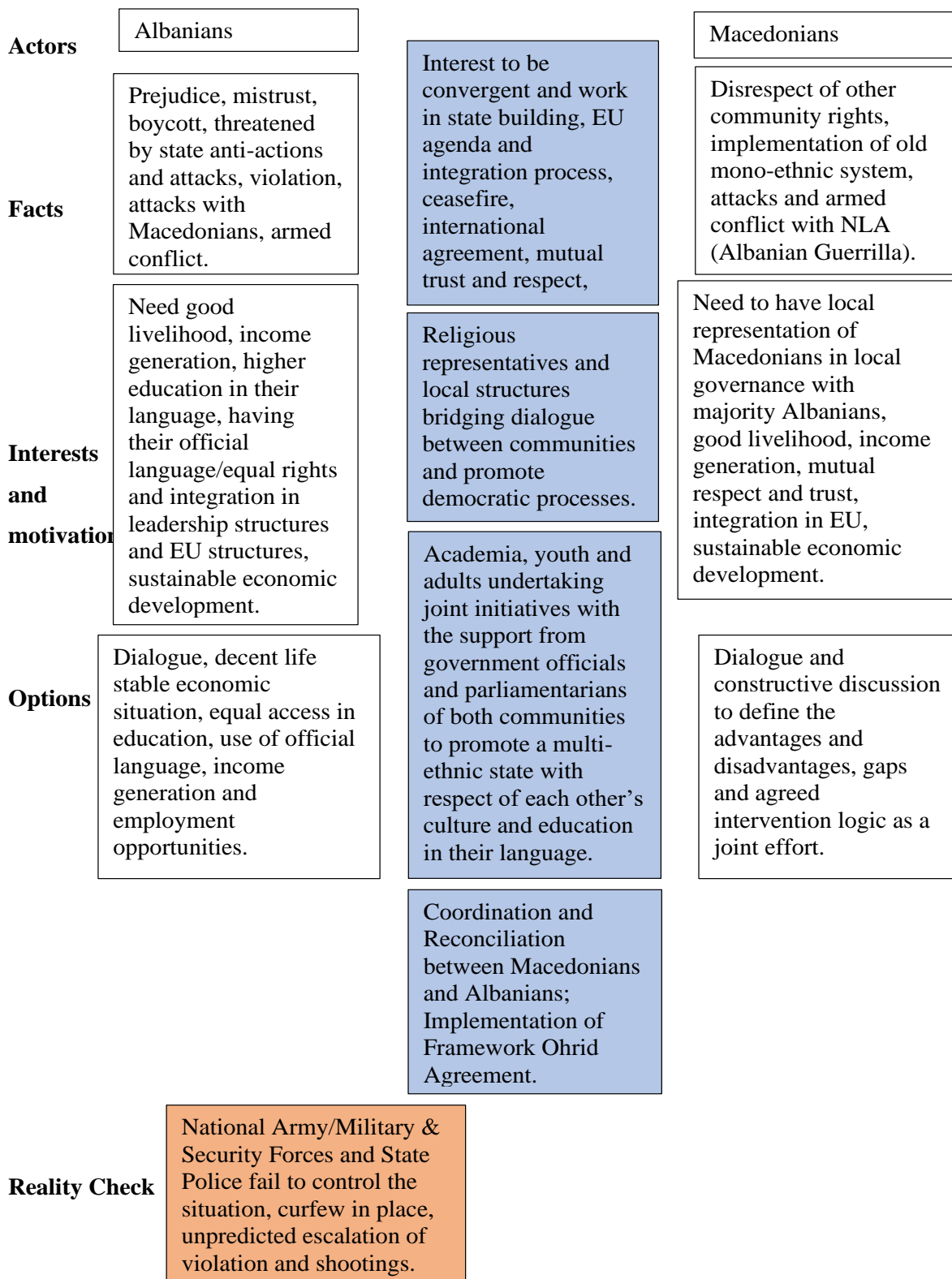
The process in which the communities in North Macedonia were triggered with inequalities it did not just cause the interethnic conflict, but it also shaped a pessimistic future image for the residents internally and wider in Western Balkan countries. Considering that multi-ethnic societies carry the potential for conflict, the relations between communities represents the substantial aspect for their future that can never be neglected.

To reiterate, the root causes of inequalities are back in the history during complex situations, associated with crises and tensions between the ethnicities. The destruction of former Yugoslavia that started in Slovenia, Croatia during 1991, reached culmination with

Bosnia & Herzegovina during 1994/95, ending the conflict in Kosovo during 1998/99 and at last with the interethnic conflict in North Macedonia during 2001, between Albanian NLA and Macedonian National Army.

Even though a lot has been studied to analyse the conflicts and inequalities, and it's understandable it is miscommunication that creates vacuum situation, there is yet no single theory that describes in specific all causes of the conflict appearance. Hence, it is important to understand what is in between/vacuum situations that is missing during violent situations which can help to prevent it and reduce inter-ethnic horizontal inequalities. Additionally, the willingness of conflictual parties and their reasonable judgment is missing in all violent and conflict situations and the nationalism increases beyond normal values, whereas the participatory democratic approaches are hidden somewhere in the darkness of conflict.

Figure 4. The macro view of intercommunity disparities in North Macedonia through Conflict Perspective Analysis Tool



The horizontal disbalance between ethnicities affiliates with expression of dissatisfaction that usually escalates in violence since all of the issues that represent a real

concern from ethnicities from the horizontal perspective, aren't discussed between them to define possible solutions for the joint way forward, but instead, they are taken as unchanged and with no constructive approach, hence deviating the idea of state building and common development where diversity would be considered a value instead of an obstacle. As already mentioned, the horizontal inequalities are still under study but in this case, they are impacted also with other elements, such as: the conflict from the neighbouring countries in Kosovo and the destructions from former Yugoslavia, associated with high devotion of the government for the country name dispute and with low interest for the ethnic relations unfortunately.

The opened negotiations of North Macedonia with EU are an optimistic and promising path under which motto the country is amortizing the intercommunity inequalities and thinking wider in a long-term perspective. However, the issues generating fragile community relations, the polarization of political arena and non-implementation of Framework Ohrid Agreement as whole, are always the future determinators and impactful in the country's future and may very easily affect horizontal disbalance between communities in North Macedonia. Additionally, the right to education and language for Roma minority in specific, is another critical step for the rehabilitation of horizontal inequalities between all ethnic groups besides of that with Albanian ethnic community.

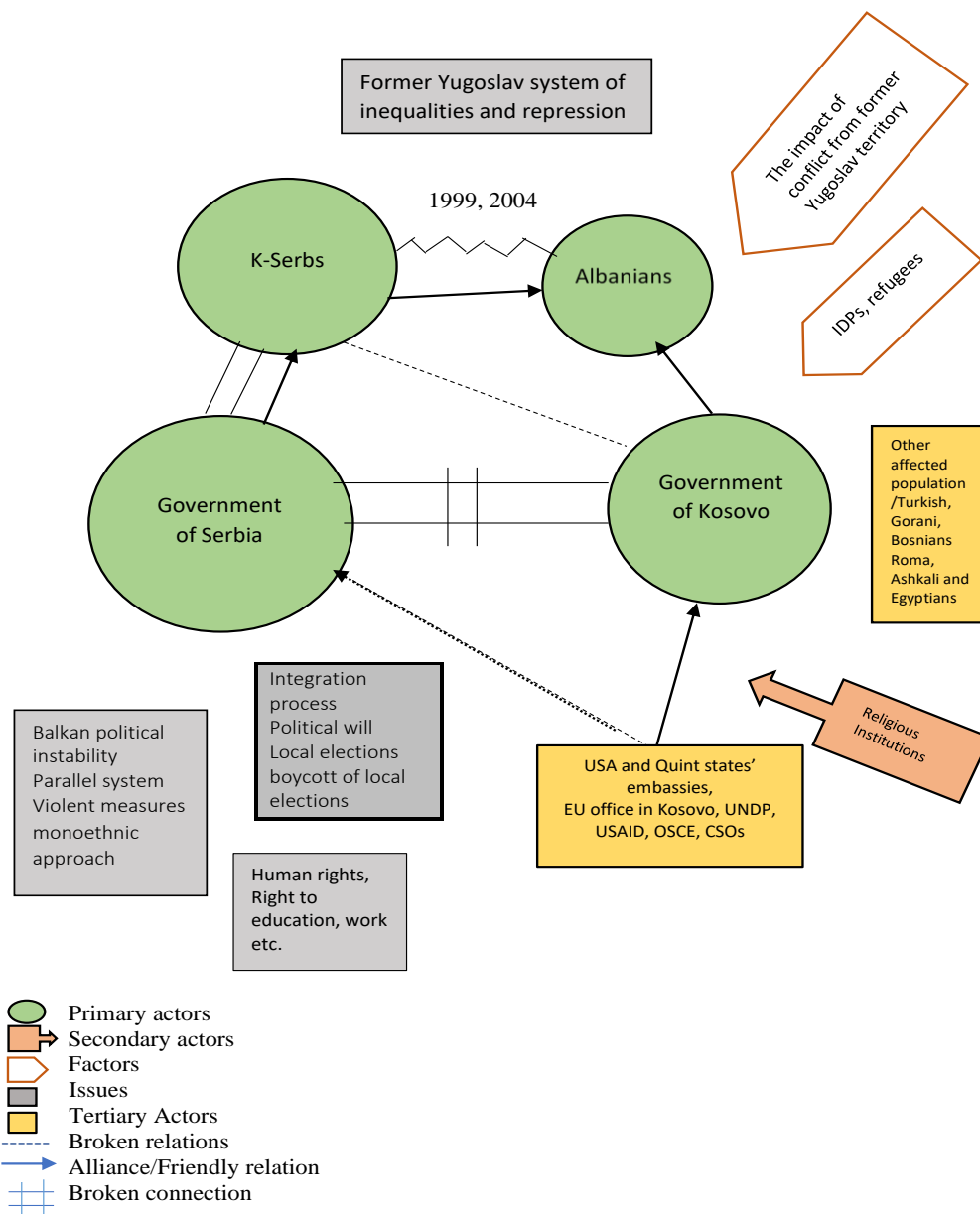
Kosovo is a place in which the roots of the interethnic inequalities and conflict go back deep in the history. Two decades after the armed conflict, Kosovo's independence still remains unacceptable fact from the Serbian community, particularly them living in border with Serbia (i.e. Mitrovicë e Veriut/Severna Mitrovica).

