



UN
Volunteers

living goVernance **in** **Albania**



Final Evaluation Report

UNV – SVF

Local Governance Programme

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Executive Summary

The UNV-Special Voluntary Fund (SVF) project is coming to a close by the end of 2004 and this evaluation was carried out to assess results in terms of the overall relevance of the UNV contribution, the concrete outcomes, and the results achieved in the promotion of Volunteerism as an important vehicle to capacity development. The UNV approach is referred to as '*living goVernance*', i.e. promoting community participation, voluntary engagement and supporting synergies between stakeholders at local level. This assessment also took place in the context of UNDP Albania country programme evaluation, which among others included a 'beneficiary self-assessment participatory evaluation', to assess the results of UNDP's programmes in Albania focusing on participation and the development approaches that contributed to community mobilization.

Background and methodology

UNV is supporting the Local Governance Programme (LGP) of UNDP in Albania through parallel funding from UNV-SVF funds. The LGP project is being implemented at the central level and in three regions of Albania, i.e. Fier, Gjirokaster, and Kukes. An amount of more than 458,000 USD was made available to mainly finance the recruitment of teams of International and National Volunteers who have been instrumental in the implementation of LGP at regional level. The UNV Country Office provides strong support to the UNVs in the field, not only on administrative issues but also on project related issues. Security is well covered in cooperation with the UN Field Security Office.

The UNV consultant joined a team of UNDP consultants to one region (Kukes) and took part in some of the focus group discussions and interviews with local stakeholders. During visits to the other two regions group discussions and individual stakeholders interviews were held. At central level (Tirana) several interviews were conducted with a variety of stakeholders. Furthermore a large amount of reading materials was processed.

Results

The main indicators for success were identified as 1) concrete outputs at all levels; 2) the major outcomes; 3) the (perceived) relevance of UNV contributions; 4) increase in Voluntary action and perceptions on Volunteerism; 5) partnerships.

Output: This project has indeed achieved many of the outputs as anticipated. Best examples include the creation of more than 126 CBO's (Community Based Organisations) in the three regions, and the implementation of small/ medium scale community based projects. The implementation of micro-capital grants programmes and the initiation of credit/saving schemes helped create social cohesion and participation in these CBOs and in the villages at large. More than 70 of these small community projects have been implemented, valued at about 1.7 million USD, with an estimated contribution by local communities of about 0.5 million USD. Another major output has been the support to the achievement of (local) MDG through the preparation of Regional Development Strategies (RDS) in Kukes and Fier. At central level the project has contributed to the strengthening of partnerships between all levels of Government, contributing to the debate on decentralization and local governance by using the regional

level experiences of the project. Specifically on the issue of promotion of Volunteerism, the UNV–SVF project organized a number of Volunteer activities, participated in research, and prepared handouts and newsletters on Volunteerism in Albania.

Outcomes: The major outcomes are clearly identified by respondents as improvement of living conditions in the communities because of the small-scale infrastructure project. A number of CBOs are still working with the micro-capital grants and the credit/saving schemes as revolving funds. The participation of people in the decision making process at community level has been established through the formation of CBOs. It can safely be assumed that social cohesion in villages has been strengthened and that people feel more empowered than before. Also women clearly took part in the CBO activities, and in some cases established ‘women CBOs’. Representatives of CBOs take part in local commune council meetings and even in regional council meetings. In some communes the CBOs are now trying to organize themselves in CBO networks to have even greater potential in becoming strong local partners in the development of the region. Cooperation between local and regional government has improved, for example through the planning process for local project priorities and through the inclusion of all stakeholders in the development of the MDG/RDS. At central level the most important outcome could be defined as the adoption of the MDG/RDS as the main vehicle of regional planning. It is now being used in other non-project regions as well.

Relevance: The UNV project specifically supported the implementation of the LGP programme at regional and local level by making use of UN Volunteers. These volunteers were instrumental in helping local communities understanding the (new) concept of voluntary action, by setting examples of volunteerism, and by providing support to the implementation of small community projects. The UN Volunteers were instrumental in bridging the gap between local people and the government at different levels. The added value of having UN Volunteers and having a specific objective on Volunteerism, is the stronger focus on voluntary action and contributions as a vehicle for social mobilization and social cohesion. At the same time this UNV-SVF project created opportunities for national volunteers to gain experience in a broad range of activities and become local ambassadors for the promotion of Volunteerism in Albania.

Voluntary action and Perceptions: Voluntary action has clearly increased in all regions and communes that this project covered. Besides the voluntary contributions, villagers initiated or participated in voluntary actions at numerous other occasions. In some instances new volunteer groups (CBO) have been created as a result of the examples set by the LGP project. Volunteerism has brought a sense of participation and ownership. It should be noted however that this new volunteerism took place in the context of the LGP project providing strong tangible incentives. At regional and local government level, there is a better understanding of the importance of voluntary action for social mobilization and empowerment. However, in much of the documentation of the LGP project there is hardly any mentioning of the wording ‘Volunteers-Volunteerism-Voluntary action’, etc. With some exceptions, the terminology is mainly focused around participation, social mobilization, self-help, empowerment, etc.

Partnerships: The LGP/UNV project established many partnerships that are focused around the implementation of the project activities. At central level, as a result of this project and through the promotion of Volunteerism in general, UNV has been able to

profile itself and create a partnership with several ministries. It also now also more visible within UNDP and other UN agencies, which can be contributed to the excellent work of the international and national UN volunteers in the field and central level, and to the active role the UNV CO is playing in supporting the LGP project.

Lessons learned

- The use of UN Volunteers in a mixed team approach is very appropriate as advocates to promote volunteerism in local governance projects. They act as facilitators, set examples, build capacities, and they are often bridge between people and local government. The selection of local NUNVs created a high level of trust among local stakeholders.
- The LGP/UNV project created an opportunity for UNV to establish a NUNV scheme in Albania and increase the level of visibility as the ‘UN organization that promotes Volunteerism’ but UNV visibility has been less than anticipated, partly due to the almost full ‘merger’ between the projects (LGP and UNV-SVF). The UNV-SVF did not have its own management structure or ‘promotion specialist’ and therefore had less opportunities to advocate for the ‘V’ and create a stronger UNV visibility.
- Not enough emphasis on the appropriate presentation of UN Volunteers in the project areas. And similarly, there is not sufficient and consistent use of the terminology concerning ‘Volunteerism’.
- Through a large number of training activities the project has provided a good foundation for self-governing communities and government level councils. Ownership of newly created CBOs and of project activities at community level is high and people have a sense of hope that things are moving forward. As a result people feel much more empowered in the development processes at village and commune level.
- However, there is a concern about the sustainability of the work that LGP and UNV have been doing. Without a process of continued facilitation and without opportunities for further resource mobilization, the communities might again lose faith and cease their voluntary contributions.
- In other words, in the opinion of the consultant, this project has not shown yet that ‘living goVernance’ or the promotion of Volunteerism could be stand-alone approaches yet. In this regard, partnerships have been very important in the successful implementation of the project. Still, the project could have cooperated with other civil society actors (national and international) to ensure a better transition and follow up after LGP has come to an end. The partnership with UNDP worked well to link local experience with upstream policy making, and to provide the necessary financial support for local level activities.
- There seems to be a lack of a clear exit strategy, both at a village level (see above) as well as for the overall LGP project. This is neither a favourable situation for the UN Volunteers or for the project counterparts and local people who still depend heavily on the support of the UNVs.

Recommendations

- Based on continued UNDP support to LGP, UNV needs to urgently extend the contracts of the UN Volunteers for at least another 6 months, and a clear exit strategy needs to be developed which will prepare local project partners for continued self-governing planning and implementation of projects. For this purpose, UNDP/LGP and

UNV need to develop partnerships with strong CSOs in the regions to facilitate a transition of CBOs from LGP support to third parties.

- UNV should use this LGP experience to replicate this approach of ‘living goVernance’ in other UNDP/UNV programmes in Albania itself and in the Balkan region. UNV should for example consider the existing proposal on ‘Promoting civic engagement in MDGs at local level through multi-sectoral action groups’ because it is built upon the foundations of the LGP.
- In such continued support UNV should strongly advocate for the inclusion of a component on the promotion of Volunteerism while at the same time make sure that this terminology is consistently applied throughout the programme. UNV also needs to make sure that UN Volunteers not only present themselves as such wherever appropriate, but that they also have the necessary knowledge and confidence to promote Volunteerism.
- There is a strong sense of voluntary action being the ‘playing field’ of the youth. There are arguments that suggest that it would be much easier to work with a young generation that was not exposed to the old ways of forced activities. UNV Albania has already established strong partnerships with the Ministry of Culture sport and Youth, and with the Albanian Youth Council, a national forum representing over 80 youth organizations.
- UNV Albania is well positioned to facilitate the drafting of a national strategy and laws on Volunteerism in Albania. UNV should use its experiences from similar processes in other countries. The development of National and Regional Volunteer Centres should be taken into consideration.
- UNV should explore the possibility of linking an eco-tourism project to the ‘Beautiful Gjirokaster’ project of UNDP. This project aims at areas of unemployment, economic development, promotion of tourism and preservation of environment and cultural heritage. Potential UNV support should be linked to the ‘eco-tourism strategy’ developed in 2003 for Fier and Gjirokaster regions by UN Volunteer.
- UNV support to Roma communities, in Albania and/or in cooperation with other countries in the Balkan region, would be a very different but challenging programme. UNV’s comparative advantage of working at the local level is a crucial factor in being able to build trust and reach out to the Roma people.

Finally, it is strongly recommended that UNV Albania strengthen its partnerships with UNDP and other UN agencies in Albania, through active promotion of Volunteerism within those agencies, and placements of UN Volunteers in their programmes in the field. For this purpose UNV CO administration, in cooperation with UNV HQ, needs to be well organised and responsive to the needs of those agencies.

The inclusion of the “V” in the UNDAF and in the new UNDP CCF presents a unique opportunity for UNV. The UNV partnership with UNDP should focus on the promotion of Volunteerism for the achievement of the MDGs in Albania. The MDGs have been the driving force for UNDPs programme for the last couple of years, both at national level as well as at regional level. This process of ‘localising’ the MDGs should be a key element of UNV’s future work on promotion of Volunteerism.

1 Introduction

The United Nations Volunteers is the UN organization that supports sustainable human development globally through the promotion of volunteerism and the mobilisation of volunteers. Globally, UNV has been supporting up to 10 projects in the thematic areas of decentralisation and local governance through its Special Voluntary Funds (SVF). These projects are aimed at promoting voluntary action in communities as key resources of social inclusion and participation. UN Volunteers are instrumental in encouraging community participation, voluntary engagement, and in creating synergies among local stakeholders. This approach is now called 'living governance' as it focuses on the way people 'live' governance dynamics in their daily lives.

The UNV-SVF evaluation took place within the framework of UNDP Albania's country programme impact assessment, planned for the beginning of October 2004. The impact assessment consists of several components, among others a 'beneficiary self-assessment participatory evaluation', to assess the results of UNDP's programmes in Albania focusing on participation and the development approaches that contribute to community mobilization. UNV was to carry out an independent evaluation on the role, impact, and contribution by the UNV-SVF project, specifically with regards to the Local Governance Programme of UNDP.

The Government of Albania is giving highest priority to supporting decentralisation and developing an effective and democratic system of local governance. UNDP supports this process through the Local Governance Programme. The UNDP-LGP project is being implemented over a period of three years from 2002-2004 at the central level and in three administrative regions of Albania, i.e. Fier, Gjirokaster, and Kukes. A total of 1.3 million USD was made available from UNDP TRAC funds while other donors such as NORAD, SOROS fund and the Albanian Government contributed more than 1.5 million USD.

Through parallel funding an amount of more than 458,000 USD was made available from UNV-SVF to mainly finance the recruitment of teams of International and National Volunteers to implement the LGP at regional level and local level (see Annex 1 for more information on the UN Volunteers). This UNV-SVF contribution is coming to an end by December 2004 and UNV needs to assess the results in terms of the overall relevance of the UNV contribution, the concrete outcomes, and results achieved in the promotion of Volunteerism as an important vehicle to social mobilisation and capacity development.

The evaluation was carried out by an independent UNV consultant and took place over a period of 10 days from the 5th of October till the 15th.

The assessment was made possible with the excellent assistance of the UNV Country Office team and UNV HQ, by the support of a large number of dedicated UN Volunteers in the regional teams, and by the *voluntary* contributions of a large number of informants and stakeholders. The UNV consultant would like to thank all for their contributions and support.

2 Methodology

The UNV consultant joined the UNDP participatory assessment team to one region (Kukes) and took part in some of the focus group discussions and interviews with local stakeholders. During visits to the other two regions (Gjirokaster and Fier) group discussions and individual stakeholders interviews were carried out, all based on the standard but open questions around the issues of: 1) change at outcome level and causes of these changes; 2) issue of Volunteerism; 3) sustainability issues; and 4) recommendations for areas of potential UNV support.

Furthermore, brief separate meetings were held with some groups that were not taking part in the LGP project (reference group). A visit to a project commune and project site was undertaken in each region. Several meetings with the regional groups of UN Volunteers were held during and/or at the end of the regional visits. At the central level (Tirana) several interviews were conducted with a variety of stakeholders, including both UNDP as well as project staff. Furthermore a large amount of reading materials was processed, including documents that were prepared by the different UNV teams in the regions. The consultant looked at UN Volunteer periodic reports but did not find much relevant information other than confirmation on the successfulness of the individual assignment.

The summaries of the interviews are included in Annex 2. Examples of the UNDP focus group discussion results are attached in Annex 3, including an example of a ‘spider-web’ (a participatory technique used for small group discussion. It should be noted however, that respondents who have had direct involvement in the LGP project or worked closely together with the LGP/UNV staff, might not have disclosed all relevant information since this exercise was presented to them as an ‘evaluation’. Still, the answers obtained from three different regions and from central level showed a high degree of consistency and most of the information should therefore be fairly reliable.

3 Background

The following background is a brief summary of the main issues that provide a framework in which the LGP–UNV project was implemented. For more detailed information other written sources are widely available.

3.1 Albania and Volunteerism

Albania is a small country in the south-eastern part of Europe. The population is only about 3.5 million with a high concentration in the capital Tirana and in the coastal areas. Most of the country is mountainous. It borders the other Balkans countries in the North and East, and Greece in the South. Crossing the Adriatic Sea in the West, it has close proximity to Italy and much of modern day influences are from this country. This influence only occurred after 1990, as it was a very closed communist state before that. It is now a ‘country in transition’ but the per capita income is still among the lowest in Europe. In the early nineties economic conditions and the road to democracy proved to be very difficult. But since 1998 the conditions are slowly improving and has Albania embarked on the road the European integration. There is still a long way to go though as individual interests play an influential role in the political arena affecting an effective government apparatus. The judiciary remains a problem and implementation of the (new) legal framework is poor. Public administration needs many capacity building efforts and is still somewhat centralized. The Government started a process of decentralisation and local governance to provide a stronger basis for appropriate regional and local development. The NGO sector is ‘booming’ although not all NGO are recognized for their social and moral commitment.



