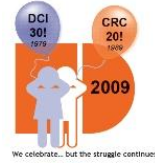


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ALO 116- Albanian National Child Helpline  
When a child calls, we are always there to listen  
2009-2011



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## Editorial- Belioza Çoku

Dear friends from wherever you may be in the world,

It is my professional duty as the Manager of ALO 116 and my moral duty as a mother to let you know that this service is of great and probably irreplaceable value for the years to come. All of us need to show support and make sure that this helpline continues its noble and difficult work.

It is a great pleasure and happiness to be able to share this incredible experience. ALO 116 – The Albanian National Children's Helpline is a common initiative of UNICEF Albania and Children's Rights Center of Albania. It offers counseling and support to children through the phone and refers their cases to governmental and non-governmental institutions which offer services for children all over the country.

We want to share with you a story, a great story which we hope will help us to secure the future of ALO 116 which for reasons that I will try to share with you shortly make it extremely important and necessary.

Let me start by telling you that in the last two years a lot has been achieved and many lessons have been learned. First of all we have learned the Albanian children have a lot to say, probably more than what many would have expected. In fact, during these two years we have answered more than 380.000 phone calls from children of all ages, regions, social and economic groups.

We have learned about all the problems that Albanian children face, and they are many. All the issues, problems, conflicts and dramas suffered by society today, are intentionally or unintentionally transferred to children as the weakest members of their communities. Children have shared with us the many problems faced in the family, school and society. They call to denounce cases of violence, to seek help or to just talk. They call to be

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informed, to get an opinion, to discuss about their issues and tell their stories. Many times they call because they are alone. Even though we are aware that nothing can replace face to face communication, reality shows that children as all other human beings need their space, time and comfort to be able to speak and share their concerns. This is one of the core reasons why ALO 116 needs to exist.

Further to the point all the above facts and reasons have made us understand one important thing: ALO 116 is an indispensable service for all Albanian children wherever they live and whatever their social or economic status. They all have something to say.

Through the many lessons learned during this process we have had to increase the number of staff, to categorize the issues and to identify the topics which need to be addressed in society. ALO 116 has allowed us to know what are the main issues and problems faced by Albanian children. Through it we have managed to inform and lobby with national policy makers, to raise awareness through the media and events, to assist parents and communities all over the country with the many problems that children have denounced at ALO 116

It is also my honor and duty to thank UNICEF Albania, CRCA/DCI Albania, the phone and mobile operators in Albania, the staff of ALO 116, the many supporters and volunteers and the general public from who we receive amazing feedback on a daily basis.

Let us make sure that ALO 116 continues to exist so that the voices of Albanian children continue to be heard.

Sincerely,  
Bela

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## Mission Statement of ALO 116

ALO 116 – National Child Help Line is a service for children that provides the following:

- ❖ Psychological Help
- ❖ Information
- ❖ Referral to the respective services according to the specifics of the case

This service is at the disposal 24 hours per day, 7 days a week for all the children and adolescents all over Albania. The service is provided by a group of psychologists and social workers who answer the calls of the children and they advise them on their problems and concerns; share the information on the topics that children and adolescents show interest of; and refer the children and adolescents to the services, according to their respective needs.

The service is focused on children in need: violated, abused and maltreated children, children of the street, children that are exploited on the street, children in conflict with the law etc. This service includes even the parents, teachers, educators or individuals that show interest on issues related to and for the children.

### MISSION STATEMENT

**ALO 116 – National Child Help Line** is a public national service that provides and referral for the children of Albania. The communication with this Line is made possible by the following numbers:

*116 – Child Help Line for the Albanian Children;*

*116-000 Phone Line for the Missing Children*

*116-111 Pan-European Line for the Children.*

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Fushave te Tenisit, Kati 2,  
Tirana / Albania

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Mbrojtja Ndërkombëtare e Fëmijëve – DCI Seksioni i Shqipërisë

Tel / Fax: + 355 4 2242264  
Mobile: + 355 67 20 75 330  
E-mail: [crca@crca.org.al](mailto:crca@crca.org.al)  
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ALO 116 communicates will the children at their most difficult period of their life. We work to protect the well-being of the child, through phone counseling, referral and proactive protection of the children’s rights. The main principles of our work are:

- ❖ ALO 116 responds free of charge to all the phone calls of the children, 24 hours per day, 7 days a week;
- ❖ ALO 116 advices and informs the children on every problem that they face;
- ❖ ALO 116 serves to all the children;
- ❖ ALO 116 refers every case, that requires a solution, to the public or private child protection services;
- ❖ ALO 116 struggles to guarantee into our work the highest standards and the most professional ones of service provision for the children and the youngsters;
- ❖ ALO 116 believes that every child and youngster, despite the age and ability, enjoys equal rights and is capable to identify and express the concerns;
- ❖ ALO 116 works to make possible child participation;
- ❖ ALO 116 is even at the disposal of those children who can not use a phone number; they can contact us through the mail service and e-mail.

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Mbrojtja Ndërkombëtare e Fëmijëve – DCI Seksioni i Shqipërisë

Tel / Fax: + 355 4 2242264

Mobile: + 355 67 20 75 330

E-mail: [crca@crca.org.al](mailto:crca@crca.org.al)

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## Principles and Standards of ALO 116

### 1. Respecting the individual Rights:

#### Principle

Children’s Helpline ALO 116 recognizes and respects the rights of young people, children and their families, by providing professional services in accordance with the Child’s Right Convention.

#### Standards

- ❖ ALO 116 presents in writing its vision and mission, which based on the Child’s Rights Convention.
- ❖ ALO 116 has developed sustainable policies by clearly determining its role so that the beneficiaries of the services and other partners who provide services shall know what to expect from it and what to provide.
- ❖ ALO 116 communicates with children in accordance to their age group, and by respecting and listening carefully to every single child.
- ❖ ALO 116 handles all incoming phone calls (including test calls) from children, youngsters and people concerned on children’s issues, with the same importance and dedication.
- ❖ ALO 116 has developed a sustainable policy of non-discrimination in regards to its services and employment policies.
- ❖ ALO 116 provides trainings as well as professional supervision for its employees and volunteers, to further develop their skills and competence regarding the

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Tirana / Albania

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Mbrojtja Ndërkombëtare e Fëmijëve – DCI Seksioni i Shqipërisë

Tel / Fax: + 355 4 2242264

Mobile: + 355 67 20 75 330

E-mail: [crca@crca.org.al](mailto:crca@crca.org.al)

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handling of every call with respect and constructive approach, including the test calls as well.

