



SOCIAL MAPPING OF VULNERABLE GROUPS
For the Municipality of Veles

STRATUM R&D



Social Mapping Results Report Template:
Social Mapping Project, Detection and Description of Vulnerable Groups by Risk Factors
STRATUM R&D / Veles
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Table of Contents

Executive summary	4
Target group / LNOB group.....	5
Background and Objectives	7
Methodology.....	10
LNOB results.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Recommendations and conclusion	Error! Bookmark not defined.

Executive summary

The prepared document is based on the analysis of previously prepared documents by the Municipality of Veles, existing National Strategies for the target groups, existing statistical data for the target groups, administrative data obtained from competent institutions, data obtained through direct interviews with members of the target groups, and data obtained through the organisation of focus groups.

The study is organised as follows. Section 1 defines the target groups and explains the background and objectives of the analysis. Section 2 describes the methodology used and the data sources. Section 3 provides an overview of the survey results presented in tables and graphs. Section 4 summarises the research findings and organises them by age, education, family size, income, housing, employment, quality of life, transportation, social and health care, and discrimination. In addition, this section contains conclusions by target groups: disabled individuals, single parents, and the elderly, as well as recommendations for the need for new, better, more accessible, and more diverse services considering the identified risks.

The study identified the following risk groups:

- a. The elderly who live alone, particularly in remote areas of the city, and who lack access to essential goods and services
- b. Single-parent families
- c. Individuals with disabilities (physical and/or mental disabilities)
- d. Families who are economically deprived
- e. Families confined to substandard housing
- f. Victims of domestic violence
- g. Individuals who have not completed their primary education or have only completed their primary education

However, the conclusions and recommendations focus predominantly on three groups: the elderly in need of assistance, people with disabilities, and single-parent families, while the other risk groups are presented and analysed through these three groups. By way of illustration victims of violence are also members of single families, people with unfinished primary education appear in all three selected groups, and the risks of poverty appear in all three of the selected groups.

Geo tagging –

According to the data from the field and respondents' feedback –

- no infrastructure for people with disabilities (no sidewalks adapted for visually impaired people and people using wheelchairs;

- Traffic signs are posted on sidewalks
- Traffic lights are without audio signals (useful for the visually impaired)
- No elevators in schools (except in the Municipal Primary School “Vasil Glavinov”, which is not functional at all times)
- Organizations for people with disabilities are mainly in apartments that have no elevators or wheelchair ramps
The sport centre on Lake Veles is designated as an inclusive place where all the needs of people with disabilities are taken into consideration
- No wheelchair ramps in banks and notaries

Target group / LNOB group

In accordance with the Veles Municipality's Social Plan and prior experiences and activities aimed at integrating vulnerable groups, the research team identified a number of vulnerable groups. For each of the identified vulnerable groups, the team developed LNOB target group-specific questionnaires. The proposed sample structure would include minimum 50 respondents from each defined vulnerable group, as well as 50 respondents from Veles-based stakeholders' groups. Numerous vulnerable groups were identified through an exchange of experiences at local and national levels (representatives from the Municipality of Veles and experts), and these groups are not mutually exclusive; for example, one respondent may represent multiple vulnerable groups. Nevertheless, these groups encompass all vulnerable categories.

- b. The elderly who live alone, particularly in remote areas of the city, and who lack access to essential goods and services
- b. Single-parent families
- c. Individuals who are physically or mentally disabled
- d. Families that struggle making ends meet
- e. Families confined to substandard housing
- f. Victims of domestic violence
- g. Individuals who have not completed their primary education or have completed only their primary education

So far, the municipality's social plan has taken into account the following vulnerable groups:

- poverty-stricken children
- adversely affected children
- physically disadvantaged individuals
- those in need of a third party's assistance

- individuals 65 years or older
- victims of domestic violence

All of these groups will be considered in this social mapping, but their definitions will vary, and as previously stated, some of these groups may overlap.

Due to the fact that the questionnaire will include questions related to respondent selection, it will be feasible to determine which vulnerable groups a particular respondent is a member of in order to detect all of the criteria for vulnerable group differentiation.

When it comes to minorities, we have received information from Veles Municipality representatives that Romani people are represented by the municipality's fourth national group and that it is preferable not to use the term "minority" in this context, but that Roma will appear in vulnerable groups and will be segmented respondents in the specific group. We will gather data on nationalities and their representation in vulnerable populations using subsamples.

Background and Objectives

Leaving No One Behind (LNOB) is at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It embodies the unwavering commitment of all UN Member States to eradicate poverty in all of its manifestations, to end discrimination and exclusion, and to reduce the inequalities and vulnerabilities that suffocate individuals and humanity as a whole.

“As we embark on this great collective journey, we pledge that no one will be left behind. Recognizing that the dignity of the human person is fundamental, we wish to see the goals and targets met for all nations and peoples and for all segments of society. And we will endeavor to reach the furthest behind first.” (interim Report 2019, Leaving no one behind, UNSDG Operational guide for UN Country Teams)

Leaving no one behind means moving beyond assessing average and aggregate progress, and towards ensuring progress for all population groups at a disaggregated level. This will require disaggregating data to identify who is being excluded or discriminated against, how and why, as well as who is experiencing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and inequalities. This will entail identifying unjust, avoidable, or extreme inequalities in outcome and opportunities, and patterns of discrimination in law, policies, and practices. This will also entail addressing patterns of exclusion, structural constraints and unequal power relations that produce and reproduce inequalities over generations and moving towards both formal and substantive equality for all groups in society. This will require supporting legal, policy, institutional and other measures to promote equality and reverse the trend of rising inequalities. This will also require free, active, and meaningful participation of all stakeholders, particularly the most marginalized, in review and follow-up processes for ensuring accountability, recourse and remedies to all (interim Report 2019, Leaving no one behind, UNSDG Operational guide for UN Country Teams)

Municipality of Veles

The municipality covers an area of 427.45 square kilometres and has a population density of 128.92 inhabitants per square kilometre.

Approximately 55,108 people live in Veles Municipality, according to statistics from the 2002 census, which was conducted after the new territorial division. Of these, 50.1 percent are male (27,632) and 49.9 percent are female (27,476).

Nationality:

Macedonians account for 84.86% (46,767)

Bosnians account for 4.37% of the population (2,406)

Albanians account for 4.17% of the population (2,299)

Turks constitute 3.13% of the population (1,724)

Roma make up 1.45% of the population (800)

Serbs account for 0.98% of the population (540)

Vlachs account for 0.62% of the population (343)

Other nationalities constitute 0.42%(229)

It must be noted that it is difficult to obtain an accurate population estimate for the Municipality of Veles using official statistics. These circumstances have developed primarily as a result of the country not having a new census for 18 years (SSO).

On the basis of the most frequently cited statistical data, one can safely conclude that the population data provided by the 2002 Census does not correspond with the population of the country in 2002 and is deemed 'no longer adequate'.

Consequently, gaining a general understanding of the municipality's current population and demographic profile is critical for developing appropriate local policies and measures.

This social plan accomplishes this goal by utilising data from publications, the Population Assessment, and annual statistical data that are pertinent to the situation. (Social Plan of the Municipality of Veles 2021-2025)

Regarding the population's identified challenges summarised in this social mapping report (estimated through the use of official statistical and administrative data sources), local plans and activities will be developed based on the social plan's assessments.

According to statistical data obtained from the State Statistical Office, the Municipality of Veles has a negative natural population change.

The primary goal of this research project is to map social problems and vulnerable groups in the municipality, analyse capacity and social services currently obtainable in the municipality, and identify specific needs for the development of social services in the municipality.

This project aims to identify the unmet needs of the citizens in these domains and provide additional measures and services at a local level.

Along with accomplishing the primary objective, the social plan also aims to contribute to the development of local social policy and social protection that is: a) targeted, b) profiled to meet the needs of its residents, c) coordinated with other government agencies, and d) utilised to advance the municipality's social development and investments. This social plan may include the interest of citizens' associations and other interested parties that may be able to provide social assistance or specific services to socially vulnerable groups residing in Veles.

Groups defined as socially vulnerable are those that are in life situations more likely to be affected by a variety of social, psychological, medical, economic, and other problems. A circumstance is a risk factor that does not have to be the direct cause, but when combined with other factors, the likelihood of a problem occurring increases. According to data obtained from the state institutions in Municipality of Veles, vulnerable groups and their statistics are as follows:

- Families and individuals who live in abject poverty 1253
- Individuals with disabilities 293



- Elderly individuals who are unable to support themselves 2
- Domestic violence victims 14
- Individuals who are currently imprisoned 10
- Drug and alcohol addicts 24
- At-risk children 162

Methodology

STRATUM R&D conducted a research project with the implementation of quantitative and qualitative techniques in accordance with the project's requirements and objectives, particularly with the expected assignment results:

1. Quantitative research (in-person interviews)- 300 respondents aged 18+ in the Municipality of Veles.
2. Qualitative research (Focus Group Discussions) – conducted after the quantitative research phase; in-depth analysis with the stakeholders, NGOs and representatives of Municipality.

The Questionnaire as a Measuring Instrument

To collect the most pertinent data, we focused on the project's primary objectives and developed explicit questions to elicit all necessary information. The interviews were conducted in the respondents' native languages, ensuring their openness and trust, as well as the ultimate accuracy of their responses.

A Discussion guide was used as a tool for qualitative research. The guide was analogous to the questionnaire, except that the questions were open and semi-structured, and the primary flow of discussion was determined by the group dynamics and the atmosphere among group participants.