Due to the history of the conflict in Kosovo, the transition from one to another status for Serbian community destructed the interethnic relations with local Albanians in post-independence period. When associated with the impact from neighbouring Serbia with imposed parallel governing structures among Serb majority municipalities as well as the unmatured political actions of Kosovo's Government, it can easily abolish relations - provoking violence and may cause boycott in local municipal structures with Serbian majority community. As a consequence, the actual horizontal inequalities between the two main

communities with history in conflict, can collapse the development and stagnate integration processes of Kosovo in the European Union.

To capture the real moments which affected the inter-community relations the below **conflict mapping** is used to provide basic evidence for the parties involved in the conflict, including their local disbalanced power and relations with Governments in Kosovo and Serbia.

Figure 5. Conflict mapping of intercommunity relations and inequalities in Kosovo



The map aims to simplify the appearance of conflict, its dimension, the issues from the history of conflict, the actual ones, the relationship with each other as a majority and non-

majority community, and the third parties' impact in overall process. It is worth mentioning that misinterpretation of social values and disrespect for each-other's culture and religion by religious institutions as well as prolonged issues between communities at horizontal level, usually become a cause for immediate conflict.

The presented horizontal inequalities within main communities and in their close relations associated with the number of issues unresolved impacted by various factors, highlights the need for transparent discussion that mark the future steps towards sustainable development for the heterogenous societies. The fact that several actors are implicated in the disbalanced situation within communities, articulates the lack of empathy in the moments of conflict escalation and directly feeds the appetites of specific political agendas and opens space for prejudice and nationalism. The lack of synchronised approaches and the dictated actions from the neighbouring Serbia and its government in relation to Kosovo Serbs, are a factor of destabilization and interference in already disbalanced relations between Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo and in the newly state-building efforts. Allied with the factors impacting western Balkan countries also, such as: lack of decent jobs for Kosovo youth & migration, poverty and low economic development, it becomes much complicated and may easily pledge destruction.

Going back to some interesting and drastic facts, for instance the constitution of Republic of Serbia still considers Kosovo as a province and constituent part of Serbia¹⁷² and Albanians are not mentioned as a minority. In contrast to this, the Constitution of Kosovo is designed based on the best advanced constitutional democratic practices for minority protection. Compared to other minorities in Kosovo, the Serb minority is advantaged in Kosovo and this is clearly distinguished in the constitution with the official languages in use (Albanian and Serbian), whereas "Turkish, Bosnian and Roma languages have the status of official languages at the municipal level or will be in official use at all levels as provided by law".¹⁷³ Furthermore, Serb Community as mentioned, has the "total number of seats won through the open election, with a minimum ten (10) seats guaranteed if the number of seats

¹⁷² Constitution of the Republic of Serbia 2006, Article 114.

¹⁷³ Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo 2008, Article 5 (Languages).

won is less than ten (10)".¹⁷⁴ Other communities in Kosovo specified with the name of communities (i.e. Roma, Ashkali, Egyptians, Turkish, Gorani and Bosnians), also have their guaranteed minimum number of seats¹⁷⁵. Kosovo is an example of how democratic constitutions should look like since it captures the best democratic constitutional parts from the developed countries, and it is written from the best practices worldwide.

However, from another point of view, this is disbalance between communities including minorities in Kosovo, and by being a favoured minority community in one state and also acknowledged a citizen in another state, which is the case with Kosovo Serbs, may create dissatisfaction between Serbs and Albanians in particular and with other communities in Kosovo and raise unpredicted expectations that can be attributed mainly to horizontal inequalities. This type of disparities originated as a result of various appetites with political, economic and cultural background, become as a source of instability and destruction of inter-community relations within the countries and do not lead anywhere but to the manifestation of dissatisfaction in different forms.

In Kosovo case the **Needs-Fear Mapping** is used to echo the specifics related to inequalities between communities that can nowadays potentially aggravate to conflict if they are not addressed accordingly. The analysis given for each actor involved, describes what each actor has in terms of issues, interest/expectations/needs, fears, means and options. In our case, this is used to obtain understanding about the role of actors involved, their perceptions for each other including prejudice, the impact of their action for their future relations, their connection with governments and the way forward with stimulated discussion for the situation. The analysis shows that there are cross-cutting interests that may be used as a connection point and contribute to peacebuilding and reconciliation process. The mismatch between the needs and the interests between communities may become a cause for their stagnant future and generate escalated violation.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid. Article 64 (Structure of Assembly), point 1.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid. point 2.

So, from the elaborated parts under this tool, it becomes clear that the ethnicities impacted by horizontal disparities, have also interests and needs, they do have fears but for each issue they have an option to overcome it. In that sense, while for a considerable percentage of Kosovo Serbs it is crucial to have dominance of parallel system, and they have a fear to accept the new reality created, similarly for them it is also important to define the safer and promising future, ensure decent jobs with improved livelihood, have access to improved public services and better infrastructure – with one-word better quality of life.

Similarly, for Kosovo Albanians it is very important to live in harmony and peacefully in their newly created state, ensure prosperity for younger generations, create a better living and working environment, have state sovereignty and sustainable economic development and decent jobs.

Must outline that inter-community disparities between Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo which are generated mainly by political influences from neighbouring Serbia, are toxic elements that impact the future of Serb minority population, especially of younger generations, as they do not yield long-term sustainable development, but instead create dependency and harm multi-ethnic social developments. These approaches cannot survive endlessly and aren't the right ones during integration processes of Kosovo towards European Union and in International Organizations' membership.

The below elaboration with disparities at horizontal level between Albanians and Serbs influenced by various factors as it is, describes how complex is the situation, thus it requires multidimensional and always interactive and constructive approach.

Figure 6. The needs-fear mapping with inequalities in Kosovo case

Parties	Issues	Interests/Needs	Fears	Means	Options
Kosovo Serbs	Return to 'status quo ante bellum', imposed parallel system in municipalities with Serb majority (i.e. health system, education, double payment), privileged minority community inside Kosovo	Security, Survival, Income generation, improved livelihood, access to improved public local services, better infrastructure	Destructed relations with Serbia if accepting Kosovo reality, potential violation, conflict appearance and damaged relations with local Albanians	Insufficient political, economic and cultural integrating approaches from local Serbs (promoted by Lista Srpska), promotion of parallel system during election process and governing	Interact in the meaningful intercommunity dialogue, reflect in the dialogue with Serbia as local Serbs with their future in Kosovo, undertake joint development efforts with common interest, join local integration process for the benefit of all communities
Kosovo Albanians	Limited access to municipal local services with Serb majority and lack of employment and integration processes for other communities including Albanians in those areas	Security, Survival, Income generation, decent jobs, improved livelihood, access to improved public local services, development, functional state, responsive government	Losing patience, appearance of violation, conflict appearance and damaged relations already established with local Serb community	Lack of political, economic and cultural actions to contribute to integration processes, no realistic promises during election process and governing	Join the local dialogue and local integration process, implement integration inter-community agenda for joint community development, promote projects with local initiatives
Kosovo Government	Limited access in municipalities with Serb majority, parallel system of Serbia, lack of feedback and cooperation from local structures and no implementation of Kosovo agenda towards EU integration process	Recognition of Kosovo's independence, further integration to UN and EU structures, visa liberalisation, equal parties in dialog with Serbia, implementation of agreements reached, eradicated parallel system in municipality and elimination of propaganda against Kosovo integration	Losing state sovereignty, no cooperation with Serb residents in Municipalities with Serb majority, the increase of parallel system, potential for violation and anarchy	Lobbying from Central level government and main political parties in Kosovo (including Serb ones) for implementation of integration and unrealistic measures for eradication of parallel structures	Have realistic action plan for integration of Kosovo Serbs, join EU dialogue with concrete actions, minimise impact of parallel structures within Kosovo, become equal party in the dialogue, ensure implementation of agreements, undertake well-thought steps that do no harm to democracy and relations with international community and in particular with other minorities in Kosovo
Serbia Government	Partial control in Serb inhabited municipalities, propaganda and anti-Kosovo integration agenda and international recognition	Gaining the control of Kosovo, protection and manipulation of Serbs in majority communities, protection and control of cultural heritage in Serb Municipalities, creating Association of Serb Communities	Losing control over Serb inhabited areas, implementation of Kosovo government agenda in municipality	Lobbying from Central level government in Serbia including Serb political parties in Kosovo, irrelevant approach towards Serbs	Minimise impact into Kosovo Serbs, accept Kosovo as independent state, consider Serbs as their community living in another neighbouring country, ensure their equal rights, start integration and dialogue for EU, stop propaganda for Kosovo