- ❖ ALO 116 has set up a special system that allows the monitoring of the quality of responses provided by its counselors.
- ❖ ALO 116 applies policies and formal effective procedures to assess different complaints and thus improving services based upon these complaints.
- ❖ ALO 116 is always sensitive in regards to children's different needs.

## 2. Access to Service

### Principle

Children's Consultation Hotline believes that each child must have direct access to all services provided for them.

### Standards

- ❖ This service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, for all children and adolescents all over Albania.
- ❖ Each call from landlines and mobiles to ALO 116 is provided free of charge for all the children in Albania due to our cooperation with these providers.
- ❖ ALO 116 develops specific strategies in order to promote the use of services by all children living in Albania.
- ❖ ALO 116 uses a strategy in recruiting its staff in order to recruit counselors who reflect the gender and cultural diversity of its clients.
- ❖ ALO 116 is also available to children, who do not have a phone, via mail or e-mail.

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Fushave te Tenisit, Kati 2,  
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### 3. Children's Participation

#### Principle

ALO 116 listens and acts based on child's voice. Their points of view and necessities must be the basis for establishing the services, tailored to their needs.

#### Standards

- ❖ ALO 116 uses a formal procedure to ensure children's safety in every aspect of their participation.
- ❖ ALO 116 promotes and supports the maximum participation of children in all the provided services.
- ❖ ALO 116 trains and supports its staff to facilitate the children's participation during different activities.

### 4. Confidentiality and Privacy

#### Principle

ALO 116 believes that all services tailored to children's needs must respect their right to privacy by assuring the confidentiality.

#### Standards

- ❖ ALO 116 has a Confidentiality Statement, which describes how the information gathered from the children, or others who have contacted our service, are kept confidential and private.
- ❖ ALO 116 informs the caller in which instances their information cannot be kept confidential, as for example when a child is in a life-threatening situation.

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Fushave te Tenisit, Kati 2,  
Tirana / Albania

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Tel / Fax: + 355 4 2242264  
Mobile: + 355 67 20 75 330  
E-mail: [crca@crca.org.al](mailto:crca@crca.org.al)  
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- ❖ ALO 116 trains counselors in order for them to explain confidentiality limits and the cases in which this principle cannot be applied to, always focusing on the child's best interest.
- ❖ ALO 116 applies a consistent policy in regards to the principle of confidentiality while managing all requests for information by the media.

5. Safety

**Principle**

ALO 116 is fully focused in guaranteeing the safety and protection of the children who contact ALO 116.

**Standards**

- ❖ ALO 116 has an internal policy in regards to protecting the children based on Child's Rights Convention, where ALO 116 emphasizes its commitment in guaranteeing the safety of children.
- ❖ Activities of ALO 116 are designed to be safe for the children and the community.
- ❖ During the different phases of recruiting new staff, ALO 116 applies standardized verification policies, in order to reduce the risk of employing personnel who might later abuse with the children.
- ❖ ALO 116 has a documented procedure that describes how a counselor must react to a child's concerns for help when maltreated.
- ❖ ALO 116 staff is trained to understand their rights and responsibilities in accordance to policies and procedures related to child protection.

6. Advocacy

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**Principle**

ALO 116 focuses on raising public awareness regarding children's rights as well as to change those policies that are harmful to children's rights.

**Standards**

- ❖ ALO 116 has an advocacy plan, which determines the goals and objectives, and the correct steps to achieve these objectives.
- ❖ ALO 116 plan encompasses advocacy activities that encourage all the groups of society to take into consideration children's needs. This includes challenges to the existing legislation, as well as practices and beliefs that are widely accepted.
- ❖ ALO 116 advocacy plan encompasses the needs of marginalized children.

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## ALO 116 Services and Activities

Albanian National Child Help Line is a very dedicated service in implementing its mission. ALO 116 is engaged to help children and youngsters, in recognizing and respecting their rights and strengthening their capacities in choosing the right alternative in the situations that require a solution.

The services that ALO 116 has provided during these three years of service 2009-2012 and will continue to provide include:

- ❖ **Active listening** of children and youngsters;
- ❖ **Informing** children, adolescents and youth, parents or personnel who work with children on the services provided by the helpline;
- ❖ **Psychological-education** on different topics: smoking, drugs, sexually transmitted diseases, characteristics that follow a child's psychosocial and physical development etc.
- ❖ **Treatment and immediate intervention** for children and youngsters in danger;
- ❖ **Emotional support** for children and adolescents during a crisis situation;
- ❖ **Cooperation** with governmental institutions and private organizations in order to provide the necessary assistance to children and families;
- ❖ **Provision of professional counseling over the phone** regarding topics concerning children and youngsters;
- ❖ **Case referral** to social services provided by the state and NGOs operating in Albania, depending on the needs of the children;
- ❖ **Assessment and impact analysis** on services provided by the Children's Counseling Helpline, in order to improve its quality for the children;

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Tel / Fax: + 355 4 2242264  
Mobile: + 355 67 20 75 330  
E-mail: [crca@crca.org.al](mailto:crca@crca.org.al)  
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- ❖ Provides **alternative information** regarding public and private organizations, which are interested in children's issues.

Apart from the services provided at the helpline premises, during 2011 we have organized a series of events aiming at informing and raising the awareness of active members who are involved in protecting children's rights and at the same time providing information to children, adolescents and parents regarding services provided by ALO 116.

Year 2009-2010

Apart for the efforts at the line and counseling services provided through the phone calls, during 2010 there have been organized a number of activities that have focused on the information and raising of awareness of the actors that are active in the protection and security of the children and at the same time inform the children, adolescents and parents on the services provided by ALO 116. During March 2010 the premises of ALO 116 were visited by the **First Lady of Albania, Mrs. Teuta Topi**.