Participants were representatives of the stakeholders but belonged to vulnerable groups, too – they were diverse in terms of gender, employment status, and their area of residence (urban/rural), but were divided into age groups.

Vesna Kuzmanovic, an accomplished researcher and psychologist, moderated the discussions, which were further assisted by Kristijan Ampovski, junior researcher and psychologist.

Sample Design

STRATUM R&D in cooperation with expert Dusan Tomsic and representatives from the Municipality of Veles developed lists of potential respondents – representatives of defined vulnerable groups – target to this research project.

The total sample size was 300 respondents and we initially planned to collect data from all representatives of the vulnerable groups. Since it was impossible, however, to reach all the participants, we managed to include at least 50 respondents per group, which in some groups led to nearly 150 respondents due to the overlapping of individual groups (one respondent may appear as a representative of more than one vulnerable group). This vastly improves the representativeness of the sample, for which detailed data are presented at the end of the report.

The Agency recruited participants for the qualitative section of the research based on criteria proposed by the Municipality of Veles and they represent a social-protection ecosystem (vulnerable groups, NGOs, donors, municipality representatives etc.)

Software used for data collection

When the questionnaire was completed, it was processed using the TAPI software, since KoBo Toolbox introduced plenty of translation-related issues. In order to have access directly from the field, we used SurveyToGo, a type of software that allows offline data collection in cases in which internet connection is unstable or somehow compromised.

The software enables logic and quality control of responses, ensuring that the data collected is ready for processing while also avoiding errors and other issues.

The software used for this research project is the best option available on the global market, as it incorporates superior logic control, ease of programming the questions, the ability to collect data without internet access (critical for rural interviewing), and the ability to monitor the interviewer's path during the interview via GPS.

Supervision of fieldwork

In order to examine the length of the interviews, the sensitivity of the questions, and any potential problems with the software, a pilot testing was conducted. STRATUM R&D selected a team of 10 interviewers plus 4 employees who were directly involved within the project. To ensure effective and efficient data collection, we organised training sessions for the selected interviewers with the goal of familiarising them with the assignment's objectives, the questionnaire's specific details, and especially for working with vulnerable groups.

The fieldwork started at the beginning of the month of May and was intensive in all respects. All respondents were reached on their home addresses (in different parts of the city of Veles and in all villages around Veles).

SUMMARY REPORT WITH CONCLUSIONS

A few vulnerable groups among which the research project was conducted have been identified based on primary data collected via direct interviews with the respondents, available analyses and strategic plans of the Municipality of Veles, and on the basis of direct discussions with representatives of the Municipality. They are as follows:

1. The elderly who live alone, particularly in remote areas of the city, and who lack access to essential goods and services
2. Single-parent families

3. Individuals who are physically or mentally disabled
4. Families who have difficulty making ends meet
5. Families confined to substandard housing
6. Victims of domestic violence
7. Individuals who have not completed their primary education or have completed only their primary education

In the final analysis are taken groups who have specific problems, and are exclusive in description of unmet needs: Single parent families, elderly who live alone without support and People with disabilities

1. QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

I. LNOB – Single Parents

Sections:

- Demographics of the group – Single-parent families are families mainly consisting of multiple generations. Single parents generally have two children, one under the age of 12 and another between the ages of 12 and 18. The average age of single parents in Veles is 41, meaning they can be categorised into the group 35-45 years old. Overall, most of them have completed high school. In contrast, their parents have only completed primary or vocational schools due to the fact that they originate from lower socio-economic groups. Poverty is a condition transferred through multiple generations, resulting in a total monthly income of 9000 denars in 70% of these families, which is a sum 40% lower than the minimum wage guaranteed in the country. The remaining 30% of single-parent families have monthly incomes equal to or higher than the minimum wage. Due to the low monthly income, these families are forced to live in extended families or in areas where living conditions are poor. In general, single parents are usually female or more precisely 82% from the single parent's family are consisted by mother and kids

Employment – In regard to employment, the situation is unfavourable. No more than 10% of single parents have done any paid work in the last 12 months, and only 22% of them have tried to find a job in the last 4 weeks. As a reason why they haven't succeeded in finding a job, they pointed out health issues and obligations for their children and/or ill parents as limiting factors. The living conditions of single parents is extremely disadvantageous, as most of them are at an age when other generations from their family depend on them, meaning that they lack the time and assistance to look for a job and escape poverty. 44% of them are actively registered in the Employment Agency of the Republic of North Macedonia and, consequently,

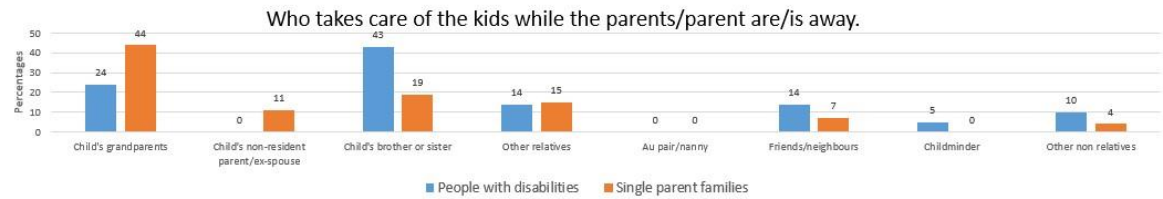
they do not receive any assistance in looking for a job and receiving health insurance. 100% of single parents haven't had any vocational training, a factor that slightly increases job opportunities. Instead, they learn about job opportunities on the Internet or through their friends and family.

Life standards & economic safety – as mentioned above, single-parent families live in urban or suburban areas where the infrastructure is poor and the living conditions are unfavourable. 30% of single-parent families live in new apartments or good houses (similar to the percentage of families who own apartments). 37% live in old houses that are acceptable conditions and 33% of single parent families live in old and ruined houses or improvised homes. Most of the single-parent families-70% live in houses that are not owned by any family member living in them, and 22% live in a house or apartment granted by the state. In general, their households are equipped with electricity, water, kitchen and toilet inside, etc., however, 30% of single-parent families live in places that are undersupplied with the abovementioned conditions. The average house size is 35 m², which is far below decent. 60% of single parents have stated that they go to bed hungry at least once per week due to financial constraints. Only 22% of single-parent families own a computer and 80% couldn't afford one, meaning that their children didn't have access to the online learning imposed by the COVID- 19 pandemic. 1/3 of the single-parent families have Internet access. On average, these families need at least €350 a month to cover basic living expenses, but most single parents stressed that they would work for an average salary of €250. The largest expenditures single-parent families face each month are food, housing, and medicine. They declared that they couldn't afford to pay any unexpected expenses of €500, eat meat every other day, or go to a one-week holiday from home. 25-30% of single-parent families can afford to pay for medicine, heating costs, mortgage, and utility bills. In the Municipality of Veles, single parents make use of the advantage of living in a smaller city by walking to their desired locations (for 30 minutes on average) or by using public transportation for longer distances. Regarding the economic safety, more than 90% of the respondents live in economic uncertainty. They are generally more concerned about crime, violence, and vandalism than environmental problems. Most of the respondents use Macedonian language at home, followed by Roma and Turkish.

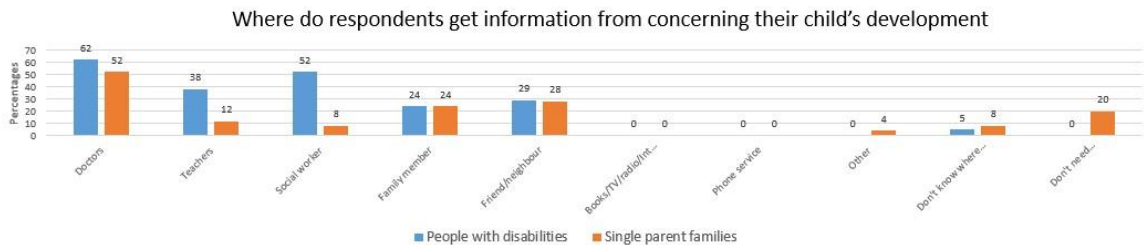
Childcare & education - 100% of the kids from the single family groups do not attend any playgroup, pre-school, or nursery school. The most frequent reasons for not doing so are: not having enough money, not having enough clothes, the parent is sick, COVID-19, etc. Having in mind that pre-school integration is important for achieving better performance throughout the educational process (unless pro-active measures are introduced), these children face the risk of repeating the same pattern of low education performance which has been established among parents of the single-parent group.

Children are usually taken care of by grandparents, relatives, or their brother / sister while the main caretaker is away.

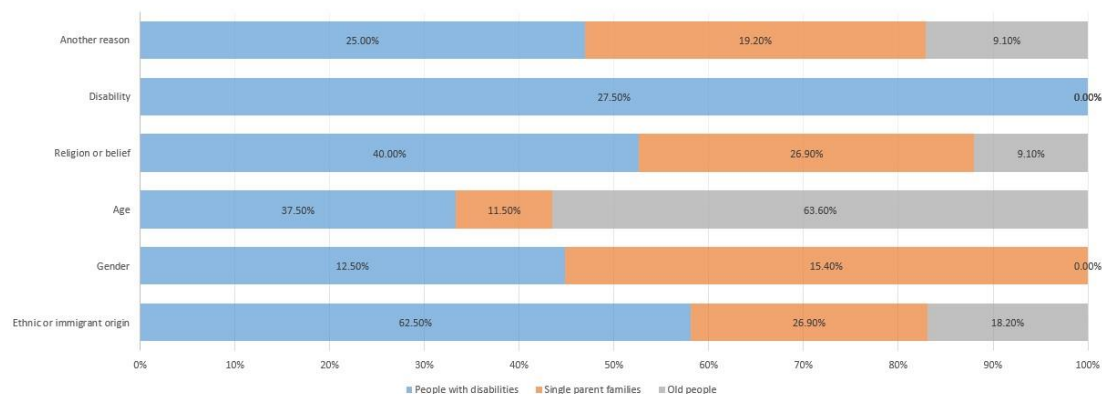
Doctors, teachers, family members, and friends/neighbors are the chief sources when parents need information related to the child's development process.



