

Tirana **SPEAKS!**

Community structures in Albania



Institute for Democracy and Mediation
Instituti për Demokraci dhe Ndërmjetësim

LEVIZ
Albania
Local Democracy in Action



Tirana SPEAKS!

Community structures in Albania

A HANDBOOK

May 2016

Contents

By Way of an Introduction	6
Community Structures in the New Law on Local Self-Governance	10
The Mission of Community Structures	12
Characteristics and Responsibilities of Effective Community Structures	14
Relations of Community Structures to Institutions	18
Five Dimensions of Community Empowerment	20
Can You Be a Member of the Community Council?	22
Challenges of Community Structures in Albanian Context	24
Examples of Civic Engagement in Local Development	31
Glossary of Terms	36
Bibliography	39

COMMUNITY

COMMUNITY

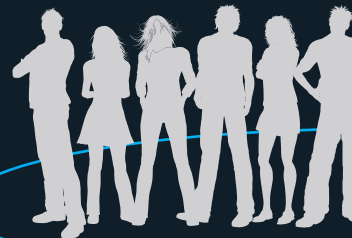
- Community structures are closely linked with a certain urban minizone.
- A community council is selected with the consent of the respective territory's residents.
- A liaison is a member of the community council.
- The Municipal Council regulates the activity of the community structures.



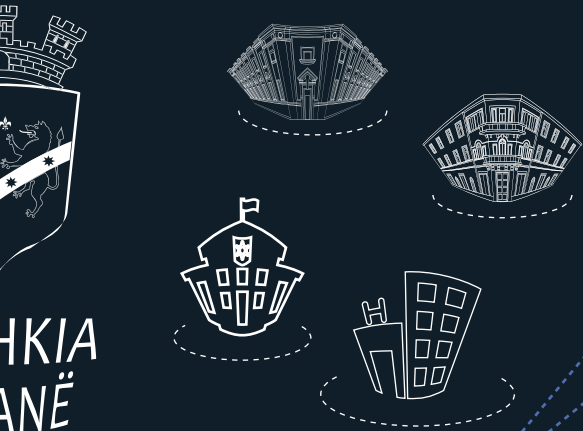
BASH
TIRA



COMMUNITY STRUCTURES



STRUCTURES



- Community structures represent the entire population of an urban minizone (including youth, women, elderly, employed or jobless residents).
- Anyone willing to contribute to a better community life can be part of the community structure.
- The final goal of this approach is to link civil attitudes and accountability with the minizone's community.



- Community structures give life to civic action in the area.
- Community structures responsibilities from the Municipal Council and the Mayor.
- Community structures serve as a bridge and partnership instrument between community and public institutions.


This handbook seeks to introduce a different alternative to governance, share its common vision, and encourage central and local institutions in their initiative to pursue and establish partnership with citizens as an important subject to change. Improvement of governance and quality of life cannot be an exclusive right of the state and its governments.

The handbook will be of help to and is expected to be endorsed by all potential stakeholders as indispensable partners of this change. It relies on the institutions' important role. However, this handbook is intended for the citizens, because the change comes from empowered and informed citizens.

The above initiatives and goals rely on the provisions of the Law on Local Self-Governance (Articles 68 and 69), which stipulate the creation of a new reality of community organizations. This reality could constitute a milestone in the development of democracy, because it employs public dynamics to empower citizens for their role in governance.

This initiative calls for the creation of an enabling environment to establish community councils upon citizens' initiative and willpower in each urban area. On this front, the handbook will address, in separate sections, approaches to the creation of community structures and citizens' role in giving life to community organizations as civil responsibility. On the other hand, it will shed light on issues relative to normative and regulatory process to be carried out by the local governance.

The process of establishing community structures constitutes a novelty to the Albanian public and should, thus, be educative to citizens and institutions. This initiative requires a different governance culture that works for the citizens and necessitates a change in managerial mindset



by relying on the active role of the citizens and community groups. On a related note, the initiative entails active citizens and commitment from common society for contribution. To this end, the instances of citizens' increasing role in the management of public life are numerous.

It goes without saying that the challenges are numerous and strenuous. Overcoming them will call for involvement in interpersonal relations among people in local communities. Investment in strengthening social capital is a missing puzzle in public policies during the country's transitional years. Some public reviews and discourses blame social and civil apathy and lack of a perspective for development of society from bottom or deficiency of one-way governance, i.e., from government to citizen and not from bottom to top, for failure in progressing to the right direction.

The situation becomes even more demanding in the newly-created local government units, which cover a larger urban and rural territory and where representation and participation of local communities in governance and decision-making are even more challenging. The new Law on Local Self-Governance has already assumed this problem. The municipality exercises its authority in suburban areas by means of administrative units. In addition, the national legislation stipulates, for the very first time, the citizens' initiative for self-organization and contribution by means of various forms to get involved and participate in local governance and improve local community's quality of life.

