CIVIL SOCIETY
IN RURAL AND REMOTE AREAS
IN ALBANIA

NEEDS, CHALLENGES, AND
AN ACTION PLATFORM

Institute for Democracy and Mediation

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

BiH   Bosnia Herzegovina

CS   Civil Society

CSO   Civil Society Organizations

CSORA   Civil Society Organizations of Rural Areas

EU   European Union

FF   Farmers' Federation

GDP   Gross Domestic Product

IFA   Independent Farmers Association

IPARD   Instrument of Pre-Accession Aid for Rural Development

KASh   Albanian Agribusiness Council

LAGS   Local Action Groups

NGO   Non-Governmental Organization

NPO   Non-Profit Organization

OXFAM   Oxford Committee for Famine Relief

RASP   Rural Association Support Program

RCS   Rural Civil Society

SI   Sustainability Index of Civil Society

SIDA   Swedish International Development Agency

TACSO   Technical Assistance for Civil Society Organizations

UNDP   United Nations Development Program

USAID   United States Agency for International Development

1.   INTRODUCTION

Regardless of the progress in the past two decades, the Albanian civil society (CS) is coping with difficulties regarding the increase of its impact on governance, its outreach to citizens, and ensuring a sustainable impact of its activities. The 2010 Civil Society Index (CSI) for Albania and other assessment reports for the third sector identify empirical evidence on disparity of the level of development and role of the urban civil society and rural and remote civil society. Lack of active actors of CS in rural and remote areas deprives the community in these areas of benefits of participatory and citizen-oriented governance and of advantages of the integration process. Concretely speaking, the civil society is one of the main actors for the future of the Local Action Groups (LAGs – a tripartite partnership among civil society, local governance and private sector) as the basic structure through which the EU assistance on rural development in Albania (IPARD Component) will be streamlined.

The Project "Empowering Civil Society in Rural and Remote Areas to Promote Good Governance and Development" aims to promote civil society in rural and remote areas and to contribute to good governance by building capacities of and empowering the CS in rural and remote areas and by facilitating the close collaboration and partnership among civil sector, local and regional authorities, and other local partners. This initiative strives to revitalize civil society in rural / remote areas and to promote good governance and civic engagement in Albania's most disadvantaged and peripheral regions. The overall purpose of this project is the empowerment of Civil Society in remote and rural areas of four regions (Alb. Qark) with the ultimate purpose of contributing to the development of good governance, civic engagement and adjustment to the challenges of EU integration.

The proposed initiative is designed to deliver concrete results over an 18-month period (July 2011 – December 2012) of implementation and address the principal concern through the achievement of two specific objectives:

1. Building sustained capacities for rural civil society (RCS) as an

indispensable stakeholder to advance rural communities' priorities through concrete actions that rely on and promote adherence to key democratic principles of participatory, accountable and citizen-oriented governance.

2. Build sensitivity and advocate with national/local stakeholders on strengthening RCS, developing alternatives to boost the impact of third sector in rural areas and empowering RCS and local stakeholders to engage in networking and tri-partite partnerships as an efficient instrument addressing development disparities and EU rural development

This assessment report completes the first phase of the project – study on assessment of capacities of the rural civil society in Albania. Through a combination of qualitative and quantitative techniques, this assessment report provides a historic view of the rural CS development in Albania and the region and analyzes and presents the current situation of the rural civil society organizations in Albania based on the qualitative and quantitative data collected from comprehensive interviews, questionnaires, and group discussions to evaluate the preliminary findings.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW ON CIVIL SOCIETY

2.1. Development of Civil Society Sector in Albania

The civil society in Albania is young and the studies on its progress focus mainly in post-communist developments of the sector. One reason to this is that prior to the collapse of the communist regime in 1990 there were no CSOs operating in Albania and significant developments of the third sector occurred during the post-communist period.[1] This viewpoint is true to a certain extent. Scholars of the Albanian Renaissance period mention individual and sporadic initiatives of the civil society supported by the Diaspora.[2]

During the fall of communism in Eastern Europe, the establishment of the civil society was perceived as the creation of a main actor for the process of transition of former communist countries.[3] Within Albania, the protests and strikes of early 1990s headed by groups of students and syndicates created the grounds for the future political and civic development of the country.[4] The collapse of communism and guarantee of the right to create associations and political parties facilitated the development of the third sector. The first Albanian CSOs were established as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and engaged primarily in human rights activities. They were the first organizations that played an active watchdog role to government's activities. Difficulties confronting the CSOs in the first years after their creation (1991-1997) included poor organizational development, lack of professional expertise and experience, deficient skills for promoting

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1   TACSO, *Albania Needs Assessment Report*., Tirana, January 29, 2010, page 14
2   Institute for Democracy and Mediation, *Index Civil Society for Albania. In Search of Citizens and Impact.* Tirana: 2010, 8. For forms of civil activity during the Albanian Renaissance see, among others, Thëngjilli, Petrika. *Albanian between East and West*. Maluka, Tirana: 2004 and Clayer, Natalie, *The Beginnings of Albanian Nationalism. The Rise of a Nation with Muslim Majority in Europe*. Përpjekja Publishing, Tirana: 2009.
3   Hann, Christine. et.al. *Civil Society: Challenging Western Models*. London: Routledge, 1996
4   Biberaj, Elez. *Albania in Transition: The Rocky Road to Democracy*. Tirana: Ora Publishing, 2001

their activities and a poor communication infrastructure.[5]

The collapse of fraudulent financial schemes in Albania in 1997 and the war in Kosovo in 1999 posed challenges to the internal developments and highlighted the need to assistance from civil society. This impacted the development of CSOs in terms of their number, mission, goal of activities, funds, level of voluntary involvement, advocacy, public image, and methods of governance. An important development in this period is the emergence of research institutions (think-tanks) as a new form of the CSOs undeveloped before.[6] Irrespective of positive developments in the third sector, the USAID Sustainability Index of the Civil Society reveals that during this period (1997-2005) most indicators, such as legal environment, organizational capacities, and distribution of services scored the same or lower in comparison with the previous years.[7]

Two main features characterizing the development of the third sector in Albania after 2005 include the increasing tendency of CS actors to shift to politics and the diminution of funding for CSOs by foreign donors. Decrease of financial support has also led to decrease of size, scope, and activities of Albania's civil society sector. Therefore, all CSOs are facing difficulties arising from diminution of funding and interest of foreign donors, increase of competitiveness of political environment, affiliation of their leaders with political parties, decreased membership in associations and networks and reduced services from the existing associations.[8]

Regardless of this phenomenon, state actors have undertaken continuous efforts to improve the legislation that regulates the activity of the civil society. The Law on Non-Profit Organizations was adopted in 2001 and in October 2007 the State Budget includes a separate line item for the support to CS. In March 2009, the Law on Organization and Functioning of the Agency for the Support of Civil Society was adopted by the Albanian Parliament. Other steps undertaken primarily by international organizations in support of the civil society include the preparation and adoption of the Civil Society Charter in 2009. Irrespective of the positive efforts, the relationship between the government agencies and CSOs remain relatively undeveloped. Moreover, civil society is often considered as a political opponent of the Government.

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5   Institute for Democracy and Mediation, *Index Civil Society for Albania. In Search of Citizens and Impact.* Tirana: 2010, pages 9-11

6   Even though the first *think tank* was established in 1991, 70% of these organizations in Albania were established during 1997-2001. See Euclid and Human Development Promotion Center, *Third Sector Development in Albania. Challenges and opportunities*; Tirana: 2009, page 22.

7   Ibid. pages 26-28

8   Ibid., page 30

In addition, there is also the perception that CSOs exist to serve the interests of private individuals or selective fractions of society rather than the public at large.[9]

2.2.   Strengths, Weaknesses and Challenges

Strengths

- CSOs have improved their lobbying and advocacy capacities for impact on policymaking;
- Albanian CSOs are open to opportunities for networking and exchange of information;
- The pressure on state actors for cooperation with CSOs is sustainable;
- CSOs are better equipped with communication capacities and more aware about their role than government agencies, particularly in terms of their interaction with the donors and beneficiary groups;
- CS has marked positive steps in the promotion of social values (such as religious harmony, interethnic relationship, etc.) not only in country but also across borders;
- Concrete activities with clear goals of the CSOs, such as training for people in need and marginalized groups have been successful in attracting the attention and ensuring citizens' support.

Weaknesses

- Albanian CSOs have weak financial stability with the sector mainly depending on foreign donors. With the diminution of foreign funding, sustainability of civil society and Albanian CSOs activities are jeopardized.
- CSOs suffer from lack of civil participation and citizens' substantial indifferentism in CSOs activities. Many citizens consider membership to CSOs as a means for personal gains and not as an undertaking to the service of social change. The high level of indifferentism and skepticism to civil society activities is noted not only among the public at large but also within social groups, which are well informed on the mission of the civil society.

9   TACSO, Albania Needs Assessment Report, Tirana, January 29, 2010, page 11.

- The civil society has played an important role in the promotion of democracy and good governance, but it has problems in the application of these principles within the CSOs. This negatively affects the activity of and trust in this sector.
- The civil society in Albania is largely identified with CSOs operating in big cities, while organizations that operate in rural and remote areas remain unknown.
- Regardless of positive steps, cooperation among government, civil society, and private sector is weak. Political affiliation among CSOs representatives affects their objectivity and the support from the public.

Challenges

- CSOs must intensify their efforts to engage citizens and main beneficiaries. They must increase their involvement in planning, monitoring, and evaluation of the impact of their activities and ensure that citizens/ beneficiaries are more active. This would improve citizen involvement, would strengthen initiatives on voluntarism, and would contribute to the decrease of citizen apathy towards CSOs.
- CSOs must diversify their focus and scope of activities and generate ideas and strategies for the diversification of financial sources and sustainability.
- Transparency and sustainability remain the main ?challenges for the CSOs, their funders, and for the main actors, such as citizens, stakeholders, and government agencies.
- Lobbying is required for drafting and implementing a long-term strategy on the improvement of relationship between state actors and stakeholders and to increase the influence of the third sector.
- It is necessary to increase cooperation and coordination among donors and CSOs to overcome the current geographic and thematic fragmentation of the third sector.
- It is necessary to intensify efforts for involvement in the development of and support to citizen platforms in rural and remote areas, which constitute the main social-economic concerns for having an active community.

For a more detailed view of the strengths, weaknesses, and challenges se also Institute for Democracy and Mediation, *An Action Agenda for Civil Society. The Path to Increased Impact and Civic Engagemen*t; Policy Brief, Tirana: July 2010; Institute for Democracy and Mediation, *Civil Society Index for Albania. In Search of Citizesn and Impact*. Tirana: 2010, and Euclid and Human Development Promotion Center. *Third Sector Development in Albania. Challenges and opportunities*; Human Development Promotion Center, Tirana: 2009.

2.3. Tendencies of Civil Society Development in the Region

Tendencies of Civil Society Development in the Region

Regardless of the varying individual status of the target countries in the European Union's Stabilization and Association Process (SAP) – collectively known by the international community as the Western Balkans, there are certain common regional problems that demand more attention. Strengthening local democracy in general and advancing sustainable rural and agricultural development in particular are among the most important priorities. Whether in the EU or in the Western Balkans, rural development is neither a minor nor a peripheral problem.[10]

Besides considerable benefits in the early 1990s, the progress in rural areas of the Western Balkans seems to have stalled. A high percentage of the economically active population are employed in agriculture (about 20%) and a good percentage live of the population lives in rural areas (some 46%).[11] Furthermore, agriculture contributes less to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in South European countries (less than 4% of GDP) as compared with the Western Balkan countries (varying between 9-20% of GPD).[12] The development of rural and remote areas in western Balkan countries is facing a series of political, economic, and social challenges.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), 6.4% of registered CSOs operate at central level. At the end of 2008, there were a little over 12,000 registered CSOs. It is estimated that approximately only 55% of registered CSOs (around 6,600) are currently active. Civil society activity is well distributed across the country, with over half all registered CSOs (51.1%) operating from smaller towns in more-orless rural municipalities. Only a little fewer than one in six CSOs work in the capital, Sarajevo, and a further 23% are located in the larger towns. As might be expected, CSOs operating only in rural parts are few in number (7.7%).[13] A successful initiative of the associations operating in rural areas in BiH is the establishment of the Independent Farmers Association (IFA), created to strengthen local and private agricultural units in the Upper Verba region. IFA offers small loans

10 International Center for Democratic transition, *Enhancing Sustainable Rural Development in the SAP Countries by Introducing the LEADER Experience*., page 2
11 According to statistics, 55-57% of Albania's population live in rural areas. See *Rural Poverty Portal*, http://www.ruralpovertyportal.org/web/guest/country/home/tags/albania
12 Lampieti, Julian, Lugg, David, Van der Cellen, Philip, Branczik, Amelia *The Changing Face of Rural Space. Agricultural and Rural Development in Western Balkans*. The World Bank, Washington D.C.: 2009.
13 Sterland, Bill. Rizova, Gallna. C*ivil Society Organizations' Capacities in the Western Balkans & Turkey. A Comparative Study of the Eight Country's Needs Assessment*, 2010, page 8

to its members through a commercial partnership arranged by a local bank, organized farmers for the joint purchasing of inputs and selling of outputs; liaised and and lobbied local policy makers on agriculture related issues.[14]

There are almost 39,000 registered associations in Croatia, comprising 93% of the total of all kinds of registered organizations recognized in the country.[15] According to 2007 statistics, 50.4% of CSOs registered in Croatia are based in the capital city and major regions.[16] During the post-Yugoslav transition, farmers were organized in associations and in 1998 they established the Farmers' Association of Croatia. However, it seems that Croatian farmers do not have considerable impact on the main decision-makers for rural areas.[17]

In Kosovo, less than 20% of the registered CSOs are active and civil society remains weak and under-developed. Most of CSOs are concentrated in the capital Prishtina and other major towns, such as Peja, Prizren and Mitrovica.[18] Rural CSOs in Kosovo are small and have limited impact. Some of their initiatives include a project funded by USAID, "Building alliances between Kosovo Association of Milk Producers and Serbian farmers",[19] a project undertaken by the Peace Corps with the Farmers' Association in Mogila[20] and environmental associations, even though the latter are not always based in rural areas.[21]

In Macedonia it is estimated that there are around 9,000 registered CSOs, 2,000 of which are active. CSOs in Macedonia are predominantly located in urban areas. Forty-three percent of all CSO are registered in the capital and the majority of others operate in the country's other large conurbations. The statistics of 2007 indicate that the CSOs presence in rural areas is low (6.3%)[22] and in 2010 their distribution is 0.5 CSO

14 Website of Partners for Development: Bosnia Herzegovina. http://www.pfd.org/where-we-work/bosnia-a-herzegovina
15 Sterland, Bill. & Rizova, Gallna. Civil Society Organizations' Capacities in the Western Balkans and Turkey. *A Comparative Study of the Eight Country's Needs Assessment.*, 2010, page 9
16 Civicus, *Global Survey for Country Reports*. Vol. 1 Country Profile., Kumarian Press INC, USA: 2007, page 68.
17 Brkic, Srecko. Zutinic, Durdica. & Tratnik, Miroslav. *Articulation of the Farmer's Interest through Protests.* Sociology and Space, vol. 42, No .314, , page 247
18 Sterland, Bill. & Rizova, Gallna. Civil Society Organizations' Capacities in the Western Balkans and Turkey. *A Comparative Study of the Eight Country's Needs Assessment.*, 2010, page 11
19 USAID, "Kosovo Cluster and Business Support Project: Building Alliances Between Kosovo Association of Milk Producers and Serbian farmers" 2005
20 Mercy Corps work in Kosovo "*Not small Potatoes*", August 9, 2010
21 Some of environmental organizations inlucde Acquila (Peja) and Eko-Klina (Klina). See USAID, Kosovo Biodiversity Assessment. 2003:, page 16
22 Civicus, *Global Survey for Country Reports*. Vol. 1 Country Profile., Kumarian Press INC, USA: 2007, page 233

per 1,000 inhabitants.[23] Successful practices of rural CSOs include the creation of the Farmers' Federation in the Republic of Macedonia with the support of the Swedish International Development Agency. This initiative is considered a success, because the federation offers a comprehensive organization that enables their participation in negotiations during the decision-making process.[24]

There are 5,459 officially registered CSOs in Montenegro; 55% are located in conurbations, including Podgorica (43.5%), southern coastal region (22%) and the northern region (22.5%).[25] One of the most successful projects undertaken in rural Montenegrin areas is an initiative funded by the USAID through the Community Revitalization through Democratic Action and implemented by the International Relief and Development Association in the Bar and Ulcinj regions. The assistance and experiences provided by this program tripped the production of olive oil and the success of this project has encouraged olive producers in other areas of the country to revitalize their parcels.[26]

There are very few reliable data on CSOs in Serbia owing to the lack of a single unified register of CSOs covering all associations, as well as other forms of not-for-profit organizations. While it is thought that there may be as many as 25,000 registered CSOs in Serbia, a reasonable estimate of active organizations would be 3,000. The activity of CSOs is centered in the capital city and other larger regional centers, such as Novi Sad in the north.[27] There is no significant development of the CSOs in rural areas in Serbia. To a certain extent, this is explained with the lack of support from international donor and national institutions for organizations operating outside larger regional centers.[28]

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23 Sterland, Bill and Rizova, Gallna. Civil Society Organizations' Capacities in the Western Balkans and Turkey. A Comparative Study of the Eight Country's Needs Assessment, 2010, page 13

24 Swedish International Development Agency, (2009), "Macedonian Farmers Find a Voice."

25 Sterland, Bill and Rizova, Gallna. Civil Society Organizations' Capacities in the Western Balkans and Turkey. A Comparative Study of the Eight Country's Needs Assessment, 2010, page 11

26 USAID, Europe and Eurasia, "Cultivating a Symbol for Peace: Re-vitalizing Montenegro's Olive Industry." http://www.usaid.gov/locations/europe_eurasia/press/success/2006-02-20.html

27 Sterland, Bill and Rizova, Gallna. *Civil Society Organizations' Capacities in the Western Balkans and Turkey. A Comparative Study of the Eight Country's Needs Assessment*, 2010, pages 12-13

28 Cicea, Claudio. Subic, Jonel and Ivanovic, Sanjin, *"Economic Effectiveness of Activities of Vegetable Growers' Associations in Serbia."* Economia Seria Management, Vol. 1. Nr. 1. 2009, page 13

Regional Challenges

- Detailed data and information as well as literature on CSOs operating in rural areas in the Western Balkans are insufficient.