Kids are taken care of by grandparents, relatives or their brother/sister while the main caretaker is away.



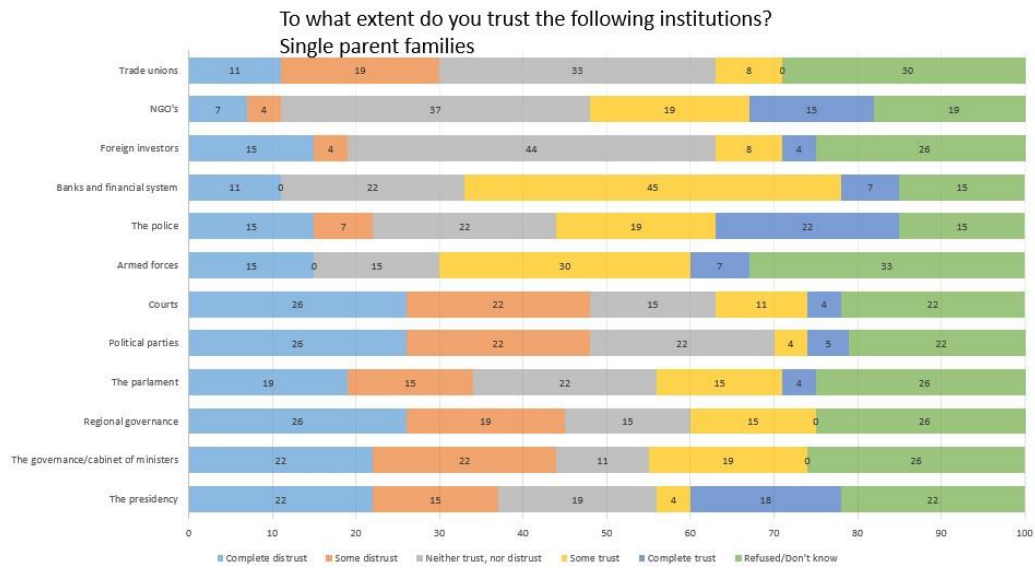
- Health** – The health condition of almost half of all single parents in the Municipality of Veles is very poor. Even more unfortunate is the fact that they have no medical insurance, as they are not registered in the Employment Agency of the Republic of North Macedonia. Mobility, dexterity, mental health, and stamina are the biggest health issues that single parents face. Having struggled with their individual health issues for 6 or more months, more than 30% of single parents are unable to carry out their daily activities. Their living conditions combined with all their obligations prevent them from regularly going to the dentist and/or the general practitioner for regular medical checks.
- Pension (social & other help and financial support)** – as stated above, single parents are deprived of financial or any other type of support or assistance from institutions. They are not even recognised as vulnerable groups and there is no explicit law that would define them as such. 33% of single parents stated that they have received a formal disability assessment, but no respondent from this group has succeeded in receiving any kind of pension. What they did receive is a carer’s allowance (mainly for their old parents or relatives) of €20-130 per month. The other type of support is child allowance, subsidizing the utility bills and social financial support. Almost 20% of single parents have loans to repay. From those who repay such loans, approximately 80% see it as a heavy burden/struggle.
- Self-employment**
 Natural diseases, earthquakes, extreme heat, floods, severe weather, and epidemics/pandemics are the most common natural hazards that single parents are faced with. Generally, they are most concerned about epidemics/pandemics, landslides, and earthquakes. They are not as concerned about: West-Nile fever, unexploded mines, tornadoes, terrorism, etc. Regardless of the level of concern, none of the single parents has any type of insurance as a contingency for these potential hazards. Concurrently, they feel that the institutions are not obligated to reduce the risk of exposure to natural or fabricated hazards and state that they have lost faith and hope in them.
- Discrimination** – Single parents often feel discrimination on various bases (excluding discrimination based on disability and even less on age). Mainly they feel discrimination during the job seeking process and education of their kids.



- COVID-19** – Although the newly-established situation imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic has influenced all people, single parents who live in poor conditions are even more negatively affected. Since their income is continually low, most single parents have taken out some type of loan to overcome their financial crisis, and only 25% of them have received some type of financial assistance from the government. Some respondents received financial assistance from religious groups of support. As mentioned above, online learning inflicted an additional problem for single parents - as most of them could not afford Internet access and technological devices or couldn't find a caretaker for their children; thus, their children were deprived of education and socialisation. The main caretakers for children of single-parent families are the grandparents, which is yet another reason why single parents feel that the institutions fail to provide any support that would result in equal chances to protect themselves and their children.

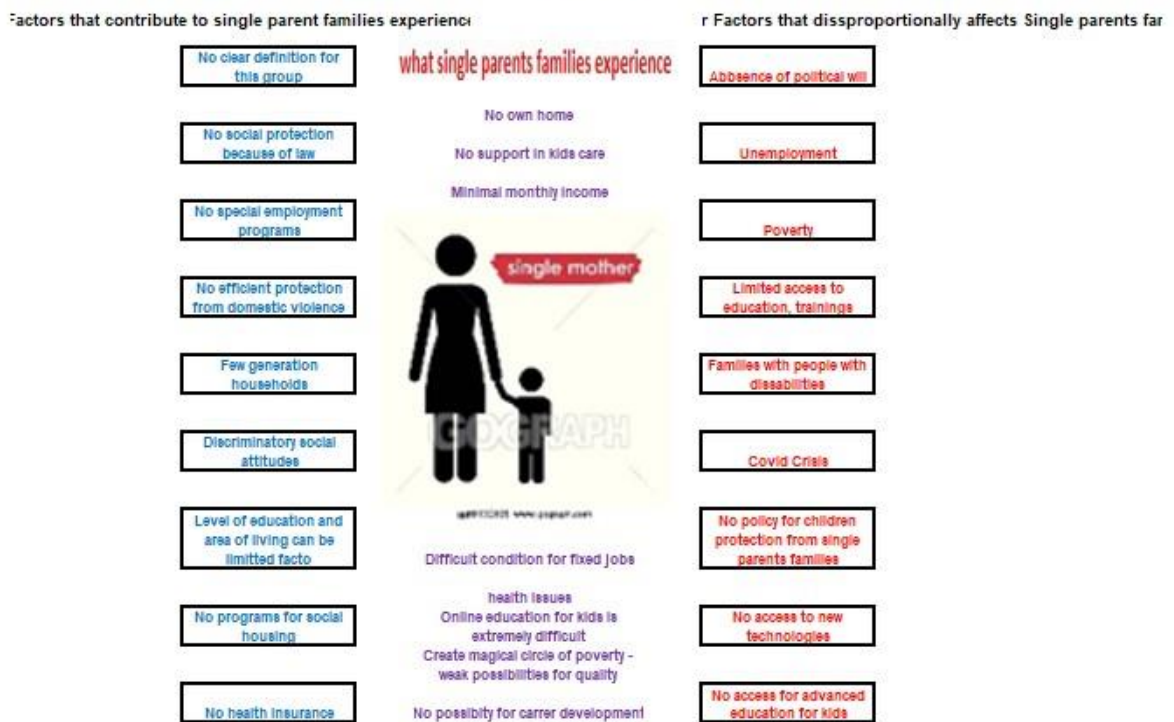
- Governance** – In a general sense, single parents do not trust the institutions, although there are exceptions – some of them have trust in the police, followed by the presidency, the banks, and the financial system. They expect from the government prioritisation of economic investments, unemployment reduction, and investments in healthcare. Speaking from their own experience, single parents stated that the most important sectors in the country should be equal rights for women, peace and stability, and a fair judiciary system.

As a vulnerable group, single parents have noticed that corruption can influence one's life and feel that the highest degree of corruption is attempting to get a job in the public sector. Apart from having to have certain social connections in order to get a job, single parents have stated that they had had to pay money to the police, courts, and the public administration for services that should have been free. Out of all free services, single parents have only used medical treatments, social security benefits, and education in the last 12 months. They felt most satisfied with the medical treatments they received and least satisfied with the lack of textbooks and supplies for their children, poor teaching, the long waiting times followed by lack of available drugs and having to pay for services that should be free.



Description of general living situation of single parent showed that 8 SDGs are indicative for this group.