Inequalities as an impact into youth migration

Intercommunity problems

Representing the affiliation between communities that indicate the level of peace and stability in society, the intercommunity problems with political background, are evident from their past in both countries and as such they require attention throughout programmes under sustainable development approaches. The intercommunity problems rooted from inequalities in both countries (Albanians vs Serbs in Kosovo and Macedonians vs Albanians in North Macedonia), are among the majority and minority groups with implication of other minority communities that do represent the threat for peace and stability. Furthermore, as a result of low economic progress and the mismatch between the demands and needs in the labour market schemes, the migration and the 'brain drain' of highly educated people (in specific youth) for both countries, is becoming a hindrance, but in remarkable nuance for Kosovo that remains still the only isolated country in Europe. Therefore, the systematic and harmonized approach between central and local levels in the countries to address and minimize the risk of these issues as per the requirements of EU enlargement perspective and the Europe 2020 Strategy, is taking place and exchange of knowledge and best practices are applied with other counterparts.

Based on this discussion, the **Hypothesis 2.** The results of accomplished SDG10 on reduced inequalities in selected countries, rely on central and local synchronized approaches with strategies of country governments and other stakeholders, with emphasis in migration and mobility of people.

The common question here would be: *What causes migration of young people?* Specifically, the migration¹⁷⁶ of highly skilled and educated people from the post-conflict and ex-communist countries, is becoming a key hindrance in their wider socio-economic development in Kosovo and North Macedonia. The governmental policymakers and implementers have not aligned functional mechanisms with the integration of evidence-

¹⁷⁶ Migration - the movement of people from one place to another that implicates a range of reasons, affected by socio-economic, social, demographic, political and security spheres of countries of origin and destination, for various purposes, such as: employment purposes, family reasons, education and similar, but also for political reasons and fleeing conflict areas.

based policies (strategy and action plan), to easily mitigate the impact by the “brain drain”¹⁷⁷ from people with an emphasis on youth and integrating diaspora. The two countries have undertaken vast efforts over the last decade to adjust their migration legislation and practice to that of the EU, transposing and implementing numerous pieces of EU migration legislation – from the asylum and migration *acquis communautaire*. This represents a huge challenge, because the *acquis communautaire* requires not just legislative transposition, but also changes in terms of migration policies, administrative capacity, and provision of information, public participation and also investments in protection measures. Although legislative alignment has continued, the implementation is different from one to another state, and it stands not just in this area, but in general with the implementation of legislation, due to either lack of budget or the specific mechanisms in place to address migration.

At the level of integration processes, both countries continue displaying progress depending to their level of integration mechanisms – Kosovo remains far away of entering EU and North Macedonia has undertaken steps forward but remains out with unopened discussion, as a consequence and the impact from the EU internal decisions undertaken lately with political influence. Being affected by internal and external migration, the migration of youth in specific needs to be prioritized and both countries need alertness and close cooperation with international structures, given the latest trends of migration - related employment and education purposes in urban areas internally and in the EU countries and overseas. An important trend remains the management with “brain drain” and movement of youth in particular, from rural to urban areas where both countries have to address at an ongoing basis. The freedom of movement for Kosovo becomes a burden issue, whose citizens still entail visa issuance to move freely in EU Schengen states.

The high unemployment rate and low economic progress are creating further misbalance in the context of demographic picture for country citizens with an emphasis in Kosovo, as well as unpredictable migration fleeing that may arise further and become an alarming issue for both countries. Unequal circumstances created from negative processes for youth are an issue for the rural-urban migration also for young generations.

¹⁷⁷ Brain drain - the loss of many highly skilled and educated people from one country to another country. Retrieved from: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org>

North Macedonia – Key facts

The Republic of Macedonia is the first country that signed the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) and the first country in which SAA has entered into force on 1 April 2004.¹⁷⁸ North Macedonia has also put in place the National Programme for Adoption of the Acquis Communautaire (NPAA), defining dynamic adoption of the Acquis Communautaire, strategic guidelines, policies, reforms, structures, resources, and deadlines to be realised by a state to fulfil the requirements for European Union membership.¹⁷⁹ By October 2019, the EU failed to open the accession talks with North Macedonia and Albania, and the resolution adopted by the European Parliament stresses it was a strategic mistake that both countries meet the requirements to start negotiations but, they did not.

In 2018, the migration applications of the North Macedonia population (first - time asylum) to the EU is 3,325, which compared to 4, 255 applications in 2017 show a decrease for 930.¹⁸⁰ Still, the numbers represent a concern considering the interest of the young population seeking education and job opportunities abroad. Further, the rural-urban migration is caused also by employment factors which are determining the migration flow most of the time.

According to the studies, in North Macedonia, the key problems relating to the youth position in the labour market analysis of the studies, are insufficient quality of education outcomes; irrelevancy of education outcomes in terms of labour market needs; a still-weak relationship between industry and working environment; career orientation is not yet integrated into secondary school curricula.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁸ The SAA (Stabilization Association Agreement) with North Macedonia. Accessible at: <http://www.sep.gov.mk/en/content/?id=17#.XeZn2ZNKjIU>

¹⁷⁹ The NPAA (National Programme for Adoption of the Acquis Communautaire), accessible at: <http://www.sep.gov.mk/en/content/?id=13#.XeZonJNKjIU>

¹⁸⁰ Retrieved from: European Policy Institute of Kosovo, *Western Balkans Migration to the EU, 2019* (p. 35)

¹⁸¹ Marija T. L., at al, *Youth Study North Macedonia 2018/2019*, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (p. 57).

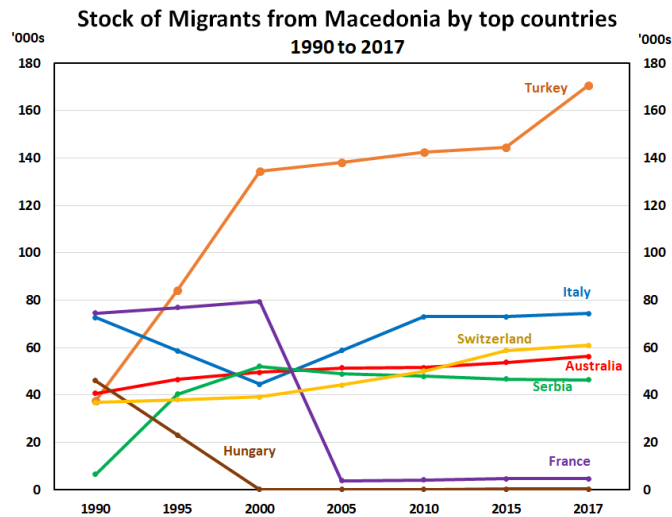
Harmonization with Acquis Communautaire in migration

Referring to the EC North Macedonia 2019 Report, the country continues to play an active and constructive role in the management of mixed migration flows, cooperates effectively with the EU Member States and neighbouring countries, and made considerable efforts to ensure basic living conditions and services for all migrants staying in the country. Moreover, the report emphasizes that there are still uncertainties on the scope and structure of migration flows, inconsistent registration of migrants apprehended in irregular movements that prevent regular and adequate protection-sensitive profiling, as well as referral to national protection mechanisms. It applauds the effective control at the southern border, including the deployment of guest officers from the EU Member States at the border and the initiation of the European Border and Coast Guard Status Agreement with the EU.

Migration trends, concerns, and unequal opportunities

Referring to the state statistical office in North Macedonia, Macedonian emigration can be roughly classified into two groups: permanent family emigration, followed by "brain-drain" and temporary economic emigration. Besides these two groups, a considerable number of citizens are leaving also the country illegally seeking asylum in EU countries. With visa-liberalization in 2010, the number of Macedonian citizens was seeking refuge and protection in EU countries and this number increased by more than 600%, where the majority of them are Albanians from North Macedonia. The Macedonian diaspora mainly consists of emigrants in developed countries, such as United States, Australia, Italy, Germany, Switzerland, and Canada (see graph. 4 below). Although Macedonians were predominant in emigration, the trend of migration for ethnic Albanians is in a constant raise. Moreover, the demand in the Western European labour markets has impacted the increase in the number of migrations for youth and women with the main purpose employment.

Graph 4. (Source: State Statistical Office)



The demographic composition of the population in North Macedonia and the migration trends became a concern and were impacted after the interventions in neighbouring Kosovo during 1999 when high number of Albanians from Kosovo became refugee in North Macedonia. Years later, with the independence of Kosovo, North Macedonia faced internal political tensions and inequalities that elevated the possibility for ethnic conflict. As a result, the number of emigrations increased since then and the trend is active although with drops in the last year.