Like in most societies, Albanian people traditionally worked together in communities on the basis of mutual support and in other common village activities. In communist times, starting after the Second World War, the state was supposed to take care of people’s needs in all spheres of life and social mobilization was introduced for the ‘betterment of the state’. People were expected to provide volunteer labour on a regular basis for all kinds of ‘improvements’ in their localities. State control and social pressure was high but people did not see immediate benefits of all these ‘voluntary’ contributions. In fact the term ‘volunteer’ got a negative image.

After transition to a new democracy in the early nineties, the Government could no longer support expensive state organizations and the social support infrastructure (health, education, etc.). Since then the Government is decentralizing power to local governments,

donors have come in, and international agencies are supporting the implementation of development projects. National and local civil society organizations have been established, and in some cases local community organizations are created. All these players are trying to re-vitalise the concepts of volunteerism, voluntary work, social mobilisation, participation, empowerment, etc. It seems however, that the former negative perception of Volunteerism is the hardest to change!

Based on research done by Albanian experts and supported by UNV and other organizations, volunteering is not one of the priorities reflected in the new legislation that was drafted in Albania over the past few years. It appears in certain sections of sectoral laws, e.g. in disaster preparedness and management, health, environment, etc. Volunteerism is recognized though as the cornerstone of civil society organizations, political parties, and for example, religious organizations. The status of volunteers is covered specifically in laws dealing with emergency situation. For example, a person who participates voluntarily in a civil emergency situation will keep his job and salary, and will have the right to health and risk insurance, etc.

Albania also signed several international treaties that deal with voluntary issues, e.g. the convention on “the right of the public to have information, to participate in the decision making process of public authorities...” signed in 2000, and the UN resolution on Volunteerism signed in 2001.

3.2 UNDP and UNV in Albania

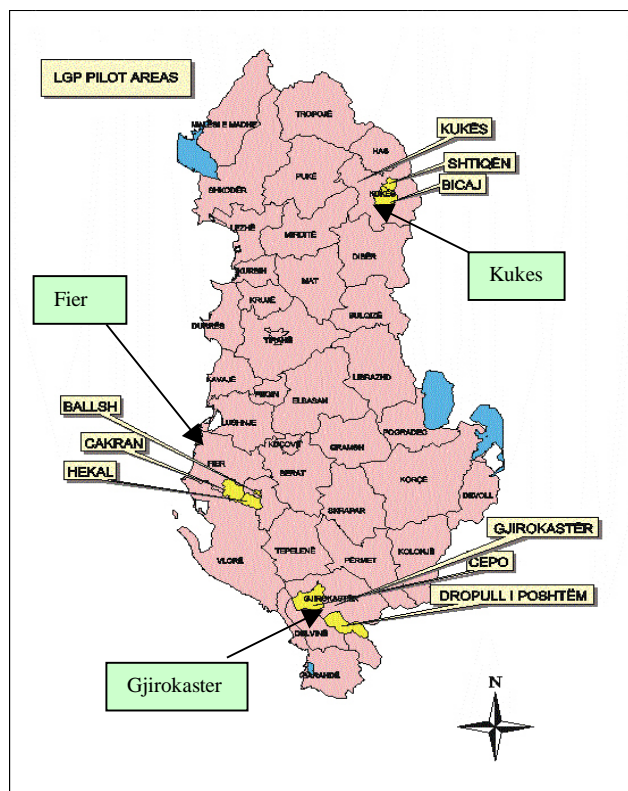
UNDP in Albania works to reach the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), supports EU integration, and responds to other national priorities through the Human Development Approach. UNDP in Albania opened in 1991 and currently employs about 40 people at the UNDP Country Office and more than 80 people in various projects (including United Nations Volunteers). It delivers nearly \$8 million per year in development and technical assistance and represents 23 other UN agencies not stationed in the country. The country office also provides programme support services to those agencies. UNDP Albania advises the government on policies and institutions to meet development challenges, and to play an advocacy role through the Human Development Report and the Millennium Development Goals. UNDP Albania practice areas are democratic governance (13 ongoing projects), poverty reduction (5 ongoing projects), Crisis Prevention and Recovery (6 projects), Energy and environment (6 ongoing projects), and HIV/AIDS (no ongoing projects) (*information from UNDP website*).

The Government of Albania gives priority to supporting decentralisation and developing an effective and democratic system of local governance. UNDP supports this process through the Local Governance Programme. The programme gives special emphasis on promoting participatory community development to ensure people's participation in local development initiatives and decision-making processes by linking the capacity building of the municipality and communes with the support for institutional development at the regional council level. The LGP applies a comprehensive and systematic approach by focusing its interventions at the central, regional, and local municipality and commune levels.

UN Volunteers established itself in Albania in September 2001 in an effort to build on the Albanian Government's growing openness towards democratic governance and civic engagement and tap into the growing potential for - together with UNDP - working with civil society and the Government in promoting volunteering for development in Albania. At present there are 18 UN Volunteers supporting UNDP development activities aiming at promoting democratic governance as well as supporting UNHCR and IOM social reintegration activities. Through the LGP project UNV established a National UNV scheme for Albanian volunteers and currently 10 Albanian UN Volunteers (and 2 Internationals) are serving in the LGP project. UNV is supporting Albania with a total of USD 487,500 from its SVF and since 2001 around USD 360,000 in the form of Fully Funded UN Volunteers from donors such as Italy, Spain and Japan (*information from UNV Albania website*).

3.3 LGP

As mentioned above, the Local Governance Programme was designed to respond to the need of the Government of Albania to implement a process of decentralization and local governance. The idea is that LGP focus its interventions at central, regional, municipality and commune levels to 'ensure linkages of grassroots experiences with the policy and institutional development' at all levels of local government. The programme has been implemented in three regions of Albania, Fier, Gjirokastrer and Kukës (see picture), to strengthen the institutional capacities of 'Regional Councils', as the second level of local government, to manage more effectively regional development functions. At the local level, the LGP has specifically been working in one municipality and two communes in each of the regions to provide support to these lowest levels of government, and to support communities in creation of self-governing CBOs that are implementing and managing a range of small-scale community initiatives as the 'entry point for alleviating poverty and increasing human security'. It has also been working at the central level of government in supporting the development of long-term policies and partnerships that are based on experiences gained at local level. The LGP gave special emphasis on promoting participatory community development to ensure people's participation in local development initiatives and decision-making processes. Since the beginning of the LGP programme in 2002, it has in fact become a cluster of interrelated activities. It now includes projects like e-governance, gender mainstreaming,



working at the central level of government in supporting the development of long-term policies and partnerships that are based on experiences gained at local level. The LGP gave special emphasis on promoting participatory community development to ensure people's participation in local development initiatives and decision-making processes.

Since the beginning of the LGP programme in 2002, it has in fact become a cluster of interrelated activities. It now includes projects like e-governance, gender mainstreaming,

poverty monitoring, and a new initiative called ‘Beautiful Gjirokaster’ which aims to ‘enhance the capacity of local government in planning and implementing projects related to cultural, historical and archaeological heritage areas’.

3.4 UNV-SVF

UNV being a close partner of UNDP in promoting local governance and community development activities decided in 2002 through its Special Voluntary Fund (SVF) to support the above mentioned parallel UNDP-LGP project in Albania. The focus of UNDP’s support is the upstream level and support to policy making in line with the MDGs in Albania. UNV’s support is focusing on the ‘downstream’ level, the local government and the communities. The objectives of LGP clearly fall within UNV’s mandate as “the UN organisation that supports sustainable human development through the promotion of Volunteerism and the mobilisation of Volunteers”.

The main development objective of the UNDP/UNV project is to support the commitment of the Government of Albania in strengthening the process of decentralization and local governance, as the institutional basis for poverty alleviation and human security. The three main objectives of the UNDP/UNV project are:

- Policy development and partnership building at central level;
- Institutional support at the regional level;
- Support at commune and municipality level to strengthen local self-governance systems

In addition to these the UNV-SVF project specifically added a fourth objective, i.e.:

- Promotion of Volunteerism to support social mobilisation practices.

The implementation of the UNV-SVF project was fully integrated in the LGP project to the extent that the UNV volunteers were the ‘operational arm’ of the LGP at regional and local level. It was mentioned in the project document that the SVF project would ‘focus directly on outcome number 2, 3 and 4 and indirectly on outcome 1’. The project duration was designed for two years from April 2002 but later an extension of the UN Volunteer contracts was signed until December 2004. Overall the main indicators for success of the UNV-SVF project can be identified as:

- 1) the main outputs at national, regional, and commune level as anticipated at the beginning of the project;
- 2) the major outcomes of these activities at all levels;
- 3) the (perceived) relevance and contributions by UNV;
- 4) the level of increase in voluntary action at local level and change of perception on the role of Volunteerism in development processes among stakeholders at all levels;
- 5) increase of partnerships as a result of this UNV-SVF project.

4 Key outcomes and findings

For reasons of clarity it is important to point out here a few issues concerning this UNV-SVF evaluation:

- it is closely linked with the overall UNDP ‘beneficiary self-assessment participatory evaluation’ which was carried out at the same time, highlighting the outcomes of the processes of local governance, social mobilization and Volunteerism (see final report by Raymond Clark, et.al.). This UNV evaluation is more specifically looking at aspects of Volunteerism in the framework of the LGP project.
- for this evaluation, the main focus is on the outcome level, i.e. the ‘immediate changes that have occurred as a result of the projects direct outputs’. Impact would be difficult to access at this stage as it is related to the long-term changes that have occurred in the area.
- the outcomes of this programme are clearly a result of the joint efforts by the different organizations to implement the LGP project, something that was indicated by many respondents. The UNV-SVF project ‘supported’ some of the outputs rather indirectly, for example the ones under objective for policy and partnership development at central level.

4.1 Some underlying factors

Before looking at the success criteria (indicators of success as mentioned earlier) it is worth to look at some factors that influenced this project, specifically looking at design, management, and UN Volunteer performance.

Project design

As mentioned above, with regards to the project design, it should be noted that the UNV-SVF project document closely follows the original LGP project document, especially with regards to goal, objectives and outputs/activities. The UNV-SVF did add one component (objective 4) on the promotion of Volunteerism. While it is understood that UNDP-LGP management did not favour separate objectives, activities, etc, it is at the same time a disadvantage from a UNV perspective. It makes it almost impossible to measure success that could be contributed to UNV only, especially at central level (objective 1). Secondly, it obscures the visibility for UNV and for Volunteerism. Even at the regional level (objectives 2 and 3) there is a limited degree of visibility for UNV although individual UNVs are known to be ‘volunteers’.

The UNV-SVF did not have its own management structure (e.g. a central project coordinator/facilitator or promotion specialist) and therefore had less opportunities to advocate for the ‘V’ and create a stronger UNV visibility. The UNV Programme Officer was technically part of a project steering committee but this committee rarely met.

Management

Management of the UNV-SVF project at the UNV Country Office level has been good. There have been only a few operational problems (e.g. delayed recruitment, problems with transfer of volunteer allowances, etc.). The UNV Country Office provides strong support to the UNVs in the field, not only on administrative issues but also on project related issues. There have been sufficient UNV briefing/meetings organized by the UNV CO and Volunteers have created a (informal) network among themselves. Security is well covered in cooperation with the UNFSO. The support and recognition given by UNDP to UNV Albania is generally good. UNV has been invited to take part in the recent UNDAF process, providing an excellent opportunity to include Volunteerism in the UN Albania agenda.

Although UNV HQ is the executing agency for the SVF project, it did not visit this project during the first two years of implementation, not only missing an opportunity to guide the UN Volunteers on the issue of Volunteerism, but also missing the opportunity to promote UNV as an organization at different levels. This would have been especially important in building relationships with local counterparts and UN agencies, including UNDP itself, in a 'new' UNV country like Albania.

UN Volunteer performance

UN Volunteer performance in general has been excellent. The UNVs are seen as highly motivated experts at the regional and commune/village level. They are well respected for their contributions and support to the local communities. Some of them were actively involved at activities at central level (e.g. the development of a training manual, etc.). In fact the UN Volunteers are the cornerstones of the LGP project at local level. The issue seems to be that they are not necessarily perceived as UNV (but rather as volunteer LGP staff), and that they do not necessarily present themselves as UN Volunteers.

There has been some change of volunteers among the IUNVs and NUNVs. For example, all of the initial IUNV regional coordinators left the project after one year (mainly for family reasons), being replaced by new IUNVs. Seven out of the seventeen NUNVs so far left the project prematurely for a variety of reasons, including for better-paid jobs with other agencies. These changes obviously have some impact on the implementation of the project.

4.2 Key findings

Outputs

This project has indeed implemented most of the activities and achieved many of the outputs as anticipated. Best examples include the creation of more than 126 CBO's in the three regions, and the implementation of small/medium scale community based projects. The CBOs were set up with their own rules and regulations, and capacity building initiatives were organized to make these CBOs self-governing institutions. About 20% of the CBOs are women-only as opposed to 60% men-only CBOs. These community organizations fully participated in prioritisation and selection of project priorities, and in the implementation of small-scale infrastructure initiatives. More than 70 of these small community projects have been implemented, valued at about 1.7 million USD, with an

estimated contribution by local government and communities (through labour and cash contributions) of about 0.5 million USD. The implementation of micro-capital grants programmes and the initiation of credit/saving schemes helped create social cohesion and participation in these CBOs and in the villages at large. Furthermore, these initiatives helped building capacity and institutional organization.

At the regional level, information centers were established (public access centers) as well as regional training units that will function as local training centers. Training was provided to build institutional capacity at regional government organizations, like the commune and municipality councils, the regional council, and the prefecture level. In Fier and Gjirokaster an additional IUNV was recruited to carry out research on the potentials for eco-tourism in both regions. The output is a strategy document on eco-tourism and list of potential projects and partnerships. The project also assisted in developing commune and municipality development plans (e.g. the Balsh municipality development plan, Fier region). One level up, and in line with the national development strategy and the MDG's. support was provided to the preparation of Regional Development Strategies (RDS) in Kukes and Fier. In Gjirokaster the project assists in the re-drafting of a previous regional strategy. In Kukes this has now been further developed in to an Area Based Development Framework.

At central level the project has contributed to the strengthening of partnerships between all levels of Government, contributing to the debate on decentralization and local governance by using the regional and local level experiences of the project. The project also developed training materials and provided training and other capacity building activities with the key assistance of one centrally based IUNV who was a training specialist for local governance. It produced a number of publications (e.g. the decentralization bulletin, an inventory on donor projects, LGP newsletters, and most notably a training manual on decentralization and local governance which was developed with inputs from the regional UNV teams), and it carried out a review on the implementation of the 'law on functioning of local government and of the decentralization strategy'.