ALO 116 announces the 1st Ambassadors in its 1st Anniversary  
*First*

During this first anniversary of the Line, ALO 116 announced the First Ambassador Mrs. Jozefina Topalli, Chairwoman of the Albanian Parliament and the well known soccer player of the Albanian National Team, Mr. Lorik Cana. This special event was greeted by the Representative of UNICEF office in Albania, Mr. Detlef Palm, representatives of the phone companies in the country, governmental institutions and the organizations of the child's rights, art and cultural personalities, parents, children etc.

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Mrs. Topalli expressed her gratitude and thanked the Albanian National Child Help Line (CRCA) and especially the staff of ALO 116 who works 24 hours non-stop to listen to the children.

Mrs. Topalli stressed the fact that the combination of the approaches of the civil society, UNICEF, business, policies, state and the society in general is only one obligation that all these actors have towards what is more important for the society, that is, the contribution for the children.

Ms. Topalli declared that this is a special birthday, because it is one of those rare moments where all: politics, state, business, local and national organizations, civil society, art and sport personalities, together with the media and children are gathered to celebrate the birthday of an important service, but also to think what other steps should be undertaken.

At the same time during his speech the First Ambassador of ALO 116, the soccer player of our National Team Mr. Lorik Cana, declared that he felt impressed that during the first year, ALO 116 has responded to 140.000 phone calls.

“This shows that our children want to talk. This shows that children want us to focus more on them that this requires that we are serious in responding and love, which is an obligation towards our country and children.”

After the ceremony for the announcement of the First Ambassadors of ALO 116, Mrs. Topalli and Mr. Cana visited the premises of ALO 160 and responded to the phone calls of the children.

During this year, some conferences and roundtables have been organized in order to build and increase the capacities of the representatives of governmental and non-

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governmental institutions and of the media as well on the issues of child abuse and the services provided by the Albanian Child Help Line under the frame of cooperation and partnership related to the help of the children.

At the same time, during October, a number of common activities have taken place under the frame of the anniversary of the CRC and the international day against abuse.

In cooperation with the Child Protection Unit in Kukës and UNICEF it is made possible the dissemination of 1200 awareness materials for the Child Help Line in some schools of Kukës.

During the activity organized on 18 November by UNICEF at 9-years school Bajram Curri were disseminated awareness materials for the school children. In cooperation with BKTF, in 18 November were disseminated awareness materials for the children at commercial center "Casa Italia".

Thanks to the successful cooperation with ME and the Directories of 9-years schools and high schools, ALO 116 has organized opened hours focusing on topics suggested by the children and teachers, in more than 20 schools of Tirana.

The participating children were from the fifth to the ninth grade. According to the group ages, the children are introduced with their rights and responsibilities, with the information, with the forms of abuse, risks that are created due to the lack of information of the interpersonal and social relations, consultations on a safer usage of the internet etc.

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These activities are a continuous part of the services of ALO 116, in order to increase the awareness of the children and youngsters through the information that assist the development of different age-groups.

Lunching of awareness spot in the most important media was another activity that ALO 116 implemented in cooperation with UNICEF.

The main images of the awareness spot were Mrs. Jozefina Topalli, Chairwoman of the Parliament and Mr. Lorik Cana soccer player of the National Soccer team of Albania. During this spot, each of them presented the Line by sharing an awareness message for the children.

Media, as a long-term partner of CRCA, has played an active role in presenting the activities of the service ALO 116 during all the year by making the activities public and by stressing the importance of the service for the children and the youngsters.

**2010-2011**

On 15th of February, we organized an event on “Children’s safety on the internet and Innovative Teachers’ Forum”.

This event was made possible by Microsoft’s office in Albania, the Department of Education and Science as well as UNICEF on the International Safer Internet Day. Among the guests during this activity were Mr. Myqerem Tafaj - Minister of Education and Science, Mr. Arsen Kurti - General Director of Microsoft Albania, Mr. Detlef Palm - UNICEF Representative in Albania, Mr. Altin Hazizaj - Director of CRCA. During this important event, children from different primary schools tried and tested internet games, which were designed to protect them from the dangers of the internet.

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The campaign of children's safety on the internet, which took place during the International Safer Internet Day, aimed at attracting the public's attention in regards to children's safety while using the internet, and at the same time to raise awareness about the important role of teachers, parents and the community regarding this issue.

During this event, ALO 116 presented its role in informing and counseling children and youngsters who call the hotline, who bring forth their concerns during the use of the internet. Apart from this, the presentations were focused on the governmental and institutional initiatives, as well as on the actions for providing a safe electronic communication environment for children in our country.

ALO 116 participated at the Children's Fair organized on June 1, International Children's Day.

This fair was organized under the supervision of Mrs. Liri Berisha, President of "Children of Albania" Foundation, with the support of Vice Minister of Education and Science Mrs. Nora Malaj, UNICEF, Tirana Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

During this fair, which continued for three days, ALO 116 promoted its services by disseminating different awareness pamphlets and brochures for the children and parents, who were part of this fair.

On June 7<sup>th</sup>, a **Cooperation Agreement** was signed at the premises of the General Directory of State Police, between Children's Rights Center in Albania (CRCA) and the General Directory of State Police.

The purpose of this Agreement is the publication of "Missing Children", on the Global Missing Children Network (GMCN), in order to assure timely interventions for finding and returning these missing children to their families or relatives.

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Tel / Fax: + 355 4 2242264  
Mobile: + 355 67 20 75 330  
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“The need for cooperation in this field became evident during the “Missing Children in Albania” Seminar, where the International Center of Missing and Exploited Children (ICMEC) based in the United States presented its work in establishing a “Global Network of Missing Children”. Eighteen countries are participants in this global network, with representatives from both civil society and police forces, which work together in finding this category of children.