Figure Wider casual and contributing factors for single parents families



LINK WITH SDGs:

1. No poverty
2. No Hunger
3. Good health & well-being
4. Quality Education

- 5. Gender Equality
- 6. Decent work & economic growth
- 7. Reduced inequality
- 8. Peace, justice, and strong institutions

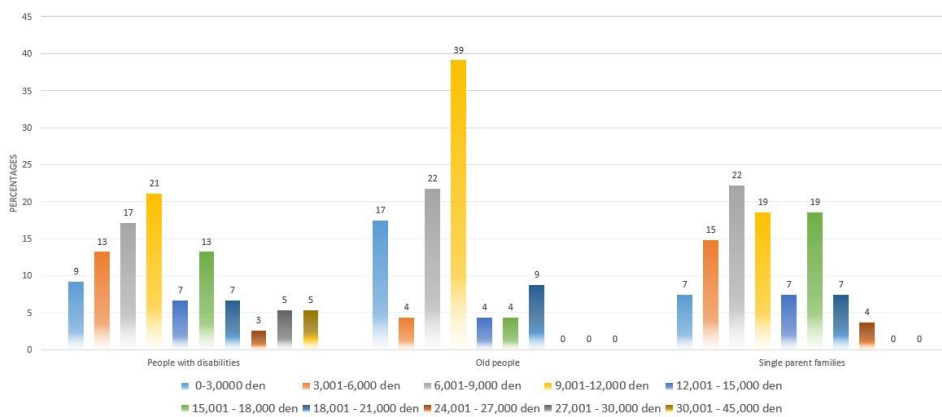
II. LNOB – People with disabilities

Sections:

- Demographics of the group – Individuals with disabilities mainly live in families without children. The average age of people with disabilities is 50, so they can be categorised into the age group of 50+. They mainly have primary school completed 50% of the respondents, meaning that their job is bad paid or social pension what they receive refer total monthly income between 9.000-12.000 denars, a sum that is 40% lower than the minimum wage guaranteed in the country. 27% of the people with disabilities have income to 9000 denars *from which – 9% even total income of 0-3000 den per month)

23% of people with disabilities have monthly incomes equal to or higher than the minimum wage. Due to their low incomes and limited opportunities for earning money, these families are forced to live in areas where conditions are far from acceptable and in old houses, 33% of which are improvised. People with disabilities are almost equally distributed in both genders. If we compare the situation of people with disabilities with that of single parents, we can see that people with disabilities have their own homes, have better houses and higher monthly incomes.

Monthly Income per household



In regard to employment, the situation is unfavourable. No more than 10% of people with disabilities have done any paid work in the last 12 months, and only 9% percent of them have tried to find a job in the last 4 weeks. As a reason why they haven't succeeded in finding a job, they pointed out health issues and age as limiting factors. Almost one half of them is retired

on the base of disability or age, thus they are not actively looking for a job. Only 9% stated that are actively looking for job and 30% of all disabled people from Veles are registered in the Employment Agency. Those individuals who are not retired are registered in The Employment Agency of the Republic of North Macedonia and receive health insurance – 98% of people with disabilities haven't had any vocational training, a factor that slightly increases job opportunities. Instead, they learn about job opportunities through their friends and family, so social isolation and low network of social relations is more prevalent among this group than the other two identified vulnerable groups (single parents and the elderly).

Life standards & economic safety –as mentioned above, people with disabilities live in urban or suburban areas where the infrastructure is poor and the living conditions are unfavourable. 16% of the people with disabilities live in new apartments or good houses. 51% live in old houses that are unacceptable conditions and almost 33% of people with disabilities live in dilapidated places or improvised homes. If we compare this result with that of single parents, people with disabilities are in a moderately better position because they live in their own houses and have no additional monthly renting costs. In general, their households are equipped with electricity, water, kitchen toilet inside, etc., however, 30% of the families consisting of people with disabilities live in places that are undersupplied with the abovementioned conditions. The average house size is 50 m², which is more acceptable than the other two vulnerable groups but remains far from decent. 50% of the people with disabilities have stated that they go to bed hungry at least once per week due to financial constraints. Less than 20% of the families of people with disabilities own a computer but stated that they didn't want it (38% and 55% stated that they want to have it but couldn't afford it.). 1/5 of the families of people with disabilities have access to the Internet. On average, these families need at least €350 a month to cover basic living expenses, but most families consisting of people with disabilities stressed that they would work for an average salary of €250. The largest expenditures these families face each month are food, housing, and medicine. Compared to the single-parent group, people with disabilities have much higher purchase power and enjoy a more favourable economic situation than single parents. In the Municipality of Veles, people with disabilities make use of the advantage of living in a smaller city by walking to their desired locations (for 30 minutes on average) or by using public transportation for longer distances. Regarding the economic safety, approximately 80% of the respondents live in economic uncertainty. For this group, problems such as crime, violence and vandalism are not as important as environmental problems. Most of the respondents use Macedonian language at home, followed by Roma and Turkish.

Childcare& education - This vulnerable group mainly consists of children older than 18 years of age, thus they do not share the same duties and obligations as single parents.

Health – The health condition of almost half of the people with disabilities is very poor or poor. However, they have medical insurance. Mobility, dexterity, mental health, and stamina are the biggest health issues that people with disabilities face. Having struggled with their individual health issues for 12 or more months, more than 50% of individuals with disabilities are unable to carry out their daily activities. Half of them have regular medical checks and have gone through a formal disabilities assessment.

Pension (social & other help and financial support) – as mentioned above, people with disabilities have financial assistance from the institutions. The value of the financial support is

between 130 – 300 € per month. From the data, it can be seen that almost 20 % of the people with disabilities are familiarized with financial support from the institutions so they apply and use all types of available support they can get. A small percentage of people with disabilities have loans to repay. From those who repay such loans, on average, 75% see it as a heavy burden/struggle.

Self-employment – not applicable for this group in the Municipality of Veles

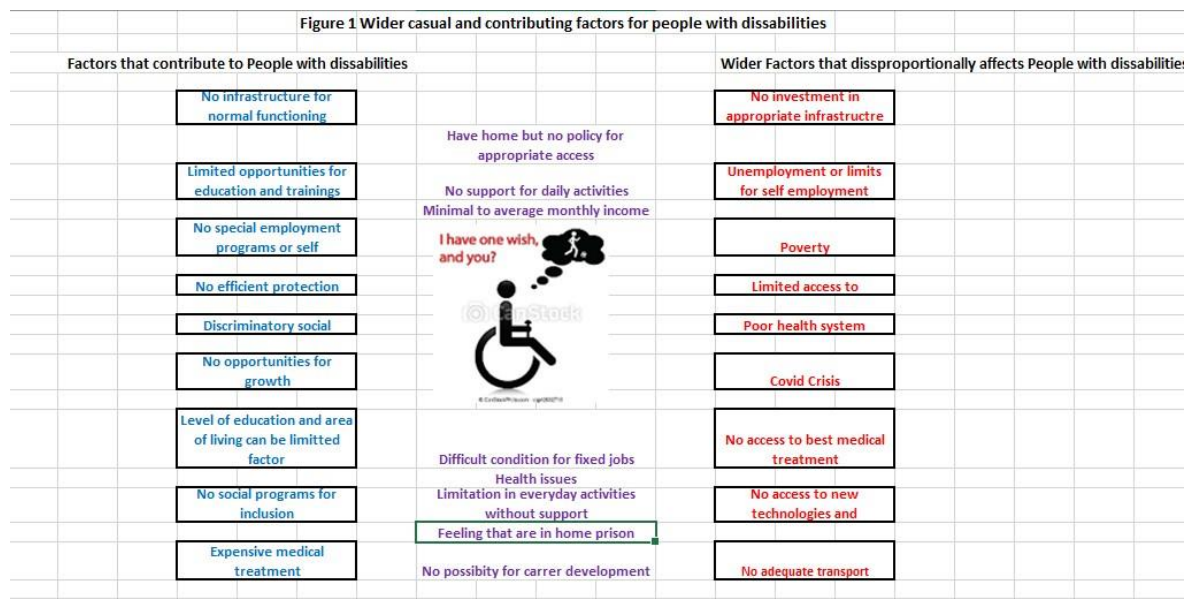
Natural diseases – people with disabilities are most concerned about: epidemics/pandemics, landslides, freeze-ups, and extremely bad weather. They are not as concerned about: West-Nile fever, fog, hazardous materials, terrorism, tornadoes, etc. Regardless of the level of concern, none of the people with disabilities has any type of insurance as a contingency for these potential hazards. Concurrently, they feel that the institutions are not obligated to reduce the risk of exposure to natural or fabricated hazards and state that they have lost faith and hope in them.

Discrimination – People with disabilities often feel discriminated but are not familiar with any laws that prohibit discrimination. They feel often that they are discriminated on all bases: disability, age, gender, ethnic belonging, and religion.

COVID-19 – Although the newly established situation imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic has influenced all people, including people with disabilities, it should be noted that this group was affected not so much from a financial aspect, but rather from a social and medical point of view. They have used the various forms of assistance that the government offered to overcome the negative consequences of the pandemic.

Governance – In a general sense, people with disabilities do not trust the institutions, although there are exceptions – some of them have trust in the armed forces, followed by the police and the regional government. They expect from the government to prioritise investments in healthcare first, then the economy, and finally, reduce unemployment. Speaking from their own experience, people with disabilities stated that the most important sectors in the country should be healthcare and social services, followed by peace and stability, and law and order. As a vulnerable group, people with disabilities have noticed that corruption can influence one's life and feel that the highest degree of corruption is attempting to get a job in the public sector. Apart from having to have certain social connections in order to get a job, individuals with disabilities have stated that they had had to pay money to the police, courts, and hospitals for services that should have been free. Out of all free services, individuals with disabilities have only used medical treatments, social security benefits, and education in the last 12 months. They felt most satisfied with the medical treatments they received and least satisfied with the lack of textbooks and supplies, poor teaching, the long waiting times followed by lack of available drugs, and having to pay for services that should be free.

The description of the general living conditions of people with disabilities showed that 6 SDGs are indicative for this group.