As part of the Europe 2020 Strategy that obliges states to reduce poverty and social exclusion by at least 20 million people by 2020, North Macedonia has given efforts to reduce unemployment¹⁸² with specific programmatic tools undertaken from various active labour market measures that are initiated from the Ministry of Education through Vocational Educational training centres in various occupations – becoming a roadmap towards labour market schemes related to on job training for self-employment programmes and a subsidised employment scheme. It was identified that there was a mismatch between the supplied and demanded skills in the labour market, which led to further assessment and analysis for creating a short-term labour market programme. Hence, the positioning into labour market schemes for the potential youth labour force, remains a concern as it is not in the desired

¹⁸² According to State Statistical Office of the Republic of North Macedonia: Unemployment Rate dropped to 17.50 % in June 2019, from the previously reported number of 17.80 % in Mar 2019. Macedonia's Unemployment Rate is updated quarterly, available from Mar 2004 to Jun 2019, with an average rate of 31.20 %. The data reached an all-time high of 38.70 % in Mar 2005 and a record low of 17.50 % in Jun 2019.

level and less attractive for the youth in rural areas since it does not influence the reduce into their movement to urban areas for employment purposes.

Kosovo – Key facts

Kosovo is characterised as a country with very young population, where the average age is 30.2 years.¹⁸³ With the earthquake crises of November 26, 2019, in Albania, Kosovo has become a country of destination from people affected by the crises whose destination is the south region/Prizren area. The collective centres improvised are providing them food and shelter.

Aiming to contribute to general indicators of social exclusion and targets for addressing the root causes of the inequalities, under the Europe 2020 Strategy, which obliges states to reduce poverty and social exclusion by at least 20 million people by 2020, Kosovo has undertaken steps and is implementing the Active Labour Market Programme, tackling the unemployment of youth from institutional level in coordination with implementing partners, donors, and agencies. Considering that a high percentage of the population in Kosovo is young, this issue requires advanced commitment and coordination of all actors to address it. In this context, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare through the Employment Agencies and Vocational Training Centres, are implementing labour market schemes for your and long-term unemployed people and are focusing their efforts to create labour potential of youth for easy employment within and outside the country. In this regard Memorandums of Understandings (MoUs) are signed between the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MLSW) and German Government, aiming to improve education and professional dual training services (i.e. construction).

This further implicates the fact that these youngsters and others staying in diaspora for education purposes are being prepared are seeking jobs outside the country whereas, in the area of “brain gain” from the area of non-vocational education, no efforts are implemented in coordination with the Ministry of Diaspora. This could attract the educated youth to return and contribute to the country by the inclusion of remittances and investments of the diaspora as well, but the doing business environment in Kosovo still lacks conditions to

¹⁸³ Retrieved from: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/sites/eacea-site/files/countryfiche_kosovo_2017_0.pdf

invest freely. Likewise, the youth that moves from rural to urban areas in Kosovo is another concerning fact since agriculture activities for youth and rural tourism attracted works, are not being promoted or considerably supported in the required level. The vocational education in specific tourism and agriculture sectors in rural areas is missing, consequently not implemented.

Activities of migration from the perspective of Acquis Communautaire

The Stability Association Agreement between EU and Kosovo – entered into force by 01 April 2016.¹⁸⁴ On July 01, 2018, the Commission confirms that Kosovo has fulfilled all outstanding visa liberalisation benchmarks, however, the decision on Commission’s proposal is nowadays pending in the EP and the Council. Therefore, migration management in Kosovo is influenced by two processes – that of visa liberalization with the EU and the agenda for integration into the EU. According to the European Commission report 2019, the legal framework is largely in line with the acquis, however, a number of administrative instructions are still awaiting approval. The adoption of a new 2019-2023 strategy and action plan on migration is pending and there is a need to improve the exchange of information and inter-institutional coordination.

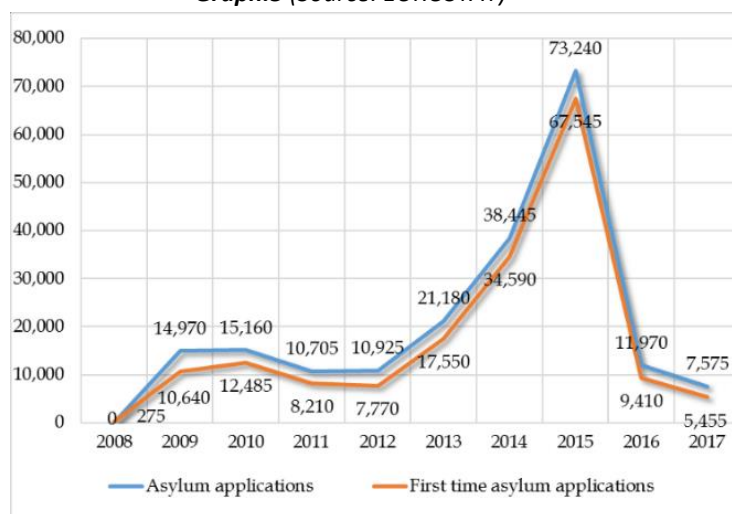
Kosovo, faces various challenges coming out of the increased number of asylum seekers, smuggling and trafficking with migrants, an increase of emigration, migration governance, and so on. It is affected by migration either as country of origin, transit, and in certain cases, as country of destination. It is emphasized there are mechanisms in place for the readmission, reintegration of readmitted persons, improved border control mechanisms, and prevention of irregular migration and fights against smuggling with migrants.

¹⁸⁴ SAA on migration issues for Kosovo is related to Article 85 on Visa, border/boundary management, asylum and migration, Article 86 on Legal migration, Article 87 on Prevention and control of illegal immigration and Article 88 on Readmission.

Migration trends, concerns, and unequal opportunities

Given the fact 60 % of Kosovo’s population is youth, the migration trends are an alarming issue since they arise from the younger population (18 – 35).¹⁸⁵ The main reasons youngsters are seeking to go out of the country is mainly due to the lack of employment opportunities inside and limited possibilities to integrate easily in the labour market schemes. It is concerning that the education in Kosovo has been suffering from creating a series of graduated young professionals not fully matched with needs-employment schemes and sectors. In 2015 (see graph. 5), Kosovo has faced the vast emigration towards EU countries, and this is considered the major “brain drain” in the last decades, together with medical personnel that is leaving the country for employment purposes, particularly to Germany.

Graph.5 (Source: EUROSTAT)



Although the National Development Strategy 2016-2021 refers to the chapter on human capital development and the ability to acquire skills through migration, or “brain gain” from the diaspora, the measures and the action plan to achieve it is not robust and remains a concern. In relation to internal migration, especially related to the movement of citizens and youth, in particular from rural to urban areas, it is evident that there are no clear programmes implemented that can engage human capital into socio-economic activities and the vocational education is lacking specific occupations that impact the decline of such movement. The

¹⁸⁵ According to tradingeconomics.com/Agency of Statistics in Kosovo, the unemployment Rate in Kosovo decreased to 25.30 percent in the second quarter of 2019 from 26.90 percent in the first quarter of 2019. Unemployment Rate in Kosovo averaged 35.39 percent from 2001 until 2019, reaching an all-time high of 57 percent in the fourth quarter of 2001 and a record low of 25.30 percent in the second quarter of 2019.

youth from rural areas faces difficulties in access to the programmes they could apply in the zones they live, in compared to the ones in urban areas. The youth from rural areas aren't equally given the opportunities to access vocational programmes, whereas from the gender perspective, the dropouts, from young girls coming from these areas are at a higher level impacted with early marriages or motivation to move to urban areas and even move out of the country.

The efforts towards long-lasting changes within communities

Inequalities between the countries

Inequalities between these two countries in the sense of freedom of movement from the EU perspective, will impact the achievement of the agenda 2030 and may postpone implementation of SDGs for Kosovo specifically. From the inter-community aspect, the relations between Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo remain fragile and horizontal inequalities affected from poverty, unemployment, low economic progress and political power, can easily polarize the situation and escalate to conflict. In the other side, the North Macedonia impacted from vertical inequalities mainly, and impacted from political power from both parties, can create tension among communities and manipulate the integration process announced recently with EU. In light of this, by implementing the programmes with intention of leaving no one behind, UNDP is tracing a path towards measurable results, is monitoring closely the progress and ensuring the longer impact in communities. This approach has long-lasting premises as they involve the participatory approach of local institutions with know-how techniques.

Explanation of SDG10

While the 17 SDGs in the agenda 2030 related Sustainable Development are formulated, the reduction of inequality was established as a goal on its own as SDG10 that urges global community to reduce inequality within and among countries. Searching the previous studies in this trail, the most common question raised would be: *Why specifically SDG10?*

The responses to this question, are the facts collected stating that it is the most difficult and complex goal that found an agreement from UN member states when endorsing the 2030 Agenda and the same time with impact into the relations between states.

The fact has been found surprising and more than a milestone in international cooperation since for the first time the common task was explicitly recognised from state governments and even combined a clear timeframe of achievement by 2030.