- The activities of organizations operating in rural areas are primarily concentrated in a narrow area and their successful practices are not shared with other communities that experience similar problems and situations.

- From a regional viewpoint, despite variations among communities there exists a considerable disparity to the disfavor of CSOs operating in rural areas as compared with those running their activities in urban areas.

- CSOs of rural areas in the region demonstrate low organizational capacities.

- Rural and local CSOs in the Balkans are mostly locally-based, oriented to their specific community and operate at municipal, communal and community level.

- CSOs in rural areas and small towns are not aware of their potential to provide input to relevant government institutions and public administration to influence social policy.[29]

2.4.   CSOs in Rural and Remote Areas in Albania

General Trend

Most of the problems affecting the CSOs in Albania apply to rural CSOs (RCSOs) as well. Yet, the literature on identification, location, capacities, and activities of these associations is less than the one on the overall development of the sector. Research conducted to date indicates that there are no sources to address CSOs in rural/remote areas in particular and their problematic in Albania.

In general, most of Albanian CSOs are based in Tirana and a small number of these organizations are based in other major cities of central Albania (Durres, Elbasan), in north (Shkoder), and in south (Vlora and Gjirokastra). The civil society seems to be poorly represented in rural and remote areas. According to the data of a poll conducted in 2009, 89% of the CSOs are based and run their activities in Tirana and other major cities

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29 See also Sterland, Bill and Rizova, Gallna. *Civil Society Organizations' Capacities in the Western Balkans and Turkey. A Comparative Study of the Eight Country's Needs Assessment*, 2010

and only 11% of them are based and operate in small towns and villages.[30] Even though Albanian CSOs operating in rural and remote areas are small, have few fulltime staff, limited professional skills and experience, and lack financial stability, they play an important role in rural development, whose major part remains to be explored.[31] Another problem that comes up mainly in discussions about CSOs in rural areas is their lack of capacities to write projects, to build coalitions and advocacy.[32]

Associations Operating in Rural Areas

Irrespective of the lack of statistics, it seems that the number of CSOs operating in communes and villages of Albania is small. Even when they exist, they lack capacities and financial stability. Yet, below are few positive examples of organizations operating in rural areas in Albania.[33]

A good example comes from the rural association of micro-credits, the associations of water users or the associations of communal forests users, which run their activity in rural areas all over the country. They have improved their organizational capacities by creating federations. They remain weak, however, and oftentimes do not function as they should since they depend on the will and contribution of the community in the commune or village of operation.[34]

Another group of rural CSOs operating in Albania includes the association of farmers that, after their foundation as NGOs, have recently developed into associations of mutual cooperation acquiring the form of agriculture-based small businesses. Some of them were established and supported by international donors, such as OXFAM and World Bank over the years.[35] Their activity is expected to increase in the future thanks to a draft law on agricultural cooperatives submitted for adoption to the Parliament of Albania.[36]

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30 Euclid and Human Development Promotion Center (2009), page 31
31 TACSO, Albania Needs Assessment Report, January 29, 2010, page 14
32 USAID 2009 NPO Sustainability Index for Albania
33 Sterland, Bill and Rizova, Gallna, *Civil Society Organizations' Capacities in the Western Balkans and Turkey. A Comparative Study of the Eight Countries Needs Assessment.*, 2010, page 8
34 For more information, see "Oxfam Work in Albania", available at: http://policy-practice. oxfam.org.uk/publications/search?i=1;q=*;q1=publications;q2=agriculture;x1=page_ type;x2=subject_area.
35 See World Bank Tirana Office, "*The World Bank Financing to Albania*" 2010: 16-18 on concrete initiatives supporting this category of CSOs
36 Albanian Agribusiness Council (KASh) website: "Projekt-ligji për Shoqëritë kooperativiste bujqësore."http://www.kash.org.al/documents/legjislacion/Ligj%20i%20ri%20per%20Koop-erativat%20Bujqesore.pdf

A third category of rural CSOs includes organizations whose activities are linked with the agricultural market or aspects of agricultural cooperation. These organizations operate in the form of farmers' federations (FF). Some examples include the federations of Shkodra, Myzeqe, and Kukes.[37] FFs have operated as NGOs to support farmers or as mediators between farmers and local or central government. However, it should be pointed out that these organizations lack organizational capacities and good management as well as advocacy and coordination of human resources, which constitute a challenge to them.

The fourth category include local organizations that operate in various towns of the country, such as Permaculture Resource Center, Agricultural Development Association of Diber, Agritra Vision, and Auleda (Vlora), which are made up of former agricultural specialists and operate on project basis. Some of them have received donor support over the years. To a certain extent, they can be considered a connecting bridge for the small farmers' needs to shake off their apathy and poverty or to increase the value added of their activity regarding the production and processing of agricultural and livestock outputs and for minor activities of rural tourism. They are, however, coping with considerable difficulties in terms of financial sustainability and the need to protect and improve their human capacities.

Another category of organizations that extend their activities in rural areas include Tirana-based CSOs.[38] Their activities are developed on ad hoc basis according to the needs of specific projects and donor, focusing primarily in drafting policy papers, studies and other activities to strengthen or build capacities of communes. These organizations mostly exhibit their think tank features. Oftentimes they not only engage in rural development but address this area in a broader framework of activities they undertake. Many times, these organizations make rural development a part of their activities as donors' agenda is focused in this issue.

Another group of institutions running their activities in rural areas include development agencies of EU countries, such as Spain, Italy, Germany, Austria, and religious organizations like (Austrian, German, Italian) CARITAS, which have undertaken projects to support rural development mainly through provision of agricultural inputs (seeds, livestock, etc.) or increase of non-agricultural activities, such as family tourism in villages. A common issue of concern for the activities and projects funded by foreign

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37 For more detailed information on the Association of Farmers of Kukes, visit http://fedfarmqk.org/

38 Examples of these organizations include the Rural Association Support Programme (RASP) http://rasp.org.al/Index%20al.html; the Organic Agriculture Association http://organic.org.al/SHQIP/index_al.html, etc.

organizations relates with the financial stability when funding is over and increase of internal capacities that make up the main elements for success and larger representation.

The last but not least group is made up of international donors, such as UNDP, World Bank, OXFAM, EU, and many other organization that have supported the development of CSOs organizations in rural areas and small towns of Albania. One initiative undertaken in this respect is the Kukës Region Cross Border Cooperation Program, funded by UNDP Albania and EU and implemented in close cooperation with the main local, central and international stakeholders, local governance administration and local CSOs of Kukes region. The project aimed to strengthen the capacities of regional actors to prepare them for proficient participation in existing and future cross-border bilateral projects.[39]

Challenges

- Specific literature on CSOs operating in rural areas in Albania is lacking.[40]
- The challenges and concerns of the rural communities including the issue of activeness of the third sector in these areas remain peripheral in the agenda and program of well known civil society organizations.
- Rural community CSOs, even when they exist, lack the required experience, capacities or network of civic actors that would contribute to local governance, community development, an acceleration of the process of accession to EU.
- It is imperative to address the need for training and strengthening of capacities of CSOs based and operating in rural and remote areas.[41]

In consideration of the above challenges and problems, the intervention of this project seeks to revitalize civil society in rural / remote areas and to promote good governance and civic engagement in Albania's most disadvantaged and peripheral regions. The intervention will start with an assessment study to be undertaken in four regions to assess the capacities and needs of associations operating in rural and remote areas.

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39 UNDP Albania website, "Kukës Region Cross-Border Cooperation Programme (KRCBC) September 2009 – May 2011" http://www.undp.org.al/index.php?page=projects/project&id=186
40 Sterland, Bill, and Rizova, Gallna, Civil Society Organizations' Capacities in the Western Balkans and Turkey. A Comparative Study of the Eight Countries Needs Assessment, 2010
41 Euro partners Development and AYNEY, "Increasing the capacities of Albanian NGOs towards future sustainability" 2009

3.   NEEDS ASSESSMENT OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN RURAL AND REMOTE AREAS

3.1.   Objectives

The identification of needs of the civil society organizations operating in rural and remote areas of Albania aims to provide detailed information on nature, opportunities, challenges/needs and deficiencies in thematic fields of their activities in these areas. The selected geographic areas where this study will be conducted include the regions of Gjirokastra, Berat, Lezha and Elbasan, in an effort to ensure a representation of the entire diversity of development of Albania.

The objectives of identification and assessment of needs of CSOs in rural and remote areas include:

- Identification of major CSOs operating in rural and remote areas of Berat, Gjirokastra, Lezha, and Elbasan and their profile;
- Measuring of level of knowledge of CSOs on the role of civil society (comparison between CSOs in rural and urban areas in order to come up with differences and similarities between them);
- Identification of developed and successful thematic fields;
- Identification of major challenges and existing needs;
- Mapping of geographic areas covered with concrete initiatives and of deficiencies related with unelaborated thematic fields;
- Exploring the opportunities to rural CSOs to build and expand partnerships and their capacities, particularly in the framework of the EU membership (EU assistance programs on rural development);
- Assessment of challenges for a more meaningful role of CSOs to improve local governance, empower community and marginalized and vulnerable groups including issues of gender, youth, and Roma community.

Research Questions

Studimi udhëhiqet nga pyetjet kërkimore të parashtruara më poshtë:

- Cila është situata aktuale e OShC-ve në zonat rurale dhe ato periferike të qarqeve të synuara?
- Cili është niveli i aktivizmit dhe njohurive për rolin që OShC-të duhet të luajnë në komunitet dhe në sistemin e qeverisjes vendore?
- Ç'lloj nismash/veprimtarish ekzistojnë në këto zona?
- Cilat janë sfidat me të cilat përballen OShCR-të gjatë zbatimit të këtyre veprimtarive/nismave? Cilat janë nevojat e tyre specifike?
- Në cilat fusha mendojnë se kanë kapacitete të forta dhe ku nevojitet zhvillim i mëtejshëm i kapaciteteve të tyre?
- Cilat janë partneritetet e ndryshme dhe rrjetet kombëtarë e ndërkombëtarë ku ato bëjnë pjesë (sipas fushave specifike që mbulojnë)?
- Cilat janë hapat për ri-orientimin e fokusit në rritje të OShCR-ve drejt zhvillimit rural?

3.2.   Methodological Approach

The study on identification and assessment of CSOs in rural and remote areas uses a mixed methodological approach for the assessment of presence, activities, and needs of the civil society in rural areas of Berat, Gjirokaster, Elbasan, and Lezha. To address the above research questions, the study uses a combination of techniques for the collection and analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data. The techniques utilized in this study include the following:

Review of Sources

The research team collected and used a variety of various documents that contained information on history and current situation of the civil society in rural and remote areas of Albania. These reviewed documents included study reports on civil society in Albania, reports on activities of various CSOs and networks of organizations, lists and statistics on Albanian CSOs, training manuals and documents and other reference materials from internet.

Special attention was given to previous reports on civil society in rural areas in general and in the project's targeted areas (Berat, Gjirokaster, Elbasan, and Lezha) in particular. The review of documents of local government units and entities as well as of the reports and statistics on activities of CSOs and their needs in specific areas of their operation provided information on the specifics of the targeted areas and paved the way for the collection and analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data.

In-Depth Interviews with Key Informants

In-depth interviews were conducted with key informants with the aim of exploring the current status of CSOs in rural and remote areas of the selected regions. These interviews revealed information on the level of activeness of rural CS, on the knowledge it has on the role to be played by the community in local governance system, on the types of existing initiatives/activities in relevant areas, on strengths and weaknesses, and on what its actors perceive to be the 'future steps' of the reorientation of rural CSOs to expand the rural focus in the framework of development and challenges of integration.

Key informants included representatives of the CSOs, local leaders, media and local institutions. In-depth interviews with key informants also served to identify the main local actors and the topics of analysis to be covered by the questionnaire in the subsequent phase of the project. This instrument was used in two stages of the needs assessment process, i.e., in the early phase of the assessment to identify the issues and in the end phase (after the survey and focus groups) with the aim of clarifying the trends and their validation.

Survey

This mini survey was conducted with the main local actors to define the needs and opportunities of the development of CS in targeted areas. The questionnaire of this survey targeted mainly the representatives of the rural CSOs (beneficiary groups of which were women, youth, Roma community, elderly, etc.) and representatives of media and local government units. The group of questions was developed on specific objectives of the project and on the finding produced from the in-depth interviews with key informants.

Sample

The survey initially sought to include a total of 400 organizations of the civil society and other local actors in the targeted regions (Berat, Gjirokaster, Elbasan, and Lezha), but the various limitations of the work on site and the geographic and thematic coverage of CSOs in these areas imposed the need to redefine the methodology and sample. This need became clear right in the first phases of the assessment- in the course of preliminary interviews with "key informants", which preceded the finalization of draft methodology. Therefore, in an effort to ensure the largest possible geographic and thematic and sectoral coverage in the four targeted areas,

the study included approximately 220 respondents for quantitative analysis of information and about 150 actors of the civil society, private sector, media, and local government units on activities that aim at the qualitative analysis of information (focus groups, structured interviews, etc.). This choice made possible a more complete and comprehensive database regarding the collection of data on site.

Focus Group Discussions

Focus group (FG) discussions were organized with community groups supported by CSOs in various areas to test the validity of findings revealed by the survey and the in-depth interviews. The selection of participants was based on the criterion of relevant beneficiaries. They were organized in discussion groups of 8-12 people based on various topics addressed during the assessment process (including the findings of the survey and in-depth interviews). Two discussions were conducted for each targeted area reaching a total of 8 FGs with over 60 participants.

Data Analysis

The following sections of this assessment report will present and discuss the findings of the analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data. The data collected from the quantitative methods were analyzed initially by coding the answers to specific areas of interest, and by comparing and contrasting them. In addition, the analysis seeks to identify the differences between CSOs established and operating in rural and remote areas and CSOs established and operating in conurbations. The data collected from the survey was analyzed with statistical software for social sciences and the findings (in the following sections) are presented initially through graphics and tables of frequencies and percentages. Further explorations with cross-tabulations have been conducted in specific cases of interest to the research questions and relevant objectives of this study.

4. ANALYSIS OF QUALITATIVE DATA

4.1. Involvement and Development of Civil Society in Rural and Remote Areas

Regardless of the long lists with names of NGOs registered in various parts of Albania (including the regions under study: Berat, Gjirokaster, Elbasan, and Lezha), the identification of active organizations in rural and remote areas proved to be a challenge, albeit expected to a certain extent. A very limited number of NGOs have extended their activity to rural and remote areas and even less exclusively focused in these areas. Furthermore, some of them had few experiences on site, which were primarily pilot projects or offspring of large regional or national projects.