LINK WITH SDGs:

1. No poverty
2. Good health & well-being
3. Quality education
4. Decent work & economic growth
5. Reduced inequality
6. Peace, justice, and strong Institutions

III. LNOB – The elderly

Sections:

- Demographics of the group – The elderly who live alone mainly live in families without kids. The average age is 71, meaning that they constitute the age group of 65+. Most of the elderly have a total monthly of 9.000-12.000 denars, a sum 40% lower than the minimum wage guaranteed in the country). 17% of old people who live alone have an income equal to or higher than the minimum wage. Due to their low incomes and limited opportunities for earning money, these families are forced to live in areas where conditions are far from acceptable and in old houses, 25% of which are improvised. Old people who live alone are almost equally distributed in both genders and live in rural areas. If we compare the situation of the elderly with the other two vulnerable groups, we can see that the elderly who live alone have their own homes, have better houses, and higher monthly incomes (meaning they have higher financial safety). However, the negative aspect is that old people are unable to execute some specific home obligations (as cooking, cleaning, gardening etc) and maintain their homes, which significantly worsens their living conditions. The elderly live in rural areas where they don't have toilets inside their homes, which is yet another cause of concern.

Employment – all respondents are at an age when they cannot actively be engaged at work, are retired, or receive some type of financial compensation for their previous work experience (pension).

Life standards & economic safety – as mentioned above, the elderly live in rural areas where the infrastructure is poor and the living conditions are unfavourable. More than 70% of old people who live alone live in old houses that are in unacceptable conditions, and almost 30% of old people who live alone live in dilapidated places or improvised homes. If we compare this result with the other two groups, the elderly live in bigger homes and perhaps even moderately better than single parents, but their homes are worse than those of people with disabilities. Regarding the income and economic safety, this group is in the best position because they have stable incomes and have no additional renting costs. However, the areas in which they live, as well as the infrastructure are of poorer quality than the other two groups. They have no computers and no Internet access, though they would certainly want access to them. On average, these families need at least €350 a month to cover basic living expenses. The largest expenditures these families face each month are food and medicine. Compared to the single-parent group and even people with disabilities, the elderly have much higher purchase power and enjoy a more favorable economic situation than single parents. In the Municipality of Veles, the elderly who live alone live mainly in rural areas around the city, so they use public transport.

Health – The health condition of the old people who live alone is very poor or fair. Surprisingly, the elderly have much more spirit and energy than single parents. They have medical insurance. Mobility, dexterity, and stamina are the biggest health issues that old people face, but their mental health is significantly better than that of the other two groups. Having struggled with their individual health issues for 12 or more months, the elderly are unable to carry out their daily activities, and half of them do not receive regular checks nor have gone through a formal disabilities assessment.

Pension (social & other help and financial support) – as previously stated, old people who live alone have financial assistance from the institutions. On average, the value of the financial support is €300 e per month. A low percentage of old people who live alone have loans to repay. From those who repay such loans, on average, 80% see it as a heavy burden/struggle.

Self-employment – not applicable for this group in the Municipality of Veles

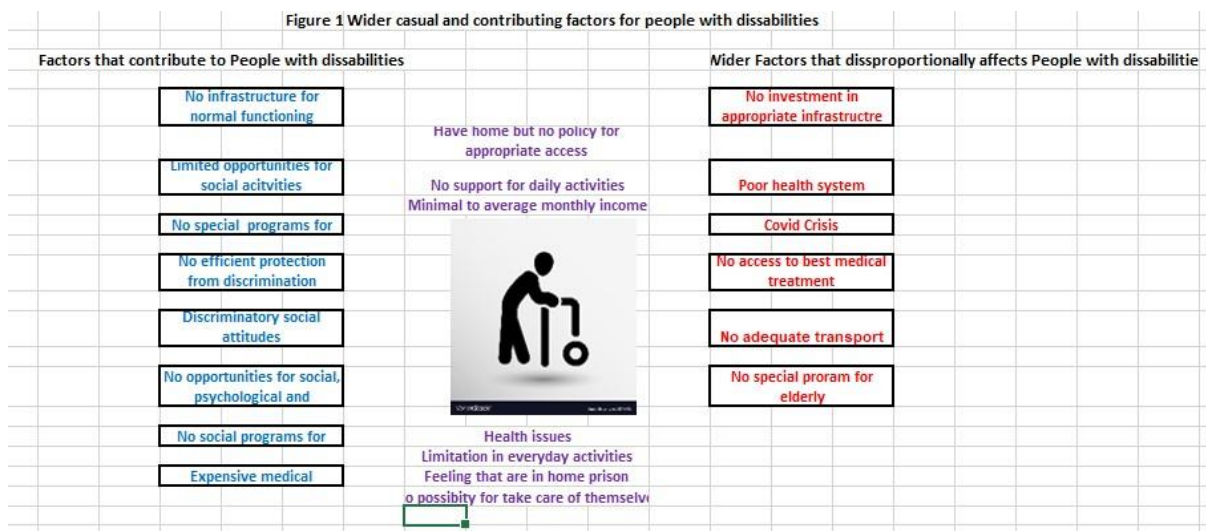
Natural diseases – old people who live alone are most concerned about: floods, epidemics/pandemics, earthquakes, freeze-ups, droughts, etc. They are not as concerned about: West-Nile fever, unexploded land mines, terrorism, gasoline explosions, and hazardous materials. Their homes are not prepared for natural or fabricated hazards. Similar to the other two groups, they feel that the institutions are not obligated to reduce the risk of exposure to natural or fabricated hazards and state that they have lost faith and hope in them.

Discrimination – Old people who live alone don't feel discriminated often and are not familiar with the law that prohibits discrimination. Still these who felt discrimination 23% of all respondents stated that they feel that are discriminated on the basis of age.

COVID-19 – Although the newly established situation imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic has influenced all people, including the elderly, it should be noted that this group was affected not so much from a financial aspect, but rather from a social and medical point of view. They have used the various forms of assistance that the government offered to overcome the negative consequences of the pandemic. They also have significantly higher amounts of savings compared to the other two vulnerable groups, especially single parents.

Governance – In a general sense, the elderly place their trust in the armed forces, followed by the police and foreign investors. They expect the government to prioritise and invest in healthcare first, then the economy, and finally, reduce the levels of crime. Similar to the group of people with disabilities, the elderly also stated that the most important sectors in the country should be healthcare and social services, peace and stability, and law and order. As a vulnerable group, the elderly have noticed that corruption can influence one's life and feel that the highest degree of corruption is attempting to get a job in the public sector. Apart from having to have certain social connections in order to get a job, at least 35% of the elderly had to pay the court or the public administration for services that should have been free. Out of all free services, old people have only used medical treatments in the last 12 months. They felt most satisfied with the medical treatments they received.

The description of the general living conditions of old people who live alone showed that 3 SDGs are indicative for this group. Still, as a main SDG for this group remains good health & well-being



LINK WITH SDGs:

1. Good health & well-being

2. Reduced inequality
3. Peace, justice, and strong Institutions

Qualitative research - analysis

Employment – employment possibilities for vulnerable groups, groups of people who lack social connections, and people who are not at their peak performance in North Macedonia are limited. In all of the discussions, the participants contrasted the previous, socialistic system with the one today and pointed out their disappointment with the way the current system is deteriorating. These vulnerable groups feel that they are not protected by the system and that the system does not create equal opportunities for all citizens. One of the respondents, a representative of the group of people with disabilities, stated that regardless of the fact that he is visually impaired, he managed to have a successful career as a professor – however, though, such an occurrence nowadays is impossible due to the fact that Veles does not have any schools for the visually impaired individuals, who are then unable to build a career due to their lack of education.

Single parents stated that they do not have access to organisations that take into consideration their specific life condition (such as obligations with children, childcare, health conditions, etc.) where they can ask for help and support when seeking employment.

If all vulnerable groups are to escape the circle of poverty, unemployment as a leading factor causing poverty in the first place must be resolved by the respective institutions.

Life standards & economic safety – The life of all vulnerable groups is extremely challenging. Obstacles for normal functioning appear on every step of the way. The first major and dominant factor is the absence of quality infrastructure for people with disabilities in the Municipality of Veles. This imposes a risk for people for disabilities, as they cannot be independent in their physical movement due to the lack of traffic lights with audio signals, the traffic signs being placed directly on sidewalks thus limiting movement with wheelchairs, and the absence of access ramps and elevators even in buildings such as schools. Another problem that negatively affects the lives of vulnerable groups is the level of financial security they enjoy, seeing as the financial compensation they receive is far below the average salary in the country. Single parents are also not recognised as a vulnerable group that needs financial support, and childcare support does not cover all monthly expenses for school supplies or expenses for food, clothes, and any other additional activities (sports or other types of training). Retired individuals are the only ones who receive a stable monthly income (pension), though the amount is hardly enough to cover expenses for food and medicine. Consequently, these low incomes lead to a poor quality of life, as these groups cannot afford to travel or attend any leisure pursuits. On a related note, the elderly face the problem of not having any assistance for any of their daily activities.

Childcare & education – the educational system is public and free of costs. However, the main predicament is that the Municipality of Veles is undersupplied with schools for children with disabilities and lacks financial resources to assist children with special needs. Although the educational system is officially inclusive, still it does not provide support for families of children with disabilities and single-parent families (which only recently secured free kindergarten for their children). However, any additional activities such as attending language courses, dancing or sports are not supported, indicating that children from vulnerable groups are faced with additional limitations due to their origin. Respondents compared the previous with the current educational system and concluded that the previous system incorporated numerous free-of-charge school activities for children, allowing

them to discover and develop their talents. In the present circumstances, parents need to pay money for these activities as they are currently not integrated within the educational system.

The Municipality of Veles was recognised as a fine example of a city that supports and invests in quality infrastructure for sport activities on Lake Veles, particularly activities for people with disabilities. Nevertheless, childcare is systematically disorganised - this further complicates the conditions of single parents, who cannot secure any protection for their children.