Some outputs: (sample)

Kukes:

- 47 CBOs created
- 669 trainee days on LG
- RDS process completed
- 80 Handouts on Volunteerism in Albania
- Two green clubs established

Fier

- RDS process completed
- Institutionalisation of data collection
- Newsletter
- UNV/LGP traveling cinema to promote MDGs

Gjirokaster

- 24 CBO created of which 17 mixed gender
- 21 small scale infrastructure projects implemented
- Working groups to revise RDS
- Volunteer activities during Poverty Week

Central

- Training Manuals, Databases, and publications
- Research on law on functioning of local government and decentralization strategy.
- Workshop on Volunteerism and Albanian Legislation

Specifically on the issue of promotion of Volunteerism (objective 4) the UNV –SVF project organized a number of Volunteer activities (e.g. during IVD and Poverty weeks),

prepared handouts on Volunteerism in Albania, and published information on Volunteerism through newsletters. It also was involved on research on Volunteerism in Albania and in 2003 UNV organized, in cooperation with the SOROS foundation, a workshop on Volunteerism in the Albanian legislation. Voluntary action and Volunteerism have been mentioned in LGP documentation, newsletters, etc, and in the 30 minutes documentary on the LGP programme in Albania. But foremost, as mentioned throughout all documentation, the implementation of the micro-capital grants programme has been considered crucial to the promotion of Volunteerism at grassroots level.

Outcomes

1. The major outcomes are clearly identified by respondents as improvement of living conditions in the communities because of the small-scale infrastructure project. Many projects focused on the water supply infrastructure and many communities now benefit from easy access to clean water, saving a considerable amount of time for many households. There are now improved facilities for health care and education, there is better access to the villages, and there is improved power supply in some cases. A number of CBO are still working with the micro capital grants and the credit/saving schemes as revolving funds from where other community members can gain access to funds, using it for income generating activities. This might be in fact a good indicator of sustainability of the project.

2. The participation of people in the decision making process at community level has been established through the formation of CBOs. It can be safely assumed from the many positive and clear responses on this issue, that social cohesion in villages has been strengthened and that people feel more empowered than before. Also women clearly take part in the CBO activities, and in many cases have established women CBOs and mixed CBOs. Representatives of CBO's take part in local commune council meetings and even in regional council meetings. In some communes the CBOs are now trying to organize themselves in CBO networks to have even greater potential in becoming strong local partners in the development of the region. As reported by many respondents, there has been a mentality change as well towards the thinking of the shared responsibilities between people and their local governments. In addition, respondents mentioned increased ownership of the projects, proven by the fact that they are willing to provide financial contributions to these activities. These comments are in fact strong indicators of change in society and could probably be attributed to increased willingness by people 'to volunteer' and adopt a self-help approach.

3. Cooperation between local and regional government has improved, for example through the planning process for local project priorities and through the inclusion of all stakeholders in the development of the MDG/RDS, and in the implementation of the RDS in the region. For example, in Kukes region the 'partnership and implementation committee' was established for this reason with membership of a wide variety of stakeholders from all levels (42 members, of which 12 commune representatives and 10 CBO and NGO representatives, and including 8 women). With the assistance of UNDP and the LGP-UNV teams, all regions have created local websites that are maintained regularly, providing information to the public on issues of local government, local issues to be addressed. Ultimately this should lead to improved governance by stronger interaction between people, CBOs, CSOs, private sector, and Government. In many of the

interviews with government representatives it was mentioned that one important change as a result of this LGP project has been the change in mentality of the local people. This change could similarly be observed among government officials. They realize now participation of local people is crucial in the development process, something that was probably unheard of only a decade ago.

4. At central level the most important outcome could be defined as the adoption of the MDG/RDS as the main vehicle of regional planning. This is an indicator that the central Government realizes the importance of decentralisation and participation. The process is now being used in other non-project regions as well. The Government adopted the training manual on local governance and decentralization as ‘an important resource for increasing capacities in this field at regional and local level’. It was designed for HR departments of the local governments.

Relevance

The relevance of the UNV-SVF project has been very high. The UNV project specifically supported the implementation of the LGP programme at regional and local level by making use of International and National Volunteers, and it obtained a key role at central level through the advisory and training services of an experienced IUNV. All UNVs were perceived by the local stakeholders as the ‘UNDP-LGP project team’ and all activities were coordinated and implemented by this team, with the assistance of one or two UNDP

Examples of ‘spontaneous Volunteerism’

One good example of spontaneous voluntary action is the formation of some ‘Green Clubs’, an alliance of students and teachers, supported by LGP staff, which advocate for environmental protection and implement some voluntary actions, e.g. in Bicaj commune, Kukes.

Another example is the self-formation of a women-only CBO in Hekal commune, Fier region. A group of women organised themselves after they learned about CBOs in a neighbouring village, they approached LGP-UNV staff for assistance in some training activities.

In Gjirokaster municipality, there have been spontaneous neighbourhood activities to work on cleaning the local environment; and a group of youth volunteers are cooperating with a local NGO to rehabilitate a public park area for recreational purposes.

project associates in each region. The UN Volunteers were key in building capacities, support the creation of CBOs, and bridging the gap between local people and the commune or municipality councils, and between the communes and the regional councils. At local level the volunteers were instrumental in helping local communities understanding the (new) concept of voluntary action, by setting examples of Volunteerism, and by providing support to the implementation of small community projects.

The added value of having UN Volunteers working in the LGP project, and having an additional component in the project, i.e. the promotion of Volunteerism, was clearly the stronger focus on voluntary action as another vehicle for social mobilization and social cohesion. Awareness of people that voluntary action does bring benefits to them

in the longer run has been increased (as opposed to the old forced voluntary action imposed by the state).

An additional and important level of relevance is the fact that the LGP project proved to be an opportunity for UNV to establish a NUNV scheme in Albania. National volunteers

gained experience in a broad range of activities and become local ambassadors for the promotion of Volunteerism in Albania. The mixed team approach, linking an International UNV with a number of National UNVs, has been successful and provided a good example of its advantages.

Voluntary action and Perceptions

As mentioned in previous sections, voluntary action has clearly been increased in all regions and communes that this project covered. The process of social mobilisation and participation in CBO activities was fully based on ‘free-will’. The accomplishments of the many small-scale community initiatives were purely based on voluntary action and contributions. Besides the voluntary contributions for the projects in kind, through the provision of labour, and through cash contributions, villagers participated in voluntary actions at numerous other occasions. Examples include the participation at village/council meetings, taking part in activities considered as ‘self-help’, taking part in local volunteer groups and events. In some instances new volunteer groups (CBO) have been created as a result of the examples set by the LGP project. In annex 4 there is another example taken from the Gjirokaster region that highlights the importance of Voluntary action in this project.

In the focus group discussions in Kukes and Gjirokaster many of the participants identified changes affecting people as the most significant outcome of the project. References were made to mentality change, willingness to volunteer, and participation (see annex 3 for an example of this exercise).

In a reference commune in the Kukes region, neighbouring a LGP project area, there was no evidence of much increased voluntary action. There have been apparently no establishment of CBOs, nor has there been much participation in the planning process for the village development different from the traditional ‘heads of villages’ meeting.

It looks like that the perception on volunteers, volunteerism and voluntary work, has changed for the better in the project areas. The old ‘volunteerism’ as practiced during communist times was perceived as forced and not necessarily benefiting the people. The new volunteerism has brought a sense of participation and ownership. People seem to realize that they can make a difference in their own lives if they ‘volunteer’. It should be noted however that this new volunteerism took mostly place in the context of the LGP project that provided strong incentives (projects, micro capital grants, etc). The next phases in the community development process will prove how much people have adopted the V–spirit and use it to achieve a better life.

The question is clearly also one about sustainability of the CBOs in the communes. In this sense, sustainability is build upon some key factors such as local capacities to organize, people’s believe and hope for a better future through voluntary contributions. People need to see tangible benefits at the end of the road, and the need for mobilizing external resources remains high. At this stage it is not yet clear to what extent CBOs will continue to operate without outside support, or with just government support. If the creation of CBO networks is successful there might be a higher chance for survival for some CBOs. Although at regional and central government level there are still views on volunteerism as unskilled, not ‘professional’, etc., there is a good understanding of the importance of voluntary action for social mobilization and empowerment, in the context of the decentralization and local governance programme of the Government. The regional

governments invited and supported the participation of citizens in the RDS development process.

An outstanding issue is the fact that in much of the documentation of the LGP project and of UNDP itself, there is hardly any mentioning of the wording ‘Volunteers-Volunteerism-Voluntary action’, etc. The terminology is focused around participation, social mobilization, self-help, empowerment, etc. Only in some instances specific sections in a document or newsletter is devoted to UNV or to the ‘V’. Two exceptions worth highlighting is the LGP progress report 2003, and especially the LGP documentary film of 2004. Also significant is that in the September 2004 issue of the global UNDP magazine ‘Choices’, the LGP Albania project is featured with references to UNV and Volunteerism.

Partnerships

The LGP/UNV project has established many partnerships during the implementation of the project. At the regional level these were all initiated by the local LGP/UNV team and include local government bodies, local NGO and volunteer groups, and obviously the many CBOs at commune level. Most of these partnerships are focused around the implementation of the project activities (e.g. the regional and local councils, the representatives of CBOs, the regional training unit, and others).

UNV Partnerships

SNV

Cooperation with SNV is based on a tripartite arrangement with the regional government. The regional training unit has both staff from SNV and LGP/UNV. SNV and LGP/UNV are closely working together based on complementarity.

Albanian Youth Council

Research on Volunteerism;
Cooperation in the regional programme RIVER SEE (exchange of regional volunteers in the Balkans);
Volunteer promotion activities;

Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport

Cooperation on Sport and Development project; Advocacy on Volunteerism. Participation in IVD 2004; IUNV placement at Ministry.

Some collaboration with local NGOs was initiated at regional level to have these NGOs either included in the LGP training activities as participants or as resources for capacity building activities. In Kukes there has been cooperation with the NGO forum. In Fier there has been good cooperation with a national NGO called CO-PLAN (Institute for Habitat Development), and with the Netherlands Development Organisation SNV. In Gjirokaster, Peace Corps volunteers participated in some of the LGP activities to mobilize resources and provide training.

In fact, it seems that LGP/UNV should have invested more in creating these local partnerships with CSO actors since there is not a clear exit strategy at the moment. CSOs could have been included in such a strategy to continue to support the newly created CBOs in the communities. Also there is little evidence of partnerships, directly or through CBO/CSO, with communes that were not part of the

project area. This would have been a way to already create stronger networks of civil society organization throughout the region before the end of the project.

At central level, as a result of this project and through the promotion of Volunteerism in general, UNV has been able to profile itself and create a partnership with several ministries. It also now also more visible within UNDP and other UN agencies, which can be contributed to the excellent work of the international and national UN volunteers in the

field and central level, and to the active role the UNV CO is playing in supporting the LGP project.

The partnership between UNDP and UNV to promote democratic local governance through linking UNDP advocacy work on upstream policy levels with UNVs downstream work and experiences has worked well. UN volunteers contributed directly to some of the activities at central level that led to the adoption of the MDG/RDS approach and the nationwide usage of the training manual on decentralisation. Indirectly has the work of the UN volunteers contributed to the earlier mentioned changes of perceptions on participation and social mobilisation. Some of the 'enabling' elements for this successful partnership are: 1) UNV's almost exclusive role to implement the project at the regional and local levels; 2) UNDP's full support to the UN Volunteers; 3) Quality of the UN Volunteers; and 4) the DEX implementation modality (although this cannot be ascertained for sure).

The Gender dimensions

Although not specifically mention in the projects objectives and expected outputs, the project did achieve a number of positive outcomes in terms of gender equality. In the traditional context of Albania the men are considered the decision makers in the household. Yet this project made headway in introducing gender mainstreaming in many of its activities. Training activities by the LGP/UNV included topics on gender equality and women empowerment where appropriate. Not only were specific women CBOs created but also a number of mixed CBOs were supported. Members of the LGP/UNV teams together with local participants of the three regions participated in a central ToT training course on 'women in leadership'.

Gender mainstreaming was included in the preparation of the RDS in the different regions. It is also covered by the training manual on decentralization and local governance, giving the local users of this manual a sound basis to incorporate gender issues in their local activities. The partnership committee for the implementation of the RDS in Kukes includes 20% women.

It seems that still a lot of the gender activities are based on women empowerment. This is obviously not wrong as long as their equal attention to awareness raising among men about the changing values. In the report on the CBO participatory self-assessment conducted in September 2003,

MDG 3 - Gender and development in Kukes region:

- Formation of 8 women CBO and 3 mixed CBO;
- For total of 20,000\$ loans to 24 members of 2 women CBO in 2 communes.
- 29% of participants of all training courses were women;
- gender projects are prioritized in list of projects of RDS;
- 2x women leadership training in Kukes (12 participants)

(from IUNV report , October 2004, Kukes.

it was noted that 'the voice of the women and young people is not sufficiently captured in the current membership of the CBOs'. It concluded that there is still a need to provide training on empowerment of these groups and on gender equality for CBO members.

5 Lessons learned

The lessons learned from the implementation of the LGP/UNV project over the last 2.5 years focus around a few themes, i.e. UNV and UN Volunteers, Volunteerism, sustainability and partnerships.

5.1 UNV and UN Volunteers

- The project lacks a clear exit strategy, which could cause a sudden vacuum for the LGP project at regional and local level, and also cause ‘disappointment’ among local counterparts. Although the project document talks briefly about a phasing out of IUNVs after two years and ‘eventually’ NUNVs, reality has been different and it is unclear how this ‘eventually’ needs to take shape.
- The use of UN Volunteers has been very appropriate as advocates promoting volunteerism in local governance projects. They act as facilitators, set examples, build capacities, and they are often bridge between people and local government. Equally, the use of the ‘twinning’ model has been very successful. National and international volunteers complement each other’s roles and capacities. It creates a higher level of impartiality and clearly indicates the presence of the UN in the project areas.
- The LGP/UNV project created an opportunity for UNV to establish a NUNV scheme in Albania and increase the level of visibility as the ‘UN organization that promotes Volunteerism’. The selection of local NUNVs created a high level of trust among local stakeholders. This positively affected the start of the project when people were still doubtful about the issues of volunteerism and social mobilization.
- Still, the UNV visibility has been less than anticipated, partly due to the almost full ‘merger’ between the projects (LGP and UNV-SVF). Most stakeholders do not know UNV and are not really aware about the UNV contribution from SVF. The lack of a UNV coordinator position or ‘Promotion specialist’ in LGP at central level might have had some disadvantages in terms of UNV influencing policies and promoting volunteerism in the field of local governance and decentralization. Such a position could probably have achieved more than through the indirect support by the UNV Country Office, which has too many other obligations as well.
- Although UNVs expressed satisfaction over the amount of training and briefing they received before and during project implementation, not enough emphasis has been given to the appropriate presentation of UN Volunteers in the project areas. Similarly, there is not sufficient and consistent use of the terminology concerning ‘Volunteerism’ (etc.), throughout LGP and UNDP documentation (including in LGP websites, newsletters etc.). It would be important to strengthen the role of UNDP Albania in highlighting and advocating for Volunteerism and for UNV itself.