In this instance, upon an initiative of the Municipality of Tirana and in partnership with many other civil society actors, the Institute for Democracy and Mediation is investing its rich multiyear experience to institutionalize a form of governance through citizen participation. We are aware that this undertaking is not trouble-free. The first hesitancy arising in this prescription relates with skepticism and lack of trust that this change can indeed occur and that local communities can undertake governance responsibilities. It is similarly challenging to change the mindset of leading or managing public life by appreciating partnership with citizens in governance.

In its entirety, the domestic social and institutional environment has not been guided, to date, by governance philosophies and models that invite



and support top-bottom and vice-versa interface. Yet, the intended change will have to occur. First of all, because there is no other alternative –apart from empowerment of citizens– to fill the vacuity and distance of citizens with government in terms of representation, participation, involvement, citizenry, civilization, responsibility, accountability, humanism, volunteering, etc. This is one side of the coin, and the most important one, indeed, because it makes citizens understand that they have the power to trigger change.

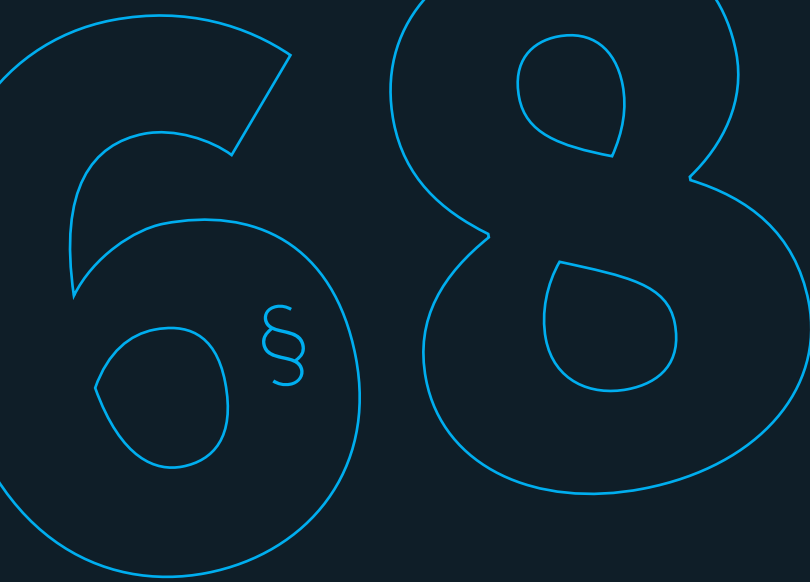
The other side of the coin: institutions face the indispensable need to collaborate and interact with community structures, which are truly elected by local communities. It is hard to image democratic governance, efficient enforcement of law at local level by any public institution, economic policies on sustainable development in rural areas in particular, social inclusion, and decrease of social disparities without the participation and contribution of the citizens and local communities in the governance processes. Any efforts to curb corruption and improve public accountability at all can be more successful when empowering citizens' voice. Finally, the very morale of the society is, after all, chained to citizenry.

Streamlining institutions to citizen-centered policies and empowerment of citizens through community structures intended for civil participation and engagement are the two directions that guarantee good governance.

Therefore, the Institute for Democracy and Mediation is convinced that the Municipality of Tirana and its Municipal Council as well as the civil society and voluntary groups will work together to establish a functioning model of community structures to be replicated in other parts of Albania.

The information in this handbook will endeavor to enliven the spirit of the new Law on Local Self-Governance (Articles 68 and 69). This approach stems from the domestic needs to strengthen participatory democracy and relies on a comparative study in the countries of the region and elsewhere.





Community Structures in the New Law on Local Self-Governance

Adopted in December 2016 and entering into force on 30 January 2016, the new Law No. 139/2015, "On Local Self-Governance", designated two specific articles on community structures, including community liaison and council.