Aiming to reduce inequality within and among countries, the SDG10 calls for reducing inequalities in income as well as those based on age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status within a country. Having this in mind, the reality shows that mixed inhabited communities in Kosovo which faced specifically horizontal inequalities, have tendency to diverge and become easily vulnerable with limited access in various municipal services.

Consequently, from the inter-community aspect, all communities in Kosovo as well as in North Macedonia, are in a fragile relation seen from the horizontal point of view of inequality, affected from poverty, unemployment, low economic progress and political power. UNDP as an impartial and trustful partner with country governments as well as the donors, aims to support in sustainable development apart from rehabilitation and reconciliation approaches. This part will acknowledge the implementation aspects and approaches that the UNDP's "Integrated Territorial Development" Project in Kosovo addressed with all local communities in partner municipalities where SDG10 was implemented along with other SDGs (although not part of the country dashboard). Likewise, will have a look into the "Creating Job Opportunities for all" project of North Macedonia related integration of SDG10 – which addressed overall social exclusion by offering employment, valuable working experience and improvement of professional skills for vulnerable communities. Furthermore, facts will be provided with the regional project in WB6 related to UNDP's contribution into long-lasting changes and regional sustainable development.

Changing dynamics at the local level

Implementing the programmes with intention of leaving no one behind, UNDP in Kosovo is tracing a path towards measurable results, is monitoring closely the progress and ensuring the longer impact in communities. This approach has long-lasting premises as they involve the participatory approach of local institutions with know-how techniques. The well-designed programme and strategy with clear oriented plans and indicators in accordance with SDG and National Development Strategy of Kosovo 2016 – 2021, is contributing to significant long-lasting changes in Kosovo and the achievement of the agenda 2030 for Kosovo.

The UNDP work in previous period 2016-2020 successfully benefited Kosovo institutions and contributed to improved living standards for people in Kosovo according to the independent programme evaluation.¹⁸⁶ The interventions of UNDP in Kosovo have strengthened the strategic, legal and institutional anti-corruption framework and contributed to safety and security in Kosovo. Long-standing support to employment policy has produced significant results, and jobs and income opportunities for local communities were created. Environment and disaster risk reduction efforts have continued despite limited external funding available. The evaluation report recommends expanding the funding base in to be able to respond to Kosovo's development needs, especially to continue the efforts in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment as well as governance at central and local levels.

The North Macedonia's Government's Programme 2017 – 2020, shows devotion on building good interethnic relations based on the principles of mutual respect and tolerance and the implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement reached in 2001. The reform agenda integrates the goals shared by all citizens; greater wellbeing for all citizens, economic development, reinstatement of democracy, rule of law and justice, equality of all citizens, efficient institutions, high-quality education and health system as well as improvement of the

¹⁸⁶ Independent UNDP Kosovo Programme Evaluation. UNDP Independent Evaluation Office. July 2020. Accessible at: <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/adr/kosovo.shtml>

international reputation and standing of the country.¹⁸⁷ The 17 SDG goals which are cohesive in the programme, can be easily monitored as they progress in implementation, and North Macedonia has made progress on this by reporting voluntarily for the accomplishments of the SDGs related to the global agenda 2030. The independent Programme Evaluation for UNDP in North Macedonia suggests among recommendations to scale up subnational interventions, encourage inter-municipal cooperation and reinforce the role of regional planning in the context of European Union integration.¹⁸⁸

Among SDGs, the SDG10 is the most challenging one for both countries to report about progress, in specific for Kosovo which is steps behind in integration processes compared to North Macedonia. While the 17 SDGs in the agenda 2030 related Sustainable Development are formulated, the reduction of inequality was established as a goal on its own as SDG10 that urges global community to reduce inequality within and among countries. Searching the previous studies in this trail, the most common question raised would be: *Why specifically to check SDG 10 within UNDP projects?* The responses to this question, are the facts confirming that the local integrated approached are having positive impact to reach equality among communities and connect similarities, instead of creating differences.

UNDP as an agency has been working to integrate this SDG in its projects at various levels and managed to have progress along with other SDGs. The focus here will be at the local level and will demonstrate that SDG10 can be integrated within project activities with specific programmatic tools and the indicators of success are measurable and can be reported.

Creating Job opportunities Project in North Macedonia

Initiated decade ago, throughout 2016 to 2018, in close partnership with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP), the Employment Service Agencies, UNDP in North Macedonia has provided technical support to the groups who were most at risk of social

¹⁸⁷ Programme of Government 2017-2020, accessible at: https://vlada.mk/sites/default/files/programa/2017-2020/Programa_Vlada_2017-2020_ENG.pdf

¹⁸⁸ Independent Evaluation Office, *Independent Country Programme Evaluation North Macedonia*, October 2020. Accessible at: <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/detail/12279#>

exclusion, by offering to these unemployed people a chance of gaining valuable working experience and improve their professional skills. Under the country's self-employment programme – defined essential for the employment strategy and supported by the national active labour market measures, the objective of the project was to reduce unemployment by encouraging the creation of small businesses that will provide a living for successful entrepreneurs. In the specific activities, primarily were targeted several groups of beneficiaries, such as: pre-school children, elderly people, adults and children with disabilities as well as citizens of rural areas who are entitled to receive health and/or educational services.¹⁸⁹

The project directly promoted and contributed to, specifically:

SDG1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere – *by increasing work activation of persons from vulnerable groups and members of groups at risk of social exclusion.*

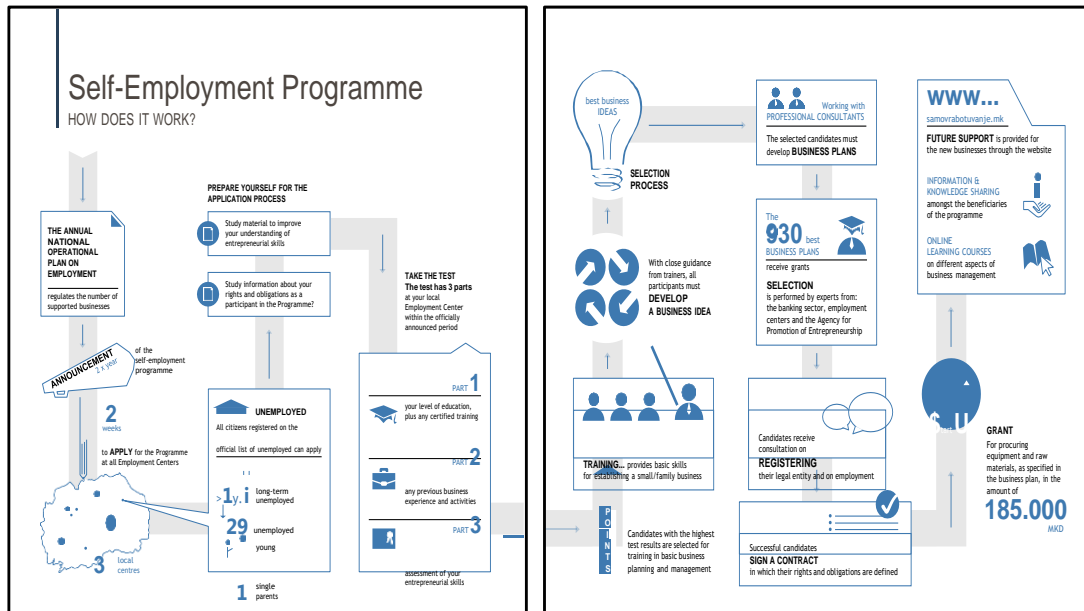
SDG8: Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all -*via support for growth of micro and small enterprises that will lead to the opening of new jobs, of people at risk of social and economic exclusion.*

SDG10: Reduce inequality within and among countries – *through closing the income gap as well as skills and opportunity gaps within vulnerable communities that lead to the opening of new valuable jobs.*

Must be outlined that the Self-employment Programme had the highest success rate overall in North Macedonia, triggering great interest among beneficiaries. Since 2012, when the programme started implementation, the Community Works Programme engaged 1,914 long-term unemployed residents in providing care services to 44,727 vulnerable end-beneficiaries, typically the elderly, preschool children and PwDs (People with Disabilities) in 63 municipalities.

¹⁸⁹ Creating Job Opportunities for All project, Accessible at: <https://www.mk.undp.org/content/north-macedonia/en/home/projects/creating-jobs-for-all.html>

Figure 8. Self-employment programme scheme as a value chain mechanism¹⁹⁰



Out of people who were engaged on a part-time basis, 87% were women. Over 482 personal and educational assistants trained and employed, to ensure that adults with disabilities are better able to participate in their communities and to enable the children with disabilities to have the support they need to attend mainstream school.¹⁹¹ SDG10 has been integrated well and served unemployed to measure the inequality gaps reduced among communities.