5.2 Volunteerism

- Through the effective mobilization of volunteers and voluntary action the project has managed to achieve most of its anticipated outputs. As a result people feel much more empowered in the development processes at village and commune level.
- Many respondents mention the increase of spontaneous voluntary activities in the project areas, and the fact that Volunteerism is now being perceived as beneficial to the communities. The values and principles of ‘Volunteerism’ have been preached and practiced throughout the project but less emphasis has been given to the consistent use of the terminology as such. In fact there still seems to be a level of uncertainty about the term itself among UNVs as well as partners, including UNDP.
- Volunteerism has not yet obtained specific attention in Albanian legislation yet although references are made to voluntary action and volunteers in specific sectoral laws. The UNV sponsored national workshop on Volunteerism in 2003 recommended the ‘compilation of a national strategy about volunteering, and also on a more specified legal framework related to volunteering.
- The workshop also highlighted another important aspect of the research done in Albania, namely the idea that youth in Albania is more inclined to contribute to voluntary work and to accept the “new” concept of volunteerism.

5.3 Sustainability and partnerships

- Through a large number of training and capacity building activities the project has provided a good foundation for self-governing communities and government level councils. Ownership of newly created CBOs and of project activities at community level is high and people have a sense of hope that things are moving forward.
- In this project a successful approach has been the linkage between social mobilization and micro capital grants. This provided incentives for communities to participate in the development process. This reinforces the successful partnership between UNDP (providing financial support and policy advice) and UNV (providing the human resources, i.e. volunteers, training and networking). The question then is to what extent this approach is sustainable and replicable. The most important factor is the sustainability of the local CBOs. There is little evidence that these ‘project-based’ CBOs can continue to operate after the project has been implemented. This is already evident in ‘older’ project areas where, since the withdrawal of LGP staff, there are no further community activities (there have been numerous requests but LGP is not able to sustain support on a continuous basis after the completion of the initial activity). This suggests that without a process of continued facilitation and without opportunities for further resource mobilization, the communities might again lose faith and cease their voluntary activities and contributions. In other words, this project has not shown yet that ‘living goVernance’ or the promotion of Volunteerism could be stand-alone approaches.

- Based on the above, UNV should always carefully consider the important issue of linking support to Volunteers to financial support for tangible activities. Equally, UNV should always consider the importance of a clear transition and exit strategy that assists CBOs and communities to continue operating even after the immediate external resources are no longer available.
- In this respect, partnerships have been very important in the successful implementation of the project. The establishment of a regional (mobile) training unit in Fier region for example, will help building capacities at local level and sustain some of the CBOs. However, the project could have cooperated with other civil society actors (national and international) to ensure a better transition and follow up after LGP has come to an end. One example is the cooperation with Co-PLAN which is a professional NGO involved in the field of community based urban development via participatory approaches that equally promote sustainable development and a new vision for civil society in Albania. Co-PLAN itself has an extensive network of partners, including the support from the Netherlands Government through a programme called 'EGUG' (Enabling Good Urban Governance). Another example is the possible cooperation with the international agency SNV (Netherlands Development Organisation).
- The planned creation of local networks of CBO (and CSOs) might help to sustain the efforts that have been initiated by the LGP/UNV project. This should have been part of the project strategy in an earlier phase, to prepare CBO for concepts of institutional strengthening through cooperation, networking, sharing etc.
- One respondent mentioned the issue of the 'DEX' execution modality as favourable to the success of this LGP project. This would also apply to the UNV execution of the SVF support. For replication purposes in Albania or elsewhere in the region, it is important to consider what effects a 'NEX' executed project might have had on for example the role and status of the Volunteers.

6 Recommendations

Recommendations for UNV fall into two categories. The first one is directly related to the LGP project, the second one is related to the future programming of UNV in Albania.

6.1 UNV and the LGP project

- It is understood that UNDP, in addition to the approved extension till the end of 2004, will continue its support to LGP in 2005. It is therefore recommended that in close coordination with UNDP/LGP, UNV urgently extends the contracts of the UN Volunteers for at least another 6 months as there is still a strong need for the continuous presence of the Volunteers. UNDP and UNV need to discuss the funding for such an extension, either from LGP resources or from a budget increase of SVF.
- To ensure that the issue of sustainability of CBO's and their activities is addressed, the UN volunteers should focus on a transition process for CBOs, assist in the formation of CBO networks, build network capacities and work on networking and resource mobilization. This transition or exit strategy needs to be developed urgently, which will prepare local project partners (especially CBOs and CSOs) for continued self-governing planning and implementation of projects.
- In addition UNV Albania, in cooperation with the local LGP/UNV teams, needs to develop partnerships with strong CSOs in the regions to facilitate a transition of CBOs from LGP support to third parties. Such cooperation should include wherever possible appropriate local NGOs and international agencies.
- In future programming of UNV-SVF, the issue of sustainability of CBOs after the end of the project needs to be better addressed as the past project strategy of LGP was to a large extent based on external donor support (UNDP and other donors). Clearer transition and exit strategies need to be identified and build in the work-planning before the end of the project.
- Depending on extension of the LGP project into a second phase, UNV should make sure that it continues to support the programme, preferably through UNDP/third party funding of UN Volunteers. A lot of trust and respect has been built up for UNV and to lose this advantage would be a mistake.
- In such continued support UNV should strongly advocate for the inclusion of a component on the promotion of Volunteerism at central level while at the same time making sure that this terminology is consistently applied throughout the programme. In this regard, it would be important to strengthen the role of UNDP and UNV in Albania in highlighting the "V" consistently, and advocating for Volunteerism and for UNV itself.

- Equally, UNV needs to make sure that UN Volunteers not only present themselves as such wherever appropriate, but that they also have the necessary knowledge and confidence to promote Volunteerism. Briefing, training, and re-current UNV workshops in Albania should be standard components of the UNV programme in Albania. Necessary funding should be built in project designs (either from UNV-SVF or from donor funding).

6.2 Future UNV programming Albania

- Much of the above applies to other future UNV programming in Albania.
- UNV has been very successful in implementing decentralization and local governance by placement of UN Volunteers at the local level and by promoting and using the values of Volunteerism. Therefore, this experience could be replicated in other UNDP/UNV programmes in the region, and in Albania itself. It would be advisable to carefully consider the impact of different execution modalities (DEX vs. NEX) on the role of the Volunteers.
- In close coordination with UNDP future support to local governance, seriously consider the existing UNV-SVF proposal on “Promoting civic engagement in MDGs at local level through multi-sectoral action groups”. This proposal was already developed in 2003 but has been shelved ever since. It might be a good and innovative follow up from the current support to the LGP programme while taking into consideration the lessons learned so far. It would focus on the same regions as LGP and therefore build upon a continued UNV presence, experience, and trust.
- In many of the responses this evaluation collected, there is a strong sense of voluntary action being the ‘playing field’ of the youth. Indeed an example of voluntary action in the LGP programme has been the voluntary establishments of ‘green clubs’ by youth at municipality level. Other stakeholders as well commented on the need for UNV to cooperate with youth organizations at all levels. There are arguments that suggest that it would be much easier to work with a young generation that was not exposed to the old ways of forced activities.
- UNV Albania has already established strong partnerships with the Ministry of Culture sport and Youth, and with the Albanian Youth Council, a national forum representing over 80 youth organizations. UNV should continue exploring ways of promoting Volunteerism with these partners. UNV Albania had recently an excellent example of an innovative approach to promote MDG through the ‘Cinema project’. This could equally be applied to the promotion of Volunteerism for MDG’s.
- As a follow up from the national workshop on Volunteerism in Albania, UNV is well positioned in close cooperation with other volunteer organizations to facilitate the drafting of a national strategy and laws on Volunteerism in Albania. UNV should use its experiences from similar processes in other countries. The

development of a National and Regional Volunteer Centres should be taken into consideration.

- Another innovative area of involvement would be linking an eco-tourism project to UNV support to the ‘Beautiful Gjirokaster’ project. This project aims at ‘supporting the Government of Albania in the enhancement of the capacity of local government in planning and implementing projects the local governments to provide better public services related to environmental, social, cultural and recreational areas’. It will address areas of unemployment, economic development, promotion of tourism and preservation of environment and cultural heritage. Potential UNV support should be linked to ‘eco-tourism strategy’ developed in 2003 for Fier and Gjirokaster regions in 2003 by an IUNV working for the LGP project. Again, such a new project would focus on two of the same regions as LGP and therefore build upon a continued UNV presence, experience, and trust.
- UNV support to Roma communities, in Albania and/or in cooperation with other countries in the Balkan region, would be a very different but challenging programme. UNV’s comparative advantage of working at the local level is a crucial factor in being able to build trust and reach out to the Roma people. Roma communities face additional difficulties in developing their communities in Albania and elsewhere. There is ample documentation from UNDP in the region on the challenges facing these communities. For UNV it would be a new and innovative programme in Eastern Europe and it could partially be based upon the lessons learned from a previous UNV/UNDP/IOM project in Albania ‘Back to the Clan - pilot project for remittance harnessing’. In such a project, UNV should try to recruit National UNVs from Roma communities who would work in close cooperation with some IUNV experts.
- It is strongly recommended that UNV Albania strengthen its partnerships with UNDP and other UN agencies in Albania, through active promotion of Volunteerism within those agencies, and placement of UN Volunteers in their programmes in the field. For this purpose UNV CO administration, in cooperation with UNV HQ, needs to be well organised and responsive to the needs of those agencies. The inclusion of Volunteerism in the UNDAF process and in the new UNDP CCF presents a unique opportunity for UNV to promote Volunteerism for the achievement of the MDGs in Albania. The MDG’s have now become one of the main driving forces for development for the Government of Albania and UNDP, and UNV should play a key role in providing support to localising the MDGs to the regions and to the local levels, and to actually provide assistance to achieve the MDGs.
- For this purpose UNDP Albania and UNV might want to consider placing a UNV specialist within the UNDP office who focuses directly on the promotion of Volunteerism for the achievement of MDGs in Albania.

7 Conclusion

The UNV-SVF support to the LGP project has been very successful and proved to be a good example of supporting ‘living goVernance’ (the approach of promoting community participation, voluntary engagement and supporting synergies between stakeholders at local level). UNV support was instrumental in the implementation of the LGP project at local level while contributing to many capacity building initiatives at central level. The UN volunteers performed well in a mixed-team approach and they earned trust and respect through their commitment. Visibility of UNV has been less than expected which was partly due to the design of the project, i.e. the full integration in the UNDP- LGP project.

Through this project UNV has promoted and showed the importance of voluntary action in the process of social mobilisation and ‘empowerment through participation’ of communities. It also bridged the gaps between local communities and their elected local governments, effectively contributing to the development of local and regional development strategies, and the adoption of this participatory planning process by the central Government. The UNV approach has been successful and should be integrated in UNDP’s new country programme in Albania.

Most important issue that remains is the sustainability of the process of participation and voluntary contributions by communities once the LGP support has dried up. The initial foundations have been laid but these communities and their newly formed CBOs need continuous support for some time to come. In this regard the partnerships with other local NGOs and other (international) agencies should be improved to create strong networks of support. Clear transition and exit strategies should have been developed in the project and those remain an important priority for an extension of the project.

In the on-going support by UNDP to the LGP project in 2005, immediate UNV support should concentrate on extension of the current UN Volunteers contracts with at least 6 months to facilitate a transition period. Equally, UNV should be involved in discussions on an extension of the LGP project into a second phase.

A variety of innovative options exist for UNV to continue its work in Albania. These include support to new UNDP initiatives in the field of local governance, and the development of a UNV project concerning civic engagement in MDGs. Furthermore, UNV could focus on programming activities concerning disadvantaged people (e.g. Roma communities), and on initiatives around promotion of Volunteerism, including support to a national strategy on Volunteerism.

With the inclusion in the UNDAF process in Albania, there is a good opportunity for UNV to promote Volunteerism across the ‘UN board’, to expand its support to the other UN agencies, and to build more partnerships at the country level. Furthermore, the relatively new focus on MDGs provides an opportunity for UNV to strengthen the concept of Volunteerism for the achievement of the MDGs in Albania.

Annex 1: List of UNVs

LIST OF NUNV & IUNV WITH LGP

Name	Status	Location	EoD	Assignment Title	End of Contract
Andrea Hoffer	IUNV	Gjirokaster	07-Jun-02	Regional Coordinator LGP	6-Jun-03
Flavio Kaisserman	IUNV	Gjirokaster	27-Jan-03	Tourism Development Specialist	26-Jan-04
Rudina Caslli	NUNV	Gjirokaster	22-Apr-02	Commune Development Specialist	3-Mar-04
Gerhard Sina	NUNV	Gjirokaster	22-Apr-02	Commune Development Specialist	31-Mar-04
Lori Shortreed	IUNV	Gjirokaster	16-Jul-03	Regional Coordinator LGP	30-Apr-04
Lindita Luzo	NUNV	Gjirokaster	22-Apr-02	Municipality Development Officer	31-Dec-04
Spiro Diamanti	NUNV	Gjirokaster	22-Apr-02	Municipality Development Officer	31-Dec-04
Jeta Sinoimeri	NUNV	Gjirokaster	01-Jul-04	Commune Development Specialist	31-Dec-04
Riccardo Mesioano	IUNV	Tirana	12-Oct-02	Small/Medium Enterprises specialist	31-Aug-03
Leilani Maghanay	IUNV	Tirana	05-Dec-02	Local Governance Training Specialist	4-Jun-04
Chittoor Mohanamma	IUNV	Kukes	23-Apr-02	Regional Coordinator LGP	6-Jun-03
Ylber Cejku	NUNV	Kukes	22-Apr-02	Commune Development Officer	31-Dec-04
Bukurosh Onuzi	NUNV	Kukes	22-Apr-02	Commune Development Officer	31-Dec-04
Bhuvan Silwal	IUNV	Kukes	30-May-03	Regional Coordinator LGP	31-Dec-04
Gazmend Dulla	NUNV	Kukes	16-Nov-02	Promotion of Volunteerism Specialist	31-Dec-04
Zyber Jata	NUNV	Kukes	22-Apr-02	Local Governance Specialist	31-Dec-04
Arben Dhima	NUNV	Fier	22-Apr-02	Municipality Development Officer	22-Jul-03
Genci Kadriu	NUNV	Fier	04-Jun-03	Regional Coordinator Assistant	31-Jul-03
Dashnor Sulaj	NUNV	Fier	22-Apr-02	Community Development Specialist	8-Nov-02
Renato Vidhi	NUNV	Fier	22-Apr-02	Community Development Specialist	11-Nov-02
Roberta Lossio	IUNV	Fier	01-Jun-02	Regional Coordinator LGP	31-Dec-03
Erion Shehu	NUNV	Fier	03-May-03	Community Development Specialist	31-Oct-04
Arben Moci	NUNV	Fier	19-Nov-02	Community Development Specialist	31-Dec-04
Bujar Taho	NUNV	Fier	29-Apr-03	Promotion of Volunteerism Specialist	31-Dec-04
Vangjel Rama	NUNV	Fier	01-Sep-03	Municipality Development Specialist	31-Dec-04
Natasha Mistry	IUNV	Fier	01-Oct-03	Regional Coordinator LGP	31-Dec-04

Annex 2: Summary interview reports

1. UNV Programme Officer, Ms Chiara Pace (summary of several meetings).

- Discussed the purpose of the UNV evaluation, highlighting the role of UNV in the project in terms of contributions, outcome and sustainability. Looking at the linkages between the ‘downstream and upstream’ activities, etc. Also looking at the outcome of the promotion of Volunteerism in LGP and in the areas the UNV project is working. And finally looking at the potentials for UNV to continue working in LGP and/or Albania.
- The UNV PO highlighted at several occasions the very strong support UNV receives from UNDP management, not only for administrative issues but also for programming activities and building partnerships.
- UNV was invited to take part in the UNDAF process (October 2004). Volunteerism will possibly be highlighted in the UNDAF.
- UNV not necessarily fully understood by other (UN) agencies /staff, often considered as regular UNDP staff.
- The UNV CO is facing some administrative problems (e.g. ATLAS) but in general the operations are going fine. There are no real security concerns - the UN FSO is functioning well.
- Difficulties for UNV in the LGP project included the turnover of IUNV / NUNV during the project period, the uncertain role of the NUNV promotion specialist in the beginning, the geographical difficulties (Kukes, Gjirokaster), and the difficulties of introducing the concept of ‘Voluntary action’ (related the past of Albania).
- Some of the advantages for UNV in this project include: the relative flexibility of ‘working like an NGO’ with the authority of the UN! The UN volunteers are the ‘backbone’ of the LGP project at local level, creating higher visibility. UN volunteers are well respected because of their ‘drive’ the NUNVs are from the local area and have very good knowledge on the local conditions, etc.
- There is unclarity on the current situation with regards to the extension of LGP and UNV’s support. This is not good for the UN Volunteers since their contracts are due to expire in December 2004.