Health –

Vulnerable groups are prone to health issues due to the stress they are exposed to. This predicament can be especially observed among the elderly who live alone in rural areas that are remote from hospitals and pharmacies. Simultaneously, the elderly are limited in movement and are subject to high risk. This issue has been detected by the representatives of the Municipality of Veles and implemented into their social plan; however, the strategy involves a significant risk of failure due to lack of finances.

Pension (social & other help, and financial support) –

As expected, dissatisfaction with the amount of financial support was observed among the vulnerable groups. Single parents hardly receive any support, with the exception of childcare support. In order to help them, individuals from vulnerable groups should be given opportunities to earn money instead of being given financial help.

Self-employment – Respondents were not familiar with the program that stimulated self-employment of vulnerable groups. They had heard about one program developed by the EANM, but stated that it was not fit to the specific needs and conditions of the vulnerable groups they belong in.

Discrimination – Although the circumstances regarding discrimination have vastly improved and respondents now feel that they can speak freely about their problems without feeling ashamed, discrimination can still be sensed in some areas. The representatives of vulnerable groups stated that they have their own battles and that they aspire to be equal, to be respected as valuable citizens, and not to be pitied.

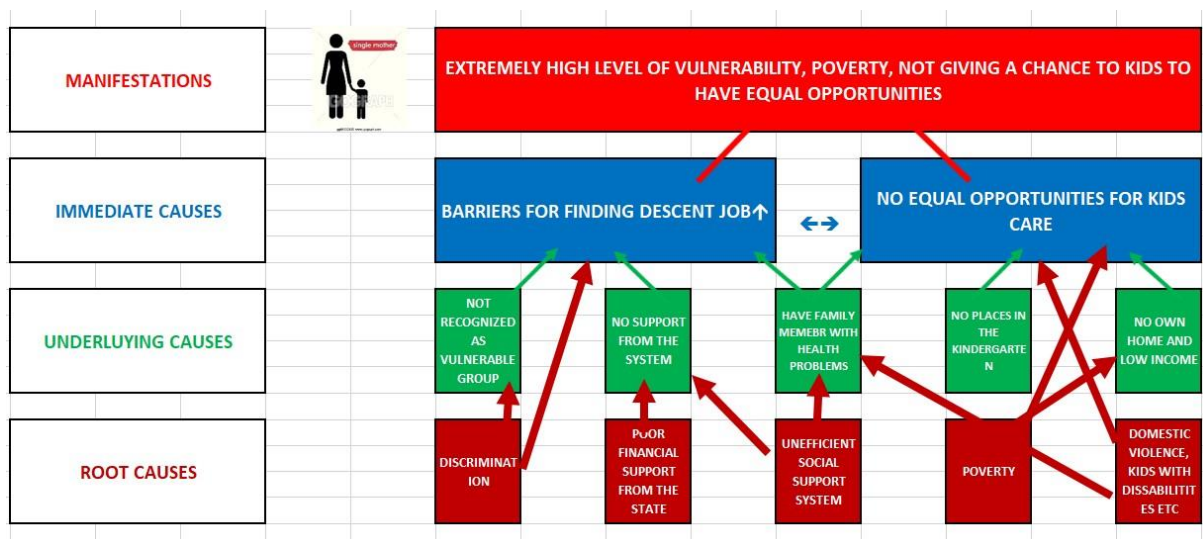
COVID-19 – The pandemic additionally exacerbated the situation because of the additional restrictive measures. The main issues for vulnerable groups were not being able to move freely, being confined to their homes without any social interaction, being under immense mental pressure and fear of illness, and feeling uncertain. . The main problem for single-parent families was the concept of online education – additional finances for technological devices, Internet, and no alternative for the single parent to take care of their children at home.

Governance – The current system in the country is not supportive. Cooperation with the Municipality of Veles is satisfactory, but not all NGOs have the same perception. Some are fairly satisfied, while others think that the Municipality representatives have no deep understanding of the specific conditions and needs of all vulnerable groups. Vulnerable groups are not knowledgeable about the activities of the Municipality and are not familiar with their rights and the correct way to use them.

To summarize: Many problems were identified during the qualitative research. The main finding is that all vulnerable groups feel they are neglected and not prioritised by the government. Prejudice, discrimination, and lack of social support are a few factors that are gradually, but positively changing.

In order to prioritise all vulnerable groups, the following actions should be taken into consideration:

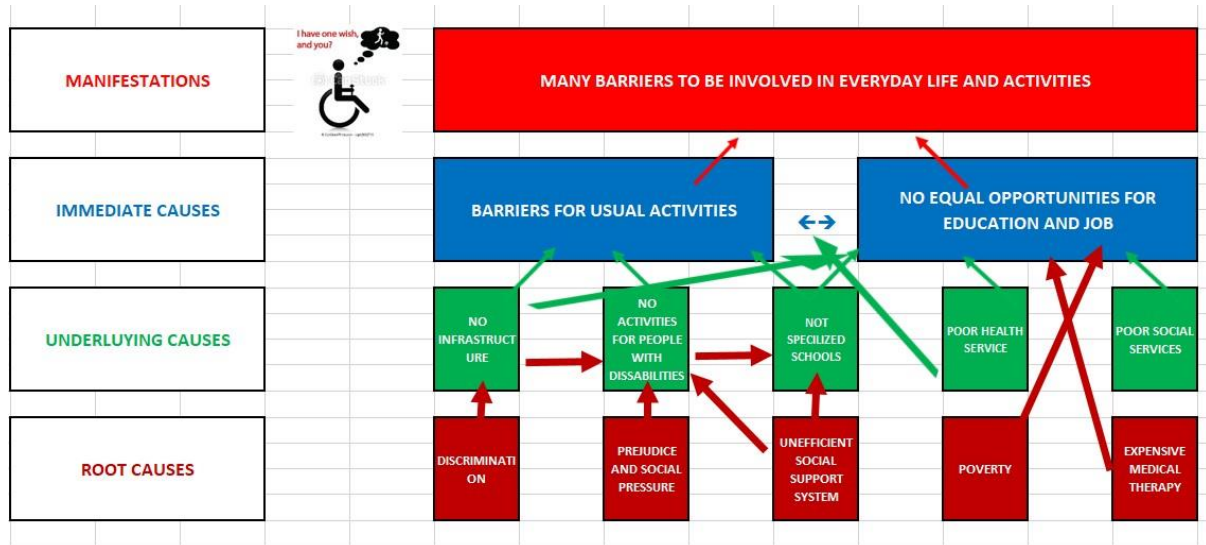
- ☐ Education – inclusive education and educational materials to be available to all people with disabilities
- ☐ Financial support
 - Social support – organising social activities (clubs for social activities for ex chess, playing cards, tombola etc; then sport facilities to be available for all people especially for these with some type of disabilities etc)
 - Psychological support – currently, there is a lack of psychological support for dealing with daily challenges
 - Assistants – paid by the municipalities or the government
 - Help and support needed in pandemic – shortage of financial support



The immediate cause for single parent’s families is socioeconomic status due to parents’ unemployment, lack of stable family income what creates no equal opportunities for their kids. Kids from these families are discriminated because have no access to high quality education

The underlying causes include lack of support in kids care what immediate provoke unemployment. Single parents are mainly in age when are in the middle of older parents and kids and they have to take care of both without any support from the system.

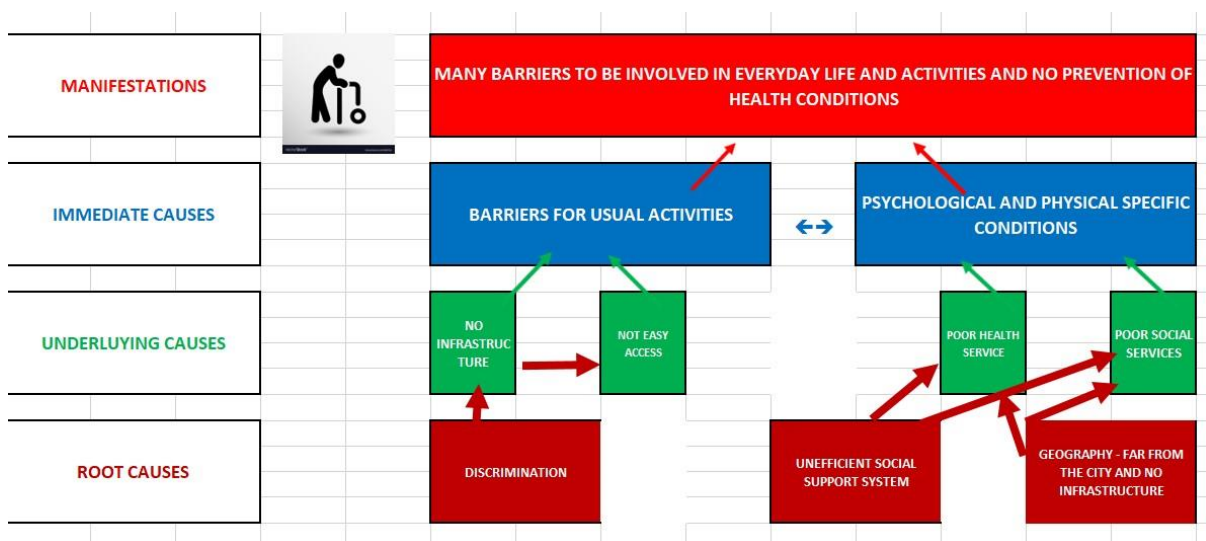
The root causes are linked to lack of policy measures, absence of efficient support system. Low are of employment leads to poverty and what is additional pressure is that big number of single parent’s families are families with kids with special needs or parent is victim of domestic violence.