Irrespective of this, some trends can be identified by means of descriptions of the history from representatives of these non-governmental organizations, whose work also covers rural and/or remote areas.

Most of these organizations were created during 1990-2000. The last decade was sluggish, although it was expected that the civil society in these areas would develop even more. The organizations operating in rural and remote areas were established for reasons of environment, preservation of culture and traditions, promotion of tourism or overcoming of emergencies of natural disasters or similar situations. Few of them were encouraged or created as a consequence of the needs and pressure of certain interest groups.

Yet, even though fewer in number, the organizations established after year 2000 have a clearer mission and vision and have stronger ties with the community and interest groups they seek to represent. They include associations of various professions, businesses, or farmers. They are, however, insufficient to address the many problems of rural and remote areas.

The shortage of civil society in rural and remote areas is also indicated from the coverage of few organizations operating there. They cover a small geographic area and oftentimes their activity does not address the

many issues of the area of activity or the direct development of the area is not its primary goal. Some organizations may claim the profile of a rural organization even though they operate mainly in urban areas and their activity in rural zones may simply be sporadic or accidental.

On the other hand, the qualitative interviews with the representatives of the civil society sector show a variety of experiences from one area to the other. This is revealed in the answers they give to the differences they see between the activities in rural and remote areas and in urban areas. The common problems they identify relate to the difficulties and challenges of work in rural and remote areas, such as those on limited funding, poor infrastructure, lack of trust from community and/or local governance, and the perspective and guarantee for sustainability.

> *"An NPO in urban area has a broad spectrum of action and operation, most often including rural areas. Local NGOs carry out their activity only in rural areas where they are located. Urban NGOs have more options of funding from and contact with various donors and probably better human resources and capacities."*
>
> *(Region of Elbasan)*

> *"I think it's a big difference... the direct work with the actors involved in the project is the most difficult, but it also bring more benefits regarding the relations established with them. Trust is one of the greatest challenges and difficulties in our work – direct contact with them is the only way to earn this trust."*
>
> *(Region of Gjirokastra)*

Differences in the difficulties mentioned above are due to the nature of organizational work. For example, organizations providing services to women cope with challenges that differ from those of NGOs working on environment.

> *"The difference lies in the lack of advisory facilities and social workers in rural areas, in the unemployment and mentality that does not make women collaborate, while in urban areas these problems are less present."*
>
> *(Region of Berat)*

> *"In comparison with urban areas, we have fewer options for funding. Our challenges are diverse; I will mention the deficient legislation on forestry and its use which makes our work difficult. Our community has not fully understood the awareness role of the association; the commune does not provide financial support."*
>
> *(Region of Elbasan)*

It is interesting to note how respondents identify their difficulties or obstacles coming from local experiences and pointing to the legal framework

on civil society in Albania as the root of the problem. Similar to businesses, treatment of the civil society sector is perceived as unjust.

> *"The challenges and difficulties of our association related to the continuous efforts for funding; we don't have logistics means to travel all around the region; the current law on associations is still a challenge to us, because we are not treated like non-profit organizations but as businesses, without any advantages in taxes and fiscal activities."*
>
> *(Region of Elbasan)*

The work in rural and remote areas does not, however, pose only challenges and difficulties. It also brings in advantages when compared with the work in urban areas. Being closer with the interest groups and the possibility of direct communication are regarded as a chance for more success and impact. Likewise, the change brought by these organizations in small areas is more visible, concrete and tangible; these attributes affect directly the increase of trust among three partners – NPO-community-local government unit.

> *"IN rural areas, the benefit is directly for the farmer, even though he is not fully committed (due to the low profits) unlike in urban areas where there is a lot of bureaucracy and theory."*
>
> *(Region of Lezhë)*

Respondents find it easy to identify their difficulties and challenges. Yet, their responses are unclear regarding the coverage of their mission and activity. It is probably the need to survive that forces some of the respondents to expand the focus of their mission and activity by including a variety of goals, objectives, activities and beneficiaries. The geographic coverage, types of activities and target groups vary according to type of projects and available donations. This, in fact, creates a mosaic that may lead to lack of trust on the part of interest groups or community at large.

As stated by the respondents, one of the greatest challenges is the very mentality of the community about the civil society.

> *"The staff of the association understands the role of the association, but the community still has a negative mentality for our activity; they are not educated about the activity of the association. Opinions on budgeting and use of funds are conflicting oftentimes."*
>
> *(Region of Elbasan)*

The limited opportunities available to these organizations have caused to a certain extent the limited presence and the nonsolid and unfriendly relations with the communities in these areas. With limited financial resources, these activities have been fewer leading to weaker relationship with the community.

"We are working on very small projects, with tiny funding, which we get with great difficulties, but we are still happy. NGOs in conurbations, in Tirana in particular, puzzle us with the funding obtained by their staff and people."

(Region of Gjirokastra)

On the other hand, the information and awareness of rural and remote communities is decisive in the support they give to the civil society and its actors. This awareness cannot change promptly and effortlessly. On the contrary, it requires a lot of work on the part of the civil society actors to inform and make community aware of and to show to them the value and usefulness of their work to the community and development of the area where they live.

"The mentality of the areas where we work is a challenge. I would like to point out that they do not understand our advice or assistance. It has been a challenge to involve women in activities and consultation meetings."

(Region of Elbasan)

"In terms of local communities, there is still much to be done, because they do not understand the importance of this work and do not help in the accomplishment of activities."

(Region of Elbasan)

4.2. Knowledge and Capacities of Civil Society in Rural and Remote Areas

NPOs running their activities in rural and remote areas report little support and resources. Limited funding is most often translated into limited infrastructure and capacities. It is generally claimed that most work is carried out on voluntary basis and that these NPOs are understaffed, even though the staff is, according to them, sufficiently qualified. Yet, further training and qualification are regarded as very necessary. Training is particularly needed in increasing capacities for writing project and fundraising, because, as they admit, activities on capacity building have generally diminished.

"Besides funding, which we do need, of course, we want training on how to write projects."

(Region of Elbasan)

"They have conducted some training sessions provided by the association central office, but in the past 4-5 years, training is gone. The staff sees nothing to work on and leaves."

(Region of Gjirokastra)

Little information is provided on self-perception of the SC actors on their

role they have or they should play in the future. These few perceptions they share on the image of civil society in community witness that there is much to be done in this direction in order to clarify and improve the image of CSOs in these areas.

"Yes, I think so. Anyway, NPOs must address community problems on site and work hard on their solution."

(Region of Berat)

"They are not completely aware of their role, because they spend most of their time in their office rather than on site, even though the farmers' interest is high."

(Region of Lezhë)

4.3. Experience to date

Regardless of short history and tradition of civil society development in rural and remote areas and difficulties confronted to date, the respondents can list achievements and successes of their work, which vary from small changes to big enterprises at regional strategy level.

"Some of our achievements are the honey product certified from HACCP and ISO-9001 in accordance with EU standards that guarantee local and international market and the opportunities to farmers to treat bee pathologies with bio products, as required by EU standards."

(Region of Lezha)

"In 2009 we managed a project on thermal and curative spa of Benje, 7 km out of town. We made the community aware of the curative values of this site, we planted trees and decorative shrubs, cleaned and repaired the catchments (basins) and installed the signage. This led to the increase of visitation to this site."

(Region of Gjirokastra)

"The Region of Elbasan did not have a strategy for decreasing urban pollution. This was achieved through successful cooperation with the region of Elbasan and public participation for a 2-year period. This marks a success of our organization."

(Region of Elbasan)

Irrespective of difficulties, efforts, and most often lack of reward, the successes they have achieved and the changes they have brought to the life of residents of these areas makes the staffs of these organizations proud and motivated to continue their work in the future.

"One woman from rural area completed the nursery course at our organization and later attended the university studies for nursery. She is now a fulltime nurse. Three women obtained the driver license thanks to our assistance and are now operating their own businesses. Some

women that completed the tailoring course in our organization have now started their tailoring business in the village."

(Region of Elbasan)

The successes attained this far helped and contributed to a better recognition among the community and the establishment of trust relationship between the civil society actors and community, to increase of faith in the potential and the role they can play in the future. This increasing trust of the community is actually considered a true success.

4.4. Needs and Challenges

When speaking of needs and challenges confronting the civil society in rural areas, the basic (and probably most immediate) need is the increase of capacities to know oneself, including the needs. Some of the needs revealed by the respondents include:

- Improvement of staff with new elements and their training with modern information;
- Upgrade of infrastructure of work with modern technology (computers, video projectors, etc.)
- Installation of labs and other work instruments;
- Establishment of partnership with local administration and other peer national and international organizations.

When respondents were asked to identify their weaknesses, they were able to mention primarily the threats affecting them and their activities. They mentioned only few weaknesses that directly relate to their organization and its elements.

"We are not persistent, we draw back when facing obstacles and indifferentism, and we do not want to create conflicts with the local government unit… most of our activities are based on awareness plans and few are based on practical work so that there is something there left from our work, which is tangible and long-lasting. This is also due to lack of funds."

(Region of Gjirokastra)

"Poor work in the promotion of our association and its activities and lack of information and cooperation with other NPOs in Elbasan."

(Region of Elbasan)

Besides lack of infrastructure and premises, poor cooperation or indifference of local governance to organizations working in rural and remote areas, problems add up from the existing legislation. According to CSOs, the applicable legislation does not facilitate their work; even worse,

these organizations feel penalized by it.

"The current legislation on NPOs does not favor us in fundraising. In fact, it is denigrating. This law must change; it must support the civil society; it should not regard CSOs as competitor and compare it with the business."

(Region of Elbasan)

Some of them have to cope with and fight the negative image that may have been created by other actors of the civil society engaged in these areas at an early stage. Their poor work or abuse with the funds may have harmed the community trust in the civil society actors. A disappointment issue, this must become a priority concern for future work.

"We have problems with the lack of trust from target groups as they relate unacceptable practices conducted by other organizations in the past."

(Region of Lezha)

"One of the weaknesses is the lack of support from the local government unit and the community at large."

(Region of Elbasan)

The civil society – local governance relations in rural and remote areas need considerable improvement. According to reports, this relationship has been weak and in some cases conflicting. Some of the blame goes to the politics. Extreme politicization of the life in rural and remote areas makes this relationship even more difficult, which, in principle, should be otherwise.

"The local government administration is indifferent and creates obstacles when asked to provide information on the work of the municipal council, municipality, commune, etc. They only want to be appraised, not criticized."

(Region of Gjirokastra)

"The extreme politicization of citizen life and discouragement imposed to us by the politics to harm us are reflected in the relationship with both rural and urban people, even though we kept a distance with the politics and local political commitments."

(Region of Gjirokastra)

The work in small communities provides direct relations with the locals and ensures a better knowledge of the area, which are advantageous to our work. The strengths identified by respondents include this very affinity between CSOs staff and communities of their work.

"Our strengths are knowledge of territory as we have been working in this area for a long time, experience, and the trust we have created in our community." *(Region of Gjirokastra)*

Yet, the community's mentality and trust remain challenges for the reasons elaborated earlier in this report.

"Mentality, apathy of citizens, lack of trust from people, lack of voluntary work, lack of offices in the premises of the commune."

(Region of Berat)

"Civil society leaders are seemingly prejudiced; they are called corruptive people."

(Region of Gjirokastra)

The civil society in these areas is strong in terms of human capacities. It is expecting a greater support from the donor community. The responding representatives believe that being small organizations in rural and remote areas penalizes them.

"Human resources are our strengths, because they are the best in the beekeeping domain; some of them hold doctoral degrees and believe in the accomplishment of the objectives of the association."

(Region of Lezha)

Donors should be more supportive to small NGOs. We have limited opportunities, because we don't have projects. The projects we write fall through, because we are a small NPO."

(Region of Elbasan)

4.5.   Networking and Collaborations

The signs of a weak civil society in rural and remote areas are significantly seen in the almost total lack of collaboration and networking among actors of this sector. Likewise, the relationship with the local government unit (as described earlier in this report) is problematic and sporadic, which is generally based on individual will and not on institutional practices.

"...The local government unit is not always cooperative; it is often impedimental and subordinate to interests."

(Region of Gjirokastra)

There seems to be a wrong perception of and failure to divide roles and responsibilities between them, because respondents report a kind of competition, jealousy or even hostility between civil society actors and local governance. The civil society work is seen as a threat to local governance.

"We try to establish effective cooperation with the commune, but the latter regards our activity as an overlapping of powers. We would like to have more support from the commune."

(Region of Elbasan)

"It is difficult to collect information and our work is seen with jealousy or ill will by the politics or local governance."   *(Region of Gjirokastra)*

"(The relationship)...is apparently normal and contextually formal, because local elects do not plan funds for these problem, do not have structures to launch call for applications, discuss and approve project, but they divide them subjectively and most often on party affiliations. There is no appropriateness, just spontaneity; funds (if any) are given (annually or biannually) on personal preferences."

(Region of Gjirokastra)

It is also worth mentioning those few good experiences, such as in the case of Women Center in Berat, for whom the Municipality of Berat is the only donor in the past two years. The case of this organization running its activity in rural areas but with home office in the urban zone should be clarified. Cases of participation in various networks come from organizations of this profile.

Experiences in rural areas specifically and exclusively reiterate the message that cooperation and partnerships are quite limited and often subject to weak or unidirectional will. Furthermore, the networks with umbrella organizations are considered a threat on the part of the 'small' actors of the civil society.

"(Relationship) generally one-sided, i.e., NPOs request cooperation and partnership, while local government units hesitate and state the wrong opinion that 'NPOs are getting rich with their projects and earning a lot!'"

(Region of Gjirokastra)

"...refrain from umbrella organizations. Dismiss the practice of providing funds to centers and give crumbs to local NPOs."

(Region of Berat)

Despite they are scarce, shaky, and short-lived, the networks of civil society in rural and remote areas have success stories, which must be replicated and shared in the future. It is necessary to strengthen that very component that makes them resistant – the specific and tangible scope of work and common interest.

"Initiatives are rare, but they exist. We can mention the positive initiative of cooperation among the Beekeeping Association, World Vision and Heifer Albania, where the association covers the technical aspect, World Vision supports the empowerment of the individuals, and Heifer Albania provides concrete donations to the support of farmers."

(Region of Lezhë)

"Networking is a consolidation means to us, and leaning on one another, enriching and sharing of experiences. We have collaborated with the association of Gracen, Bradashesh, Gjinar. These cases of cooperation are focused in the forestry area."   *(Region of Elbasan)*

4.6.   Sustainability and Future of Civil Society in Rural and Remote Areas

The respondents are already clear that if they seek sustainability to their work they should first of all turn to local community and respective local government unit. Cooperation between them is crucial to the sustainability and future of the civil society sector and to the development of these areas in general.

> *"For sustainability, it is important to find support from the local community, because support from the local government unit will follow."*
>
> *(Region of Gjirokastra)*

The civil society needs to be more committed in rural and remote areas if it wants to have a more prosperous future. This is not just a piece of advice or push, but a need identified by its representatives. What the civil society has right now is insufficient to make this real. It requires capacity building, collaborations and partnerships that would help to get the best of all opportunities, including the European integration process.

> *"(In the future) I see a more accountable civil society, aware of its potential and vital space."*
>
> *(Region of Berat)*

> *"I hope we will be more powerful and active, because we believe that with the advancement of integration processes of our country, we will have more collaborations, partnerships, funding, and benefits from community programs funded by EU."*
>
> *(Region of Gjirokastra)*

The relationship among NPOs, community, and local government unit is expected to be inevitably affected by the presence of another very important partner, absent to date, the business community. The establishment of this tripartite partnership, civil society – local governance – business community, will facilitate the path to greater benefits from EU programs, as hoped for by the respondents.

Respondents deem that those who will accelerate the work of the civil society in rural and remote areas are the youth. In addition, it is expected that their work will be recognized and evaluated, if needed, by means of a type of monitoring and ranking of the civil society actors according to area and contribution they have given to it.

> *"The associations must work harder in rural areas; yet, it would be a good idea to conduct monitoring to identify the impact of the projects on site in order to rank NPOs. This must, of course, be conducted fairly, impartially and accurately.*   *(Region of Gjirokastra)*

Areas expected to be developed include agriculture, livestock, agri-tourism, environment, and, even though we are speaking of rural areas, social issues will be an integral part of the civil society agenda in these areas. A prosperous development necessitates financial support and capacity building on the part of state entities in general and local governance in particular.