2. Secretary General of Kukes Prefecture (7 October)

- The main achievement of LGP is the participatory development of the Kukes RDS in line with the priorities of the MDG’s. The drafting of the RDS faced many challenges in terms of process and in terms of identifying the main problems and priorities. UNDP/LGP has facilitated the process with the assistance of the local UNDP/LGP team.
- It is the intention of the regional government to replicate this process at commune and municipality level and the government will make available local resources.
- The major lessons learned in the process: the contributions of the communities and the social mobilisation process are important and should be valued.
- The biggest challenges facing the implementation of the RDS will be the mentality and low awareness of local people on participation, secondly the high migration rates of the region to other parts of Albania, the challenges concerning the infrastructure and accessibility problems of the region, the marketing issue of local production, and finally the low investment rates of industries in the region.
- Public administration is still weak in the region and needs further support in terms of capacity building. It will also be strengthened through yet another ‘territorial reform’ in Albania.
- The main changes that have occurred during the last 3 years include the increase of participation of local people in identifying problems and in planning of projects. People now also choose leaders based on merits and knowledge rather than on nepotism. And people see slow improvements in the region and therefore migration has become less.
- The presence of a UNDP office in the region with UNDP staff has made a big difference. UNDP should also be working in the environment sector and in business development support.

- Aware of UN Volunteer presence in the LGP project. They are assisting local NGO's in building capacity and advocacy capacity. Volunteerism has improved since the 'old days' and it is not being perceived as a burden anymore. People realize that they can make a change.
- It is very obvious that this UNDP/LGP project has made a big impact on the project areas. There is some change in non-project areas as well but less tangible.

3. Members of Regional Council, Kukes. (7 October)

(Head of council + 4 members of RDS implementation committee)

- Good cooperation with UNDP on the development of the RDS in Kukes, especially with regards to the identification of problems and priorities. Now at the beginning of the implementation phase of the RDS and still like to see UNDP operating in all areas of the region.
- LGP project has been very successful and has increased the capacity of local CBOs.
- The partnership or implementation committee for the RDS consists of a wide variety of stakeholders from all levels (42 members, of which 12 commune representatives and 10 CBO and NGO representatives, and including 8 women). It has created 6 thematic sub-groups.
- The key changes that occurred as a result from the RDS process are the involvement of communities in drafting the strategy, democratic participation, and teamwork. The RDS was a process of participation and an opportunity for educated people to get involved!
- Some challenges now are the priority setting for implementation, the signing of a MoU with central government, resource mobilisation, and convincing UNDP to continue to support Kukes region.
- Another important lesson is that there hasn't been sufficient coverage by the media of UNDP's activities yet, especially on the process.
- If there is no outside assistance there is a danger that the RDS becomes no more than a book on the shelves although the government will try to finance some of the activities.
- In terms of sustainability of the process and the empowerment of the people it should be noted that people and CBO will try to find alternative funding but that there is now an awareness that people have to take control of their own lives.
- UN Volunteers played an important role. Perception of people on role of volunteerism has changed because of the involvement of national volunteers setting examples. There is a change in mentality in the project areas, not seen in other areas.

4. CSO meeting, focus group discussion, Kukes (7 October) (see annex 3)

(about 10 participants from CBO, NGO, NGO forum, journalists.)

5. Secretary of Terthore commune council (non-project area) (7 October) and Head of social support department of commune

- The changes over the last few years are not much. A few infrastructure projects (water supply, local road, health centers) have been implemented with funding from the government and the Albanian Development Fund. These projects require a local contribution of 10% of total cost.
- The economic situation in the commune has not much changed but the commune experienced a very high rate of migration (up to 25%) over the past 4 years. Reasons are the high unemployment rates and lack of economic opportunities.
- There are no CBOs, people are not aware or do not see benefits to organize themselves because of the lack of resources. The commune receives little financial assistance from outside.
- In the commune council only the heads of villages represent the local communities. There are no women members in the council. A village committee of all heads of households (usually very few women are involved) decides on village priorities and presents those to the commune council that selects the main projects. Project proposals are then send for approval to the regional level or directly to ministerial level.
- There is some awareness on the UNDP projects in the neighbouring commune and the formation of new CBOs in local villages to implement small-scale projects. No attempts have been made to study in detail or duplicate these efforts because "they are excluded anyway".

- There would be opportunities for voluntary action in the commune but the people and villages lack sufficient organizational skills, and there is no support to guide them on a vision, purpose, etc... There is a lack of technical assistance.

6. National UNV team Kukes (summary of several meetings) (7 October)

(the IUNV - regional LGP coordinator was absent)

- The four National UN Volunteers (NUNV) worked for most of the time on close coordination with two local UNDP staff (programme associates). They covered 2 communes and 1 municipality while one of them was the Volunteerism promotion specialist for the region.
- When they applied to the job they were not really aware about the differences between UNDP and UNV positions, they considered it more a LGP assignment. Their impression is that they were selected for NUNV posts based on their specific qualifications and experience, fitting a NUNV profile.
- They did not see the UNV-SVF project document; they are working on the basis of the LGP work planning. Exception is the promotion specialist who has it's own TOR.
- They all highlighted the fact that being a volunteer it (finally) earned them respect in the local communities because they work for the benefit of the community, they are seen as the bridge to project funding opportunities, and because villagers now better understand the value of voluntary work.
- Through training and capacity building activities on planning and management of projects people have changed their mentality and attitude towards 'self-governing'. People have more hope for the future.
- Some outcomes of the project are: 1) active participation by CBO representatives in council meetings; 2) beneficiaries use their new skills and experience from training in planning and management of development activities; 3) some CBO are independently planning for new projects through the created savings projects, and by contacting other organizations (CSO); 4) there are reported cases that ex-migrants are returning to the project areas because they see improvements.
- A lesson learned from this project is that it would be very difficult yet to achieve sustainable results if there hadn't been the follow up support of LGP micro capital resources, in other words, only voluntary action / support in capacity building of local beneficiaries might not be sufficient yet.
- Volunteerism is more likely to succeed in places/areas that are still homogeneous of composition. Working in the municipality proved more difficult in the beginning because of a lack of trust.
- It is very important to motivate people, let them participate in planning, design, and monitoring. Transparency of project activities is another important issue. All these factors have created a sense of ownership and empowerment. This will ensure the sustainability of the 'volunteerism'.
- For the NUNVs this has been an enrichment of experiences and they feel satisfaction when they see appreciation from local people. Still they do not consider themselves as very different from the UNDP staff... they are all part of the same local LGP team.
- NUNV feel that sufficient support is given to them by the UNV CO and the LGP office in Tirana. They received briefing on UNV, security, etc. and they highly appreciate the UNV retreats that provide an excellent opportunity for sharing of experiences on LGP and on being a volunteer.
- Some recommendations: 1) UNV should continue working in the LGP programme in Albania because of the high level of trust that has been achieved; 2) UNV should be doing more on the promotion of Volunteerism, more media attention, more publications, etc; 3) UNV should be looking into the feasibility of supporting the establishment of national and local Volunteer Centres. These Volunteer Centres are to coordinate and facilitate the role of Volunteerism in achieving the MDG' in Albania. The MDGs cannot be achieved if volunteers are not included; 4) UNV should support the Government on creating a new law on Volunteerism (although provisions on Volunteerism are made in the current legislation of certain sectors (e.g. disaster management).
- UNV should periodically review the NUNV VLA level since the cost of living has gone up substantially.

7. Group of local teacher/nurses in Bicaj commune, Kukes (8 October)

- They have not been taking part in project activities, they are not member of CBO. They are aware about the CBOs and consider a positive sign of development. Changes that have occurred in the

commune are mainly infrastructure projects. Economic conditions have somewhat improved in general and the past high migration rate has slowed down. Some people are even returning (mainly because problems they face in the new locations are even worse than 'at home').

- In this area there are only 'men CBO', men are still the decision makers here. Women do participate in activities on a voluntary basis. There is still a lack of efforts to facilitate the creation of women CBOs and women will not do it by themselves.
- Other voluntary activities include the cleaning of the local environment, the green clubs at the (high)-school.

8. Director of Albanian Youth Council, Ms. Arjola Agolli (10 October)

- The AYC consists of a steering committee of respected persons who volunteer their time to guide and support the AYC. The executive board (full time paid staff) is responsible for management and coordination of this national forum, representing around 80 youth organizations in the country. Its work is based on activities of youth volunteers around the country.
- One the most important focus groups for the AYC are the 'Youth Parliaments' that exists in each region (with support from UNICEF), working on advocacy campaigns (e.g. against crime, on voting, on educational reforms, on participation, etc.).
- It is estimated that 90% of all volunteers in Albania are youth volunteers. Volunteering is often seen as a bridge between school and a professional life. It is valued for gaining experience. But it will take a long time before volunteering has gained a real positive status in all strata of Albanian life (the past has put a strong stigma on the 'V' in Albania).
- Volunteering needs to be promoted more (and UNV is an excellent organization to do that because of its international status). Volunteerism is now better developed in CSOs in Albania but hasn't been institutionalized at government level. A Volunteer Centre could be an instrument to achieve awareness raising on volunteerism and coordinate voluntary activities.
- There has been strong cooperation with UNV in Albania on several issues: 1) research project on Volunteerism in Albania; 2) study on existing laws and regulation concerning the 'V'; 3) lobbying at several Ministerial levels, parliament members; 4) participation in a regional Balkan programme on the exchange of local Volunteers (RIVERSEE).
- AYC is currently working with UNV in the region (Sarajevo) on a project to develop framework for laws on Volunteerism in seven Balkan countries ('Albert Einstein project'), Support from MS Denmark and the SEE Youth Network.
- AYC is not fully aware on the work done by UNV/LGP in local governance but it is recommended to include youth as much as possible in the decentralization process and local governance. AYC could provide capacity building services for local youth organizations, student groups, local governments, etc.
- Possible partnership between UNV/LGP and AYC to support youth groups in communes and villages.

9. UNDP advisor on MDGs / Democratic Governance, Mr. Joe Hooper (11 October)

- Mr. Hooper used to work as a UN Volunteer and has a good knowledge on the organization. Now he is working on a cost share basis between UNDP and the LGP project.
- Views UNDP/LGP's approach of social mobilisation as very appropriate in the decentralization process.
- The LGP project (like most UNDP projects in Albania) has been implemented under a DEX modality although the Government has a high degree of ownership. {what impact did this have on the status of Volunteers ? }
- UNV plays an important role in LGP at community level and in supporting the implementation of the RDS in different regions. The UN Volunteers use volunteerism as a tool to achieve social mobilization; the communities are aware that they are volunteers themselves; they set good examples.

- One outcome of this project at central level has been the Government's intention to require a nationwide development of a regional RDS, in line with localised MDGs, and in line with the National Strategy for Socio Economic development (NSSSED).
- The IUNVs also played a very important role to promote volunteerism at regional level but the further 'up the government chain' the less clear UNV becomes. There is still an uphill battle in Albania for the recognition of voluntary work.
- The image has improved much easier among the youth and there is an opportunity for UNV to work with youth to advocate for social change. Also because Albania is experiencing a demographic change to a younger population.
- UNV should also continue to support the LGP now and in any future expansion. Volunteers have been key in the implementation of LGP so far.

10. UNDP LGP staff, Ms. Etleva Martiri and Mr. Admir Duraj (11 October)

- Key outcome of the LGP projects is the representation and full participation of CBO members in meetings on decision making and planning at local level. CBO leaders now sometimes approach UNDP in Tirana directly.
- Sustainability issue of CBOs relates to a learning process of people, most CBOs are organized around groups of households. There is intention to create local networks of CBOs.
- UNV has had a strong impact a local level; LGP was implemented through local UNV/LGP teams. At central level UNV supported the development of training manuals and capacity building activities. The Government is using this new knowledge to require a development of RDS in all regions.
- The UNV programme in Albania is included in the overall UNDP programme, there is not much differentiation.
- Recommendations for the future of UNV programming in Albania would include a continuation of UNVs support to LGP because of its high impact at local level; new support to civic education and civic rights programmes; and work to support Roma communities in Albania.

11. LGP – CTA, Mr. Elyan Pandey (11 October)

- At the beginning of the project in 2002 there was very different picture in the local project areas. There was no involvement of people, no participation and few capacities for decision-making and planning, etc. Now the project has achieved a high level of participation and empowerment. Still the communities need further resource mobilisation and capacity building to sustain the efforts made so far.
- At regional level UNV contributed to the RDS development, and there is now a wide acceptance on the issue of participation in decision making, based on local priorities. There is now certainly a bridge between communities and local government.
- At central level UNVs have contributed to policy development at the Ministry of Local Government (e.g. assessment of laws on decentralization, the acceptance of the RDS process by central level). The UNV support has been key, and the NUNV / twinning strategy has provided opportunities for nationals to built their capacities through the LGP project.
- A concern for LGP is the limited size of the project: only three regions and a small number of communes have been reached. Much support is needed to expand to other regions and to initiate resource mobilization activities for the implementation of the RDS process.
- The strong point of UN Volunteers is that they are highly motivated and achieve good results even though their salaries are limited. A weakness is that UN Volunteers might leave the project for better (paid) opportunities elsewhere.
- LGP follows a process of social mobilisation based on concept of Volunteerism, voluntary activities (e.g. contributions in kind, cash, labour), the creation of local interest groups (CBO), and the implementation of a savings programme. One of the benefits they see is gaining access to micro capital grants.
- The added value of recruiting volunteers is that they can portrait themselves to help on a voluntary basis and thereby setting an example.
- It has been beneficial to the programme that the recruited NUNVs were from the local areas. They obviously had a good knowledge of the people and the working conditions. Outsiders might not

have been accepted so easily (trust factor). IUNVs played important complimentary roles and setting even stronger examples of ‘voluntarism’.