Regional Project “Regional Programme on Local Democracy in the Western Balkans” (ReLOaD)

ReLOaD is a UNDP regional project funded by the European Union (EU), implemented from 2017 – 2020 in WB6 IPA beneficiaries (Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia). The project aimed to strengthen participatory democracies and the EU integration process in the Western Balkans through empowerment of civil society to actively take part in decision making and by stimulating an enabling legal and financial environment for civil society.¹⁹² In total there were 56 local governments involved in the action and 493 civil society organizations which provided services to the citizens in partner localities and the programme triggered large interest by local governments

¹⁹⁰ Retrieved from Self-employment success stories in North Macedonia – February 2013

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Retrieved from: <https://www.undp.org/bosnia-herzegovina/projects/regional-programme-local-democracy-western-balkans-reload>

across the Western Balkan. More specifically, translated into success achieved in numbers, 155, or 31.5% of all local governments in the region, have applied to participate in the Action, and 53 or 11% of all local governments from the region were selected (12 in Albania; 21 in BiH – with 11 new; 5 in Montenegro; 5 in Kosovo; 5 in North Macedonia with 3 more associate municipalities; and 5 in and Serbia). Furthermore, the final project evaluation with the feedback received from over 200 direct stakeholders, stressed that ReLOaD as a regional pilot project has been completed successfully. The concept for improving cooperation between local governments and CSOs was very practical and effective, therefore it recommended the second phase of the project. Overall, the regional project budget was EUR 8.5 million whereas EUR 1.5 million was from local governments and UNDP.¹⁹³

The project has directly linkage with SDG SDG16/ Peace, justice and strong institutions. ReLOaD advocated and facilitated wide promotion of the partnership between local authorities and civil society providing spaces for better inclusion of the civil society in democratic processes on a local level.

Linkage with EU accession agenda: Direct contribution to strengthening public administration and institutional building at subnational government levels, as well as indirect contribution to Ch. 22 “Regional Policy and Coordination of Structural Instruments”

Linkage with UNDP Strategic Plan

Contributing Outcome (UNDAF/CPD, RPD or GPD):

Linkage with UNDP Strategic Plan 2014-2017: Inclusive and effective democratic governance

Indicative Output(s):

4.2 CPD: Improved implementation of development strategies and service delivery at subnational levels

4.4 CPD: Frameworks and dialogue processes in place for effective civil society engagement in development

4.5 CPD: Strengthened partnerships and networks for sustainable local development

Throughout 2017-2020, there are EUR 1,232,394.38 spent for 95 projects (43 in North Macedonia and 52 in Kosovo), counting the fast-track projects during COVID-19 pandemic.

¹⁹³ UNDP ReLOaD, *The Final Report, February 1, 2017 to December 31, 2020*.

Further details related to projects supported for socially excluded categories of people and addressed social issues through transparent funding of CSOs in specific sectors, are given in a table below.

Table 6. Number of projects with allocation of funds per sector in both countries

Sector	North Macedonia		Kosovo	
	Number of projects	Funds allocated	Number of projects	Funds allocated
Culture	4	EUR 57,008.44	8	EUR 114,199.00
Education	2	EUR 28,451.22	3	EUR 23,598.10
Environment	5	EUR 76,181.95	8	EUR 107,006.50
Gender	0	EUR -	0	EUR -
Social inclusion	8	EUR 121,906.05	8	EUR 120,337.81
Volunteerism	2	EUR 26,335.45	0	EUR -
Youth	8	EUR 86,628.81	6	EUR 112,234.20
COVID19 support	5	EUR 47,500.16	10	EUR 17,986.32
Poverty reduction	9	EUR 158,926.77	9	EUR 134,093.60
TOTAL	43	EUR 602,938.85	52	EUR 629,455.53

The data from the table cumulates that the most supported sectors during this period apart from the required support related to COVID-19, were environment, poverty reduction, social inclusion, and youth.

It is evident that ReLOaD proved to be very effective at local level but with limited regional visibility which couldn't activate other forms of partnerships globally with other actors. Inside North Macedonia there were initiatives undertaken by Mayors but not in institutionalised procedure (EC - Evaluation of EU support to local authorities in enlargement and neighbourhood regions (2010-2018)).

ReLOaD/ Kosovo component

The overall project budget for Kosovo was EUR 891,096.00, and the project partners were competitively selected municipalities of Istog/k, Kamenicë/a, Lipjan/Lipljan, Viti/na, Zvečan/Zvečan, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and residents of partner municipalities. The project collaborated closely with EU Office in Kosovo; the Ministry of Local Government Administration (MLGA); the Office of Good Governance of the Office of Prime Minister; the Association of Kosovo Municipalities; CiviKos Platform; the Department for Registration and Liaison with NGOs, Ministry of Public Administration (MPA); TACSO in Kosovo; and other

institutions in charge for and donors working in support of civil society.¹⁹⁴ The project activities in Kosovo promoted synergy between local authorities and civil society hence contributing to higher quality of life in partner with direct benefits on inclusive and more transparent decision-making processes.

In Kosovo, ReLOaD project worked in 5 municipalities: Istog/k, Kamenicë/a, Lipjan/Lipljan, Viti/Vitina, and Zvečan/Zvečan selected through a competitive, transparent, and inclusive process. Gender sensitivity, social inclusion and promotion of multi-ethnic interventions was given special consideration in each objective and all the activities. In total 6,139 residents benefited through 52 CSOs projects supported by partner municipalities practicing transparent funding of CSOs and also during COVID 19 pandemic.

Among the project results achieved within 4 years of implementation in Kosovo, were:

- CSOs delivering services to local communities by addressing their priority needs;
- 5 partner municipalities among 50 in total from the WB region, have enhanced their capacities and are using transparent and project-base model for funding of CSOs as well as implementing local development plans and strategies; and
- Regional networking, practice sharing, dialogue and cooperation between local governments and CSOs across the WB, has been improved.¹⁹⁵

The project directly contributed to SDG16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, by promoting transparent public funding for the CSOs from the municipal budget. Indirectly, the project contributed to SDG1 Poverty, SDG5 Gender equality and SDG8 Decent Work and Economic Growth, while financing CSOs' project activities that address democratic values and transparent processes between local governments and civil society organizations.

Considering that throughout this project's first phase the approach helped to enable hearing the people's voice in need by creating better working and living environments, it is counted to have contributed indirectly to SDG10 as well. Among 5 municipalities, municipality

¹⁹⁴ Regional Programme on Local Democracy in the Western Balkans, *Fact sheet*, accessible at: <https://www.undp.org/kosovo/projects/regional-programme-local-democracy-western-balkans-reload>

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

of Kamenicë/a has been announced as the best performing LG during the project's first phase, based on a matrix with criterion and scorings which evaluated the performance of the LGs.

Kamenicë/a municipality is located in the eastern part of Kosovo covering an area of approximately 423 km². It includes Kamenicë/a town and 56 villages. According to the 2011 Kosovo Population and Housing Census, the total population is 36,085, counting 34,186 Albanians, 1,554 Serbs, 240 Roma and others 105 (OSCE Municipal Profile – 2018).¹⁹⁶

According to the ReLOaD project data, throughout 2017 – 2020, in total, 3 public calls for CSOs were organized in **Kamenicë/a municipality** - 2 regular jointly with ReLOaD and 1 independently by municipality. The experience gained in the project, helped 4 municipal officials to gain knowledge on Project Cycle Management and recognize the importance of the inclusive and transparent approaches and a need for a dialogue with CSOs.

In the other side, public hearings during the 2 calls for project proposals (in 2018 and 2019), as well the organization of Independent Public call in November 2020, has helped members from different local communities to finalise their priorities, raise thematic discussions and address their needs. As such, the municipality was able to support 7 CSOs, mainly in the areas of Education, Culture, Youth, Social Inclusion and COVID-19 support and the total budget with co-financing (in minimum 20% from municipality for each grant), was EUR 121,884.97.

Presently, the municipality can give advises to other local governments in terms of the approaches for the support to CSOs that address community needs. This way, the approach is promising to the long-lasting change and institutional memory for replication of knowledge as required.

¹⁹⁶ OSCE Municipal Profile, Kamenicë/a, accessible at:
https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/e/6/13119_1.pdf

Table 7. Projects supported in Kamenicë/a municipality as part of prioritised needs through public calls (2017-2020)

IPA beneficiary	Municipality/Ci	Organisation	Project title	Focus Area Pick from Dropdown list	Approved funds in EUR	Final number of beneficiaries
Kosovo	Kamenice/a	Dardana Press	Rritja e transparencës, ndërgjegjësimi i qytetarëve përmes qasjes aktive në proceset vendimmarrëse	Education	EUR 9,931.50	401
Kosovo	Kamenice/a	Education Code	Ma Kupto Heshitjen	Social inclusion	EUR 17,434.77	29
Kosovo	Kamenice/a	Kosovo Women for Women	"Improved Self-Employment and Employment Opportunities in Viti"-COVID19	COVID19 support	EUR 668.20	0
Kosovo	Kamenice/a	Local Solution	"Promovimi i sektorit të Bimëve Mjekësore aromatike në Viti"-COVID19	COVID19 support	EUR 1,000.00	10
Kosovo	Kamenice/a	Network for Peace Movement (NOPM)	Awareness and activation of citizens in decision-making processes	Social inclusion	EUR 21,976.50	551
Kosovo	Kamenice/a	Open Data Kosovo	Code 4 Kamenica	Youth	EUR 31,810.00	41
Kosovo	Kamenice/a	Proactive	Reclaim Prosperity through Tourism and Cultural Heritage	Culture	EUR 29,094.00	10
Kosovo	Kamenice/a	Shoqata e te drejtave te pacienteve ne Kosove (PRAK)	Rrugëtimi i grupeve të cenushme nëpër shërbimet shëndetësore	Social inclusion	EUR 9,970.00	112

ReLOaD/North Macedonia component

The overall budget for North Macedonia was EUR 845,000.00, whereas municipalities selected were: Gostivar, Kavadarci, Kumanovo, Resen, Strumica (with associate municipalities Novo Selo, Vasilevo and Bosilovo), as part of the direct approach from the assessment done to ensure that only municipalities in need will benefit from the action. Important to highlight that the activities were done in partnership with all five local governments in making the preconditions for formal adoption and institutionalization of the mechanism for disbursement of public funds for CSOs.