That same day the number **116-000** was officially established; this number corresponds to the Pan-European number of missing children in Europe. This number was made available to UNICEF and CRCA from AKEP (Postal and Electronic Communication Authority) since ALO 116 started to provide its services. At the end of the ceremony organized on this occasion, the cooperation agreement was signed between the General Director of State Police Mr. Hysni Burgaj and the Director of the Children’s Rights Center of Albania Mr. Altin Hazizaj.

At the same time in June, an event was organized as part of the **International Day against Child Labor** at Youth Park in Tirana.

The event was organized by the coalition “United for Child Care and Protection” in cooperation with partner organizations one of which was ALO 116. The aim of this event was to entertain children and at the same time to raise awareness regarding the effects that hard labor causes on children’s health and well being.

During this event, people responsible for ALO 116 have distributed awareness material and at the same time have provided information to children, parents, professionals and by passers regarding all the services ALO 116 provides.

During this event, the Children’s Rights Center of Albania (CRCA/DCI, Albania), in cooperation with the Academy of Film Marubi and ALO 116-Albanian National Helpline for Children, conducted the screening of the movie “Anna”.

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This movie was produced by Amnesty International in cooperation with CRCA/DCI, Albania. The movie is about a little girl in Tirana, who works together with her mother, in order that her older sister can continue her studies and the family can have something to eat. After the screening, there was an open forum regarding children's work as an important issue, and this phenomenon in Albania today.

**From April-July 2011, ALO 116 staff was part of the research team for Epidemiological Studies regarding the Abuse and Neglect of Children.** The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship parent-child and the different disciplinary actions used within a family. During these months, ALO 116 staff has met about 4.500 children and parents in many urban and rural parts of the country. Leaflets regarding information about ALO 116 were given out in every school and every classroom, and from the beginning of this study we have seen an increase in the number of calls from the areas visited by our staff.

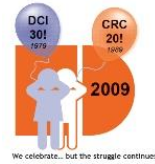
The participation of ALO 116 staff in this study was organized in order for them to be placed at direct contact with the children. This has helped them to familiarize with children, to see their concerns and enter the world they live in.

The rise in the number of calls, as well as of the children and youngsters looking for services from the National Helpline for Children, had an impact on ALO 116 staff which during August undertook an effort for the improvement of data system and categorization of concerns referred to by the callers during the month of August. Under this frame ALO 116 aimed at improving access to data categories by reflecting the standards of the Child Helpline International.

**During September, the Children's Counseling Helpline was visited by a Board Representative from CHI-Child Helpline International.** The goal of this visit was to receive information on the hotline and assess the work conducted until that period. Different meetings were organized with the Supporting Board and Coordinating Board and with the representatives of the NGOs.

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**During October, the head office staff of ALO 116, took part in the European Conference for Children's Hotlines, organized by the Child Helpline International.** The goal of this conference was the exchange of information and experiences gathered by the different agencies on identifying positive models on the application of the standards and the ranking of the new objectives on a global scale. In this conference, ALO 116 proved once again that the work and standards applied in Albania might created models and references for the similar agencies throughout western European countries.

On November 20th 2011 – Children's Rights Center of Albania – CRCA / DCI Albania, ALO 116 in cooperation with Children's Alliance-Tirana Region, "TAMAM", "La Casa del Cuore" and sponsored by UNICEF, organized an event with and for the children in Tirana. This event aimed particularly those children who have dropped-out school, those struggling with social-economic issues and children suffering form trauma due to the Gerdec tragedy.

This event was organized under the frame of November 20<sup>th</sup> – International Day of the Child's Rights Convention (CRC).

ALO 116 – National Helpline for Children's Counseling was given "Best Idea" Award after participating in "Open Datathon Albania" marathon on December 20th, an event that took place for the first time in Albania.

Hackathone is a global event, where groups and individuals gather in order to share statistical analyses from different backgrounds. The aim of this event is to raise large public awareness regarding the use of statistical data, as means to promote transparency and the democracy.

This was the first time Open Datathon Albania was organized in Albania. During this activity different approaches were presented to transform statistical data into

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comprehensible information for everyone. ALO 116 presented in this activity, how methodologies and statistical data can bring forth change and improvements in regards to children's rights situation in Albania. Representatives from Albanian National Child Helpline - ALO 116, presented in front of a large audience data, statistics and analysis collected from everyday work at ALO 116.

At the end of this event, the jury and participants awarded ALO 116 with "The Best Idea" Award, for its presentation and work, which consisted on the assessment of different problems regarding children's right and data that were previously collected and then presented during this event. There were 12 different organizations and individuals competing for this award from both Albania and Kosovo, most of which were experts in the fields of research, economics, IT and statistical analysis. This award came at a very important moment for ALO 116, because it did not only illustrate the achievements of the Helpline during a very short period, but above all, it stimulated the use of technology and new statistical analysis methods in the field of social society and children's protection services.

Part of the award was also a symbolic grant of \$100 dollars, which was awarded to ALO 116, on the day it started its new campaign "**Albania Donates**".

ALO 116 – The Albanian National Children's Helpline, started today the fundraising campaign from citizens "Albania Donates" located first at the "End of Year City" by *Murat Toptani* street, one of the busiest venues of the capital these festive days. The amazing end of year atmosphere is now joined by ALO 116 with its little house number 33, the place where everybody can get to know the Line better and also give their contribution for its continuity.

"The contribution of people will make possible for us to continue with our work, which so far has given impressive results" said Mr. Hazizaj in front of the Albanian Volunteers Network who are not by the "End of Year City" and on the coming weeks will be located



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Mail address: P. O. Box 1738, Tirana / Albania;  
Office address: Pall. Shallvareve, Vila mbrapa  
Fushave te Tenisit, Kati 2,  
Tirana / Albania

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Mbrojtja Ndërkombëtare e Fëmijëve – DCI Seksioni i Shqipërisë

Tel / Fax: + 355 4 2242264  
Mobile: + 355 67 20 75 330  
E-mail: [crca@crca.org.al](mailto:crca@crca.org.al)  
[www.crca.org.al](http://www.crca.org.al)

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at some of the busiest streets of Tirana such as *Durrësi Street, Kavaja Street, Sami Frashëri Street, Barrikada Street, Myslym Shyri Street, Bajram Curri Boulevard and Dëshmorët e Kombit Boulevard.*

Citizens who want to donate for ALO 116 and want to know precisely the position of volunteers can visit the webpage [www.alo116.al](http://www.alo116.al) and the ALO 116 page on Facebook. The volunteers will wear jackets with the ALO 116 logo and will keep an ID. All citizens who want to know the final sum of the funds raised, their destination and the way they will be used will be informed by e-mail and will read the official documents on the Line's webpage.