Article 68

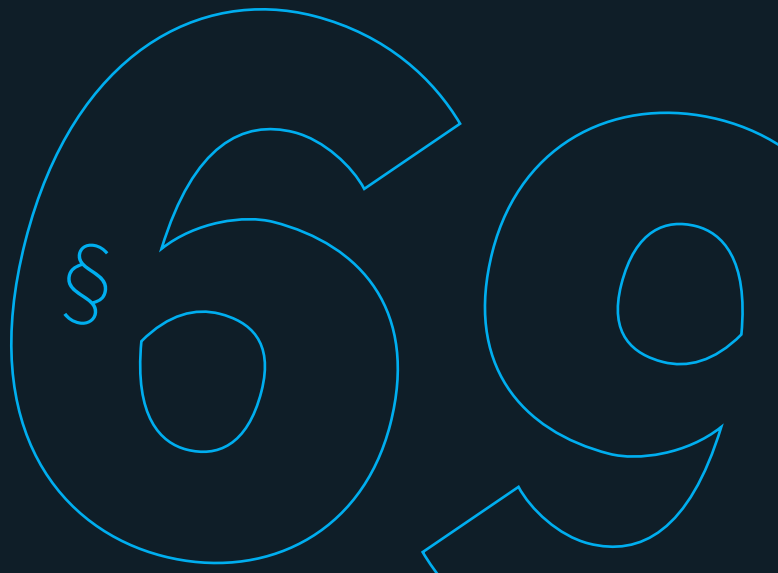
Community Structures in Town

1. Community councils of quarters (neighborhoods) are established and function in towns upon an initiative of the citizens. Councils consist of residents of the quarter and are organized on voluntary basis.
2. The Municipal Council shall define general rules on organization and functioning of community councils of the quarters and their relationships with the municipality and its structures.
3. Community liaisons, who will head and organize the work of community councils, shall be elected from members of community councils.
4. As a rule, a community council is created in each and every quarter. The Municipal Council may decide to establish two or more councils in one quarter or to merge the councils of two or more quarters.

Article 69

Duties and Rights of Community Council and Liaison

1. Community liaison and council may support the local self-governance functions in their quarter and may implement projects to the benefit and interest of the community.
2. In reliance of the Municipal Council decision, community councils have the right to exercise certain functions and powers that may be delegated by the Council. In this case, the Municipal Council shall determine funding or co-funding for performing the delegated function or authority that can in no case be used to reward or remunerate community council members.
3. The community liaison may be paid for his work in accordance with procedures determined by the Municipal Council in compliance with the applicable legislation.
4. Detailed duties shall be specified in the regulations and ordinances of the Municipal Council.



The community structures' mission is to implement participatory democracy through the empowerment, organization and mobilization of citizens on issues of fundamental importance to them.

At bottom of all initiatives and efforts of community structures is volunteering. Citizens get together, because believe they can change the community in which they live; common interests prevail over personal ones. Citizens are aware that change can come from themselves by joining forces and acting strategically to solve problems that concern them.

The dynamics that accompany this type of development, so deficient and scarce in Albanian communities, lead to the strengthening of social cohesion and increased demand for officials' accountability. Communities are transformed gradually in areas where citizens are well-organized and officials responsible. In this way, communities thrive.

This dynamic promotes models of civic activism, organizing into groups according to interests, taking responsibility for the community to contribute to improving the quality of life in every neighborhood of the urban territory.

This mission links citizens with the social environment and the local community by promoting accountability for better and safer life. Cooperation and interaction with citizens take on a new dimension. Volunteering remains a value that accompanies these processes.

1

Community liaison and community council members collaborate with individuals, families and groups to empower them and promote social change. Community liaison and community council members work to identify the resources, needs, and opportunities that exist in the community; to raise awareness about residents about their rights and responsibilities; plan the steps to be taken to address the problems facing the community; and develop activities, which strengthen social cohesion and accountability mechanisms, promote participation in decision-making at the local level, and inspire confidence in the change coming from the community itself.

2

Community structures focus on the day problems that concern the community, such as the environment, unemployment, inequality, lack of public services or their poor quality. To address the problems, liaison and community council members act strategically creating and mobilizing horizontal¹ and vertical² connections, investing time and energy in creating cooperative relationships with local authorities and various local actors such as civil society organizations, businesses and also discussing ideas, seeking support and resources that can lead to problem solving.

3

Community liaison and community council members work in groups. Strong community structure consists of individuals who have common interests and put the interests of the community above personal ones. Liaison and community council members share the same vision and purpose, have defined roles, which are based on their talents, have different skills that complement each other and trust and respect each other.

4

Community liaison and community council members reflect constantly about their work and strive to strengthen relationships within the group. Community structures have a collaborative organizational culture and focus on solving problems.

1 Relations established within a local government unit or among local government units

2 Relations established between the local government unit and central government



5

Community liaison and community council members support initiatives that focus on measuring the impact of policies and programs or gathering regularly information about the concerns of residents. They use this information in order to advocate for improving the quality of life in the community.

6

Community liaison and community council members work to organize information campaigns to increase awareness of the population about legal changes or policies and programs that affect their welfare. At the same time, use different techniques for the distribution of information, affecting all population groups, in all areas, whether central or peripheral.

7

Community liaison and community council members work to strengthen their capacities as individuals and as a group. For example, they learn how to improve relationships with people, how to communicate effectively, how to talk and negotiate, how to expand their network of connections within and outside the community.

8

Community structures work to strengthen accountability mechanisms where residents are more likely to interact with local authorities and put them to account. Liaison and community council members promote officials commitment during community meetings. In this way, residents receive information about projects and initiatives that will be implemented. Meanwhile, residents have the opportunity to hold officials accountable and seek to improve services.

9

Community liaison and community council members work to identify suitable organizational methods, which take into account local characteristics. For example, they avoid arranging meetings in formal settings where residents may not feel free to express their opinion. Or, discuss and identify methods, the application of which can gradually lead to enhanced confidence of residents. Liaison and community council members organize meetings on a regular basis.

10

Community liaison and community council members establish strong relations of cooperation with civil society organizations or other local actors and rely on each other mutually.