- The LGP project has provided UNDP and UNV with a high visibility in Albania and UNV should continue to support the LGP programme. UNVs should be built in the design of new initiatives around local governance.
- For example, the LGP cluster now includes a new programme, i.e. ‘Beautiful Gjirokaster’ which deals with many aspects of local governance, employment, economic development, etc. It would be an opportunity for UNV to support.

12. SNV Albania Country Director, Mr. Maarten Bremer (11 October)

- SNV Albania has gone through a transition phase from working directly with local counterparts on capacity building and project implementation, towards a sole ‘advisory and capacity building’ role for counterparts at mainly the regional level (or ‘meso-level’ in SNV terminology). Obviously this transition is a challenge since beneficiaries do not receive direct support in terms of projects, grants, etc. The expectation is that in the longer run local government and CSOs will be strong to generate resources on their own.
- SNV has a long history of involvement in local governance programmes in three regions of Albania of which Fier is a ‘shared’ region with UNDP’s LGP. In Fier there is strong cooperation at the regional level through a tri-partite agreement with LGP and the regional government. Cooperation mainly focuses around capacity building activities. The regional mobile training unit has staff from SNV, LGP and the government.
- SNV also support the MDGs as the basis for the local RDS and supports this process actively in the other two areas where SNV is working (Diber and in Korca town).
- Concern for SNV is the identification of good civil society actors, organizations. Only 15-20% of NGO’s are active CS organisations with potential and a vision.
- The sustainability of CBO is still a big question if funds ‘dry up’. These CBOs needs much further support from other CSOs to sustain their efforts. Coordination with these CSOs is important and therefore SNV’s role could be complimentary to LGP’s role. One example is SNV work with the Forest Users Association, which is of importance not only in natural resources management but also in land title issues. The latter is currently a ‘hot’ issue in most parts of Albania.

13. UNDP DRR, Ms. Elzira Sagynbaeva (11 October)

- The LGP project very successfully implemented with the support of UN Volunteers at central, regional, and local level.
- UNV support at central level in capacity building activities, and in defining roles of all Government levels in the process of decentralization and local governance. The UNV support to the development of a central training manual on decentralization and local governance has been highly appreciated.
- At regional level UN Volunteers were especially successful in supporting local communities through a process of social mobilization, providing training for local counterparts, help develop the local RDS, and define roles of the regional councils.
- The local RDS developed with the support of the LGP project proved to be a good example for the central government to replicate in other areas of the country.
- LGP was vehicle for UNV to establish a National UNV programme in Albania. The twinning approach with IUNVs proved beneficial (local knowledge and experience twinned with international experience and neutrality).
- The beginning of the project experienced a lot of mistrust, which was gradually overcome with this process of social mobilization facilitated by the UNVs.
- UNV should continue to be involved in the LGP, even without the SVF support provided in the first phase.
- ‘Volunteerism’ is not yet a terminology that is widely used in UNDP where the concept is often referred to as social mobilization, community participation, etc.
- UNV needs to raise the profile of volunteerism and of volunteers in Albania.
- UNV is primary ‘delivery modality’ for UNDP ‘s programme now and hopefully in the future, and UNV should expand the NUNV modality, and create local networks of volunteers.

- The UNV CO unit performs well and is actively involved in the UNDP programme in Albania, e.g. the recent involvement in the UNDAF process.
- Sometimes UNV experiences administrative problems. This might be due to the functioning of the ATLAS system but is also a result of the centralised way UNF HQ is operating. There is little room for flexible operations and this is not always appreciated by UN agencies.
- Funding available to UNV CO is too limited (e.g. POEM) and does not allow for much innovative work, resulting in an ‘inward’ looking UNV operation.

14. Local stakeholders meeting, Gjirokaster region (12 October)

- Separate accounts of this meeting is presented in annex 5

15. Meeting UNV team Gjirokaster (summary of several meetings) (12/13 October)

- Low level of trust among people at the beginning of LGP, difficult to operate in communities, but now the projects has had a high impact. 24 new CBO were created and people have hope for a better future. Requests have been sent to the UNDP/LGP for a continuation and expansion of LGP support but these requests cannot be supported (limitations of LGP resources).
- Main achievements of the project are the increased level of participation and empowerment of people, and the voluntary contributions to the micro capital grants and savings scheme. LGP has managed to organize people in a structured way and build capacity.
- With regards to sustainability it is expected that when LGP finishes its activities something will remain, some CBO will continue to organize and plan for the implementation of new projects. Also networks of CBOs are planned that will strengthen the role of CBOs in regional development.
- The volunteer status of UNVs difficult to explain to local people since the allowances are relatively high, UNVs make use of project vehicles, etc. Advantage has been the selection of NUNV from local areas (local knowledge, etc.)
- There is collaboration between CBOs and NGOs in the region but the number of strong NGOs is still small. The NGOs provide training for men and women members of CBOs.
- The model of CBOs is not duplicated in non-project areas since people need facilitation and small incentives (micro projects etc. to get started).
- UNV should continue working in Gjirokaster region through the LGP project or other initiatives, Two years are not sufficient to make a real change but UNV has built up a good level of trust and respect.
- UNV should involve youth, work on environment issues, and possibly join the ‘Beautiful Gjirokaster’ project.
- More attention should be given to awareness raising on volunteerism, participation etc. among all local stakeholders. More use of local media.
- UNV support to the Volunteers is good, especially like the UNV retreats that provide opportunities for sharing ideas and experiences.

16. Head of Public Information department Gjirokaster, Ms. Shpresa Mino (13 October)

- LGP has been good in Gjirokaster, for example the Public Access Centre where people now have easy access to information that is important to them.
- Factors that ensure sustainability of the LGP process are the successful implementation of small projects, the level of trust that has been created, the tripartite coordination, and the strong involvement of local people. Communities are very interested to expand their activities with the future assistance of UNDP.
- The Gjirokaster regional strategy, which was developed some years ago, is now being redrafted because of the new RDS policy that was supported by UNDP (updated to line up with the MDGs). For this region the MDGs on gender, child mortality, education and environment are the most important. In Albania there is a 9th MDG on Local Governance that is very important too.
- UNDP presence is very important to assist Gjirokaster in many of its problems, i.e. social problems, unemployment, environment, etc. The ‘Beautiful Gjirokaster’ project is an important project to make people proud again and create social cohesion.

- UNV is not very well known as an organization but there are volunteers working in the LGP project. There should be more media coverage, cooperation with the PAC center and with University in Gjirokaster.

17. Head of Development Division Gjirokaster Prefecture, Ms. Bejo Alketa (13 October).

- Cooperation with UNDP in the region has been very positive and although the impact has been high, the LGP project is still small scale ... needs expansion. Region needs to work on other donor support as well.
- The UN volunteers are well known for their support, and volunteers are an important force for development.
- Volunteerism needs to expand to the other communes, for example by facilitating study tours, and the establishment of networks of CBOs.
- Technical assistance in project development and resource mobilization is necessary and could be incorporated in the PAC centers.
- The 'Beautiful Gjirokaster' project could be a good opportunity for UN Volunteers to continue working in this region, because it addresses a range of issues, e.g. environment, eco-tourism, unemployment and urban planning.

18. Head of Planning Department Gjirokaster Municipality, Ms. Marjeta Kola (13 October).

- Cooperation has been very good and the impact has been high. The introduction of the new ways of volunteering has set strong examples of social mobilization.
- Some other donors are now coming to this region as well (WB irrigation, EU water supply, and Albanian Development Fund?!). Gjirokaster region is also part of a UNDP regional project with the UNDP office in Bratislava (Local Sustainable Development).
- Factors of sustainability of development process in communities are the improvement of the socio-economic conditions in the villages and the motivation of the people. Therefore CBO will continue to function.
- UNV has made a highly valued contribution; the UN volunteers are very good and motivated.
- Opportunity for UNV is the 'Beautiful Gjirokaster' project. Important for preservation of the city, for environment issues, and for tourism development (= economic development). There is no functioning tourism office and there is a lack of legislation on for example (eco)-tourism.
- UNV is also to work more with youth groups and involve them in environment projects. Set up youth training centers and organize training courses.
- UNV could also be cooperating with local NGO in the region on issues like environment. A number of NGOs are really civil society actors, working on the basis of volunteerism. An example is the rehabilitation of a public park with youth volunteers.

19. Discussion with Group of 14 Stakeholders, Cepo commune. (13 October)

(all heads of CBO, 1 Islamic CSO, 2 women CBO, and Head of Commune Council)

- Important outcome is that the CBO are now well organized and that organizational capacity has been increased. Cooperation between all parties has been very strong. Some CBO are now working with WB on an irrigation project.
- The CSO is providing free vocational training to the CBO members to start small income generating activities.
- The strength of the UNDP model: 1) based on voluntary contributions, inclusion of Volunteerism; 2) tripartite agreements; 3) serves as 'ice-breaker' for participation; 4) organizes communities and build capacities; 5) increase in women participation.
- Sustainability is ensured because people are now motivated, mentality has changed, people participate actively, social mobilisation has worked well. What the CBOs learned so far is a "heritage" that will not be lost!
- Challenges in the future are: infrastructure is very important but very expensive, people cannot afford because of the poor economic conditions. UNDP only covered a small number of villages and it is not clear how it can be expanded.

- Local government should play an active role to link up non-project villages, create a CBO network, duplicate model in other areas.
- Recommendations include more focusing on youth groups, schools, because it is a new generation with a new way of thinking. Voluntary contributions might be increased to a level of 20% of project costs; and most important UNDP should continue until 2010!

20. Meeting with Deputy Head of Fier Regional council, Mr. Asqeri Muhaj, and specialist of Fier regional development unit, Ms. Mirjana Zisi. (14 October)

- UNDP/LGP has successfully supported the development of the RDS, engaging stakeholders on a voluntary basis. UNVs were instrumental in this process.
- Challenge will be the implementation of the RDS because the cost implications and the difficulty of finding interested donors. This work is assigned to 5 working groups, identifying projects, estimate costs, and draft proposals.
- In the implementation of LGP in Fier the UN Volunteers are to be respected for their good work and dedication.
- Volunteerism in the communities has created 'unity' among people, based on their free will as opposed to the old forced 'voluntary work'.
- Capacities and efficiency of stakeholders have increased a lot as a result from this LGP project. The regional training unit has been very good. One national UNV is part of this training team.
- In one commune (Heklan) they have now developed a commune development strategy that is fully in line with the RDS of Fier region. This is setting a good example for other communes in the region.
- Challenge is still to collect reliable data as basis for strategic planning at all levels.
- Sustainability of volunteerism and of CBO is still somewhat depending on implementation of activities and the level of resource mobilization.

21. Discussion with group of Stakeholders, Cakran commune (14 October)
(6 heads of CBO/village, 1 women CBO, and deputy head of commune)

- The deputy Head of Commune gave a brief presentation on the background on Cakran commune, the largest in the country. The livelihood of the commune is based on agriculture and it faced many problems in the transition phase from the old regime to the new era. LGP has introduced a new model of social mobilisation and voluntary work. 11 out of the 13 villages in this commune participated in LGP, some projects served the whole commune (hospital). Projects were small scale, focus on infrastructure works, and people contributed their own resources to all projects. People are now more confident and aware about their own potentials for the future. Likes to continue with tripartite cooperation with UNDP.
- Like in Gjirokaster all the heads of CBOs provided a brief presentation on their background and their activities within the LGP project. The CBOs are focused around infrastructure projects and working on a voluntary basis.
- LGP provided training for women CBO on management of a credit/savings programme that has now turned into a revolving fund / community development fund.
- In a neighbouring commune a women CBO was created without project support but LGP assisted in training.
- LGP has managed to bring people together through a new organizational approach introduced by the UN Volunteers. A basis for future projects has been created with voluntary contributions of the communities.
- Now awareness that participation will bring success. There is more unity in the community.

22. Meeting with SNV field-office staff Fier (14 October)

- SNV Fier has gone through some changes over the last few years. Initially SNV worked with local partners based on SNV priorities, criteria. Now they are only providing advisory services based on the needs and priorities of carefully selected civil society actors who are interested in SNV as a partner. A contract is signed with these partners outlining each other's responsibilities and a work plan. SNV is focused on institutional development and organizational strengthening. This is

considered an outcome while the impact is expected to be a better interaction, etc. between CSO and local government.