**This is what happens when a child calls ALO 116**

**Service presentation**

“Hello, this is the Children’s Counseling Helpline...”

The specialized professional working at ALO 116 awaits the call and makes an analysis on the immediate needs presented by the caller.

**Careful listening**

The counselor on the line establishes a helping relationship through careful active-listening, by understanding the expressed needs, by making the proper assessment of actions needed to be taken and preventive interventions, support and alternative assistance in order to solve the problem, and at the same time to raise a child’s or adolescent’s welfare.

**Case referral to the appropriate services**

In most cases, listening over the phone is only the first stage of the process, which provides a direct and specific intervention by other services, which are close to the area where the caller lives. A careful and sensitive listening, combined with proper specialized assistance as well as on the ground intervention can often result in a better management

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Fushave te Tenisit, Kati 2,  
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Mbrojtja Ndërkombëtare e Fëmijëve – DCI Seksioni i Shqipërisë

Tel / Fax: + 355 4 2242264

Mobile: + 355 67 20 75 330

E-mail: [crca@crca.org.al](mailto:crca@crca.org.al)

[www.crca.org.al](http://www.crca.org.al)

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of the situation in which the emotional, psychological and physical welfare of a child or adolescent are in grave danger.

**Following each case step by step**

The intervention of institutions or organizations on the ground focusing on child protection can significantly reduce the repetition of abuse and other issues and ensure a long-term support for the child and his/her family. The counselor at ALO 116 provides cooperation and facilitation among the children, adolescents and families with professionals directly involved with these cases.

**Instead of statistics and graphs...**

**Successful stories in ALO 116  
2009-2010**

**CASE A: ALO 116 and the Police of Kosovo save from the trafficking the girl who had run away from her family in Albania.**

**Initials: A.K.**

**Age: 15 years**

**Citizenship: British**

**Nationality: Albanian**

In December the parent of a juvenile girl contacted ALO 116. He was concerned because his daughter had left the family of their relatives and they did not know where she was. The father of the girl had followed the procedures at the nearest Police Station on the disappearance of the daughter, but still there was no answer, even after three weeks. Meanwhile he requires assistance to the Line, and he declared that he had strong reasons to believe that the life of his daughter was in danger. ALO 116, taking into consideration the age of the juvenile girl and the highest interest of the child, influenced on the

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Tirana / Albania

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Mbrojtja Ndërkombëtare e Fëmijëve – DCI Seksioni i Shqipërisë

Tel / Fax: + 355 4 2242264

Mobile: + 355 67 20 75 330

E-mail: [crca@crca.org.al](mailto:crca@crca.org.al)

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speeding up the procedures and increased the interest of the research through the local authorities and those beyond the border.

***What has ALO 116 done up to now.***

Our service, after receiving detailed information on the background and the data on the case, immediately contacted the General Directory of State Police. The representatives of GDP informed us on their attempts for this particular case, according to the procedure. Anyhow there was no news yet on the fate of the juvenile girl. The father had the contacts of ALO 116, and this is why we were the first to be contacted by the father of the girl because she had called him by an unknown number, which corresponded to the prefix of the Republic of Kosovo. ALO 116 contacted immediately the Representatives of the Ministry of Interior of Kosovo, who were very cooperative and started their attempts for the localization of the girl. After some days, the father of the girl contacted ALO 116, and thanked us on our work, because he had communicated with the Police of Kosovo and they had informed him that they knew the case and that they were trying to locate the girl. The Police of Kosovo, after conducting an excellent work and after having a frequent exchange of information with ALO 116, managed to locate the girl and to bring her back to her family in Albania.

**CASE B: ALO 116 and State Structures save three children from the extreme negligence**

**Initials: V.D./S.D./E.D.**

**Age of the children: 3, 8 and 11 years**

**City: P**

***Background of the Case***

A citizen from the city S. has called Child Help Line and reported the case of a family from the village Z. of the city P. During one of her visits in the village of her parents she learned

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about the history of three girls who lived by themselves in a ruined house and in terrible conditions.

One of the girls was 3 and half years old and the two other ones were respectively 8 and 11 years old. Their parents were separated some time ago and with the court decision they were under the custody of their father. The father of the girls lives with another woman, while the mother of the girls lives in the village of her parents, in another city. The mother of the girls has tried to take the girls with her but the ex-husband has taken them back again.

At the moment that the mother had taken the girls, the father had informed the police and the girls were sent back to their father. Even though he has the custody of the girls, they stay home by themselves and take care for each other while the girls are visited by the father only once a week. When he goes and meets them, he exerts violence on them. The girls live in terrible conditions and in very difficult economic conditions. They own some cattle and take care about them systematically by pasturing them. They do not benefit any economic assistance. According to the citizen who reported the case, the people living in the village have not reacted to this situation because they are afraid of the reaction of the father of the girls.

After some verification it resulted the children lived by themselves in the house, taking care for each other and did not attend the school.

***What has ALO 116 done up to now.***

As long as the case was presented, we contacted with the mayor of the commune of the area, Mr. V. M., who informed us on the history of the family D. Then we contacted the uncle all the girls, who lived in the same village with them. He confirmed that the situation of the girls was very critical and that they lived in terrible conditions.

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They could not provide food; they had no clothes, and lived without electricity. The older sister was systematically exposed to risk of trafficking because she would go every day out to pasture the cattle without the care of an adult or a relative. While the other girls would stay home and they tried to eat whatever they found around.

Their uncle declared that the father would not take care about them, and he maltreated them. According to him, the father of the girls was interested to gain their custody because they received social assistance and at the same time they took care about the cattle which were a source of incomes.