11

Community structures have a work plan, which is prepared in cooperation and reflects efforts to strengthen the community and improve the quality of life in the community. Community liaison and council members work together as a group and not as individuals with different goals and interests. They attend meetings on a regular basis, share responsibilities, and respect each other's opinions.

12

Community liaison and community council members have very good communication, organizational, interpersonal, collaborative skills, very good knowledge of social and economic problems that characterize the community, knowledge of how both public and non-public sector work, are positive, open, and have no prejudicial attitudes.

13

Community liaison and community council members pay attention to the process of communication with residents.

They give encouraging messages; encourage people to reflect on the role they can play in local initiatives in cooperation with each other; encourage confidence in themselves and to others.

14

The composition of the community structure reflects the composition of the community,

in terms of age, gender, ethnicity or other characteristics. During the meetings, liaison and community council members encourage the involvement in the discussion of different groups, paying particular importance to excluded groups. As a result of the discussion, experience and expertise to bring different groups, people learn more about each other and work together. Liaison and community council members challenge discriminatory beliefs and attitudes, giving a good example to the community.



1

Community liaison and council establish relations to facilitate and support the activities of municipalities and other public institutions.

2

Community liaison takes responsibilities from the Municipal Council and the Mayor, responsibilities related to the mission of community structures. The whole regulatory process of the creation and activity of the community council and liaison is realized with the decision of the Municipal Council.

3

Community liaison and council can facilitate contacts and enable collaboration with various institutions in the community, environmental institutions, schools, especially in the context of the initiative “school as a community center” with civil emergencies, etc.

4

Community liaison and council cooperate and make possible a better environment for community policing contributing thereby to public safety.

5

Liaison and community council assist in local development by mobilizing various contributions of citizens and the private sector. The scope is relevant to EU policies related to community-led development.

1. Trust: to improve people's skills, knowledge and trust, and inculcate the thought that they themselves can be agents of change.

2. Involvement: act aware that discrimination is present, to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between groups and to challenge inequality and exclusion.

3. Organization: to bring together people in order to discuss issues and common concerns to groups that are open and which are characterized by democratic decision-making.

4. Collaboration: to build positive relations between groups, to identify common interests, create and maintain connections with various stakeholders, and promote the establishment of cooperative relations.

5. Impact: to encourage community participation in decision-making and to influence in policy-making processes.





Can You Be a Member of the Community Council?





YES, IF YOU ARE A RESIDENT!

YES, IF YOU WANT TO CONTRIBUTE!

YES, IF YOU THINK THAT THE COMMUNITY AND THE NEIGHBORHOOD DESERVE MORE!

YES, IF YOU LOOK TOWARDS A BETTER FUTURE!

YOU CAN BE YOUNG OR OLD, EMPLOYED OR UNEMPLOYED, WITH ANY SOCIAL STATUS.

YES, IF YOU BELIEVE IN CHANGE!

YES, IF YOU BELIEVE IN A JOINT EFFORT!

YES, IF YOU DO NOT EXPECT OTHERS TO DO EVERYTHING FOR YOU!

THE LAW REQUIRES THAT THE COMMUNITY STRUCTURES EMANATE FROM CITIZENS' INITIATIVES AND ARE ESSENTIALLY VOLUNTARY.

1**STRENGTHENING CITIZENS' TRUST TO EACH OTHER.**

Individuals who trust each other are more likely to cooperate and participate in collective initiatives (Uslaner, 2003). Trust promotes optimism, tolerance and solidarity (Putnam, 2000). Studies show that trust levels are among the lowest in Albania³. The results of the European Social Survey (2013) point out that Albania has the lowest levels of social trust in Europe. Community liaison and community council members should organize activities that create opportunities for people to come together, to know each other and discuss common problems. Activities may lead to increased awareness about the problems that residents are facing and mobilize joint resources to improve the quality of life in the community.

2**COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION IN THE PRESENCE OF POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION.**

Poverty is one of the main obstacles for citizen engagement in local activities. If individuals struggle to meet basic needs, then they may have less time and energy to engage with local organizations (Mandel, 2002). Uncertainty about the future leads to skepticism towards collective initiatives (Cook et al., 2004). Poverty is closely related to social exclusion. Individuals living in poverty are less likely to participate in social, economic, and political life. Community structures should pay attention to the poorest and excluded groups. If community meetings attract only a homogeneous group, for example, individuals who have close links with officials, community structures will then lead to the deepening of social and economic gap. Overcome this

3 Social trust is measured in the following statements: (a) generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people? (b) do you think that most people would try to take advantage of you if they got the chance, or would they try to be fair? (c) Would you say that most of the time people try to be helpful or that they are mostly looking out for themselves? (European Social Survey, Core Module (2013))



challenge will require a number of steps. For example, meetings can be held not only in the center of the community but also in peripheral areas. The composition of the community council should reflect the composition of the community and information about meetings should be distributed in all neighborhoods and areas using various forms of dissemination of information.