The immediate cause for people with disabilities' situation are barriers in the society what limited them in inclusion in everyday life. All these barriers make impossible for these people to find descent job, to improve skills and talents because no access to education, trainings, courses etc

The underlying causes include lack of caregiving services, lack of accessible architectural solutions which would improve accessibility to different activities which are necessary for quality life. Poor health system and expensive medical treatments make situation even worse because all these costs are not covered by the State.

The root causes are linked to lack of policy measures specifically directed to these categories of people, discrimination, prejudices and inefficient system.



The immediate cause for elderly's situation are all barriers for usual activities and specific psychological and physical conditions as illness, disabilities. Elderly have real problems with mobility and in the same time they face infrastructural barriers.

The underlying causes include lack of caregiving services and fair access to advanced health services or treatments. Social services are limited too so elderly often feel as prisoners in own home.

The root causes are linked to lack of policy measures and infrastructure. Especially difficult situation is with elderly who live in rural areas, far from city where all important institutions and objects are settled.

CONCLUSIONS AFTER THE ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS

The strongest correlation between the results is a low level of education (uncompleted primary school) followed by an advanced age of learning in certain groups, all of which contribute to limited opportunities to enter the labour market, which in turn affects poor living conditions, entry into the poverty cycle, and social exclusion. The inability of children from these families to attend preschool education further diminishes their chances of advancing in education.

Additionally, the low monthly income of 9000-12000 denars in families, which is less than the minimum guaranteed monthly salary, indicates that these people earn money in the field of grey economy or through the finance under the Social Protection Law, the Pension and Disability Insurance Law, or labour laws. Respondents' inactivity increases their risk of poverty and makes them reliant on the resources provided by social protection and social security systems.

The need for development of social and health services is evident, particularly those delivered in the home and community, which should improve the respondents' quality of life. Single-parent measures, such as financial assistance to supplement the household budget and childcare, as well as access to preschools and early childhood development centres, should be considered immediately to create the conditions for parents to enter the labour market.

Additionally, in the area of housing for people who live in substandard conditions, efforts to provide decent housing should be made. As a special target group, domestic violence victims should be provided with adequate conditions for safe housing, as well as additional measures for activation and entry into the labour market, which will result in economic independence for the victims.

In terms of employment, measures are required to increase individual activation through the provision of training, retraining, and additional training tailored to the municipality's and the region's labour market needs. It is necessary to strengthen the activation measures for beneficiaries of the Guaranteed Minimum Assistance, who are required by the Social Protection Law to seek and accept work, necessitating increased collaboration between CSW Veles and EC-Veles in activating these beneficiaries.

It is necessary to work on increasing awareness among the local population and target groups of the existence of legal protection against direct and indirect discrimination, as well as familiarity with their respective rights and protection mechanisms.

According to administrative data obtained from the MLSP, the following situation exists in the Municipality of Veles in the second quarter of 2021:

The title of the rights	Number of users
Minimum assistance guaranteed	1,746
GMP - Allowance for children	958
Financial assistance for a newborn on one-time basis	26
Assistance in cash and in-kind on a one-time basis	75
New foster family	10
Protection of the health	385

Supplementary educational material	937
Educational subvention for students	5
Compensation in cash for assistance and care provided by another person	2,227
Compensation in cash for part-time work	7
Assistance with the cost of social housing	2
Disability	552
Unique adornment	233
Allowance for a third child by the parents	875
Allowance for a fourth child by the parents	49
Pensions social	317
Incapacity civil	4
TOTAL	8,408

INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

According to the data gathered in the table above, there are 552 people in the municipality of Veles who claim their right to social protection on the basis of disability (physical, intellectual, or sensory disability) and 233 children with disabilities who claim their right to special allowance. According to the results of the interviews, 1/3 of disabled people are 65 years or older, placing them in the category of adults, which increases the risks and needs of this target group.

In terms of **education**, negative trends have been observed, e.g., up to 48% of people with disabilities have an incomplete primary education, and 100% of children do not attend kindergartens or early childhood development centres. This necessitates significant investment in establishing **inclusive preschool, primary, and secondary education**, providing didactic and learning materials, investing in teaching and teaching staff, and establishing conditions for accessibility of education for children / persons with disabilities.

In terms of **employment**, it can be concluded that only 10% of people with disabilities worked in the last year. When asked for reasons why they are inactive and if they are looking for work, people with disabilities typically stated their health status or age. 30% of respondents who are disabled are registered with the ESA, but 80% stated that they have not looked for work in the last four weeks.

In the area of **vocational training and retraining**, only 2% of people with disabilities reported having attended some type of training or retraining, confirming the conclusion that people with disabilities are passive in their job search and reliant on funds provided by social protection and social security systems. Additionally, the supply of jobs for people with disabilities is extremely limited; it is common

for this group to believe that they should work exclusively in the protected labour market - protection companies - because open-market opportunities are scarce or non-existent.

One of the most significant challenges facing people with disabilities is an **environment that is not adapted to their specific needs, i.e. accessibility**, which includes **not only physical accessibility, but also access to information, institutions, goods, and services**. While the majority of children / persons with disabilities receive financial benefits from social and child protection, there is an **obvious lack of social and health services in the local community and at home** that are tailored to the beneficiaries' unique needs.

Two-thirds of respondents who are disabled are homeowners. The majority of residents live in older homes that are in reasonably good conditions. One of the primary concerns of parents of disabled children / adults is what will happen to disabled people after they leave, owing to the municipality of Veles's limited activities and measures promoting independent living with support. Independent living refers to the provision of all necessary resources to enable individuals with disabilities to exercise their choice and control over their lives, as well as to make life decisions.

Personal autonomy and decision-making are necessary components of independent living, which include access to transportation, information, communication, and personal assistance, as well as home care and assistance, housing, daily routines, habits, decent employment, personal relationships, clothing, nutrition, hygiene, and health care.

Problem identification	SDG ¹	High effect	Medium effect	Low effect	Key institutions
Low income	SDG – No poverty				
	Recommendation 1	Increasing the coverage of disabled individuals who use their social protection rights	Assistance to biological families caring for children or disabled individuals	Provision of food and hygiene products to low-income families	MLSP in collaboration with the Municipality of Veles, the Veles Red Cross, and the private sector
	Recommendation 2...	Establishment of a system for determining financial rights for disabled individuals based on their needs and remaining functional capacity	Establishment of Support Centers for People with Disabilities to Live Independently	Assistance with the establishment of specialised foster families	MLSP, Municipality of Veles, SWC Veles, and organisations of civil society (NGOs)
Discrimination	SDG Reduced Inequality				
	Recommendation 1	Training in self-advocacy, anti-discrimination for people with disabilities, and human, sexual, and reproductive rights	Campaigns of public awareness at the local level	Appointment of a disabled person to work with the Veles municipality	Municipality of Veles, NGO for disabled people
	Recommendation 2...	Evaluation of the services and goods utilised by people with disabilities, as well as the difficulties they encounter while utilising them	Personal assistance, as well as help and care at home, managed by associations of people with disabilities.	A local action plan to reduce social exclusion to be developed.	Persons with Disabilities Associations, Veles Municipality

¹ Here please specify which SDG is priority. Include 3 to 5 priority SDGs which point out to the respective policy areas where recommendations are provided and as per LNOB group.

No access to (high quality) education **SDG Quality Education**

Recommendation 1	Providing educational assistants and professional support from the Resource Center	Scholarships for disabled children enrolled in regular classes	Creating inclusive teams in all elementary and secondary schools... collaboration with the community to advance equality, the Child Rights Convention, and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	Veles Municipality and MES, CSOs, and UN
Recommendation 2...	Assuring the availability and accessibility of schools (both outside and inside buildings) and educational materials, as well as the provision of assistive technology	Training of educators and professionals in the field of inclusive education.	In the medium term, support centres should be established in primary and secondary schools.	Veles Municipality, MES, and accredited training providers

No employment **SDG Decent work and economic growth**

Recommendation 1	Establishment of a Vocational Rehabilitation and Training Center for Disabled Individuals	Collaboration between the SWC, CV, and the Municipality of Veles on job training, job placement, and retention.	Providing employment opportunities within the municipality and its public enterprises	Municipality of Veles, non-governmental organisation (NGO), multi-sectoral social enterprise (MLSP), or private sector
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	Recommendation 2...	Increasing employment opportunities in private businesses by promoting the provisions of the Law on the Employment of Persons with Disabilities	Promotion of the abilities of people with disabilities and social entrepreneurship Granting start-up grants to new businesses	The Municipality's use of the statutory provision for reserved public procurement in support of social enterprises	Municipality of Veles, ESA, and non-governmental organisation
Low quality of life	SDG Good health and wellbeing				
	Recommendation 1	Adaptation of the homes of disabled people who live in substandard conditions	Establishment of an early intervention centre and acquisition of health rehabilitation equipment	Training of health care personnel on the municipality of Veles's territory in order to work with people with disabilities	Veles Municipality, Union of Special Educators
	Recommendation 2...	Providing free health care to people over the age of 18 with disabilities...	Assuring health care facility accessibility	Establishing favourable conditions for participation in cultural and sporting activities on the municipal territory of Veles	Veles Municipality, Ministry of Health, and sports and cultural associations

SINGLE PARENT FAMILIES

According to the Social Protection Law, a single parent is a parent who executes parental rights and responsibilities for the child solely because the other parent is unknown, deceased, missing, or temporarily or permanently unable to execute parental rights and responsibilities for the child. A single-parent family is defined as a family with a single parent who is responsible for their children's development and upbringing. All roles and responsibilities are primarily carried out by one of the parents in these families.