At the same time the uncle declared that he could not take care about his nieces because he has a sick child and he does not have economical possibilities. He has tried to contact the police of the city but no measures have been taken yet.

ALO 116, informed officially the local police on the case of the girls in order to speed up the procedures for the applications of the respective measures for the transfer of the girls from the environment of abuse.

The next step was the communication with Terres des Hommes, at the nearest city where one of the members of the organization cooperated with ALO 116 and the Regional Directory of Social Services in order to provide shelter for the girls.

After some days we were contacted by the mayor of the commune of the area and we were informed that the sisters were sent to the orphanage of the city where their mother was as well and due the persistence of ALO 116 some measures were taken in order for the sisters not to be separated from each other.

**CASE C: ALO 116 assists in the improvement of family relations**

**Name: A**

**Age: 31 years**

**City: Shkodra**

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**Background of the case**

A woman called at ALO 116 and she was very concerned on the way how she was behaving with her children. She declared she had passed a difficult childhood because of the family where she grew up. She was violated and beaten systematically by the parents and by the older brothers and sisters. She declared that during her childhood she was abused even sexually by a neighbor.

Mrs. A declares that she was married through matchmaking and when she met her husband, she had the feeling that her life was going to be better. She got married nine years ago and now she has two children: a son – four years old, and a daughter - two years.

Mrs. A says that her daughter is very intelligent. She declares that she feels very sad because she thinks she is not a good mother. She declares that when her daughter does not behave properly, she hits her and she starts crying and this makes her feel sad. She says that the way she behaves is not the way she wants to behave but her reaction is related to the family environment that is very tense.

Mrs. A declared that she felt very bad emotionally due to the very bad relationship she had with her husband and she declared that this has an influence on the relation with her children. She declares that sometimes she would hit her children even without any proper reason. She declares that she quarrels a lot with her husband in the presence of the children and after that they quarrel she does not know what she does and find difficulties to control herself.

Mrs. A is very concerned whether she will be a good mother for her children. She is concerned on the way she reacts towards her children, on the improper environment where they are growing up and how will these factors have an influence on their lives.

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***What has ALO 116 done up to now.***

The discussions with Mrs. A. have continued for three months. During this time the mother has been consulted on how to manage the undesired reactions due to the family conflicts and she has also been informed on the successful approaches of the parenting. Mrs. A. has been consulted on the way how to improve her relationship with her husband and to keep the children away from the conflicted relationship, to reflect on the relationship and to create a proper family environment for the well-being of her children. Mrs. A. had never discussed with her husband during this time because she had “obeyed” to the orders of her husband and she was very afraid all the way how he would react if she tried to discuss with him on the importance of the improvement of their relationship, on the way how she felt related to the family situation.

After having three months of discussions with the woman, she decided to discuss with her husband and she expressed all her thoughts that she had accumulated after each conflict and she rose the awareness of her husband on how this situation’s negative impact could influence on the well-being of the children. Now Mrs. A. feels much better and safer even though the conflicts are still present, but they happen more rarely and when those happen they keep the children away.

**CASE D: ALO 116 helps a family in need**

**Initials: K. S**

**Age: 10 years**

**City: K**

***Family members***

K. lives in village S. with her family which consists of her sisters, two brothers, parents and one aunt who has recently moved to their house.

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**Case Background**

K.S. has called the Line in November 2009. At the very beginning the conversation was mainly related to gathering of information for the offered services. After that it was established a trust relationship, K.S. starts talking on her family problems.

The family is living in very difficult economic conditions because nobody works in their family. This is the reason why the mother together with the children is obliged to beg on the streets of city K.

There is no proper information whether the children are attending school even though in some cases during the discussions K. accepts that sometimes she quits the lessons because she goes out with her mother to beg on the street and to assist her aunt who is paralyzed. A year ago the house was burned down and the commune promised them that they will reconstruct it again, but after they reconstructed only one room, the commune stopped working. At the moment all the family is living in one single room.

Lately, this family has faced another problem. The aunt of K.S., whose name is Vali (for confidentiality reasons we are not using her real name) lives in a domestic violence situation and due to this she was obliged to leave her family and now she is living with the family of her brother. Vali is invalid and the paralyzes had been created due to the violence exerted by her husband.

During a discussion with the counseling operator, K.S. described the fear she had felt when the aunt's drunk husband went to their apartment and had exerted violence on the paralyzed aunt. The husband had used cold weapons, by threatening the aunt that he would kill her in front of her nephews and nieces. The story was also confirmed by the aunt, who declared that her husband violated her systematically and this was the reason why she had been obliged to leave her apartment and to denounce for many times the violence to the police forces. But according to her the police forces had not done

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Office address: Pall. Shallvareve, Vila mbrapa  
Fushave te Tenisit, Kati 2,  
Tirana / Albania

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Mbrojtja Ndërkombëtare e Fëmijëve – DCI Seksioni i Shqipërisë

Tel / Fax: + 355 4 2242264  
Mobile: + 355 67 20 75 330  
E-mail: [crca@crca.org.al](mailto:crca@crca.org.al)  
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anything. This situation had influence negatively on the children and they described it in tears.

**Assessment and management of the case**

Based on the assessment of the situation through the information gathered during the phone calls with K. and the family, we focused on the strong points of the family and on the possibility that the parents might have to find a job. At the same time the local institutions and the NGOs operating in city K. had been informed on the case in order to refer the needs of the family by taking in consideration the highest interest of the children.

For this case of domestic violence, Child Help Line contacted the police, who were cooperative and took the respective measures (this was confirmed by the woman). At the same time a great emotional support was given to the children of the family, especially to K., who had experienced very badly the violence exerted on their aunt in their presence.

The counselors reached to the conclusion that the invalidity of Vali had an influence on both families because she had never had an equipment to move around. The services and assistance for her were provided by the nephews and nieces. Because of this assistance, they did not focus on school and games. After analyzing the situation we found the possibility to have an invalidity carriage for their aunt by hoping that this action would facilitate their lives and would create the possibility to continue with the studies.