3

COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION IN THE PRESENCE OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DISPARITIES.

Albania is characterized by high levels of disparities (INSTAT, 2013). They deepen social inequality, erode trust and social cohesion, negatively affect participation in local organizations, and weaken the likelihood to vote, protest and lobby for change (Neckerman & Torche, 2007). Where there is more inequality, there is also more pessimism about economic growth and improving living conditions. Expectations for the future are low. At the same time, where there is more disparities, there is even more distrust to others (Center for American Progress, 2012). Dissatisfaction with political and economic development is closely related with the lack of trust in officials. One of the challenges is to mobilize community structures regardless of community's social and economic inequality and awaken interest groups who feel excluded from the social and economic development to participate in local events. This challenge becomes even greater with territorial and administrative reform, which has increased the physical distance between residents and local representatives. Citizens are concerned that this reform will widen the gap between urban and rural areas (Institute for Democracy and Mediation and the National Democratic Institute, 2016). They want more opportunities for interaction with representatives at local and national level.

4**DETACHMENT FROM THE COMMUNIST LEGACY.**

One of the effects of the centralized decision-making system of the communist era is the obliteration of personal initiative. Although this legacy has faded in time, it continues to affect. As in the past, people often believe that it is the responsibility of officials to mobilize them in community initiatives (Bartkowski, 2003; Buchowski, 1996). Simultaneously, voluntary activities are perceived as a legacy of the communist era and some realization of voluntary activities is an unwanted throwback to the past. Community structures challenge is to overcome these beliefs and perceptions, highlighting that the residents can have on local initiatives. This requires a series of attempts to focus on the empowerment of citizens. However, the communist legacy is not limited to the negative aspects. One of the positive impacts is related to the experience that individuals gained in professional organizations. Although these organizations were used to advance partisan purposes, they urged solidarity and commitment to the collective interests (Howard, 2003). Individuals, especially those who have lived their youth during the Communist period, talking passionately about collective work and cooperation with others. In this context, community structures can be based on existing experience and also to challenge beliefs inherited from the past.

5**DISESTABLISHING THE CLIENTELIST PRACTICES.**

Clientelist practices in the distribution of goods and services undermine solidarity among residents and their participation in collective initiatives. In cases where residents face difficulty in obtaining services, they are not organized in a group seeking to change the situation, but use individual forms, for example contact officials or their relatives who serve as liaisons with officers (Dauti, 2016). Community structures must distance themselves from clientelist practices pointing out the importance of organizing and mobilizing the population and improving the delivery of services to all. Regarding political commitment, a study conducted recently shows that people are more likely to discuss with



each other about politics rather than participate in public hearings or meetings of local councils where they have the opportunity to contact directly with officials and hold them accountable (Institute for Democracy and Mediation and the National Democratic Institute, 2016). Community structures must encourage residents express concerns through collective action and participation in the formal spaces.

6

ENCOURAGING PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS.

Various studies have highlighted the low levels of participation in local organizations (IDM, 2010). One of the challenges of community structures is to mobilize residents in activities at the local level. One of the reasons why people may be reluctant to participate in community structures or in activities organized by community structures is that they may think that these structures serve to political and economic interests of the elite or to a certain group. The data show that local initiatives aimed at increasing the participation of citizens in decision-making have a number of problems, for example, individuals who engage in participatory processes have personal and political connections with officials (Gaventa & Barrett, 2012). Community structures must work hard to deliver the message that they are the structures that represent community interests and not the interests of the elite.

7

MITIGATION OF POLITICAL POLARIZATION.

Another challenge of community structures is to mobilize inhabitants in the presence of political polarization and political conflict. Meetings or activities can attract only party militants or supporters of the ruling political force. This group is more likely to express confidence in the officials than to criticize them. For this reason, community structures should be very careful in the selection of members. Community liaison should be a distinguished person with good reputation in the community and also be independent. You need to avoid the

transformation of community structure into a mechanism that serves the political and economic interests of a small group of individuals.

8

COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION IN THE PRESENCE OF LOW LEVELS OF TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY.

Despite the improvement in time, Albania is ranked as one of the countries with high level of corruption (Transparency International, 2014). Albanian citizens rank corruption as the second largest problem, after unemployment (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Institute of Statistics, 2011). More than half of Albanians believe that corruption occurs often or very often in central or local government (ibid). The study conducted by the Institute for Democracy and Mediation (2015) shows that “47% of respondents [n = 1,600] believe that the Albanian public institutions are transparent and accountable” (p. 5). These data suggest that more should be done to enhance transparency and accountability. Perception of corruption has a direct effect on commitment of residents at local decision-making. Residents can express little interest in local organizations, because they think that their opinions will not be considered. Residents will feel excluded from local decision-making and will not participate in organizations that support them. Community structures’ challenge is to encourage interest in local events despite disappointment from the political class and lack of transparency and accountability of public institutions.