"If we have support from the state, not only with funding but also with capacity building, we will be sustainable in the future. In addition, if there is mutual collaboration and no hostile attitude, I can say that our sustainability will be more guaranteed."

(Region of Berat)

A powerful civil society in rural areas may contribute to their sustainable development. Some of the actors are aware of the role they can play and the opportunity they can give to these areas.

"In addition, I would say that if NPOs in rural areas accomplish their mission for which they are established and receive funding, the migration in these areas will cease, because the farmers/specialists will see no other living opportunities outside their area, but will return to investments in the zones where they live."

(Region of Gjirokastra)

Opportunities are out there, waiting to be exploited. Therefore, as stated by them, the future is the 'yellow traffic light'; it will take hard work, efforts, cooperation, and partnership to get to the green light.

"I see the future as the yellow traffic light. We will be more certain, qualitative and more qualified in our work in 5 years from now, if funding is available."

(Region of Elbasan)

"Të ardhmen e shikoj portokalli. Pas 5 vitesh po ka financime do jemi më të sigurt në punën tonë, më cilësorë dhe më të kualifikuar".

(Qarku Elbasan)

5.   ANALIZA E TË DHËNAVE SASIORE

5.1.   Profili pjesëmarrësve në studim

Siç është përshkruar edhe në kampionimin e këtij studimi gjatë paraqitjes së metodologjisë së tij, targeti synonte të përfshinte përfaqësues nga i gjithë spektri i shoqërisë civile në zonat rurale dhe periferike. Së bashku me përfaqësuesit e organizatave jo qeveritare (që rëndom njehsohen me shoqërinë civile në tërësi), në studim u përfshirë edhe përfaqësues të shoqatave të biznesit, përfaqësues të medieve lokale si dhe përfaqësues të organeve të pushteti vendor me qëllim pasjen e një këndvështrimi tjetër nga ajo e vetë aktorëve të shoqërisë civile. Duke pasur parasysh objektivat e studimit, sondazhi u fokusua në një masë më të madhe tek aktorët e shoqërisë civile, ndërkohë që pjesëmarrja e kategorive të tjera rezultoi si më poshtë:

Grafiku 1. Pjesëmarrësit në studim sipas angazhimit të tyre
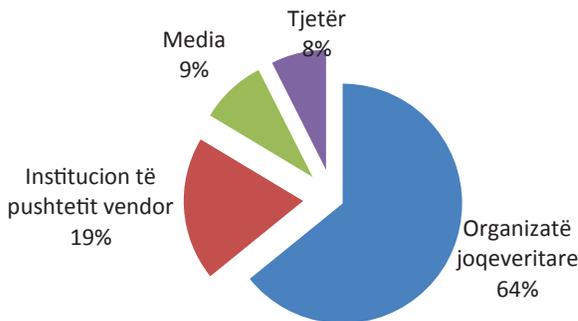
Pavarësisht vështirësive si pasojë e aktorëve të pakët të shoqërisë civile dhe stafeve të tyre të limituara qe veprojnë në këto zona, u synua që pjesë e këtij studimi të ishin jo vetëm drejtues, por edhe anëtarë të stafeve të tyre apo edhe bashkëpunëtore. Grafiku i mëposhtëm paraqet profilin e pjesëmarrësve sipas pozicioneve të tyre. Për arsyet e mësipërme, ka një avantazh të lehtë të drejtuesve.

Grafiku 2. Përgjigjedhënësit në studim sipas pozicionit
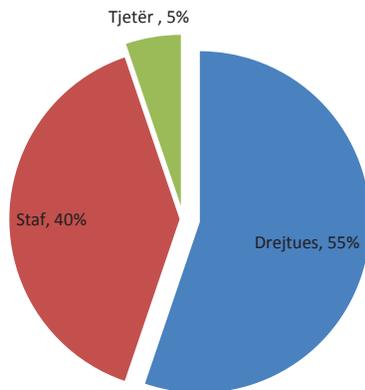
Me një fokus kryesor tek aktorët e shoqërisë civile në zonat rurale dhe periferike të qarqeve të përfshira, studimi nënvizon se vetëm një pjesë e vogël e këtyre aktorëve punojnë në këto zona kanë edhe qendrën e tyre të vendosur pranë këtyre zonave/komuniteteve. Siç shihet edhe në grafikun e mëposhtëm, vetëm 20% e pjesëmarrësve në këtë studim vijnë nga zonat rurale, 32% nga qytezat (të cilat deri diku mund të konsiderohen si satelitë periferikë të qendrave urbane të rajoneve të studiuara) dhe mëse 48% janë pjesë e organizatave me qendër në zonat urbane, por me veprimtari dhe njohuri edhe për zhvillimin e shoqërisë civile në zonat rurale dhe periferike.

Grafiku 3. Pjesëmarrësit sipas qendrës së punës
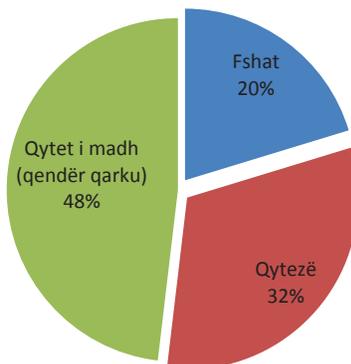
Pyetësori i hartuar për këtë sondazh u nda në disa seksione, një pjesë e të cilëve i trajtohej gjithë të anketuarve ndërsa pjesa tjetër vetëm anëtarëve të organizatave të shoqërisë civile. Në vijim parashtrohen gjetjet e identifikuara.

5.2.   Vështrim mbi shoqërinë civile në zonat rurale dhe periferike

Një pjesë e rëndësishme e pyetësorit kërkonte të merrte informacion për të krijuar një panoramë të shoqërisë civile në zonat rurale/periferike nga vetë përfaqësuesit e këtij sektori dhe bashkëpunëtorët e tyre në institucionet e pushtetit vendor. Për këtë atyre iu kërkua të vlerësonin rolin, kontributin dhe impaktin e punës së aktorëve të shoqërisë civile në këto zona.

Nga gjithë përgjigjedhënsit në këtë studim vetëm 23% mendojnë se shoqëria civile në këto zona është shumë aktive (vlerësime 1 dhe 2). Pjesa dërrmuese, 87% i japin vlerësimin nga 3-5, ku alternative 5 korrespondon me 'aspak aktive'. Në fakt kjo gjetje mund të mos përbëjë surprizë, pasi siç është komentuar edhe më herët zonat rurale dhe periferike në vend 'vuajnë' nga një shoqëri civile shumë e tkurrur. Sasia mund të jetë përcaktuese edhe në këtë vlerësim që vetë përfaqësuesit e saj bëjnë. Megjithatë, kjo 'notë' për shkallën e veprimtarie të shoqërisë civile në këto zona mund të pasqyrojë edhe pasivitetin apo veprimtarinë e ulët edhe të aktorëve që janë prezent në këto zona.

Grafiku 4. Sa aktive është shoqëria civile në zonat rurale/periferike?
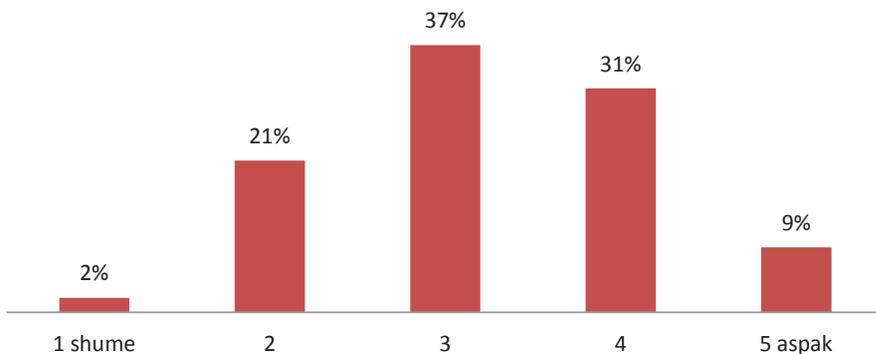
Grafiku 4.1 Opinioni i OJQ-ve
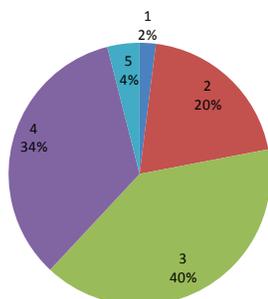
Grafiku 4.2 Pjesa tjetër e të anketuarve
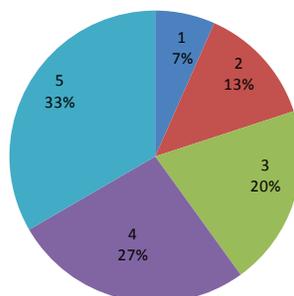
Shkalla e veprimtarisë të shoqërisë civile në zonat rurale shihet më me skepticizëm nga vetë aktorët kryesorë të saj siç janë organizatat jo-qeveritare. Vetëm 2% e tyre mendojnë se shoqëria civile në këto zona është shumë aktive krahasuar me 7% të pjesës tjetër të të pyeturve, përfaqësues të medias apo pushtetit vendor. Më tepër sesa për nota pesimiste, këtu mund të aludohet për një shkallë më të lartë njohje të veprimtarisë dhe rolit që shoqëria civile luan në këto zona nga vetë përfaqësuesit e saj. Gjithsesi, diferenca më e ndjeshme vihet re në ekstremin tjetër të vlerësimit, atë negativ. Siç shihet qartë, alternativën 5 (aspak aktive), e zgjedhin 33% e përfaqësuesve të medias dhe pushtetit vendor përkundrejt 4% të përfaqësuesve të organizatave jo-qeveritare. Gjë që tregon qartë se pritshmëritë e komunitetit (veçanërisht medias dhe pushtetit vendor) në zonat rurale mbeten në një pjesë të madhe të paplotësuara.

Arsyeja e dytë e një note të ulët për veprimtarinë e shoqërisë civile në zonat rurale duket se përforcohet edhe nga përgjigjja që merr pyetja lidhur me impaktin e punës së shoqërisë civile në këto zona. Pjesa më e madhe e vlerësojnë punën e shoqërisë civile në zonat rurale dhe periferike nga pak në aspak ndikuese (alternativat 3-5). Vetëm 22% e tyre e vlerësojnë pozitivisht impaktin e saj. Po kështu 71% e të pyeturve besojnë se shoqëria civile në zonat rurale e periferike trajton vetëm pjesërisht nevojat e këtyre zonave dhe 24% mendojnë se veprimtarie i saj është i shkëputur nga realiteti dhe nuk trajton aspak këto nevoja.

Grafiku 5. Sa ndikon puna e shoqërisë civile në këto zona?
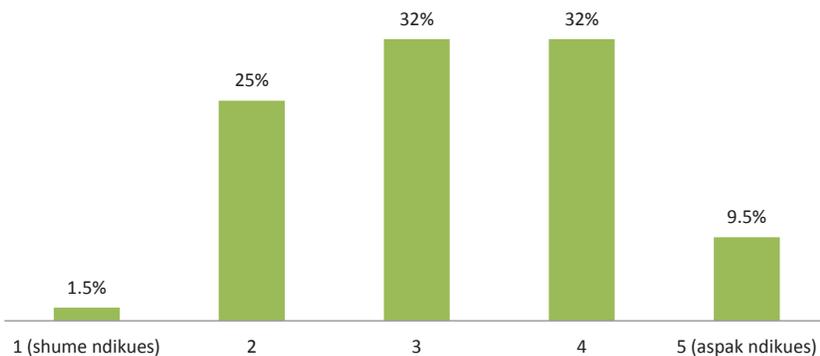
Grafiku 6. Sa i plotëson shoqëria civile nevojat e komuniteteve në zonat rurale/periferike?
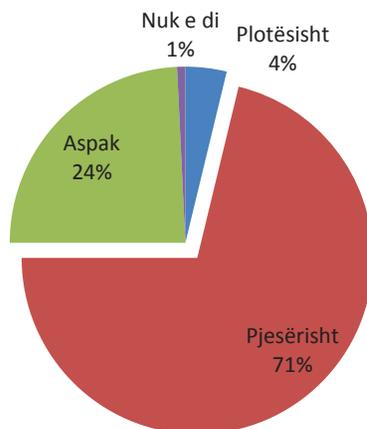
Trendi i një vlerësimi më kritik për punën e shoqërisë civile nga përfaqësuesit medias dhe pushtetit vendor vazhdon të shfaqet edhe në vlerësimin e ndikimit të punës së shoqërisë civile në këto zona. Ashtu si edhe në vlerësimin e veprimtarisë të shoqërisë civile edhe në vlerësimin e impaktit të punës së saj, rezultatet e përgjithshme anojnë drejt një vlerësimi të ulët, si në grafikun 5. Gjithsesi, Tabela 1, bën të qartë diferencimin midis dy nënkategorive, ku media e pushteti vendor në 33% të rasteve e vlerëson nul ndikimin e punës së shoqërisë civile përkundrejt 5% të përfaqësuesve të organizatave jo-qeveritare. Kjo e fundit, ndonëse një shifër e ulët, shumë domethënëse kur vjen nga aktorët kryesor të punës së shoqërisë civile në këto zona.

Si do ta vlerësonit ndikimin e punës së sho-qërisë civile në komunitetin ku punoni në një shkallë nga 1 (shumë) në 5 (aspak)?	OJQ-të (në %)	Pjesa tjetër: media dhe pushteti vendor (në %)
1 (shumë)	2	7
2	29	13
3	32	20
4	32	27
5 (aspak)	5	33

Më të ngjashëm në përgjigjet e tyre këto dy nëngrupe shfaqen në vlerësimin e nivelit me të cilin shoqëria civile i plotëson nevojat e komunitetit (si në tabelën në vijim). Megjithatë, ky vlerësim varjon edhe në bazë të çështjeve apo nevojave të veçanta. Më poshtë renditen fushat apo nevojat

që mendohet të jenë trajtuar më shumë dhe më pak nga shoqëria civile në zonat rurale/periferike.

Sa i plotëson shoqëria civile nevojat e komu-nëteve në zonat rurale/periferike?	OJQ-të (në %)	Pjesa tjetër: media dhe pushteti vendor (në %)
Plotësisht	5	2
Pjesërisht	69	75
Aspak	25	23
Nuk e di	1	0

Ndër çështjet dhe problematikat që mendohet se shoqëria civile në zonat rurale dhe periferike ka punuar më mirë përmenden:

- Çështje që lidhen me advokacinë dhe lobimin për grupe të caktuara interesi apo për zonën në tërësi
- Puna për të drejtat e grave dhe fëmijëve (përfshi kategori të veçanta të tyre si p.sh gratë e dhunuara, fëmijët me probleme zhvillimi etj);
- Ruajtja dhe promovimi i kulturës, traditës dhe zakoneve të zonave ku punohet;
- Mbrojtja e mjedisit dhe promovimi i turizmit (kulturor dhe mjedisor);
- Promovimi i grupeve të ndryshme profesionale (p.sh fermerëve, gazetarëve lokalë etj.)

Më opinion e tyre është bërë pak ose aspak për të trajtuar një sërë problemesh të tjera që ata vetë i përshkruajnë si nevojë për:

- Vende të reja pune;
- Projekte për zhvillimin e bujqësisë si dhe për zhvillimin e blegtorisë
- Zhvillimin i infrastrukturës se zonës (p.sh për rruge, sisteme për ujitjen e tokave etj.)
- Ndërgjegjësimin e komunitetit, inkurajimin e vullnetarizmit dhe punës në komunitet,
- Pjesëmarrjen më të madhe të grave në jetën komunitare, politikëbërje etj.
- Rritjen e bashkëpunimi ndërinstitucional;
- Mbrojtjen e të drejtave të minoritetit;
- Çështjet sociale në përgjithësi dhe njerëzit me aftësi të kufizuara dhe shërbimi shëndetësor e arsimor në veçanti.

Pjesë e mostrajtimit të mirë të disa prej çështjeve që edhe vetë pjesëmarrësit në studim indetifikojnë janë edhe ato që lidhen me të drejtat e grave dhe minoriteteve. Rezulton se shoqëria civile në këto zona është

ende larg një përfaqësimi dhe trajtimi të mirë të çështjeve të minoriteteve dhe grave. Të parat besohet se trajtohen pjesërisht, pasi 50% e të pyeturve zgjedhin këtë alternativë dhe ato të grave 58%.