We managed to provide this possibility due to the cooperation of the National Child Help Line with the association **Albanian Community Assist**. The shipping of the carriage was made possible due to the cooperation with the Foundation **Terre des home**.

After some further communications with K. she declared that she was happy for her aunt. She says that now the aunt might move by herself with the assistance of the carriage and

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she might do things by herself without the assistance of the other people. K. declares that she has started school again and she feels happy because her father has started to work.

The counselors reached to the conclusion that the invalidity of Vali had an influence on both families because she had never had an equipment to move around. The services and assistance for her were provided by the nephews and nieces. Because of this assistance, they did not focus on school and games. After analyzing the situation we found the possibility to have an invalidity carriage for their aunt by hoping that this action would facilitate their lives and would create the possibility to continue with the studies. We managed to provide this possibility due to the cooperation of the National Child Help Line with the association Albanian Community Assist. The shipping of the carriage was made possible due to the cooperation with the Foundation Terre des home. We managed to provide this possibility due to the cooperation of the National Child Help Line with the association **Albanian Community Assist**. The shipping of the carriage was made possible due to the cooperation with the Foundation **Terre des home**.

**Cases of ALO 116 in 2010-2011**

**Case: A.L.**

**Initials:** A.L.  
**Age:** 14 years old  
**Citizenship:** Albanian  
**Nationality:** Albanian

In the month of July, after some information received from the media regarding a girl who had run away from home, supervisors of Children's Helpline contacted the girl's family. According to the family, A.L. had left home without giving any details to where she was heading. A.L. had left behind a hand-written letter where she stated that she had taken some poison and was heading towards the mountains near the village.

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ALO 116 staff, responsible for following this case, after having been informed of the situation regarding the girl's relationship with the other members of the family, received further detailed information which were then shared with the police for physically finding her by providing at the same time 24 hour service access to 116-000 number. After a weeklong search by the police, the young girl was found in one of the outskirts of Tirana.

**Case: Mateo Bejaj**

**Name:** Mateo

**Last Name:** Bejaj

**Age:** 15 years old

**Birthplace:** Fitore, Vlorë

**Nationality:** Albanian

Mateo Bejaj, 15 years old, living in the village Bishan in Vlora has yet to be found, even though the police had began a standard investigation. 6 months have passed since he ran away from home, and besides the information collected by ALO 116 and passed on to the police, there is still no trace of Mateo.

Every hour that passes, puts his life in greater danger. For this reason The Children's Human Rights Center of Albania and Missing Children Helpline – ALO 116 has provided an intensive inter-agency cooperation, by using any means of communication and cooperation, in order to collect the most information in regards to Bejaj's case. Children's Counseling Helpline - ALO 116 is available 24 hours a day, 7 day a week by calling 116-000, where every citizen, can report anonymously, if he has sufficient information in order to facilitate the search for 15-year-old Mateo Bejaj.

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Mbrojtja Ndërkombëtare e Fëmijëve – DCI Seksioni i Shqipërisë

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**Name of referring person:** Ema  
**Child's initials:** K/S  
**Age of child:** 13 years old  
**Location:** Berat  
**Date:** 21.12.11

**Family composition**

The child with initials E/S is 13 years old, and lives with the father, and aunt and the 5-year-old brother. The mother of the children had passed away.

**Case background**

Ema calls in to report the case of a 13-year-old child named K/S. She is a relative of this child. K/S has been living home alone for two years.

His mother passed away 4 years ago, and his father together with his little 5-year-old brother have moved in with their aunt. The father has not been taking care of his child for the past two years; he has neglected his needs for food, clothing, schooling etc. According to Ema, the child has had some problems with the law because of stealing. That is the reason why he is considered a problematic child by those surrounding him.

K/S lives in Berat in his home. He does not attend school, often is feed by his relatives, asking them for help; but some other times he has to steal in order to provide food. His father is disappointed from him and does not want to take care about him anymore.

Often times during an argument with his son the father has bitten and mistreated his son in different ways. Two months ago, he beat his son while “dragging him on the floor”. Some people got involved and gave shelter to the boy the day of the incident.

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The boy suffers from asthma, and every month is obliged to go to the city hospital to receive oxygen. Often times, doctors have noticed signs of abuse on his body, eyes, yet they have taken no measures, while knowing very well the reason for those markings.

He is registered as in the seventh grade, but he rarely attends school. Teachers just pass him despite his seldom attendance.

Ema has tried many times to speak to the father of the child, and to try to convince him to take care of his child, but he continuously refuses to do so. The father has acted aggressively towards Ema by yelling and telling her it was not her business and not to interfere in his decisions.

Ema's husband has asked not to interfere any longer, even though he feels sorry for the child and would like to be of help to him. From time to time, relatives help the child by providing food and clothing for him whenever they see that he is in miserable conditions.

**What had ALO 116 done?**

After a careful collection of data regarding this case, ALO 116 referred this case to the city's CPU. K/S' case is still an ongoing one, but they have worked with him intensively. Thanks to a useful cooperation with Berat's CPU, but also due to the continuous assistance of ALO 116, they have put together a work plan, which is monitored by CPU staff.

Every new information regarding K/S case is referred to CPU services, which carefully elaborate and verify the information being provided regarding this case.

The latest information reveals that the child is attending school regularly, he now lives with his father, and relations between father and son are now calm and constructive.



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Fushave te Tenisit, Kati 2,  
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Mbrojtja Ndërkombëtare e Fëmijëve – DCI Seksioni i Shqipërisë

Tel / Fax: + 355 4 2242264  
Mobile: + 355 67 20 75 330  
E-mail: [crca@crca.org.al](mailto:crca@crca.org.al)  
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The family has received food aid, considering the very harsh financial situation it is going through.

At the same time, a support network has been created for this child thanks to the cooperation between the CPU staff, the father and aunt, the Director of Regional Education Directory, the teachers and the school principal.