According to the data collected for the municipality of Veles, two-thirds of respondents from single-parent families are between the ages of 25 and 44. What's alarming is that 47% of single-parent families have not completed primary education, limiting their ability to enter the labour market and thus increasing their risk of poverty. Additionally concerning is the fact that 100% of children in single-parent families do not attend kindergarten or early childhood development centres due to financial constraints, a lack of appropriate clothing, and other factors.

In terms of employment, based on respondents' responses, only 10% of single parents reported working in the last 12 months. The reason for their inactivity and the question of whether they are looking for work is due to the single parents' health condition or their obligation to care for their children. While 44% of respondents who are single parents are registered with ESA, 80% of them stated that they have not looked for work in the last four weeks.

In regard to vocational training, 100% of single-parent families did not participate in programmes aimed at improving work skills. The majority of respondents indicated that their family's monthly income ranged between 9000 and 12000 denars.

Single parents are the most vulnerable to poor health, with nearly half of them lacking health insurance. They face the greatest risks to their mobility, mental health, and endurance. There are no special financial rights for single parents under social protection, except for the rights to child and educational allowance under the Child Protection Law, and the services they require are underdeveloped.

Additionally, a significant disadvantage is the municipality of Veles's lack of accurate data on the number of single parents.

All of these findings indicate that single-parent families in the municipality of Veles face numerous challenges, including financial difficulties, difficulties with socialisation, a lack of time, and chronic fatigue, which contributes to health problems, a lack of support from the social protection system, and frequently, stigma from society.

Problem identification	SDG ²	High effect	Medium effect	Low effect	Key institutions
Low income	SDG – No poverty				
	Recommendation 1	Introduction of financial rights from social security for single parents	Creating a fund to assist single-parent families	Provision of food and hygiene items to low-income single-parent families	MLSP in collaboration with the Municipality of Veles, the Veles Red Cross, and the private sector
	Recommendation 2...	Establishment of training services for occupations that are deficient on the labor market in the municipality of Veles	Subsidizing kindergarten and early childhood development centers for children from single-parent families who earn less than the country's average net salary	Implementation of measures to subsidize electricity and combat energy poverty	MLSP, Veles Municipality, and CSW Veles
Discrimination	SDG Reduced Inequality Recommendation 1	Self-advocacy trainings, human rights protection trainings	Incorporation of a single-parent family registry in the municipality of Veles	Support to civil society organizations working to advance the rights of single-parent families	Municipality, of Veles, NGOs

² Here please specify which SDG is priority. Include 3 to 5 priority SDGs which point out to the respective policy areas where recommendations are provided and as per LNOB group.

				and to protect them from discrimination	
	Recommendation 2...	Establishment of a free legal aid and protection from gender-based violence office	Increasing the number of professionals in the CSW and Veles municipality to assist single parents	Promotion of gender-based violence prevention measures...	Municipality of Veles, CSW Veles, NGO
No access to (high quality) education	SDG Quality Education				
	Recommendation 1	Creating conditions for single parents to complete their education in primary and secondary schools - through validation and instruction on education completion	Providing scholarships for low-income single-parent families' children	Support for the establishment of Early Childhood Development Centers and Job Training and Support Centers	Veles Municipality, MoES, and COV, as well as CSOs and UNDP
	Recommendation 2...	Contributing to the cost of vocational training for single parents - via the non-formal education system	Assistance with the purchase of school supplies and information technology equipment for children from low-	In the medium term, increasing kindergarten capacity and enrollment of children in preschool education	Veles Municipality, MOES, MLSP, and ESA, as well as accredited training providers

income single-parent households.

No employment

SDG Decent work and economic growth

Recommendation 1

Single parent employment in the care economy (personal assistance, help and care at home, supported living)

Subsidizing the private sector's hiring of single parents and providing flexible work conditions

Providing employment opportunities within the municipality and its public enterprises

Municipality of Veles, non-governmental organisation (NGO), multi-sectoral social enterprise (MLSP), or private sector

Recommendation 2...

Grants for self-employment and the development of social enterprises

Career counsellors and mentoring support are now available within ESA.

Psychological support for long-term unemployed individuals, soft skill training, and motivation to return to work

Municipality of Veles, EC Veles, civil society organizations

Low quality of life

SDG Good health and wellbeing

Recommendation 1

Providing single-parent families with affordable housing or rehabilitating existing units

Introduction of tourism vouchers for low-income single-parent families

Providing low-interest loans for the purchase and adaptation of housing

Veles Municipality, Habitat, and private sector

Recommendation 2...	Providing free health care to low-income single-parent families	Advice on maintaining a healthy lifestyle and provision of free physical activity classes	Establishing favorable conditions for participation in cultural and sporting activities on the municipal territory of Veles	Veles Municipality, Ministry of Health, and sports and cultural associations
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Elderly people

The population of the Republic of North Macedonia is ageing, meaning that not only is the number of the elderly growing, but so is their share of the total population. The Republic of North Macedonia recently exceeded the limit of 12% of the elderly population and joined the group of countries demographically classified as having an elderly population. This problem is exacerbated further by the external and internal migration of the young population, the decline in the number of traditional families and households with multiple generations, and the increasing need for services and support in the environment in which the elderly live, as well as certain facilities that provide residential specialised health and social services. An additional risk factor is the death of a spouse or when care and assistance are provided by an adult or frail family member.

According to the data collected on the age of members of the age group in the municipality of Veles, the average age is 71 years. 56 percent of them have not completed primary education. 2/3 of adult respondents are homeowners, and 34% of adult respondents received a pension in the last 12 months in terms of social security and monthly income. There is a dearth of social and health services for the elderly in Veles, as well as a shortage of housing facilities - homes for the elderly.

According to data obtained from the Republic of Macedonia's Pension and Disability Insurance Fund, there are a total of 11,331 pension beneficiaries on the municipality of Veles, including 6,842 elderly pension beneficiaries, 2,076 disabled pension beneficiaries, and 2,413 family pension beneficiaries. According to JUM SWC Veles' records, 82 elderly people are beneficiaries of the elderly's right to social security. Additionally, according to JUM SWC Veles data, 2,272 people receive compensation for assistance and care provided by another person.

Problem identification	SDG ³	High effect	Medium effect	Low effect	Key institutions
Low income	SDG – No poverty				
	Recommendation 1	Financial assistance to the elderly who have not exercised their pension rights under the Pension and Disability Insurance Law	By establishing home help and care teams, we can assist the elderly who live alone, particularly in remote rural areas.	Providing food packages and hygiene materials	MLSP in collaboration with the Municipality of Veles, the Veles Red Cross, and the private sector
	Recommendation 2...	Subsidizing the cost of housing in institutions for the elderly's protection	Establishment of day care centers	Implementation of measures to subsidise electricity and combat energy poverty	MLSP, Veles Municipality, and CSW Veles
Discrimination	SDG Reduced Inequality				
	Recommendation 1	Self-advocacy trainings, human rights protection trainings	Supporting the Red Cross's volunteer activities for the protection of the elderly	Support to civil society organisations in promoting the concept of active ageing	Municipality of Veles, NGO
	Recommendation 2...	Incorporation of a free legal aid office	Increased professional staff in the CSW and the	Promotion of measures aimed at	Municipality of Veles, CSW Veles, NGO

³ Here please specify which SDG is priority. Include 3 to 5 priority SDGs which point out to the respective policy areas where recommendations are provided and as per LNOB group.

			municipality of Veles to assist the elderly	preventing domestic violence...		
No access to (high quality) education	SDG Quality Education	Recommendation 1	Establishment of a centre for active ageing and lifelong learning	Providing lectures on a variety of topics of interest to seniors	Sustaining the pensioners' associations' activities	Municipality of Veles and NGOs
		Recommendation 2...	Providing funding for training in elderly-friendly occupations	Contribute to the establishment of senior citizen clubs	Providing reading areas and access to free books (audio books)and daily newspapers	Municipality of Veles and accredited training providers
No employment	SDG Decent work and economic growth	Recommendation 1	Awarding grants for starting your own business and developing rural tourism	Support for private producers of food, milk, and dairy products	Providing venues for the free exchange of goods and services	Municipality of Veles, NGO, MLSP or social enterprise or private sector
Low quality of life	SDG Good health and wellbeing	Recommendation 1	Providing social housing or rehabilitating existing units	Introducing tourism vouchers for low-income elderly, providing of spa	Organizing transportation for visits to locations	Veles Municipality, Habitat, and private sector

		vouchers, and health tourism	outside the municipality	Veles
Recommendation 2...	Establishment of a residential institution for the care and housing of the elderly	Advice on maintaining a healthy lifestyle and provision of free physical activity classes	Providing opportunities for participation in cultural and sporting activities on the municipal territory of Veles. Organizing competitions in a variety of sports disciplines	Veles Municipality and sports and cultural organizations
Recommendation 3...	Providing access to social housing to single parents (single parents are usually women who do not have property or home); Providing access to public transport to people with disabilities			Veles Municipality, Habitat, and private sector
Recommendation 4...	Providing inclusive public spaces for people with disabilities and save spaces for women, children, elderly, people with disabilities (availability, accessibility, lightening etc.);			Municipality of Veles
Recommendation 5...	Developing inclusive policies for disaster risk management			Municipality of Veles