Grafiku 7. Përfaqësimi dhe trajtimi i çështjeve të minoriteteve

Nuk e di
12%

Aspak
7%

Plotësisht
31%

Pjesërisht
50%
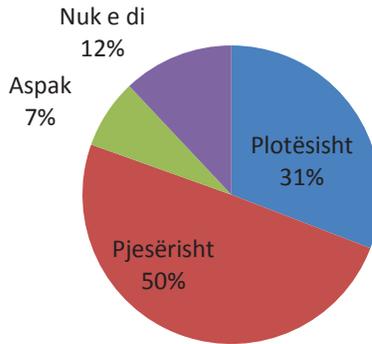
Grafiku 8. Përfaqësimi dhe trajtimi i çështjeve të grave

Nuk e di
1%

Aspak
13%

Plotësisht
28%

Pjesërisht
58%
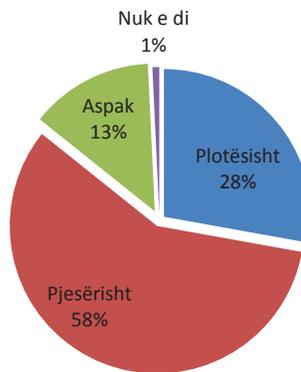
5.3.   Shoqëria civile dhe mjedisi rural/periferik

Suksesi apo mossuksesi i shoqërisë civile në këto zona varet si nga faktorë që mund të kontrollohen prej vetë asaj, ashtu edhe nga faktorë të cilët lidhen me kontekstin, komunitetet ku punojnë dhe mjedisin rural/periferik në përgjithësi. Në këtë prizëm, puna e shoqërisë civile në zonat rurale dhe periferike rezulton të vlerësohet si me më shumë sfida dhe vështirësi sesa ajo në zonat urbane. Kjo duke filluar që nga lehtësia me të cilën mund të themelohet një organizatë apo shoqatë në këto zona respektive. Gati tre të katërtat e të gjithë pjesëmarrësve (74% e tyre) shprehen se është më e vështirë të nisësh një veprimtari të tillë në zonat rurale dhe vetëm 18% mendojnë se nuk ka ndonjë diferencë midis zonave urbane dhe atyre rurale

(siç tregohet edhe në grafikun e mëposhtëm).

Grafiku 9. Më e lehtë të themelosh një organizatë në zonat urbane apo rurale?
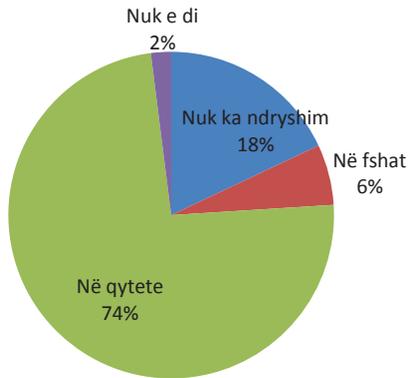
Pikë së pari, mjedisi rural e periferik në tërësi cilësohet si përgjithësisht jo shumë miqësor dhe mbështetës ndaj aktorëve të shoqërisë civile. Madje 10% e të pyeturve mendojnë se ai është 'totalisht pengues' e vetëm 1% mendojnë se ai është' totalisht mbështetës'. Vështirësitë janë të ndryshme; infrastrukturore, të mentalitetit, burimeve etj. Por këto do të eksplorohen më tej. Ajo që mund të vihet re është se këtë atmosferë jo shumë miqësore e perceptojnë dhe e vlerësojnë si të tillë më tepër përfaqësuesit e medias dhe pushtetit vendor (33%) sesa vetë përfaqësuesit e organizatave jo-qeveritare (9%), ndryshe nga sa mund të pritej (Shiko tabelën 3).

Grafiku 10. Sa mbështetës është mjedisi i zonave rurale/periferike?
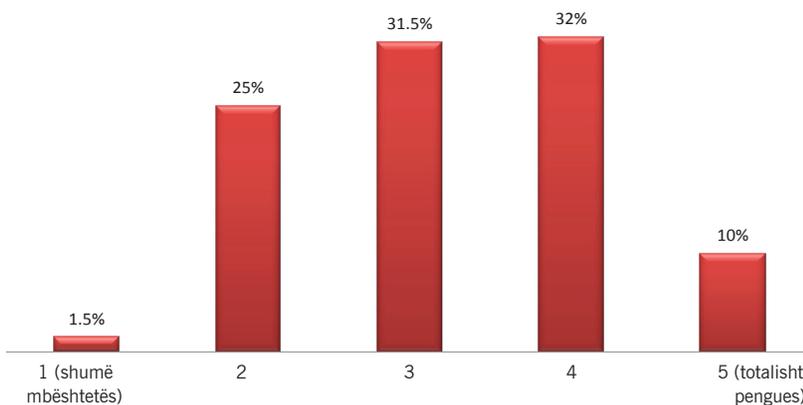
Si do ta vlerësonit mjedisin rural/periferik në raport me shoqërinë civile dhe veprimtarinë në një shkallë nga 1 në 5?	OJQ-të (në %)	Pjesa tjetër e shoqërisë civile dhe pushteti ven-dor (në %)
1 (shumë mbështetës/bashkëpunues)	4	7
2	21	13
3	38	20
4	28	27
5 (totalisht pengues)	9	33

Vetë aktivizimi i komuniteteve rurale/periferike dhe grupeve të interesit në to vlerësohet si më i vështirë sesa në zonat urbane. Mbi 70% të pjesëmarrësve në studim mendojnë se komuniteti dhe grupet e interesit janë më aktivë dhe përfshihen më lehtë në veprimtari e shoqërisë civile në zonat urbane. Ndërkohë 16% mendojnë se nuk ka diferenca dhe vetëm 11% se ndodh e kundërta – pra më aktivë në zonat rurale/periferike.

Grafiku 11. Komuniteti/grupet e interesit më aktivë në:
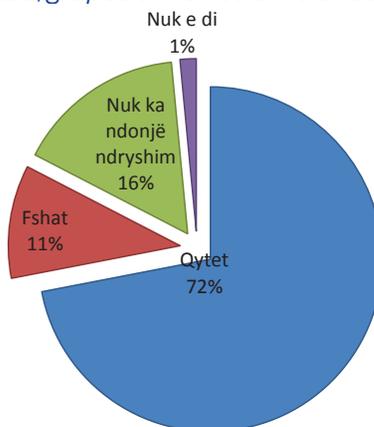
Ky lloj pasiviteti i komuniteti dhe grupeve të interesit kombinohet edhe me një mospërfshirje të tyre në proceset e identifikimit dhe prioritizimit të nevojave për t'u trajtuar nga shoqëria civile në të ardhmen. 27% e pjesëmarrësve në studim shprehen se komuniteti dhe grupet e interesit nuk përfshihen aspak dhe 66% se përfshihen vetëm pjesërisht në proceset e kësaj natyre.

Grafiku 12. Përfshirja e komunitetit në vendosjen e përparësive të shoqërisë civile
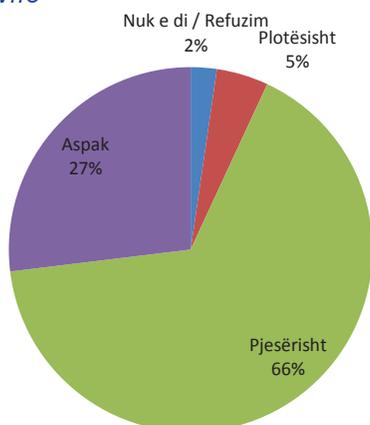
A përfshihet komuniteti i zonave rurale në veprimtaritë e shoqërisë civile për vendosjen e përparësive të agjendës së tyre (organizatave të shoqërisë civile):	OJQ-të (në %)	Pjesa tjetër e shoqërisë civile dhe pushteti vendor (në %)
Plotësisht	5	4
Pjesërisht	65	68
Aspak	29	24
Nuk e di / Refuzim	1	4

5.4. Kapacitetet dhe çështjet organizative të shoqërisë civile në zonat rurale/periferike

Motivet që shtyjnë organizimin e grupeve të interesit apo edhe individëve të veçantë të iniciojnë apo bëhen pjesë e organizmave të ndryshëm të shoqërisë civile variojnë në kohë dhe hapësirë. Pavarësisht kësaj, ky studim është përpjekur të identifikojë arsyet kryesore që nxit veprimtarinë e shoqërisë civile në zonat rurale dhe periferike duke u kërkuar përgjigjedhënësve të zgjedhin tre motive kryesore. Totali i tyre shfaqet si në grafikun e mëposhtëm.

Grafiku 13. Arsyet e themelimit të organizatës
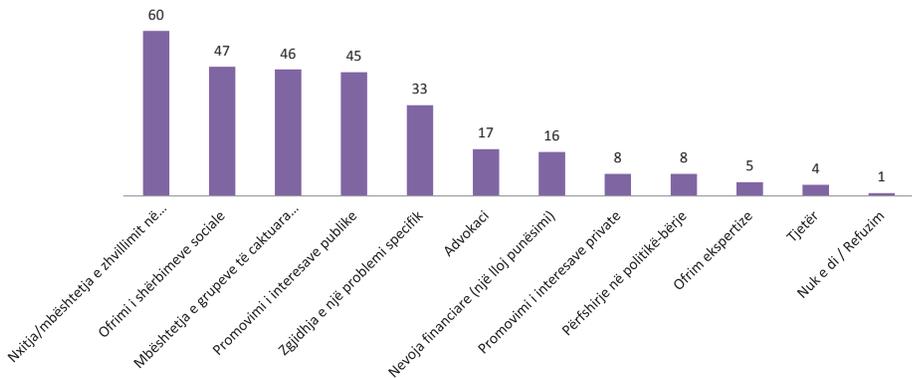
Tre arsyet kryesore rezultojnë të jenë:
- Nxitja dhe mbështetja e zhvillimit të zonës;
- Ofrimi i shërbimeve sociale;
- Mbështetja e grupeve të caktuara në komunitet.

Motive që nëse kanë baza të forta dhe përkthen në vizione dhe objektiva për aktorët e shoqërisë civile të këtyre zonave do të përputheshin shumë mirë edhe me nevojat ende të patrajtuara nga shoqëria të cilat vetë të anketuarit i identifikojnë si të tilla.

Zgjidhja e një problemi specifik ka qenë më rrallë një katalizator për aktivizim të aktorëve të shoqërisë civile. Shumë herë më pak organizatat e shoqërisë civile janë krijuar, ndër të tjera, edhe me qëllim ofrimin e ekspertizës të munguar në këto zona.

Pavarësisht arsyeve të themelimit dhe veprimtarie të tyre, shumica e aktorëve të shoqërisë civile në këto zona ballafaqohen dhe nuk kanë ende të zgjidhura çështje elementare të infrastrukturës. Për shembull, gati 8% e tyre nuk kanë asnjë mjet komunikimi. Vetëm 26% e tyre i kanë të gjithë elementët bazë si telefoni, faksi, kompjuteri dhe interneti. Çështja e zyrave mbetet veçanërisht problematike për to.

Vështirësive të shkaktuara nga infrastruktura e dobët fizike i shtohen edhe kufizimet në burime njerëzore dhe financiare. Në pjesën më të madhe të kohës shoqëria civile në zonat rurale e periferike duket se punon vullnetarisht. Të anketuarit raportojnë se mëse 70% e atyre që angazhohen në punët e organizatës/shoqatës së tyre janë vullnetarë. 10-15% e stafit punon me kohë të pjesshme dhe vetëm 15-20% e stafit është i përhershëm dhe me kohë të plotë. Ndryshe nga shoqëria civile në zonat urbane që rezulton të jetë e dominuar (në shifra) nga gratë, në zonat rurale ka një balancim diku tek 55% gra me 45% burra të punësuar apo të angazhuar

në punën e shoqërisë civile.

Pjesa dërmuese e stafeve të organizatave të shoqërisë civile në zonat rurale 'vuajnë' nga nivelet e dobëta të kualifikimit të stafeve të tyre. Në total, të pyeturit raportojnë për 84% të stafit me arsim të lartë. Vetëm 35% e tyre janë në gjendje të punojnë në gjuhën angleze. Duke pasur parasysh kërkesat e kohës, ky është një kufizim shumë i madh për zhvillimin e tyre, shkrimin e projekteve, ngritjen e fondeve, rrjetëzimet dhe partneritetet rajonale dhe më gjerë. Ngritja e kapaciteteve të tyre për shkrimin e projekteve dhe ngritjen e fondeve rezulton të jetë emergjente. Raportohet vetëm për rreth 10% të stafit që është i trajnuar/kualifikuar për shkrim projektesh dhe ngritje fondesh. Elemente këto thelbësore për organizmat e shoqërisë civile. Gjithashtu, dobët shfaqet edhe komponenti i PR-it apo marrëdhënieve me publikun/komunitetin. Vetëm 14% e stafeve kanë kapacitete në këtë drejtim. Këtu mund të gjendet pjesërisht edhe shkaku i marrëdhënieve jo shumë të ngushta me komunitetin apo edhe imazhit thuajse tërësisht të munguar të shoqërisë civile në zonat rurale/periferike.

Rreth 60% e organizatave kanë politika të shkruara për trajtimin e stafit dhe ofrimin e mundësive të barabarta për ta. Pjesa tjetër ose raporton që nuk ka ose që nuk është në dijeni ekzistencës së tyre. Rreth 23% e pjesëmarrësve në studim raportojnë se stafet në të cilët ata bëjnë pjesë nuk janë trajnuar asnjëherë, për asnjë tematike.

Grafiku 14. Ekzistenca e politikave të shkruara për stafin?
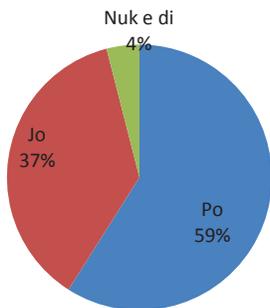
Grafiku 15. A është trajnuar ndonjëherë stafi?
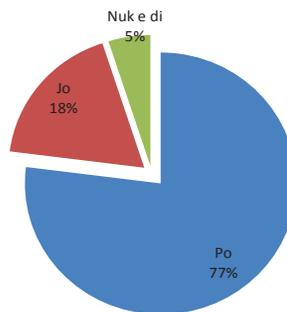
Edhe tek ato organizata të cilat kanë përvoja trajnimesh në stafet e tyre ato kanë qenë kryesisht të kufizuara tek:
- Menaxhimin e OJQ-ve (51%)
- Partneritetet privat-publik-civil (27%)
- Fondet e Bashkimit Evropian (22%)

Megjithatë, vetëbesimi dhe gatishmëria për të qenë organizata që ofrojnë trajnime nuk mungon. Mëse 43% pretendojnë se organizata që përfaqësojnë i ka kapacitet për të ofruar trajnime, 39% se i ka të pjesshme këto kapacitete dhe vetëm 16% i përgjigjen gjetjeve të mësipërme të niveleve te ulëta të trajnimit të stafi, e për pasojë thonë se nuk i kanë kapacitetet e mjaftueshme për një detyre të tillë.

Grafiku 16. A ka organizata juaj kapacitete për të ofruar trajnime?

Nuk e di 2%
Nuk ka kapacitete 16%
Po, ka kapacitete të pjesshme 39%
Po, ka kapacitete të mjaftueshme 43%
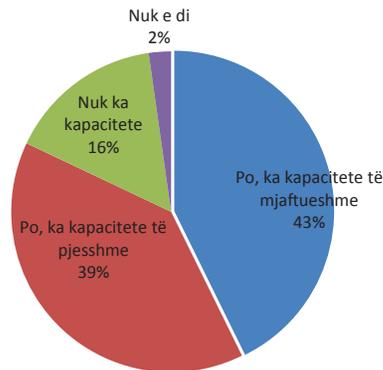
5.5.   Pengesat, nevojat dhe vështirësitë

Në përpjekje për të identifikuar pengesat, nevojat dhe vështirësitë e hasura nga shoqëria civile në zonat rurale e periferike, pjesëmarrësve në studim iu kërkua që të përcaktonin origjinën nga buronin vështirësitë më të mëdha për këtë sektor, nga përvoja e tyre e deritanishme.