9

CREATING AN OPEN FORUM WHERE PEOPLE FEEL FREE TO EXPRESS THEIR OPINIONS.

Participation in organized community meetings will not guarantee that people will hold officials accountable. Residents can attend to get information, but not to hold officials accountable from the fear of consequences befalling to themselves or to their relatives because of their criticism. The challenge is to create a forum where people do not feel threatened that provision of information, particularly criticism of



officials, will trigger negative consequences. Acting as liaison with the local residents, community structures can increase the opportunities for continuous communication between residents and officials, and provide for a space where people can communicate their concerns and discuss options for changing the situation.

10 ▶ **IMPROVING ACCESS TO INFORMATION.**

Currently, access to information in Albania is characterized by a number of problems. Often, information is not accessible to the majority of the population. The information is not communicated in a plain language in order to be understood by people with low level of education. At the same time, support is provided for the excluded groups, such as persons with disabilities (UNDP, 2014). In the absence of information, people cannot speak out to demand their rights or to hold officials accountable. Community structures must work hard to improve access to information, so that every resident will have basic knowledge of law.

11 ▶ **ESTABLISHING STRONG RELATIONS OF COOPERATION WITH CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS.**

The success of community structures depends on the extent to which they will establish strong relations of cooperation with civil society organizations. While Albanians are skeptical about civil society organizations (IDM, 2010), it's noted that their attitude in time has been improved. The study conducted by the Institute for Democracy and Mediation and the National Democratic Institute (2016) shows that citizens are interested in participating in activities organized by civil society, which will lead to the change of the situation they are facing. Another challenge, in addition to the establishment of relations of cooperation, is related to the limited number of civil society organizations in distant cities. Approximately 90% of civil society organizations are concentrated in Tirana and main cities of the country (IDM, 2012).

EXAMPLES OF
CIVIC
ENGAGEMENT
IN
LOCAL
DEVELOPMENT

“ **Community-Based Groups in Shkodra**

Ten years ago, three community-based groups –specifically the groups of Luigj Gurakuqi Neighborhood, Bajram Curri Neighborhood and that Filip Shiroka Neighborhood in Shkodra– earned a special work experience by setting the model for the first-time community structures representing neighborhood residents. Citizens’ involvement was entirely voluntary, but was encouraged by an enabling environment in Shkodra. A new model, local business supported these initiatives of the community-based group. The Municipality responded to community groups by providing infrastructure investments involving resident volunteers to monitor the quality of municipal investments in the respective neighborhoods. Upon completion of work, people’s pride was more than legitimate: A large-sized billboard writing “Well done to the Filip Shiroka Community” was placed on at the entrance of the community neighborhood.

Source: IDM & Balkan Trust for Democracy (2006)



“ **Community mobilization and local infrastructure**

During 2003-2006, the Albanian Development Fund requested the creation of a local group called the Advisory and Monitoring Group for every local public infrastructure project it was going to fund. Group members were elected in open public meetings by residents of the neighborhood where the project was being implemented. The groups had an important role in the preparatory, design, procurement, and monitoring phases of the project. Their contribution was crucial in informing citizens, consultation with the designer, negotiating solutions to issues of ownership, especially in monitoring the implementation of the works. These groups had an important role in the final acceptance of the infrastructure facilities as well as in their ongoing maintenance through community mobilization. Thanks to them, infrastructural facilities, such as schools, health centers, markets and roads were regarded not as a gift from outside, but as facilities that belong to the community and to which they had given their own contribution.

Source: E. Azizaj, Social Inspector, Albanian Development Fund (2003-2006)



“ **Community-based organization in Kukës**

With the support of local government units and UNDP, during February 2005-October 2007, 145 community-based organizations with over 4,200 members were created. They were involved in local development by: (i) selection of small infrastructure projects in their community in the education area, health care, environment, greenery, etc.; (ii) contribution to the implementation of projects and providing various donated materials and machinery on site; (iii) oversight of works; and, (iv) building voluntary of mechanisms of maintenance of buildings after their completion.

In a survey conducted with 454 individuals, including residents, members of community organizations, and officials, about 93% reported that these organizations were very effective in tackling the problems of development confronting their community. Approximately 92% of respondents said they would contribute to the sustainability of handed-over infrastructure projects by maintaining or providing other services to them or through payment of related fees. Within a short period, residents' satisfaction with municipal services grew by 35%. Here are some of the experiences of residents:

Change that brings participation in community-based organizations: the experience of Kukes inhabitants

“By working together, I learned that the local government is not as bad as I first thought.” (Resident of Commune of Bushtrica, p. 17)

“We need to plan together if we want to solve our problems, rather than complaining to each other and wait endlessly, just like we did in the past.” (Villager of Bushtrice, p. 12)



“We have learned that in this way we can solve our problems and address our needs.” (Representatives of community organization, Bushtrice, p. 4)

“Most of the problems that we currently have can be resolved within the village, if you play an active role and show our good will.” (Resident of Commune of Zapod, p. 9)