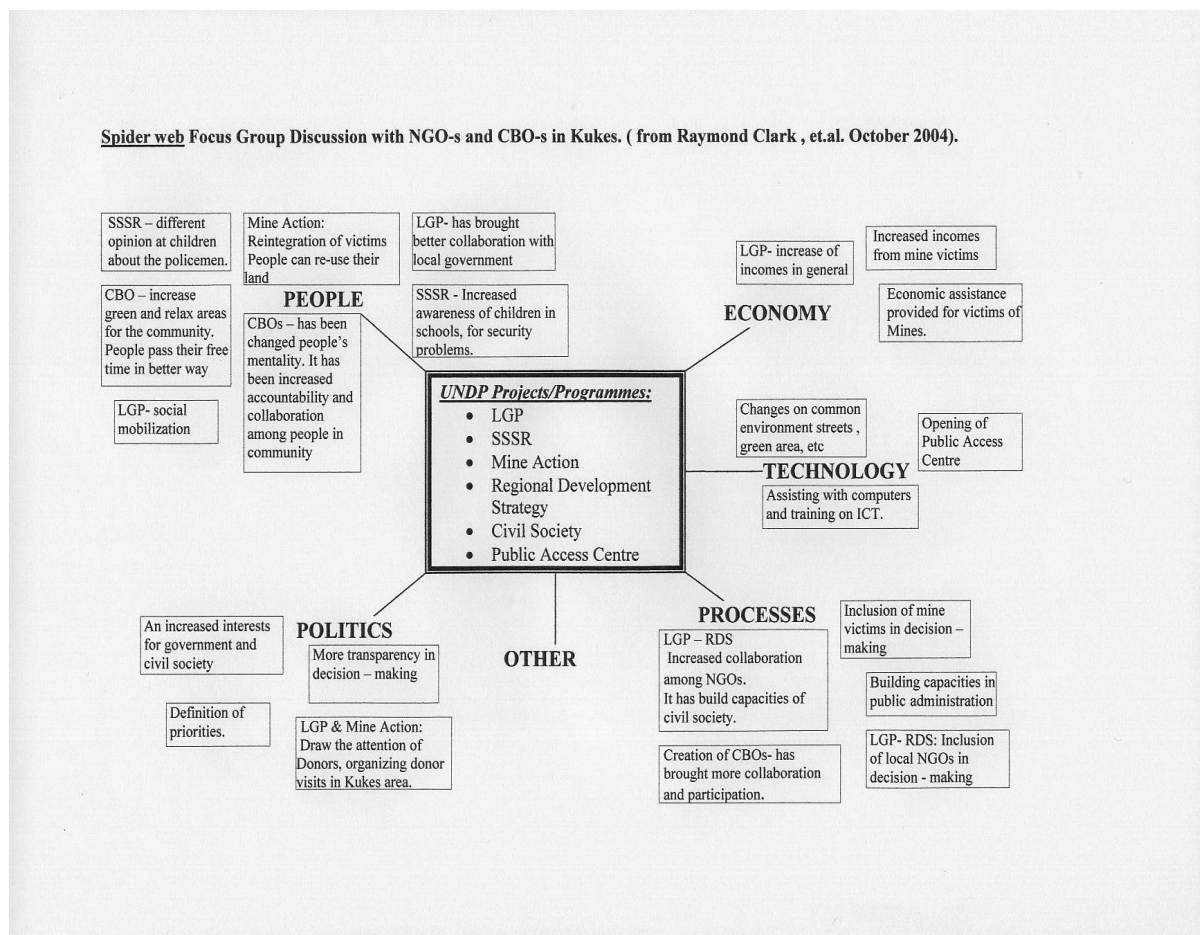
- In Fier they are working with local government of 3 municipalities, with the regional council and with 3 CSOs. Working at this 'meso' level will generate change at the national and grassroots level.
- SNV support the work of the MDG / RDS in Fier. SNV has an agreement with local government and LGP on cooperation, e.g. through the regional mobile training unit, and the Public Access Centres.
- SNV values the open communication and information sharing between all parties; there is no competition but rather synergy of efforts by adopting different approaches to achieve the same goal.
- UNDP/LGP should continue working in the communes/communities because of the high level of trust that has been established. CBOs need continued support to strengthen the organization. At least there needs to be a transition period before pulling out, a proper exit plan.
- For example, could CSOs that are working with SNV be involved in some kind of support to the CBOs in the future?

23. Meeting UNV team Fier (summary) (14 October)

- Good support and cooperation with UNV CO, appreciate the UNV retreats, etc.
- There is an issue of the level of VLA for NUNV since the costs of living has increased. There should be periodical reviews.
- Communities perceive the volunteers as 'community development specialists'; they don't necessarily understand the concept of paid UN volunteers and discussion in the beginning of the project only created confusion (especially with the negative image volunteerism in the past). UNVs sometimes avoid the usage of the term Volunteer because of the perceptions with unskilled, unpaid work.
- Volunteerism is not yet linked everywhere to participation, empowerment and self-help.
- Recommendations for the future: 1) promote the V more at all levels of society, e.g. urban areas, youth groups, students, etc.; 2) need better orientation for UNVs at beginning of assignments on aspects of Volunteerism, in general and in Albania, etc.
- UNV should try to mobilize Volunteers for all UNDP projects as they are very good resources and have comparative advantages to work at the local level.
- UNV should also make more use in Albania of the other international volunteer modalities like Unites, Tokten, and CSP (corporate volunteering).
- UNV should provide more retreats for all UNVs (e.g. NUNVs going to HQ in Bonn) and should provide opportunities for NUNVs to learn English.

Annex 3: Example spider-web exercise in Kukes

The following is an example of a spider web exercise in which participants are asked to indicate change over the last few years with regards to 5 main areas of concern: People, Economy, Technology, Politics, and Processes. These changes are seen in the context of the UNDP projects in the area (central box).



Annex 4: Empowering communities in Gjirokaster

Empowering communities in Gjirokaster. Communities put emphasis on transparent procedures in Local Development Initiatives

The CBO meetings in Granice



Granice, a new quarter in the Municipality of Gjirokaster, is part of the UNDP, Local Governance Program, which among others aims at strengthening the community-based organizations as an important starting point for alleviating poverty and strengthening human security. UNDP project is also being implemented in 6 other communes and three municipalities of Kukes, Fier and Gjirokaster. The citizens of Granice often discussed the problems they faced with the sewage system which was completely damaged, water supply, internal roads, lack of a medical health

center and kindergartens. The solution to their problems seemed so difficult to them. When the community members heard about the UNDP project and especially the new approach of social mobilization, some hope seemed to glitter. When UNDP staff introduced the community mobilization and self-development approach to the community members in a series of meeting with the citizens, they decided to organize a group of people into self-sustaining Community Based Organization (CBO) which would plan and prioritize the development activities. 31 Representative from the households of the quarter formed the first ever community- based organization in the Granice Quarter. They elected the Chairperson, secretary, treasurer, women representative and approved and signed their development plan and listed their priorities. The CBO established partnerships with the Municipality and managed to get their full support and commitment to help with technical and financial assistance for their project. Frequent meetings were held with community members to prioritize the most urgent development needs for them. The construction of sewerage system was their no 1 priority. They decided to support this development work financially as well through small funding from each and very household. The municipality provided them with technical assistance in the technical design of the project and supported it financially as well. The CBO also established a functional group responsible for finalizing all the documents needed and collecting financial contribution from the community members. The community supported this committee in providing small funding from each and every house hold. The total estimated costs of the project is \$ 36700 of which Municipality and the community contributed approximately 40% and the rest will be mobilize from donors. The project proposal finalized by the CBO was appraised at the local level by a local committee (representative of the local government and CBO) and invited the contractors through a bidding process. A total of eight companies presented the bidding documents in the presence of community members. The name of the winning party was decided based on the cost, technical design and the vote of the commission members. Such a process for sub-contracting being undertaken by the community-based organization is an example of community's ownership and also a successful practice of transparent selection of sub-contractor for community development projects. The community members of Granice feel proud. They helped themselves solve their most urgent development needs.

**For more information, Please contact:
Nora Kushti, Public Relations / Information Analyst, UNDP Albania.**

(from UNDP Albania newsletter 'UNDP and Partners', issue 7, 2003)

Annex 5: Summary of meeting in Gjirokaster

Focus Group Discussion with UNV Evaluation mission in Gjirokastra Region.

Date and Time *October 12th, 2004 , 14.30*

Report by: *Jeta Sinoimeri and Elton Qendro*

Participants:

Nr	First Name	Last Name	Institution representing
1	Shkelqim	Nora	Development Department Gjirokaster Region
2	Pashun	Memishaj	Service Department , Gjirokaster Region
3	Beqir	Liti	Service Department, Gjirokaster Region
4	Vangjel	Muco	Department of Programming and Development Gjirokaster Municipality
5	Marjeta	Kola	Department of Programming and Development Gjirokaster Municipality
6	Alketa	Qamo	Department of Programming and Development Gjirokaster Municipality
7	Pandeli	Cinga	Secretary of Commune Dropull I Poshtem
8	Jorgo	Mitili	Public relation office, Dropull i Poshtem commune
9	Jorgo	Masho	CBO Sofratike - Dropull i Poshtem
10	Shpresa	Mino	CBO " 18 Shtatori"- Gjirokaster
11	Jorgo	Xherahu	CBO " 11 Janari"- Gjirokaster
12	Vasil	Muka	Representative of NGO: Open Society Education and Children Alliance
13	Dorjan	Llogo	Youth Council representative
14	Linda	Adams	Peace Corps Volunteer

Also present in the meeting:

Jeta Sinoimeri	- NUNV, LGP-UNDP Gjirokaster
Spiro Diamanti	- NUNV, LGP-UNDP Gjirokaster
Elton Qendro	- FPA LGP-UNDP Gjirokaster

The meeting started with the introduction of the meeting by IUNV Promotion Volunteer Chiara Pace, and Jasper Zijlstra Consultant for UNV Evaluation mission, asked from the participants through debate their ideas in regard to the achievement of volunteerism works and activities in LGP programme, and the changes that have occurred with the presence of volunteers that work with LGP.

The ideas of the participants were:

1. Community organization and its total engagement for the solution of the problems
2. breaking the ice in regard to common problems
3. Turning back to volunteerism but in new forms
4. Broad participation in UNDP programme

The question made by Mr. Zijlstra in regard to the concept of volunteerism, and necessity and continuity of volunteerism in the region ?

- Raised the debate in a higher level. According the participants volunteerism is:
 1. Participation for infrastructure changes;
 2. solution of social problems;
 3. participation in decision making processes;
 4. Participation of community according a plan, by using efficient approaches for a positive result;
 5. giving time, exchange of ideas, intellectual contribution for changes;

- while the sustainability and continuity the participants answered:

1. LGP-UNDP presence in the region;
2. Creating strong roots with the experiences already formed;

3. conviction that nothing can be done without the social, financial, intellectual contribution of the community;
4. A correct partnership with Local Government authorities;
 - What makes volunteerism sustainable?
 1. coordination of actions between community and government according the social policies
 2. CBO function as a result of their activity extension
 3. Compiling programmes for development from CBO members
 4. Community readiness for serious engagement as a result of traditional culture of the region

As a result of the different ideas mentioned in the discussion about the positive values of volunteerism UNV Consultant asked from the participants recommendations or ideas for the improvement of volunteerism in the region and mentioning some difficulties or obstacles on the way:

The participants stressed:

1. Community initiatives have always positive impact but they are not presented clearly and community contribution is not being recognized as the merit goes to Local Government financial contribution
2. Improvement of:
 - a) Sensitizing the community and finding new way for bringing people into volunteer works
 - b) Transparency which will bring a positive result and credibility in the eyes of the community
 - c) Advocacy, that should be done toward volunteerism
3. Intensifying the job for capacity building through different trainings
4. An extension of LGP-UNDP programme in other areas as it has a lot of values to give to the community

Chiara Pace IUNV PO gave another direction of the discussion when she asked about Volunteers activities organized from Local Government for promotion of volunteerism, ways to make this promotion, and the existence of the volunteers centers in this region.?

The participants gave ideas like:

- The fact that each activity undertaken by the local government is done through direct participation of the community it really shows that members of these communities and the representatives of Local Government work together for the support of volunteerism.
- Volunteerism programme should start from the smallest communities, especially from youth generation as they re the future of the country and they will bring change.
- Tools for propaganda should be used as much as possible, like local media to open new programme in these TV for volunteerism initiatives.
- The existence of two volunteer centers like: Cultural youth council, Public Access Center;

The question in regard to the existence of volunteerism forms before UNDP programme came to this region: the reaction was:

- a) Cooperation of the community with local government and business community implemented the cleaning of the sewage system, buying a new car to clean the city and some other works for infrastructure construction.
- b) Different groups of civil society have become a process in the RDS compilation
- c) Farmer's CBO created before UNDP presence in the Region have successfully functioned to attract different donors like World Bank, MADA to implement different projects.

The representatives of UNV Evaluation mission who initiated this meeting thanked the participants for their ideas about volunteerism and their active discussions in this meeting.

Annex 6: Itinerary UNV evaluation mission

5 – 15 October 2004

Date	Time	Activity	People met	Venue
5	am	Preparations and reading	-	Sofia
	15.00-17.30	Travel Sofia - Tirana Arrival Tirana	Mr Genci Kojdheli, UNV COA	UNDP vehicle/ UNV Unit /UNDP CO
	18.00-21.45	Discuss agenda / Dinner	Ms. Chiara Pace, UNV PO	
6	08.00-14.30	Travel by car to Kukes municipality	Mr. Raymond Clarke, UNDP consultant Ms. Irene Dule, UNDP staff Ms. Elida Metaj UNDP Staff Mr. Veri, Mine Action staff	UNDP vehicle/ driver
	15.30	Meet project staff UNDP	LGP, Mine Action, SSSR staff	UNDP premises
	16.30-18.00	Meet UNV team	NUNV team: Mr Ylber Cejku, Mr. Bukurosh Onuzi, Mr. Gazmend Dulla, Mr. Zyber Jata.	UNDP premises
7	9.30-10.30	Interview in Prefecture-	UNDP team, Secretary general, prefecture	Office prefecture
	11.00-12.30	Interview in the Regional Council	UNDP team, Head of Council, and four council members	Office Regional Council
	13.00-14.00	Structured interview with CSOs-	VMA: Yonuz Kola Mother & Children- Violeta Sinawi CCF: Mirdasha Hoxha Women in Develop- Lumtura Baja CBO: Mustafa Kaculi Journalist: Zana Spahiu, Kukes TV Confirmed	UNDP premises
	15.00-16.00	Interview with non-project commune Terthore	Secretary of Commune Council, Member of council	Terthore commune
	17.00-18.30	Meet UNV team	NUNV team	hotel
8	9.30-10.00	Opening of school at Bicaj Village,	UNDP team, NUNV	Bicaj village

	10.00-11.00	Interview with nurses and teachers of Bicaj village	NUNV	Bicaj village
	11:30-13.30	Visit health center, school, in remote area of Bicaj commune	UNDP, NUNV	Bicaj commune
	14.45-20.40	Departure to Tirana Arrive Tirana	UNDP team	UNDP vehicle/ driver
9	10.00-13.00	Meeting with the UNDP teams (Summary of processes and lessons learned)	UNDP teams (4 regions)	UNDP office
	14.00-15.30	Working Lunch with UNV PO	Ms. Chiara Pace	Outside office
	16.00-18.00	Work at office (reading, etc>)	-	UNV office
10	9.00-11.30	Work at office (reading, etc>)	-	UNV office
	11.30-13.30	Meeting with Albanian Youth Council	Ms. Arjola Agolli	Outside office
	14.00-17.30	Work at office (reading, writing)	Ms. Chiara Pace	UNV Office
11	9.00-10.00	Meeting with UNDP mission / UNDP	UNDP management and staff, UNDP country mission members, UNDP consultant, Government representatives;	UNDP office
	11.00-12.00	Meet UNDP MDGs, democratic governance advisor	Mr. Joe Hooper	Outside office
	12.30-13.30	Meet UNDP staff, LGP	Ms. Etleva Martiri and Mr. Admir Duraj	Outside office
	15.00-16.00	Meeting LGP - CTA	Mr. Elyan Pandey	LGP project office
	16.30-17.15	Meeting SNV Albania	Mr. Maarten Bremer	SNV office
	17.30-18.00	Meeting UNDP DRR	Ms. Elzira Sagynbaeva	UNDP office
12	8:00-13.00	Field trip to Gjirokastra	Ms. Chiara Pace	UNDP vehicle / driver
	13.30 – 14.00	meeting LGP Gjirokastra Team	LGP / UNV team	LGP office
	14.30 – 16.30	Group discussion with local stakeholders:	Regional Council -Gjirokastra Municipality -CBOs members	Regional council office