Grafiku 17. Vështirësitë më të mëdha lidhen me:

6%	80%	5%	9%	0 %
1. Mungesa në burime njerëzore	2. Mungesa në burime financiare	3. Mungesa infrastrukturore	4. Mungesa e bashkëpunimit nga institucionet publike	5. Tjetër
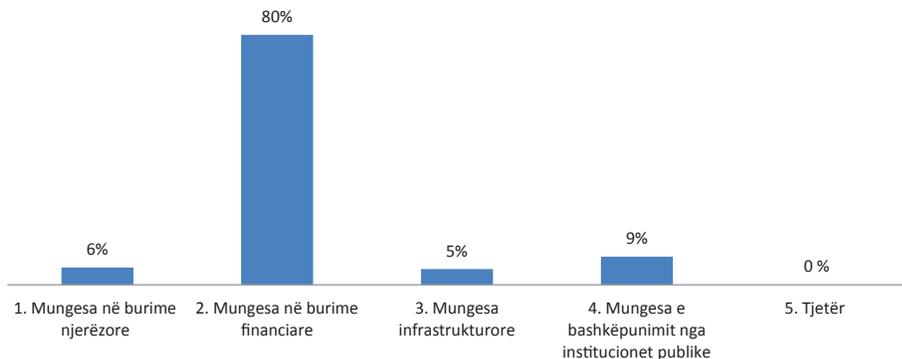
Është mëse e qartë nga grafiku i mësipërm se për të anketuarit problemet dhe vështirësitë më të mëdha lidhen me burimet dhe mbështetjen e kufizuar financiare. Dhe në të vërtetë vetëm 10% e tyre raportojnë për një rritje të

fondeve në raport me një vit më parë, 48% kanë ruajtur status-quo dhe thuajse një e treta (33%) kanë pasur rënie të burimeve financiare këtë vit krahasuar me një vit më parë.

Grafiku 18. Fondet në raport me një vit më parë
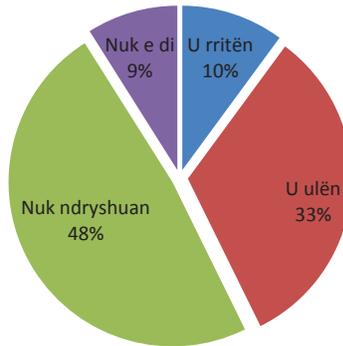
Ndër burimet kryesore financiare renditen ato që vijnë nga qeverisja qendrore dhe ajo lokale. 17% vijnë nga donatorët e huaj dhe vetëm 18% nga një total i kontributeve të biznesit, anëtarësisë, apo shërbimet e vetë organizatës. Ndarje që tregon se vetëmbështetja është ende larg. Siç shihet edhe në grafikun (20) në vijim, kjo shpërndarje nuk pritet të ndryshojë shumë në vitin e ardhshëm.

Grafiku 19. Burimi kryesor i fondeve
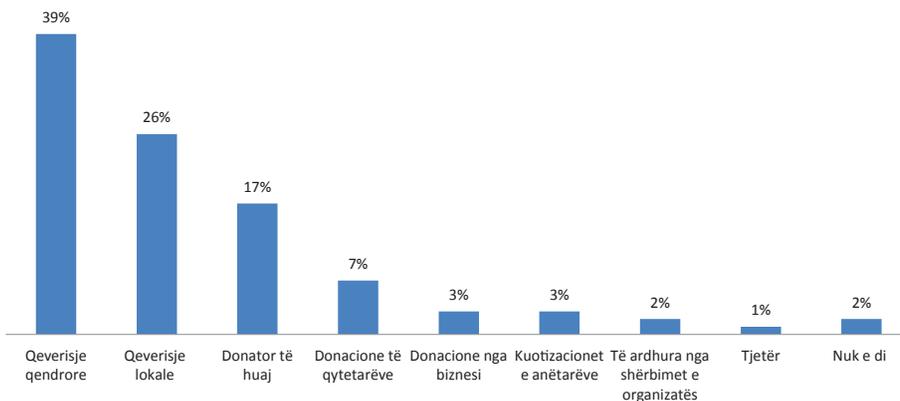
Grafiku 20. Pritshmëritë për buxhetin e vitit të ardhshëm
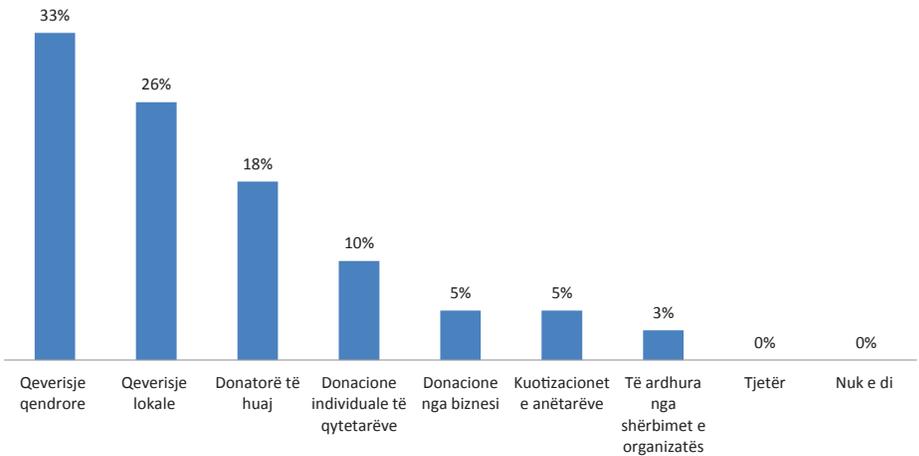
5.6.   E ardhmja dhe kapacitet për planifikim

Pak prej përfaqësuesve të shoqërisë civile të zonave rurale (36%) besojnë se shoqëria civile në këto zona i ka kapacitetet e mjaftueshme për të parashikuar ndryshimet dhe nevojat për të ardhmen e komuniteteve ku ato punojnë. Rreth 40% e tyre shprehen se këto kapacitete janë të pjesshme dhe një përqindje jo e vogël, 23% mendojnë se nuk kanë aspak kapacitete të mjaftueshme në këtë drejtim.

Grafiku 21. Kapacitetet e shoqërisë civile për parashikimin e nevojave dhe ndryshimeve
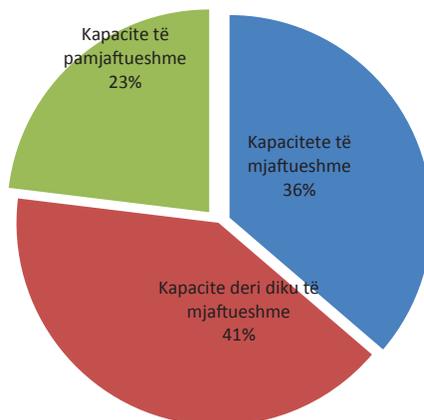
Këto gjetje e bëjnë të vështirë të besohet se me këtë imazh dhe besim që kanë vetë përfaqësuesit e shoqërisë civile në këto zona për sektorin ku ata

punojnë edhe imazhi që ka komuniteti i këtyre zonave për shoqërinë civile ashtu si edhe marrëdhënia midis saj dhe komuniteteve rurale/periferike të përmirësohen ndjeshëm në të ardhmen e afërt.

Një situatë e ngjashme rezulton edhe për qartësinë e vizionit dhe qëllimeve që ka për të ardhmen shoqëria civile në këto zona. 61% shprehen se ky vizion është pjesërisht i qartë dhe për 12% aspak i qartë.

Grafiku 22. Qartësia e vizionit të shoqërisë civile për të ardhmen
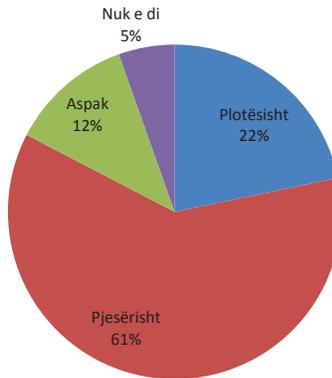
Një vizion i qartë, qëllime e objektiva të mirëpërcaktuar si dhe plane konkrete veprimi kërkojnë edhe vlerësime të vazhdueshme të kushteve të jashtme, kapaciteteve, mundësive dhe kërcënimeve. Ndonëse vlerësime të kushteve të jashtme duket se praktikohen relativisht në ritme të kënaqshme nga aktorët e shoqërisë civile në zonat rurale/periferike, një pjesë e vogël i kthejnë këto vlerësime apo edhe vlerësime të natyrave të tjera në plane konkrete.

Grafiku 23. Shpeshtësia e vlerësimit të kushteve të jashtme
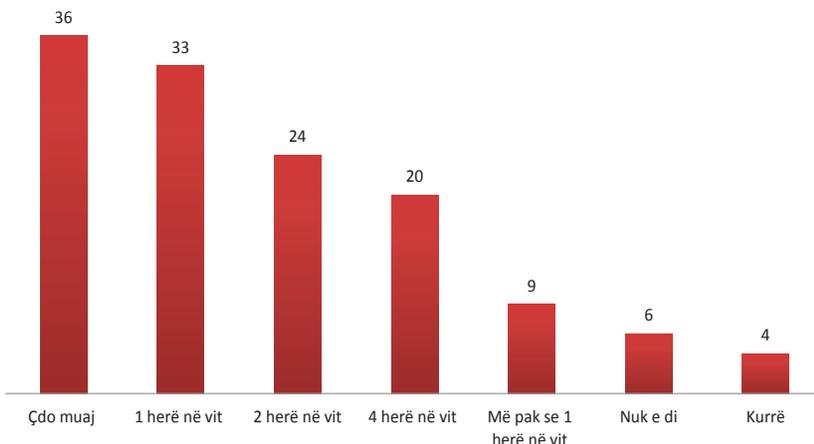
Plane zhvillimi, 3 apo 5 vjeçare, kanë vetëm gjysma e organizatave të përfaqësuara në këtë studim. Me mungesë informacioni mbi përfituesit që duhet të jenë edhe mbështetësit kryesor të veprimtarie të tyre, në fakt duhet të jetë vështirë të planifikohet, duke bërë që këta aktorë të veprojnë shpesh pa plane afatmesme dhe afatgjata.

Grafiku 24. A ka organizata juaj një plan zhvillimi 3- apo 5-vjeçar?
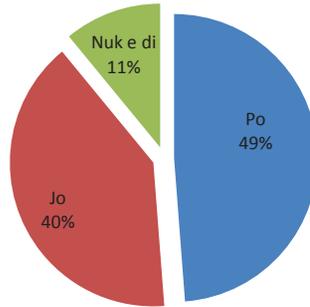
Fakti se gati gjysma e tyre nuk kanë informacion mbi përfituesit e veprimtarisë që ata kryejnë në këto komunitet nuk shërben vetëm si një shpjegim për planifikimin e dobët të punës por edhe si një dëshmi e marrëdhënies së dobët me përfituesit dhe komunitetin në përgjithësi. Çështje e ngritur edhe nga vetë ata në pjesën cilësore të studimit.

Grafiku 25. Informacion mbi përfituesit
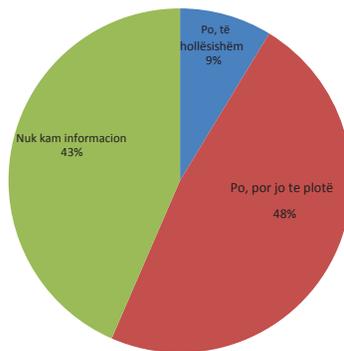
Po si vendosen përparësi në një kontekst ku informacione të rëndësishme mbi përfituesit apo planet afatmesme dhe afatgjata mungojnë? Grafiku i mëposhtëm rendit alternativat më të përzgjedhura prej përgjigjedhënësve. Ndonëse alternativa me e përzgjedhur është ajo e përparësive të vendosura nga vetë komuniteti, mbetet të eksplorohet më tej sesi arrijnë të identifikohen ato kur marrëdhënia me këtë të fundit lë për të dëshiruar, siç u analizua edhe më lart. Siç mund të pritej, përparësit e donatorëve qëndrojnë lart

edhe në axhendën e përparësive të shoqërisë civile në këto zona.

Grafiku 26. Faktorët përcaktues në vendosjen e përparësive për shoqërinë civile në zonat rurale/periferike

Strategjitë kombëtare/lokale të zhvillimit, 9%

Tjetër, 0%

Nuk e di, 1%

Interes/nevojat e grupeve të marxhinalizuara, 13%

Prioritetet e identifikuara nga vetë komuniteti i zonës rurale/periferike, 32%

Interes/nevojat e grupeve të ndryshme sociale, 19%

Prioritetet e përcaktuara nga donatorë të huaj, 26%
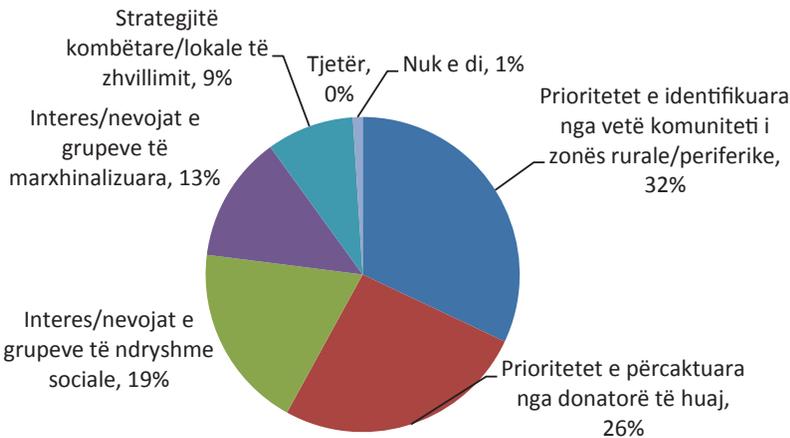
5.7.   Bashkëpunimet, rrjetëzimet dhe marrëdhëniet me publikun

Përgjatë një viti, edhe pse pjesa dërmuese prej 75%, raportojnë të kenë pasur të paktën një takim me organizata të tjera, është thuajse surprizuese mungesa totale e kontakteve me organizata të tjera të shoqërisë civile në këto zona për mëse një të katërtën e tyre. Po e njëjta situatë është edhe për bashkëpunime më të ngushta si këmbime informacionesh, të dhënash apo dokumentesh që mund të lehtësojnë punën e njëri-tjetrit.

Grafiku 27. Takime me organizata të tjera gjatë vitit të fundit

Nuk e di 2%

Jo 23%

Po 75%
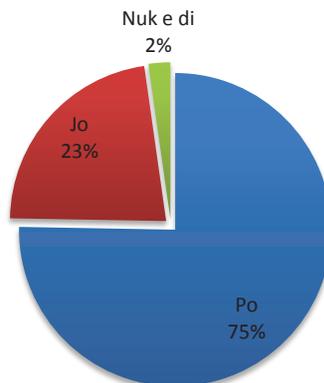
Grafiku 28. A keni shkëmbyer informacione/të dhëna/dokumente me organizata të tjera?
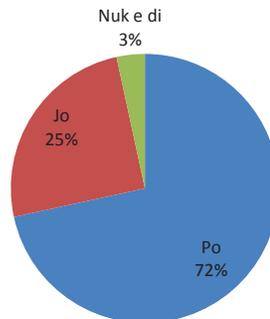
Megjithatë në ato raste ku ka pasur shkëmbime të tilla është shkuar deri edhe në partneritete me projekte të përbashkëta me organizata të tjera (në 57% të rasteve) apo edhe partneritete dhe bashkëpunime me pushtetin vendor (59%). Një përqindje aspak për t'u neglizhuar, 40%, ka pasur një mungesë totale bashkëpunimesh; qoftë më pushtetin vendor apo me organizata të tjera të shoqërisë civile në nivele lokal dhe më gjerë.

Grafiku 29. Projekte të përbashkëta me organizata të tjera?
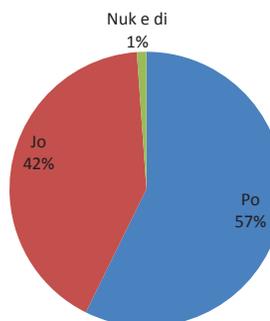
Grafiku 30. Bashkëpunime me pushtetin vendor
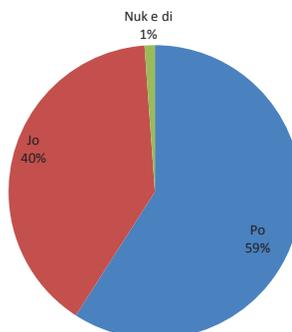
Sipas shpeshtësisë së bashkëpunimeve dhe partneriteteve të derita-nishme, më të shpeshta rezultojnë të jenë ato me:
- Organizata të tjera që punojnë në zonën ku punon organizata e tyre
- Organizata ndërkombëtare apo/dhe donatorë
- Komunitetin lokal
- Institucione të pushtetit vendor

Më pak janë provuar partneritete dhe bashkëpunime me:
- Organizata të nivelit kombëtar
- Institucione të pushtetit qendror
- Median, etj.