## CASE TWO

**Name of referring person:** J.Xh  
**Child initials:** F  
**Age of child:** 17 year old  
**Location:** .....Shkodër  
**Date:** ..... 14.11.11

This case was referred to ALO 116 by one of the staff of the municipality of Shkodra. She was informed about ALO 116 from the police and decided to ask for assistance regarding a 17-year-old girl, who at the time was being assisted at the police station in Shkodra. This girl had been abandoned by her parents. Based on the information provided by the staff of the municipality J.Xh., the girl had continuous conflicts with her family. They complained that the girl smoked, had an aggressive behavior and often left home without telling where she was going and when she would be back, without asking for permission from her parents.

Her parents abandoned her, and refuse to take her back home. On the other hand, the girl herself refused to return to her parents' home. The police asked for assistance by the municipality on this case, in order to provide shelter for this girl.

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J.Xh declares: *“We tried to find a short term solution in order to find shelter for this girl, but in our city we have not been able find a shelter. We though you could help us get in touch with a center which moght provide shelter for this young girl for a few days until the family’s situation is calmer.”*

**What ALO 116 did in this case?**

After collecting all the necessary information, ALO 116 took these measures:

- a) Immediately contacted the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunity.
- b) Contacted and reported this case to the Regional Directorate of Social Services.

The case referral was successful.

Thanks to the cooperation with these institutions, we were able to provide a temporary shelter for the girl at “Village of Peace” center. At the same time, psychological and emotional support was provided to the girl, as well as implementation of a long-term plan for her and her family.

**CASE THREE**

**Name:** S.  
**Age:** 13 years old  
**Location:** X

**Family composition**

S. is 13 years old and lives with her parents in a village in the northern part of Albania. Her parents have an age difference of 22 years between them. She has two younger brothers, for whom she provides full time care.

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**Case background**

A call comes to our helpline but no one speaks. Heavy breathing can be heard, and a little while longer, you can hear a faint voice. She would like to express much more, but she is frightened and shy. She gives her information after a few more calls. She has never had a chance to speak to anyone about things so important to her.

After a short pause, she says -“My father doesn’t love me, he beats me, he whips me with a belt and doesn’t allow me to attend school”. After this, I hear her voice, and she starts to cry and tremble. She continues to tell her childhood story:

“My father has never loved me, ever since I was a little girl, I remember him being distant. He only loves my brothers, and he is never satisfied with me. I take care of all the housework, because my mother works all day long. My father has been married three times, he does not love anyone. He has even beaten his own mother. With my mother and me, he does the same. He beats me when my mother is not home; he hits me with anything at hand, shoes, whip and other objects. I have black marks on my body, and for this reason we have even gone to the police, but they have kept him for a few days, and than he has returned”.

She speaks of her efforts to be loved and supported by her father, but according to her, these efforts are useless. She has only felt hate and distance from her father for years. Sometimes, she feels guilty, but she does not know what she can do in order for these things never to happen again in her family.

Sometimes her father will not have any contact with S, this makes her feel better than when he is around the house. She plays the parental role for her two brothers, she feeds them, dresses them, cleans the house and works throughout the day. There are times that she does not go to school as her father does not allow her to.

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She expresses great love for her brothers and for her mother and the opposite feelings for her father. She has friends, but she almost has no free time to enjoy her childhood.

It has been years since she last played with other kids, and time is not enough even for her to do her homework. There are teachers who support her, but also some others who make fun of her clothes. Someone told her she dresses badly, and this has made her deeply sad; she cried and refused to go to school for several days. She wishes her friends would not have negative thoughts in her regard, but she cannot change their opinions. She says, she feels often lonely and without any support, and thus life does not have any meaning.

She has thought to take her own life (something she has only thought to, but never acted upon). There are times she feels life is beautiful to live, and other times where she feels a deep dread and thinks otherwise.

She knows she is loved by her mother and her brothers, but the suffering caused by her father is unbearable for her. She asks to the counselors different questions such as: is it fair what is happening to her?! Are there other children who are beaten and suffer just like me?! She insists on an answer to these questions and requests a swift solution to her situation, which she does not receive right away.

After talking to ALO 116 she expresses her feelings: "I like talking to you, even though I am scared my father might hear me. I feel better, I have people who listen to me, and sometimes I am ashamed that I feel and say such things about my family....."

**What ALO 116 did in this case?**

- a) *Emotional support*
- b) *A three-month counseling period.*

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Support is very scarce for her and her need for encouragement is great. Making sure she understands that she is an intelligent girl, that she is doing a lot for her family, are some of the elements which make her feel better about herself, and this why she is freed from the guilt she feels.

The discussion between her mother and the ALO 116 counselor, allows her to speak more freely, and she feels this way she is receiving the great support that she needs. She says she feels better and not guilty when she speaks with the psychologist. In her latest calls, she says she is learning to spend a little bit more time for herself, to read, or to just sit down and think about her desires, school, her friends or even a close friend. Either way, these moments for S are scarce, most of the time, she must face things, which she cannot change, and which are beyond her control. She does not want the conversations to be brief, nor does she want anyone to interrupt her .....

She believes, these calls would be very beneficial for her two brothers as well. She says, they do not understand much, but they feel sorry for their sister.

**c) Referral**

The girl's mother was an important and active catalyst during her consultations with the counselor because she herself was part of the same cycle of abuse exerted by the head of the family towards the other members of the family. The girl's mother has been referred to the Counseling Center for Women and Girls.

**Case 4**

**Case:** A. J

**Age:** 7 years old

**Location:** Kolonjë, Lushnjë

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ALO 116 receives a call from a 35-year-old mother of a 7-year-old boy. She speaks about her 7-year-old son who is in the first grade. Her son has serious hearing problems. This element hampers him reach the same academic level as the other classmates, and at the same time in building interpersonal relationships with other children at school

At the moment his mother and father are unemployed. The latter rarely works because his fingers were severely injured during an accident, and has forgone through surgeries in the stomach and foot.

The child has been seen by doctors at the French Hospital and at the Mother Teresa Hospital in Tirana, and doctors on both visits have told the family the child must use a hearing device. The family is in dire financial situation, and cannot afford to buy the hearing device for the child.

ALO 116 in cooperation with Albanian Community Assist - ACA (an organization operating in Tirana) was able to contact a partner foundation in London, which in return was able to provide the hearing device needed for the 7-year-old boy.