	17.00-18.00	Coffee with LGP / UNV team	-Media, -Local partners (10 participants) Mr Elton Qendro, Ms Jeta Sinoimeri and Spiro Diamanti.	Outside office
	20.00-	Meet with one NUNV	Ms Lindita Luzo	Outside office
13	8.30-9.15	Meeting representative Regional Council (head of public info dep.)	Ms. Ms. Shpresa Mino	PAC center of Reg. Council
	9.30-10.15	Meeting representative Prefecture (head of development)	Ms. Ms. Bejo Alketa	Office of Prefecture
	10.30-11.30	Meeting representative Municipality (head of planning)	Ms. Ms. Marjeta Kola	Office of Municipality
	14.00-16.00	Group meeting Cepo commune	Representatives of commune, CBO's, UNVs, UNV PO	Commune Cepo
	16.30-17.30	Meet NUNVs	Ms Jeta Sinoimeri and Spiro Diamanti.	Outside office
	17.30-19.00	Informal meeting with Peace Corps volunteers	LGP /UNV team, Linda and Jeff Adams	Outside office
14	8.00-11.00	Travel to Fier region, municipality	Ms. Chiara Pace	UNDP vehicle / driver
	11.15-12.00	Discussion with UNV Project staff	Ms Natasha Mistry, Mr Arben Dhima	LGP office
	12.00-13.00	Meeting with Regional Council and Regional Development Unit.	Mr. Asqeri Muhaj, and Ms. Mirjana Zisi	Regional Council Office
	13.00-14.00	Travel to Cakran Commune.	UNVs, UNV PO	UNDP vehicle/driver
	14.00-15.00	Group meeting in Cakran commune:	Meeting with the Head of Cakran Commune: and 7 Heads of CBOs/ villages	Commune centre office
	15.00-16.00	Visit water supply project	Head of Commune, few CBO representatives, UNVs	Village
	17.00-18.00	Meet with SNV team in Fier	UNVs, UNV PO, SNV team	SNV office
	18.00-18.40	Meet with UNV team in Fier	UNV team	LGP office
	18.45-21.00	Travel back to Tirana	Ms. Chiara Pace	UNDP vehicle/driver
15	06.45-8.30	To Airport Departure to Sofia		UNDP vehicle / driver

Annex 7: TOR - UNV evaluation mission

Terms of Reference – Evaluation mission Project 00015213 (ALB/02/V01) UNV Support to Local Governance Programme in Albania

1. Background

1.1 United Nations Volunteer Programme

Volunteering brings benefits to both society at large and the individual volunteer. It makes important contributions, economically as well as socially. It contributes to a more cohesive society by building trust and reciprocity among citizens.

The United Nations Volunteers is the UN organization that supports sustainable human development globally through the promotion of volunteerism and the mobilisation of volunteers. It serves the causes of peace and development through enhancing opportunities for participation by all peoples. It is universal, inclusive and embraces volunteer action in all its diversity. It values free will, commitment, engagement and solidarity, which are the foundations of volunteerism.

The United Nations Volunteer programme promotes global volunteer contributions and mobilises volunteers in support of the UN operations and activities of UN agencies, governments, NGOs etc, in development, emergency or other situations where these contributions could make a difference. Typically, UN Volunteers bring dedication, commitment and engagement combined with skills and experience to bear on the situations wherein they are deployed. In any given year, there are about 5000 individuals from around 140 countries who serve in more than 140 countries. There are many different roles and contributions that Volunteers bring. Below is an attempt to define the role of volunteers to relief and development work.

1.2 Background to the project

The Government of Albania is giving highest priority to supporting decentralisation and developing an effective and democratic system of local governance. It plans to strengthen the capacities and capabilities of the municipal and local governments through several interventions - training in development planning and management as well as legislative development with regard to local ownership of property and fiscal management.

The Government is emphasizing the institutional strengthening of the regional councils to increasingly undertake central line functions and to provide support to the municipalities and communes as a critical priority. The strategy of aligning the roles and functions of the prefectures and the regional councils is expected to further redefine the responsibilities and financial relationships between the central and local governments as well as further consolidate the functions of the local governments through the implementation of their relevant tasks and competencies. The Government expects that its strategy will result in the local people benefiting from the development process through their participation and improvement of their livelihoods.

In support of this process and to complement government's efforts, UNDP supports – through its Local Governance Programme – the commitment of the Government of Albania in strengthening the on-going process of decentralization and democratic system of local governance as the institutional basis for equitable development, poverty alleviation and human security. The programme gives special emphasis on promoting participatory community development to ensure

people's participation in local development initiatives and decision-making processes by linking the capacity building of the municipality and communes with the support for institutional development at the regional council level. The LGP applies a comprehensive and systematic approach by focusing its interventions at the central, regional, and local municipality and commune levels. In this way, it takes advantage of linkages between grass-root experiences and policy and institutional development at all levels: Central, Regional and Municipality and Commune level.

UNV being a close partner of UNDP in promoting local governance and community development activities decided through its Special Voluntary Fund (SVF) to support the pilot phase. Other donor contribution to the programme in addition to UNDP and UNV, are NORAD, Soros Foundation, AGFUND and Sida. One of the key components of the Local Governance Programme is to support the establishment of "Democratic Governance" at the local level. The concept of Democratic Governance includes both the capacity building and strengthening of government institutions, as well as the process of enabling and encouraging citizens to participate in democratic processes. More specifically, LGP focuses on:

- Development of Local Government bodies through training and provision of expertise;
- Fostering partnerships with the State as well as with civil society;
- Encouraging efficient Governance over public resources through the implementation of small initiatives including community infrastructure works.

Clearly, these areas fall within UNV's mandate, as *"the UN organization that supports sustainable human development globally through the promotion of volunteerism and the mobilisation of volunteers. It serves the causes of peace and development through enhancing opportunities for participation by all peoples. It is universal, inclusive and embraces volunteer action in all its diversity. It values free will, commitment, engagement and solidarity, which are the foundations of volunteerism"*. Indeed, The UNV's of LGP have been the essential link between citizens and their elected representatives.

UN Volunteers firmly established itself in Albania in September 2001 in an effort to build on the Albanian Government's growing openness towards democratic governance and civic engagement and tap into the growing potential for - together with UNDP - working with civil society and the Government in promoting volunteering for development in Albania. In April 2002, a total amount of USD 458, 696 was approved from the UNV SVF to complement the ongoing UNDP Local Governance Programme in supporting the ongoing process of decentralisation and democratic systems of local governance in Albania. UN Volunteers in Albania support UNDP development activities aiming at promoting democratic governance as well as support UNHCR and IOM social reintegration activities. The UNV Programme in partnership with NGOs like Soros Foundation, the Albanian Youth Council and many others is playing a lead role in promoting volunteerism among students and youth in the country.

The main development objective of the UNV SVF project is to support the commitment of the Government of Albania in strengthening the on-going process of decentralization and democratic system of local governance as the institutional basis for poverty alleviation and human security. This project proposes four main components:

- Policy Development and Partnership Building at the Central Level
- Democratic Local Governance: Institutional Support at the Regional Level
- Democratic Local Governance and Development: Support at the Commune and Municipal Level
- Promotion of volunteerism to support social mobilization practices

The programme operates on the principles of social mobilization and community development i.e. enhancing the capacity of local government and communities to adopt a participatory and transparent method of development programming and management. As well as getting communities involved in self help initiatives. The pilot phase has been operating mainly in three regions (Fier, Kukes and Gjirokaster). The main players in programme implementation at the

regional level are national and international UNVs. They work closely as a team, under the mixed team modality now being practised in most country offices. A total of 11 National UNVs and 2 International UNVs are currently serving with the programme. So far 126 CBOs have been formed and actively engaged by UN volunteers in the process of planning local development projects in their communities.

2. Purpose/Justification of the Evaluation

The aim of the evaluation is to make an objective assessment of the results and the impact that the project has achieved. The evaluation will provide UNV with the results, clear analysis of the progress and lessons learned from UNV contribution to the programme. It will also make recommendations which could enhance UNV future contribution to Decentralization and Local Governance programmes in Albania, particularly in view of the new corporate policy shift towards promoting volunteerism as a development concept at all levels. This evaluation will increase UNV's accountability to donors and will identify lessons learnt, and perhaps best practices. The results of the evaluation will facilitate information and knowledge sharing and thereby contribute to similar development initiatives in the future, as helping UNDP CO and UNV HQ in identifying potential partners for programme expansion activities in Albania.

3. Objectives of the Evaluation

3.1. General objective

Assess the relevance, performance (effectiveness and efficiency) and success (impact and sustainability) of the the project, draw lessons learned and make recommendations for future similar project, which will also inform the project up scaling and replicating processes.

3.2. Specific objectives

- *Take stock of and document what UNV has been doing and achieving for improving future activities (What have been achieved and what can be done better?).*
- *Examine the impact of the project on local governance in Albania.*
- *Establish the particular value added of the volunteerism aspect of the contributions of the United Nations Volunteers Programme in local governance initiatives.*
- *Identify the positive factors and winning program strategies that have contributed both to project successes as well as difficulties/failures.*
- *Document lessons learned about project design, implementation and management.*

4. Components of the Review/Evaluation and Outputs

	Activity	No of working days	Key Outputs
1.	Preparation - Briefing from UNV office - Review of project document - Other literature review - Agreement on activities, timeframe, and performance indicators - Preparation of meetings/program - Development of evaluation methodology (questionnaires, etc.)	1	Agreement on indicators, timeframes and program

2.	Meetings/interviews with stakeholders - Beneficiaries - UNVs - Heads of Municipalities - Heads of Regional Council - UNV COT - UNDP DRR - UNDP LGP CTA - Others as identified by the consultant (includes visits to the regions and CBOs)	10	Documented records of interview with each person
3.	Debrief / preliminary verbal report from consultant - to make recommendations for final stages of report writing, catch problems, assist with issues, etc.	1	
4.	Writing report - Agreed report template, draft report & final report - Report should be: ➤ Analytical in nature (both quantitative and qualitative) ➤ Structured around issues and related findings ➤ Conclusions ➤ Learnings - Present draft form for review by UNV office before final report is presented	2	- Draft report delivered to UNV office for consideration - Final report delivered - Consideration should be given to producing a final report for public information and donors
Total time allocation for evaluation			

The consultant may suggest an alternative approach.

The consultant will prepare a draft report, that will be shared with all major stakeholders involved in the evaluation to invite their comments and to correct any factual errors.

Once comments on the report are received and incorporated into the draft report, the consultant will present the final report.

The Final Report will be in English with an executive summary in English and Albanian. The executive summary should be a stand-alone type of chapter of the report.

The full report (not exceeding 30 pages, executive summary and annexes excluded) should be analytical and structured around issues and related findings, conclusions, learning, recommendations. The Consultant will finalise and submit the **Final Evaluation Report** to the UNDP/UNV, within ten days after the debriefing meeting. The submission will be as follows: 4 bound copies hard copies and 1 soft copy in Microsoft windows 6.0. The UNV Albania office will facilitate distribution of the report to all parties concerned.

It should include:

- *Areas and activities in which UN Volunteers and the UNV programme have been more successful as well as those in which they have been less successful.*
- *Contributions of the UN Volunteers: Specific added value of UN Volunteers to the achievement of the project*
- *Information on volunteerism: e.g. contribution of UNV to local volunteerism, UNVs' perception of volunteerism, spirit of volunteerism, degree of identification with UNV, reputation of volunteers and make suggestions as how to ensure UNV Volunteers are the best advocates for volunteerism in the context of the host organisations within which they are serving, etc.*
- *Recommendations on a strategy for project exit that will also inform the project up scaling and replicating processes as well as developing participatory learning processes for future programme activities.*
- *Important lessons learned*

The duration of the evaluation mission will be of two weeks, October 2004. The UNV evaluation mission will take place at the same time with the UNDP country programme evaluation.

5. Key Areas of Focus/Issues to be addressed

❑ Issues relevant to the Local governance sector, that need to be investigated:

- *Progress at national level of local governance initiatives, networks and capacity in the fields of community participation, programme planning and management, advocacy*
- *Modalities and impact of information sharing among local governance actors at national level*
- *If target groups have indeed internalized the approach and would be able to sustain the initiatives started by the project.*
- *Underlying factors influencing the achievement of the initiative expected outcome: What factors beyond UNV control have facilitated or influenced the achievement of the project?*
- *Partnership strategy: To what extent has the partnership strategy of the UNV support to local governance sector in Albania been effective?*

❑ Specific impact and added value of the UNV approach to the promotion of Local Governance, outlining in particular:

- *If and how the strategic placement and recruitment of volunteers contributed to supporting the local governance sector. What is the UN Volunteer breakdown by gender/geography?*
- *UNV specific contribution: To what extent UNV initiatives can be credibly linked to the achievement of the outcome?*
- *What are the specific strengths and weaknesses of the UNV approach as put in practice by the project with respect to the promotion of local governance?*
- *What are the advantages of the UNV approach as put in practice by the project with respect to other possible forms of support to local governance*
- *How the identified strengths could be valued and the weaknesses addressed?*
- *If and how the project has stimulated local volunteerism. How these effects could be maintained and strengthened*
- *What are the advantages that the UN Volunteers contribute to the project that an international or national consultants/ staff could not bring?*
- *If, how and in what specific areas the continued adoption of the UNV approach to the promotion of local governance would be recommended.*

❑ Assess whether and to what extent the project promoted a gender appropriate involvement of the various stakeholders and learning approach capable to significantly develop their capacity.

6. Management of the Assignment

The overall responsibility for managing the evaluation will be with the APEC Section , in close collaboration with the Evaluation Unit and the other key stakeholders and the UNDP/UNV country team. UNV Country Office, Albania will provide support to the consultant by organising meetings with key partners and will work closely with the Project Coordinator to avail required information.

The continuous involvement of major stakeholders at the country level should be ensured and maintained throughout the entire evaluation process. The Consultant will report to the UNDP Deputy Resident Representative. In undertaking the day-to-day consultancy activities the consultant will liaise with the UNV Programme Officer and the Project Coordinator.

7. Operating Principles

Participation of different stakeholders at whatever level is appropriate (participation informing, consulting, active involvement, partnership, decision-making) particularly at the design stage and in the formulation of recommendations.

It is important to feedback to those who contributed including the beneficiaries (e.g. community groups)– not necessarily on the results of the review exercise but on their input. The evaluation team should co- ordinate the production of a summary report for the beneficiaries in the local language.

The consultants should consider the audience of the evaluation and ways to not just communicate the findings but to maximize learning.

8. Requirements

The assignment will be contracted to an International consultant with experience in the substantive area and a knowledge of volunteerism/UNV. The consultant should have:

- University degrees at the post-graduate level in the social sciences, management or any relevant field of study;
- 10 years work experience in project management and/or governance of which at least five are in local governance programme in a developing country;
- Proven track record and experience in consultancy work;
- Knowledge of UNV programmes and its mandate and work experience with UN system would be an asset ;
- Knowledge, understanding, and experience of volunteerism, an asset;
- Good analytical and report writing skills;
- Good people and communication skills;
- Sensitive towards gender and ethnic minority issues; and
- Excellent English language skills, both written and spoken. Knowledge of Albanian would be an asset.

9. Attachments

- Project documents of UNDP and UNV LGPs
- Any progress report/monitoring visit reports/tripartite review report, etc...