“Our participation and cooperation with each other are our main sources. Before, we did not know we had them.” (Villager of Petkaj, Shemri. P. 7)

“We understand that the government is not able to do everything and we will achieve nothing if we do not work together.” (Resident of Commune of Topojan, p. 11)

Source: UNDP (2005)

Glossary of Terms

Accountability: *the principle and process that ensures that public officials and elected representatives are responsible for their actions (Thomas & Pierson, 2010, p. 6).*

Citizen assembly: *citizens convening to discuss various issues in the territory of a community structure.*

Civil engagement letter: *a document submitted by the candidate for member of the community council through which the candidate expresses his/her commitment and ideas for community organization.*

Client accountability: *the unaccountable officials are more motivated to fulfill personal interests rather than offer the public services from which benefit the entire population (Keefer, Narayan, & Vishwanath, 2006).*

Clientelism: *providing exclusive services in exchange for political support (Jamal, 2007, p. 14); a social order that depends upon relations of patronage; in particular, a political approach that emphasizes or exploits such relations.*

Commission for community structures: *structure that rises with the decision of the municipal council for facilitating and monitoring the pre-election process and the election of community structures.*

Community action: *the efforts made to ensure the resources, promoting political participation or the collapse of the proposals, which may conflict with the interests of residents (Thomas & Pierson, 2010, p. 115).*



Community assembly: local structure, which is composed by community liaisons.

Community board: local structure, which is composed by community liaisons of a municipal unit.

Community council: local structure, which rises in basic citizens' initiative and consists of local people (Article 68, Law 139/2015).

Community liaison: the person elected by the members of the community council that directs and organizes the work of the council.

Community mobilization: the process of interconnecting the various sectors of the community and the creation of partnerships in order to address issues that concern the community. Community mobilization involves activation of resources, dissemination of information, providing support, and promoting cooperation between public and private sectors in the community (Advocates for Youth, 2014).

Community structure: community self-government unit, which has the mission to increase the feeling of belonging to the community, volunteering, civic engagement and contribution to improve the quality of life in the community.

Community work: a broad set of practices designed to improve the quality of life for individuals living in a particular community (Thomas & Pierson, 2010, p. 113).

Empowerment: any process by which those who, comparatively, have no power gain or helped to gain more power (Thomas & Pierson, 2010, p. 205).

Neighborhood forum: a semi-formal organization, which brings together representatives of local organizations, service users and residents to express their opinions about the services and projects aimed at improving the quality of life in the community (Thomas & Pierson, 2010 p. 358).

Networking: the process, which binds together individuals, groups and/or



communities with common interests with the purpose of disseminating information, knowledge, resource sharing, and providing mutual support (Thomas & Pierson, 2010, p. 360).

Participation: the process of involvement of community members in decisions that affect their lives and the realization of the desired changes (Thomas & Pierson, 2010, p. 384).

Partnership: a working relationship that includes a number of organizations that establish formal or semi-formal agreement where are agreed goals, shared resources, and planned a common strategy (Thomas & Pierson, 2010, p. 385).

Social capital: the links among individuals - social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from connections (Putnam, 2000, p. 19).

Social cohesion: the willingness of members of a society to cooperate with each other, share a common vision and sense of belonging. In a community with high social cohesion, residents have good relations with each other, people feel they belong to the community, the level of cooperation for public projects is high, the level of crime is low, and differences by age, gender, origin, ethnicity, or other characteristics do not serve to divide people from each other (Ratcliffe & Newman, 2011).

Social exclusion: the process that deprives individuals and families, groups and neighborhoods of the resources that are necessary to thrive in society (Thomas & Pierson, 2010, p. 485).

Social network: a network of social relations through which people connect to each other. Networks exist in relation to individuals and families and also whole neighborhoods (Thomas & Pierson, 2010, p. 361).

Volunteering: unpaid contribution, carried not so binding, and that leads to public benefits (UN Volunteers, 2011).



Bibliography

Advocates for Youth. (2014). Strategies Guided by Best Practice for Community Mobilization. Retrieved from <http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/publications/publications-a-z/2398-strategies-guided-by-best-practice-for-community-mobilization>

Bartkowski, J. (2003). 'Social Capital in Poland', in G. Badescu and E. M. Uslaner (eds.), Social Capital and the Transition to Democracy, pp. 184-199. New York: Routledge.

Buchowski, M. (1996). 'The Shifting Meanings of Civil and Civic Society in Poland', in C. M. Hann and E. C. Dunn (eds.), Civil Society: Challenging Western Models, pp. 79-98. New York: Routledge.

Center for American Progress. (2012). Income Inequality in the US Fuels Pessimism and Threatens Social Cohesion. Marrë më 28 Gusht, 2013 nga <http://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Uslaner.pdf>.