Grafiku 31. Bashkëpunimet më të shpeshta
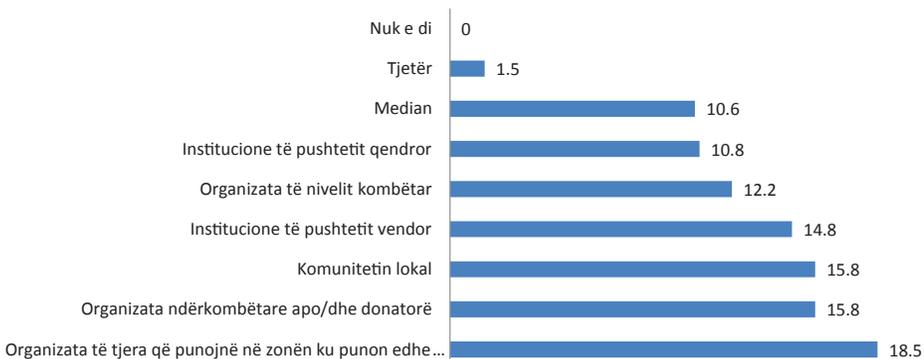
Bashkëpunimi i dobët me organizata të tjera në nivel kombëtare pasqyrohet edhe në pjesëmarrjen e ulët në rrjete apo organizata ombrellë. Në grafikun e mëposhtëm tregohet se vetëm gjysma e organizata pjesë e këtij studimi kanë një përvojë formale të punës në rrjet apo me një organizatë ombrellë.

Grafiku 32. A është organizata juaj anëtare formale e ndonjë grupi, rrjeti, organizate ombrellë?
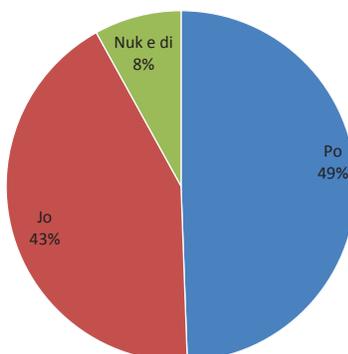
Pavarësisht nga përvojat e limituara në këtë drejtim, bazuar nga sa është jetësuar deri më tani nga këto lloj bashkëpunimesh, më të frytshmet për ta kanë rezultuar bashkëpunimet dhe rrjetet me:

- OJF të tjera lokale
- OJF të huaja
- OJF të mëdha në nivel kombëtar

Pushteti vendor dhe komuniteti i biznesit mbeten partnerë të vështirë për shoqërinë civile. Sidomos marrëdhëniet me biznesin mbeten në një fazë embrional.

Grafiku 33. Bashkëpunimet më të frytshme me:

Nuk e di — 1%
Tjetër — 6%
Zyrat rajonale të donatorëve — 7%
Pushtetin vendor — 14%
Organizata biznesi — 1%
OJF të huaja — 25%
OJF të mëdha në nivel kombëtar — 16%
OJF të tjera lokale — 30%
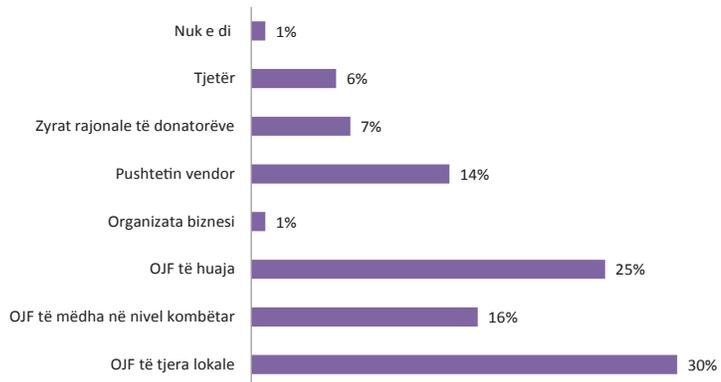
Në përmirësimin e këtyre marrëdhënieve do të kontribuonte ndjeshëm edhe një PR profesional i punës së shoqërisë civile në këto zona. Aktualisht përfaqësuesit e këtij sektori pretendojnë se bëjnë një punë relativisht të mirë në informimin e komunitetit lidhur me veprimtarinë dhe arritjet e tyre.

Grafiku 34. Sa shpesh informohen qytetarët për veprimtarinë e shoqatës që përfaqësoni?

1 herë në disa vite — 4%
Kurrë — 2%
Nuk e di — 1%
Më shumë se 4 herë në vit — 28%
1 herë në vit — 34%
2 deri në 4 herë në vit — 31%
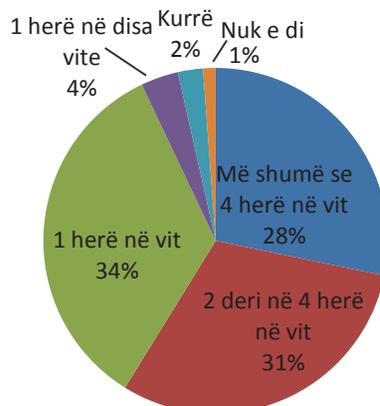
Për informimin e qytetarëve preferohen përgjithëseisht takimet në komunitet dhe publikimet e fletëpalosjeve, broshurave e buletine. Më rrallë zënë vend mes mjeteve të komunitikit mediat lokale dhe botime më të plota si raportet vjetore.

Grafiku 35. Mjetet kryesore për informimin e publikut
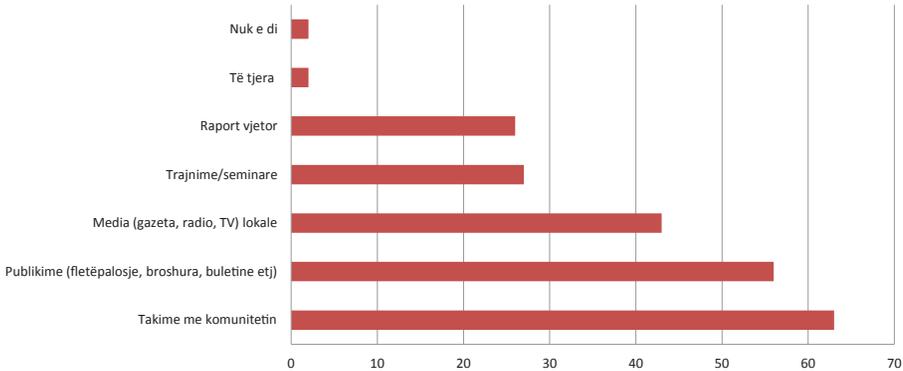
Puna për përmirësimin e marrëdhënieve me qytetarët duhet të ecë paralelisht edhe me atë për përmirësimin e marrëdhënieve me pushtetin vendor por edhe të aktorëve të tjerë si biznesi. Tregues i një komunikimi të dobët midis shoqërisë civile dhe këtij të fundit është edhe shkalla e dobët e informimit që kanë të anketuarit lidhur me planet e komunës apo bashkisë ku ata pretendojnë se kontribuojnë me punën e tyre. Gati 15% e tyre janë tërësisht të painformuar për këtë aspekt. Kjo e bën pothuaj të pamundur bashkërendimin e përpjekjeve dhe bashkëpunimet me ta. 50% mjaftohen me informacion të pjesshëm dhe vetëm 35% ndihen plotësisht të informuar.

Grafiku 36. A jeni të informuar mbi planet e komunës/bashkisë?
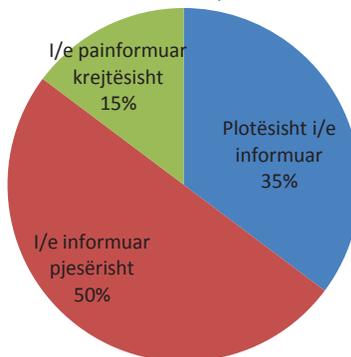
6. CONCLUSIONS

As already advised by the literature review on civil society, this assessment study confirms the fact that the civil society in rural and remote areas is still in embryonic phase. The rural and remote areas are less attractive to organizations operating at national or international level. CS organizations located in rural areas are very few and their activity is modest and oftentimes sporadic. The inconsiderable activity of civil society and the weak impact of its work in these areas is a perception shared by both the civil society actor and other community stakeholders.

It is commonly accepted that the work in rural and remote areas poses greater challenges and difficulties than work in urban areas. Yet, advantages and characteristics are also identified; they make work in these areas interesting and rewarding. Being closer to interest groups and the opportunity of direct communication are regarded as an option for more sustainable impact in normal conditions. Likewise, the changes brought about from the work of civil society in these small areas become more appreciable, concrete and tangible; these are qualities that have direct impact on the strengthening of trust among three parties: civil society – community – local governance.

There is still lack of clarity on coverage and extension of mission and activity of civil society actors in these areas. The need to survive, regardless of difficulties, makes some NGOs lose focus in their mission and their work includes a variety of goals, objectives, activities, and beneficiaries. The geographic coverage, types of activities and target groups vary by available projects or donations and this sometimes creates a mosaic that could affect the quality and results, thus affecting the trust of interest groups or community at large.

The civil society's expansion and activities are limited due to numerous obstacles and difficulties arising from limited budgets, rigid mentalities, resistance and lack of tradition in these communities, lack of cooperation from local government unit, etc. However, apart from addressing these challenges, the civil society in these areas needs to concentrate on the

problems relating to the opinion it enjoys among the public and the level of awareness and knowledge it has for its own role as well as the capacities it needs to accomplish its role and fulfill the responsibilities of the sector.

To date, the image of civil society in rural areas has been improved by the work conducted to address issues of advocacy and lobbying for certain interest groups or for the entire area, for rights of women and children, (including certain categories of these groups, such as violated women), preservation and promotion of culture, traditions and customs of the area, protection of environment and promotion of (cultural and environmental) tourism, or for the promotion of various professional groups (such as farmers, craftsmen, local journalists, etc.). It is also time for civil society in these areas to turn to several important issues for the community, but that have been addressed little. These issues include creation of new jobs, projects for rural and agricultural development, infrastructure development of the zone, community awareness, promotion of voluntarism, and work in community, greater participation of women in community life, increase of cooperation with institutions, and protection of the rights of minorities or other groups with special needs.

In an effort to institute changes, the civil society actors in rural areas feel powerless and alone, because cooperation with local governance, media and members of the same sector is limited. The assistance to be provided to civil society for capacity building should address not only the immediate needs, which they identified as training and qualification for writing projects and fundraising, but also improvement of relations with the public, media, local government unit, and business community as well as building partnerships and networking within civil society and broader. In this aspect, the duties, responsibilities and opportunities pertain to all – civil society, local government units, business, the community at large and other stakeholders.

7.   RECOMMENDATIONS

The last section of this assessment report focuses in the identification of the implications of the main findings produced by this study as well as in the generation of relevant alternatives for action intended for the stakeholders targeted in this assessment.

- The study demonstrates the overall finding relating to the unsatisfactory coverage of rural areas by civil society, with few of these areas left completely uncovered. In this context, one of the main recommendations is intended to civil society actors to be more alert and to guide their activities to issues such as:
  − o Work to promote and facilitate the work in rural areas, rural development, and their incorporation in the focus of EU programs
  − Community awareness, promotion of voluntarism and work in community
  − Greater participation of women in community life, policymaking, etc.
  − Increase of cross-institutional cooperation
  − Protection of rights of minorities
  − Social issues in general and people with disabilities as well as health and educational services in particular.

- Slow pace of civil society development in rural and remote areas of the country is considerably affected by the opportunities of cooperation and their concretization among civil society organizations, local governance agencies, and local business sector. In this regard, prioritization of this issue in the agenda of civil society and local government must become a key recommendation for the future.

- Cooperation and partnership among civil society organizations, and partnership with local government units and business community are indispensable for a more active and recognizable civil society in rural and remote areas. Coordination of efforts in common areas of activity, collaboration and partnerships as well as networking with civil society organizations in rural areas must be encouraged and facilitated to

become fully operational and sustainable.

- The improvement of the civil society role in rural and remote areas must be a result of internal capacity building. The recommendation for capacity building and improvement applies to both human and infrastructure capacities. Consolidation of capacities of human resources, particularly in writing projects and fundraising, is very important for the sustainability and self-sufficiency of the civil society organizations in these areas.

- Last but not least, the civil society in rural and remote areas must feel and act as part of these areas. Its activity must be closely related with the community, incorporate their interests, address their problems, and show to them its work and achievements as transparently and continuously as possible. Clarification of the profile of the actors in this sector, building of capacities on public relations, and active involvement of interest groups would be some of approaches to be followed in this regard.

8. PARTNERS FOR AN ACTIVE CIVIL SOCIETY IN RURAL AND REMOTE AREAS: A PLATFORM OF ALTERNATIVES

Representatives of Albanian Government, the United Nations, EU Delegation, institutions focused in development of marginalized groups and areas, civil society and media were involved in a consultation process in the framework of the Empowering Civil Society in Rural and Remote Areas" National Workshop (in Tirana on March 1, 2012) to discuss and promote a shared platform of alternatives aimed at encouraging civil society in rural and remote areas.

Based on the preliminary findings of the "Civil Society in Rural and Remote Areas in Albania" Study and on the experience and viewpoints of key organizations focused in the development of civil sector in remote areas, the participants a considerable set of measures for a more active civil society in these areas. This set of measures and development alternatives are suggested to shape the main dimensions of intervention for empowering the civil society in rural and remote areas. These dimensions are:

1. Addressing Challenges and Immediate Needs
2. Promotion of Partnerships, Networking and Citizen Involvement
3. Sustainability and Future of Civil Society in Rural and Remote Areas

The suggestions and recommendations of over 170 participants in the national workshop detail and complete the recommendation set of this study targeting not only civil society organizations but above all state agencies at national and local level as well as donor community.

8.1. Addressing Challenges and Immediate Needs

- Regardless of passiveness of the rural and remote area community to become part of the civil society action, the initiatives to date (such as in

nature disasters) underline the potential and will of the local community for collaboration in the solution of the problems, which implies the promotion of these initiatives.

- Another problem that can be quite well addressed by community organizations in cooperation with the local government bodies is the issue of joint management of local schools and other locally-provided public services by local CSOs and public entities.

- The concept of voluntarism and community engagement needs further promotion, particularly in rural and remote areas where the potential for promotion is quite significant. Local Action Groups are important structures to be supported regarding the organization of communities. In addition, networking initiatives of the rural civil society organizations must be supported.

- Building and improvement of capacities of rural civil society organizations must also be targeted. In addition, support should be provided to initiatives that seek to increase cooperation between local governance and rural CSOs. Promotion of a small grants program, whose requirements will comply with the current status of capacities of rural CSOs would help to revitalize the civil sector in these areas.

- Image improvement of civil sector and CSOs in these areas must primarily turn into action from these very actors of civil society by promoting and supporting good management practices, involvement, and the principles of good governance, such as accountability, transparency, etc. Special attention must be paid to membership-based CSOs.

- The donor community must diversify the spectrum of its support and facilitate the procedures of applications from rural and remote areas by offering assistance for those sectors and actors that do not possess the required capacities for applications.

- The role of local government unit is crucial to the better operation of a local environment in rural and remote areas so as it is more supportive to civil society sector. There is room to further improve the partnership with this sector, particularly in remote areas and through modes funding for services provided to the local community

8.2.   Promotion of Partnerships, Networking and Citizen Involvement

- It is necessary to coordinate efforts among government, CSOs in rural

and urban areas, international donors, and private sector. Exchange of experience and viewpoints on how to address barriers to networking could be an effective starting point to increase impact in this context.

- CSOs of urban areas that have a more consolidated development should share skills and experiences with rural organizations and increase local and national networking among CSOs as potential rural CSOs development. This process must also include project ideas shared between urban and rural CSOs and a coordination of their activity to avoid overlapping. Annual plans of local CSOs could be a potential alternative in this direction.

- Continuous communication and transparency are starting points for a reliable partnership with the community and involvement of citizens in the civil society actions.

- The local government must help to increase and improve the capacities of rural CSOs because they are messengers of community problems and know the local reality very well.

- The business community must pay more attention to the options of funding as an expression of its focus to situations of concern to society and increase cooperation with local organizations. In this context, it is crucial that state agencies enrich the incentive framework.

8.3.   Sustainability and Future of Civil Society in Rural and Remote Areas

- It is necessary to devolve (decentralize) the power as a tool for expanding governance to citizens.