Within relevant stakeholders there were: The Ministry of Local Self-Government, the Association of Units of Local Self-Government of the North Macedonia, TACSO North Macedonia, General Secretariat of the Government – Unit for Cooperation with the NGOs and Centre for Research and Policy Making – NGO that coordinates the network of NGOs in the frames of the Open Government Partnership.

Within 4 years of implementation in Gostivar, Kavadarci, Kumanovo, Resen, Strumica (with associate municipalities Novo Selo, Vasilevo and Bosilovo), the ReLOaD project key results were the following:

- Local governments and CSOs used transparent and project-based model for funding of CSOs from the local governments' budgets;
- CSOs delivering services which address the needs of the local citizens in partner localities;

- Strengthened capacities of CSOs and local governments to implement grant schemes and deliver good quality projects for the benefit of residents;
- Improved regional networking, dialogue, practice sharing and cooperation between local governments and CSOs across the Western Balkans.

The project likewise directly contributed to SDG16 on Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, by practicing and promoting transparent public funding to CSOs from the local government budgets. Considering that the project was implemented locally with various stakeholders in addressing the community needs, the project indirectly contributed to other SDGs, such as: SDG1 Poverty, SDG 5 Gender equality and SDG8 Decent Work and Economic Growth. As part of the 3 Public Calls organised in partner localities consequently in **Gostivar Municipality** (2 jointly with ReLOaD and 1 independently by municipality), key conditions for selecting projects from the evaluation commissions included a municipal commitment to co-fund the grants and to ensure a fair and transparent process of funding. Priority was given to initiatives aimed at improving services for disadvantaged groups, promoting gender equality and human rights, strengthening social cohesion and increasing environmental protection. Located into Polog region of North Macedonia, Gostivar municipality is an example of mixed municipality inhabited mainly by Albanians and Macedonians and a small number of Turks, Roma and other small groups

Throughout 2017 – 2020, among selected projects and CSOs in Gostivar with mixed population, were:

- The initiative for Civil Integration - to raise environmental awareness about illegal dumpsites and irresponsible waste disposal.
- HDZR Mesecina - to provide analysis, training and mentoring aimed at increasing Roma inclusion, especially women, in the labour market.
- Gostivar SC Snowline, in cooperation with the Center for Social Work and primary and high schools from Gostivar, to organize winter sports activities in Mavrovo for children with disabilities.
- The Platform for Youth Empowerment - to organize a hackathon with a focus on programming and web design to promote young people's interest in IT.

It is worth noting that the 2 Public Calls are implemented with combined financial means by municipality, with no lower than 20% added to the total amount of the grants, whereas the independent public call was organized with contribution of municipality to assess the level of knowledge and experience gained to complete a call on their own. Gostivar has supported 8 CSOs, mainly in the areas of Education, Culture, Youth, Social Inclusion, Poverty Reduction, Environment and COVID-19 support and the total budget with co-financing (in minimum 20% from municipality for each grant), was EUR 139,508.21. The 4 staff that have been part of the project cycle management training possess knowledge and skills which is being used to help their counterparts as well in similar approaches.

Table 8. Projects supported in Gostivar municipality articulating community needs (2017-2020)

IPA beneficiary	Municipality/Ci	Organisation	Project title	Focus Area Pick from Dropdown list	Approved funds in EUR	Final number of beneficiaries	Socially excluded
North Macedonia	Gostivar	Youth Empowerment Platform	Techathon	Youth	EUR 12,998.37	75	
North Macedonia	Gostivar	Initiative for Civil Integrations	Be an eco-activist	Environment	EUR 9,952.85	145	
North Macedonia	Gostivar	Ski Club Snowline	Sport has no limits	Social inclusion	EUR 19,501.95	193	19
North Macedonia	Gostivar	Humanitarian and voluntary organisation of Roma persons Mesecina	Improving the inclusion of Roma persons on the labour market with emphasis on the Roma woman	Poverty reduction	EUR 22,049.35	165	
North Macedonia	Gostivar	Foundation Information Center	Use of innovative technologies on the job and in classes	Education	EUR 21,539.02	113	52
North Macedonia	Gostivar	Initiative for civic integration	Give me shelter for salvation	Environment	EUR 25,053.66	300	
North Macedonia	Gostivar	Democracy Lab Youth and Community Center	Highschool Sports League	Youth	EUR 21,917.07	142	
North Macedonia	Gostivar	Democracy Lab Youth and Community Center	Assistance and psychological support to young people in Gostivar during a pandemic COVID 19	COVID19 support	EUR 6,495.93	30	20

Kosovo and North Macedonia – data (2021)

Country	Capital City	Area (km ²)	Population	Male population (%)	Female population (%)	GDP (USD)	Unemployment	Net Migration	Average annual income (USD)
Kosovo	Prishtina	10,887 km ²	1,786,038	49.8%	50.2%	9.41 bn \$	20.7 %	-15,050	5,130 USD
North Macedonia	Skopje	25,710 km ²	2,065,000	49.9%	50.1%	13.83 bn \$	15.8 %	-486	6,190 USD

III Chapter

Conclusions & Recommendations

UNDP has been operating in Kosovo and North Macedonia over twenty years, working to support social and economic development and promote a sustainable and peaceful future. The UNDP's program has evolved over time to align with each country's national priorities and the Agenda 2030, resulting in trustworthy partnerships and sustainable outcomes. By collaborating closely with other relevant stakeholders, UNDP has played a key role in North Macedonia's progress towards EU integration, implementing several joint programs/projects. Meanwhile, in Kosovo, UNDP is working closely with the UNKT team to strengthen the Agenda 2030, using its specialized program approaches to support this path. The UNDP aims to address the SDGs in all of its projects and actively promotes SDG10, which helps to reduce inequalities, by incorporating it into the Annual Work plans and collaborating with its partners to monitor and report on the progress made. The agency endorses integrated approaches that involve stakeholders in order to generate sustainable and impactful changes within communities. For example, they implement ALMM measures with Employment Offices to address labour market needs, facilitate dialogue between Local Governments and CSOs to better understand the voice and needs of citizens, collaborate with governments to strengthen legislative and policy frameworks, and improve municipal public services to support rural development. By working closely with a number of stakeholders, the organization aims to create long-lasting positive changes in the communities they serve. Responding to the SDG10 on reduced inequalities, the NDS in Kosovo has some gaps, therefore, it needs to review and align other indicators in the Kosovo strategic document 2030 (including 10.1.1, 10.7.1 and 10.7.2), to enable review on their progress as well as accelerate government actions and start voluntary reporting on SDGs. In North Macedonia, the SDG10 made progress, however, there are near future steps to be undertaken and enable reporting by the Government in relation to migration, intercommunity relations and LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) rights which are crucial. SDG10 is a complex goal, which also means to decrease the inequalities between the states. To this end, Kosovo and North Macedonia, as neighbouring countries, need to further align their joint migration efforts. One potential avenue for cooperation is to initiate efforts towards an integrated border police, which could

enhance coordination and effectiveness in managing migration across the shared border. The pandemic outbreak has created a new work environment that was previously unpredictable for all states. As a result, Kosovo and North Macedonia, along with other countries, have established virtual programs as part of the 2030 agenda to address SDG10 and other SDGs. These virtual programs can help integrate safe working environments for people, considering the new challenges posed by the pandemic. By utilizing technology and other resources, these virtual programs can help ensure that individuals can work safely and productively towards achieving the SDGs.