Cook, K. S., Rice, E., & Gerbasi, A. (2004). 'The Emergence of Trust Networks Under Uncertainty: The Case of Transitional Economies', In J. Kornai, B. Rothstein, & S. Rose-Ackerman (eds.). Creating Social Trust in Post-Socialist Transition, pp. 193 – 212. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Dauti, M. (2016). Contesting Corruption: How the Poor Demand Accountability and Responsiveness from Government Officials. British Journal of Social Work. doi: 10.1093/bjsw/bcw019

Gaventa, J., & Barrett, G. (2012). Mapping the Outcomes of Citizen Engagement. World Development 40(12), 2399-2410.

Howard, M. M. (2003) 'Why Post-Communist Citizens do not Join Voluntary Organizations', in G. Badescu and E. M. Uslaner (eds.), *Social Capital and the Transition to Democracy*, pp. 165 – 183. New York: Routledge.

European Social Research. (2013). *Preliminary Findings of European Social Survey*. Retrieved from <http://www.soros.al/2010/article.php?id=437>

INSTAT (2013). *Albania: Poverty Trend, 2002-2005-2008-2012*. Tirana: INSTAT

Institute for Democracy and Mediation & Balkan Trust for Democracy. (2006). *Community Newsletter, No. 1*

Institute for Democracy and Mediation & Balkan Trust for Democracy. (2007). *Community Newsletter, No. 2*

Institute for Democracy and Mediation. (2010). *Civil Society Index for Albania: In Search of Citizens and Impact*. Tirana: IDM.

Institute for Democracy and Mediation. (2012). *Civil Society in Rural and Suburban Areas of Albania: Needs, Challenges and an Action Platform*. Tirana: IDM.

Institute for Democracy and Mediation. (2015). *Brief: Public Opinion Survey. Trust in Government*. Tirana: IDM.

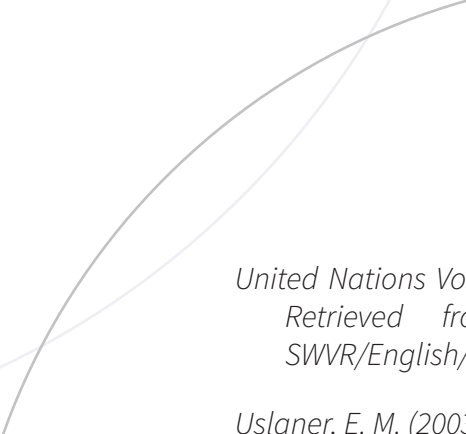
Institute for Democracy and Mediation & National Democratic Institute (2016). *Audit of Political Engagement in Albania* Tirana IDM and NDI

Jamal, A. A. (2007). *Barriers to Democracy: The Other Side of Social Capital in Palestine and the Arab World*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Keefer, P. E, Narayan, A., & Vishwanath, T. (2006). 'Decentralization in Pakistan: Are Local Governments Likely to Be More Accountable Than Central Governments?' in *Decentralization and Local Governance in Developing Countries: A Comparative Perspective*, edited by P. Bardhan & D. Mookherjee (eds.), pp. 285-303. Cambridge: MIT Press.

- Mandel, R. (2002). 'Seeding Civil Society', in C. M. Hann (ed.), *Post-socialism: Ideals, Ideologies and Practices in Eurasia*, pp. 279-296. New York: Routledge.
- Neckerman, K. M., & Torche, F. (2007). *Inequality: Causes and Consequences*. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 33, 335-357.
- Pickett, K., & Wilkinson, R. (2009). *The Spirit Level*. Retrieved from <http://www.equalitytrust.org.uk/www.equalitytrust.org.uk/research/thespirllevel>.
- Putnam, R., D. (2000). *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Ratcliffe, P., & , I. (Eds.). (2011). *Promoting Social Cohesion: Implications for Policy and Frameworks for Evaluation*. Bristol, UK: Policy Press.
- Thomas, M., & Pierson, J. (2010). *Dictionary of Social Work: The Definitive A to Z of Social Work and Social Care*. Berkshire, GBR: Open University Press.
- Transparency International. (2014). *Corruption Perceptions Index*. Marrënga www.transparency.org/cpi2014/results
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. (2011). *Corruption in Albania: Bribery as Experienced by the Population*. Vienna, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.
- United Nations Development Programme. (2014). *Social Housing in Albania: A Needs Assessment*. Retrieved from <http://www.al.undp.org/content/albania/en/home/library/poverty/needs-assessment-of-social-housing-in-albania//>
- United Nations Development Programme. (2005). *A Difference in the Making: An Independent Evaluation of the Kukes Regional Development Initiative Community Infrastructure Project*. Retrieved from <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/documents/download/585>





United Nations Volunteers. (2011). Taking the Measure of Volunteering. Retrieved from http://www.unv.org/fileadmin/docdb/pdf/2011/SWVR/English/SWVR2011_full_%5B04%5D_chapter1.pdf

Uslaner, E. M. (2003). 'Trust and Civic Engagement in East and West', in G. Badescu and E. M. Uslaner (eds.), Social Capital and the Transition to Democracy, pp. 81 – 94. New York: Routledge.