- The local governance must engage the human capital of these organizations in order to avoid its loss. Initiatives such as creation of private cooperatives, concessions of monuments of culture and other initiatives must promote and increase participation of citizens to solve problems that pertain to communities.

- Both central and local governments must play a more active role in the increase of civic involvement in decision-making and solution of problems of civil society in general and rural civil society organizations in particular. Possible alternatives may include elections of representatives of neighborhoods, reeves, and communal and municipal structures and use of these entities for partnership with civil society and for drafting development strategies and plans.

- Involvement of citizens and civil society sector must also be considered when drafting plans and projects in the framework of EU funding and process of membership so that they reflect the needs and priorities of local communities as best as possible. Opportunities offered from the country's integration should be explored, as consultation with civil society and interest groups of all primary sectors is essential.

- Ideas and priorities established by the community should be promoted; in this respect, all governments and civil society must assist the community of donors to prioritize their agenda locally.

- Donors' strategy on the country must be based on the local context, not on the global one. Donors can help by giving more feedback on project proposals of civil society organizations and rural organizations that are not successful.

- There is an unbalanced ratio between the role of local governance and the role of civil society. Undertaking initiatives, such as creation of a Partnership Fund, which local government should aim for rural civil society organizations, will serve the development.

- Registration of CSOs, particularly those in local/rural/remote areas would help to develop experiences, improve exchange, and enhance cooperation. There are currently two registers: one established by Partners Albania and the other one by UNDP. A good start would be to update these registers.

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10. ANNEXES

10.1. Semi-Structured Interviews with Key Informants

Assessment of civil society in rural and remote areas

Qualitative interview with actors of civil society operating in rural and remote areas

Structure of Issues of Interview

ISSUE	SPECIFIC QUESTION	NOTES
• Involvement in rural and remote areas (vs. urban areas)	1. Short history on involvement of your NPO in the rural and remote areas	
	2. What were the reasons that made you start this activity? What were the issues that you focused on? Why?	
	3. How would you compare your work in rural and remote areas with the activity of NGOs in conurbations? What are the differences and the details that make this difference, including interest, challenges, and difficulties?	
• Coverage	1. What is the geographical coverage of your NPO's activity?	
	2. What types of activities do you engage in and implement?	
	3. Which are the main beneficiaries and target groups you work with and establish partnerships?	

ISSUE	SPECIFIC QUESTION	NOTES
• **Capacities and level of knowledge**	1. What kind of resources and support are available to your NPO to work in rural and remote areas?	
	2. Staff: How would you rate your staff in terms of quality and number (including education, training, qualification, etc.)? What are their needs? a. Awareness: Are NGOs in rural and re-mote areas aware of the role they play or should play? Are local communities aware of this role? Why?	
• **Experience to date**	1. What are the main achievements of your organization or network where you are part of in rural and remote areas?	
	2. Give a brief description of a successful experience.	
	3. What are the main difficulties confronting your NPO in rural and remote areas?	
• **Needs and challenges (particularly those regarding the context of rural and remote areas)**	1. What are the strengths and weaknesses of your organization?	
	2. What are the main needs?	
	3. What are the main challenges you are facing?	
	4. What are the opportunities of develop-ment for NPOs and civil society in rural and remote areas (including funding)?	
• **Networking and collaborations**	1. Are there networking initiatives among NPOs operating in rural and remote areas? If yes, give examples and provide a short description on the areas they operate and what actors are involved. How would you rate the work of these networks?	
	2. How are the relations of cooperation between NPOs in rural and remote areas and local government in these areas?	

ISSUE	SPECIFIC QUESTION	NOTES
• **Sustainability (future of civil society in rural and remote areas))**	1. How do you see the future of civil society in rural and remote areas? How do you see your organization 5 years from now?	
	2. Do you think there is a promotional environment for the empowerment and enhancement of civil society in rural and remote areas? If yes, in which areas do you see more chances for such thing? How much time would it take to achieve this?	
	3. In what areas and sectors do you think it is more important to involve NPOs in rural and remote areas? In what fields and sectors are there more chances of strengthening of activities and impact of NPOs in rural and remote areas? Why?	
	4. Besides funding, what are the other factors that you would rely on for the sustainability and further development of your organization (support from community, local governance, etc.)??	
• **Other important issues**	– In this section, make your respondent share and give information on important issues on civil society in rural and remote areas	
	…	
	…	

Data on respondent

1. Name of organization / institution
2. Name and position of interviewee
3. Contact number of organization/institution and interviewee (mobile phone, landline phone, email address, including website of organization, if any).

10.2. Survey

Questionnaire for civil society organizations in rural and remote areas 2011

Who is this questionnaire intended for?

This questionnaire is designed and intended for all types of civil society organizations established and/or operating in rural areas of the regions of Lezha, Berat, Elbasan, and Gjirokastra and their collaborators in local governance and media. If you are representing such institution, then you may be involved in this study and invite your colleagues to become part of it by filling in its questionnaire.

Invitation for collaboration

Distinguished colleagues,

The research team established by IDM in the framework of "Empowering Civil Society in Rural and Remote Areas to Promote Development and Good Governance" Project, supported by UNDP Albania, has the pleasure to invite you to take part in a study that aims to assess the needs, issues, and opportunities of the civil society organizations established and/or operating in rural areas of the regions of Lezha, Berat, Elbasan, and Gjirokastra. Secondly, the study seeks to come up with some recommendations on priority steps to be undertaken for encouraging and facilitating the work and development of civil society in rural and remote areas of Albania.

Your answers will be an indisputable contribution to the success of this project. IDM assures you of the anonymity of this interview.

Thank you.

SECTION I
General Information

1.1   Full name: _____

1.2   Telephone: _____

1.3   E-mail:_____

1.4   Region/Municipality/Commune:_____

1.5   Name of institution you represent:_____

1.6   Positioni: _____

Head of organization/institution	**1 ☐**
Staff of organization/institution	**2 ☐**
Other (specify)_____	**3 ☐**

1.7 Where is your organization located?

Village	**1 ☐**
Small town	**2 ☐**
Large city (center of region)	**3 ☐**

1.8 Are you part of:

Non-governmental organization	**1 ☐**
Local government unit	**2 ☐**
Media	**3 ☐**
Other_____	**4 ☐**

1.9 What was the main reason for the creation of your organization?
(Check any option that applies.)

Solution of a specific problem	**1 ☐**
Support and promotion of development in the area of activity	**2 ☐**
Promotion of public interests	**3 ☐**
Promotion of private interests	**4 ☐**
Advocacy (in a political process headed by an individual or group seeking to impact public policies and decision-making)	**5 ☐**
Provision of social services	**6 ☐**
Support to certain groups of community	**7 ☐**
Provision of expertise	**8 ☐**

Policymaking	9 ☐
Financial needs (a kind of employment)	10 ☐
Other _____	11 ☐

1.10 How active do you rate the civil society in your area, in a scale of 1 (very active) to 5 (not active at all)?
1   2   3   4   5

1.11 How would you rate the impact of the civil society work in your community of activity, in a scale of 1 (very active) to 5 (not active at all)?
1   2   3   4   5

1.12 According to your opinion, what are the 3 areas best covered from the activity of civil society in your zone? (Rank by importance.)
1……………………………………………………………………………………
2……………………………………………………………………………………
3……………………………………………………………………………………

1.13 According to your opinion, what are the 3 areas least covered from the activity of civil society in your zone:
1……………………………………………………………………………………
2……………………………………………………………………………………
3……………………………………………………………………………………

1.14 Does your organization/institution have access to:

	Yes 1 ☐	No 2 ☐
a. Telephone		
b. Fax		
c. Computer		
d. Internet		

SECTION II
Civil Society and Rural and Remote Areas/Environment

2.1. How would you evaluate the rural and remote environment in relation to civil society and its activity, in a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is

"very supportive and collaborative" and 5 is "totally obstructive"?

1   2   3   4   5

2.2. According to you, is it easier to create an organization in:

Town	1 ☐
Village	2 ☐
No difference	3 ☐

2.3 Are communities/interest groups more active and involved much easier in the activities of civil society in:

Town	1 ☐
Village	2 ☐
No difference	3 ☐

2.4 According to you, does the current level of civil society development in rural and remote areas meet the needs and issues of these areas?

Fully	1 ☐
Partly	2 ☐
Not at all	3 ☐
Don't know / don't answer	99 ☐

2.5 Is the community of rural areas involved in the activities of civil society on establishment of priorities in the agenda of CSOs?

Fully	1 ☐
Partly	2 ☐
Not at all	3 ☐
Don't know / don't answer	99 ☐

2.6 In the areas of your activity, are minorities and their issues included and represented by the civil society?

Fully	1 ☐
Partly	2 ☐
Not at all	3 ☐
Don't know / don't answer	99 ☐

2.7 In the areas of your activity, are women and their issues included and represented by the civil society?

Fully	1 ☐
Partly	2 ☐
Not at all	3 ☐
Don't know / don't answer	99 ☐

2.8 How often do you conduct assessment and analysis of the external conditions where your organization operates?

Less than one time a year	1 ☐
1 time a year	2 ☐
2 times a year	3 ☐
4 times a year	4 ☐
Every month	5 ☐
Never	6 ☐

Note: The following sections (No. III, IV and V) are intended for representatives of the civil society organizations only.

SECTION III
Organizational Capacities and Issues

3.1 What human resources does your organization have?

Full-time employees	_____%
Part-time employees	_____%
Volunteers	_____%
Women	_____%
Men	_____%

3.2 Sa shpesh bëni vlerësime dhe analiza të kushteve të jashtme ku vepron organizata juaj?

University education	_____%
English language skills to work with	_____%
Been trained to write projects	_____%
Been trained on fundraising	_____%
Been trained on relations with beneficiaries and community in general	_____%

3.3 Does your organization have written policies for training of staff and for providing equal opportunities to employees?

Yes	1 ☐
No	2 ☐
Don't know / don't answer	99 ☐

3.4 Has your staff ever been trained?

Yes	1 ☐
No (Pass to question 3.6)	2 ☐
Don't know / don't answer (Pass to question 3.6)	99 ☐

3.5 Has any of your staff members been trained on:

	PO 1 ☐	JO 2 ☐	Don't know/don't answer 99 ☐
NPO management			
Private-public partnership			
European Union funding			

3.6 Does your organization have the required capacities to provide training?

Yes, it has all capacities	1 ☐
Yes, but it has insufficient capacities	2 ☐
No, it does not have capacities	3 ☐
Don't know / don't answer	99 ☐

3.7 According to you, the greatest obstacles in performing activities of civil society in your area are related to?

1. Deficiency in human resources (in expertise)	
2. Deficiency in financial resources	2 ☐
3. Infrastructure deficiencies (office, equipment, etc.)	3 ☐
4. Lack of cooperation from public institutions	4 ☐
5. Other (specify)_____	5 ☐

3.8 Do you think the civil society in your area has the capacities to foresee the future changes and needs of the community of your area?

Sufficient capacities	1 ☐
Sufficient capacities to a certain extent	2 ☐

Insufficient capacities	3 ☐
Don't know / don't answer	99 ☐

3.9 Do you think that civil society in your area has a clear vision of the goals/objectives that it seeks to accomplish in the next 5-10 years?

Fully	1 ☐
Partly	2 ☐
Not at all	3 ☐
Don't know / don't answer	99 ☐

3.10 Do you have information on the number of citizens using or benefiting from the activities of the civil society in your community?

Yes, detailed information	1 ☐
Yes, but incomplete information	2 ☐
No information at all	3 ☐
Don't know / don't answer	99 ☐

SECTION IV
Financial and Management Needs

4.1 Based on the previous financial year, rank by importance (where 1 is the most important) the following financial resources for the budget of your organization.

Central government	1 ☐
Local government	2 ☐
Foreign donor	3 ☐
Individual donations of citizens	4 ☐
Donations from business	5 ☐
Membership fees	6 ☐
Revenues from services of organization	7 ☐
Other_____	8 ☐
Don't know / don't answer	99 ☐

4.2 Compared with the previous year, funding of your organization:

Increased	1 ☐
Decreased	2 ☐
Did not change	3 ☐
Don't know / don't answer	99 ☐

4.3 Where do you think majority of funding should be generated from in the future? *(Rank by importance where 1 is the main source.)*

Central government	1 ☐
Local government	2 ☐
Foreign donor	3 ☐
Individual donations of citizens	4 ☐
Donations from business	5 ☐
Membership fees	6 ☐
Revenues from services of organization	7 ☐
Other_____	8 ☐
Don't know / don't answer	99 ☐

4.4 How important do you think are the following factors in definition of priorities of civil society in rural and remote areas? *(Rank by importance in a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is most important.)*

Priorities identified by community of the rural and remote area	1 ☐
Priorities defined by foreign donors	2 ☐
Interests/needs of various social groups	3 ☐
Interests/needs of marginalized groups	4 ☐
National/local development strategies	5 ☐
Other_____	6 ☐

4.5 Does your organization have a 3- or 5-year development plan?

Po	1 ☐
Jo	2 ☐
Nuk e di / Refuzim	99 ☐

SECTION V
Collaborations

5.1 In the last year (September 2010 – September 2011), have you had any (work) meetings with other organizations working in rural areas?

Yes	1 ☐
No	2 ☐
Don't know / don't answer	99 ☐

5.2 Have you exchanged information/data/documents with other organizations during the last year?

Yes	1 ☐
No	2 ☐
Don't know / don't answer	99 ☐

5.3 Have you had a joint project with other organizations of civil society during the last year?

Yes	1 ☐
No	2 ☐
Don't know / don't answer	99 ☐

5.4 Have you collaborated with the local government unit during the last year?

Yes	1 ☐
No	2 ☐
Don't know / don't answer	99 ☐

5.5 Considering your experiences to date, the most frequent collaborations were with *(rank by importance, where 1 – most important)***:**

Other organizations working in the same area of your organization's location	1 ☐
Organizations with national coverage	2 ☐
International organizations and/or donors	3 ☐
Local governance entities	4 ☐
Central government agencies	5 ☐

Local community	6 ☐
Media	7 ☐
Other_____	8 ☐
Don't know / don't answer	99 ☐

5.6 Is your organization a formal member to any group, network, umbrella organization, etc.?

Yes	1 ☐
No	2 ☐
Don't know / don't answer	99 ☐

5.7 How often do you inform citizens on services/activities of your organization?

Every month	1 ☐
4 times a year	2 ☐
2 times a year	3 ☐
One time a year	4 ☐
Once in few years	5 ☐
Never	6 ☐
Don't know / don't answer	99 ☐

5.8 What are the main means you use for information?

Publications (leaflets, brochures, bulletins, etc.)	1 ☐
Annual report	2 ☐
Meetings with the community	3 ☐
Local media (newspaper, radio, TV)	4 ☐
Training/workshop	5 ☐
Other (specify)_____	6 ☐

5.9 Are you informed about the work plan of the municipality/commune on the development of the area of your activity?

Fully informed	1 ☐
Partly informed	2 ☐
Fully uninformed	3 ☐
Don't know / don't answer	99 ☐

5.10 Based on your experiences, the most fruitful collaborations were with:

Other local NPOs	1 ☐
Large national NPOs	2 ☐
Foreign NPOs	3 ☐
Business organizations	4 ☐
Local government unit	5 ☐
Regional office of donors	6 ☐
Other _____	7 ☐
Don't know / don't answer	99 ☐

Thank you.

10.3.   Interviews of Focus Groups

Issues of discussion:

1. Specific difficulties and problems of their rural areas only

2. Civil society – community relationship: Why this lack of trust and confidence (as the analysis of quantitative data suggests)

3. Civil society – local governance relationship: Why is local governance presumably seeing civil society as a rival?

4. The relationship with the business community is very weak. How do you see the future of this relationship?

5. The staff of civil society organizations in rural areas seems to have been little trained, even though they are ready to provide training when asked about that. What is the tradeoff here? What is the need for capacity building? What areas can be covered by local organizations and in what areas does staff need training urgently?

6. It is claimed that the relationship with the community, beneficiaries, is primarily kept via direct meetings with the community. Likewise, it is stated that community priorities are on top of civil society agenda. What is the truth behind this statement? How effective are these meetings and how are priorities identified?

7. An overall view reveals that civil society members find it difficult to identify deficiencies or other limitations of their work and are chiefly focused in financial difficulties.

a. Are there other weaknesses that can be identified?

b. How are sustainability, self-sufficiency and financial support perceived? What are their expectations and plans?

8. What is the image of civil society in these areas and how do they see their future? What are the main actors and concrete responsibilities that are identified to help get there?