The interethnic relations of post-conflict societies can be fragile with the tendency to down, as horizontal inequalities can lead to violations at various levels and under different circumstances. Horizontal inequalities are particularly relevant in post-conflict and former Yugoslav countries, where they represent the transition from a monoethnic to a multi-ethnic society. In Kosovo and North Macedonia, current political, economic, and cultural factors, combined with historical root causes, can easily damage interethnic relations, and provoke violations, specifically in areas with mixed communities that were in conflict in the past. For example, in Kosovo, tensions between Albanians and Serbs, and in North Macedonia, between Macedonians and Albanians, may exacerbate horizontal inequalities and threaten the stability of the society. In addition to existing inequalities among communities, the spread of conflict from neighbouring countries can also exacerbate tensions and have a negative impact on fragile community relations. Furthermore, immediate transitions from one social status to another within communities can also be a challenge, especially when combined with fear, mistrust, and other factors that deepen dissatisfaction and generate conflict. This can lead to justification for violent actions in the name of protecting national values and territory. Although the concept of horizontal inequalities is still new globally, it interacts with other dynamics of violation in multi-ethnic countries, although these interactions are not yet fully understood. The examples of Kosovo and North Macedonia demonstrate that reducing horizontal inequalities is essential to preventing future violations and conflicts among communities that have recently experienced conflict. It is important to recognize that horizontal inequalities can be a potential source of violation and may escalate to conflict. The Ohrid Agreement, while not perfect in practice, provided a framework for resolving the issue between Macedonians and Albanians in North Macedonia. However, there are still parts of

the agreement that require implementation, such as the usage of the Albanian official language, which could become a potential obstacle for North Macedonia in the EU integration process and a reason for further tension. In addition, neglecting the language and education rights of the Roma minority living in North Macedonia, simply because these issues were not addressed in the Ohrid Agreement, represents a potential threat for the emergence of horizontal inequalities. In Kosovo case, the focus in the relations between Albanians and Serbs, by neglecting in practice the rights of marginalised groups, in particular of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians, could provoke tension and repetition of horizontal inequalities between all communities, although the constitution is based on the best models for respect of their rights. UNDP on both sides, proved to have international and local capacities to amortise horizontal community oscillations and put preventive measures in place. The municipalities of Dragash/Dragaš and Shtërpçë/Štrpce in Kosovo, along with Gostivar and Veles in North Macedonia, are demonstrating significant returns on investments and active involvement of all relevant stakeholders to tackle unemployment and decrease inequalities among diverse ethnic and vulnerable groups within their societies. The UNDP is implementing an inclusive approach in these smaller and to some extent isolated municipalities, ensuring that no one is left behind.

Apart from the fact that SDG10 was integrated as part of the sample project in Kosovo in the activities (InTerDev) as well as within the Infographic, it wasn't included in the dashboard, therefore the progress is measurable only in partner municipalities, beneficiaries and final project reports. Compared to North Macedonia who spent USD 46,352,985 since 2015-2021, Kosovo spent USD 6,754,798 during the same period, which is around 7 times less. It shows that North Macedonia took an early approach towards achieving SDG10 across all sectors, and as a result, the UNDP's efforts in the country played a significant role in expediting its integration into the EU prior to 2015. Due to high poverty and unemployment rates, migration remains an attractive option particularly among young generation in North Macedonia. For nearly half of these youths, the primary motivation for migration is to enhance their standard of living and secure a decent job. Kosovo is particularly concerning case due to its large population of young residents (over 60% under the age of 30), who are seeking higher education and employment opportunities within the EU and abroad. It has highest rates of emigration, with at least one member from every fourth household living

outside of the country. This indicates the difficult situation and the urgent need to address the factors that are leading towards high levels of emigration. The data from State statistical offices could be retrieved better in the case of North Macedonia, whereas in Kosovo case, it was difficult to be oriented and access many of them. Additionally, the data related to SDGs and the progress made is hard to find. The KAS in Kosovo needs to work closely with all relevant actors and create user friendly platform where data are easy to find and are reflected from the progress made under each SDG, in particular SDG 10. While for North Macedonia the freedom of movement is not an issue anymore and the country advanced to the level of almost opening discussion for negotiations to EU, the limited freedom of movement for Kosovars in Schengen Zone impacts further illegal migration flow. Kosovo citizens still are not free to travel, consequently, they are unequal with other southeast European citizens and isolated. Analysing the age population in both countries, Kosovo's population has a population twice as young than North Macedonia, and even fewer job opportunities. This means, the youth there have higher tendencies for migration related to education and employment purposes.

Relevant authorities in North Macedonia and Kosovo need to again review the education programme and promote vocational education to address the mismatch of demands and needs in the labour market, to address to the rural–urban migration and correspond to the latest unemployment needs. As part of this review, it is crucial to prioritize gender and minority inclusion as a measure for ensuring equal access to education and decent employment, rather than treating it as a cross-cutting element. By doing so, the newly reviewed education programs would better treat the needs of the labour market and promote more sustainable economic development.

A joint platform is proposed to be initiated with the lessons learnt from both countries supporting the decrease of inequalities for youth in both countries towards access to vocational education by integrating gender and minority components specifically within the employment and education programme with tourism, agriculture, and rural development schemes. The impact on highly educated citizens in both countries, affects migration and impacts development, causing a loss of long-term investment. In the contrary, migration would become the only option to overcome the difficulty for employment by impacting the

state demographic changes, in terms of the number of populations, gender, age, ethnic structure, educational level, etc.


The rural-urban migration affects the depopulation of rural areas directly influencing economic development. Furthermore, international migration is the key factor for the decreased fertility rate, a decline of population in Kosovo and North Macedonia. In both countries with prominence in the Kosovo case, the strategic plan for remittances and diaspora investments needs to be further promoted as a stimulator for the “brain gain” which would also help report on the progress made for addressing SDG10 related to migration efforts.

UNDP in North Macedonia and Kosovo supports all communities in need by ensuring the peaceful future and socioeconomic development. The country programme development by UNDP is prepared in line with national development strategies of both countries, the agenda 2030 and relies on the joint integrated efforts that are implemented with other sister agencies and various donors. The approach of UNDP leads to trustful partnerships and maximised impact in communities. The local level response initiative implemented by UNDP in Kosovo in close partnership with local actors in Kosovo (e.g. Municipalities, local Civil Society Organizations, businesses etc.), has led towards tangible results and addressed the most significant needs of communities as well as contributed to reduce horizontal inequalities within local communities by building trust and offering sustainable jobs for people in need. Similar programme in future with bottom-up approaches, would support to further decrease these inequalities and create better living conditions. The self-employment programme in North Macedonia is an example that a well-prepared systemic approach in close coordination with relevant state actors, can tackle and generate jobs and incomes for vulnerable categories in societies including PwDs. Furthermore, the programme is inclusive and creates a possibility for all vulnerable individuals to better position themselves in the labour market regardless their education level, sex, religion, disability, and ethnicity. A reshuffled programme based on the needs from the residents in other relevant occupations during COVID 19 pandemic, including agriculture and tourism for instance, may further support to decrease inequalities between the urban/peri urban and rural area population and support to prevent movements to urban areas for potential job opportunities. The UNDP projects are addressing all SDGs and specifically the SDG10 on reduced inequalities by integrating in their Annual Work plans

specific actions and reporting against it. The COVID 19 outbreak created a new work environment for all states; Having this in mind, to respond better to community needs, Kosovo and North Macedonia could exchange virtual programmes that tackle social exclusion and fill in the income and opportunity gaps created for their citizens because of pandemic.

Regional programmes with intention to improve local democracy and cooperation between local authorities and civil society in IPA beneficiaries beyond SDG16 are contributing to accomplish other SDGs in parallel, such as: SDG1, SDG5, SDG8 and SDG10. All these well mainstreamed, integrated and synergised within Country Offices and their programmes as well as other donor funded projects locally, will pledge an approach that would help to address the most burning issues regionally within different communities such as within youth for instance regarding their perspectives and employment. This regional approach is helping local governments and civil societies to bridge dialogue, be prepared for the EU accession agenda and discuss jointly for the common issues as well as interact with each other during regional conferences.

ANNEX: SDG10 – Reduced Inequalities

	10.1	By 2030, progressively achieve and sustain income growth of the bottom 40 per cent of the population at a rate higher than the national average	10.1.1	Growth rates of household expenditure or income per capita among the bottom 40 per cent of the population and the total population
	10.2	By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status	10.2.1	Proportion of people living below 50 per cent of median income, by age, sex and persons with disabilities
	10.3	Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard	10.3.1	Proportion of the population reporting having personally felt discriminated against or harassed within the previous 12 months on the basis of a ground of discrimination prohibited under international human rights law
	10.4	Adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality	10.4.1	Labour share of GDP, comprising wages and social protection transfers
	10.5	Improve the regulation and monitoring of global financial markets and institutions and strengthen the implementation of such regulations	10.5.1	Financial Soundness Indicators
	10.6	Ensure enhanced representation and voice for developing countries in decision-making in global international economic and financial institutions in order to deliver more effective, credible, accountable and legitimate institutions	10.6.1	Proportion of members and voting rights of developing countries in international organizations
	10.7	Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies	10.7.1	Recruitment cost borne by employee as a proportion of yearly income earned in country of destination
			10.7.2	Number of countries that have implemented well-managed migration policies
	10.a	Implement the principle of special and differential treatment for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, in accordance with World Trade Organization agreements	10.a.1	Proportion of tariff lines applied to imports from least developed countries and developing countries with zero-tariff
	10.b	Encourage official development assistance and financial flows, including foreign direct investment, to States where the need is greatest, in particular least developed countries, African countries, small island developing States and landlocked developing countries, in accordance with their national plans and programmes	10.b.1	Total resource flows for development, by recipient and donor countries and type of flow (e.g. official development assistance, foreign direct investment and other flows)
	10.c	By 2030, reduce to less than 3 per cent the transaction costs of migrant remittances and eliminate remittance corridors with costs higher than 5 per cent	10.c.1	Remittance costs as a proportion of the amount remitted

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