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STUDY RESEARCH



VOLUNTEERISM PERCEPTIONS AND REALITIES IN THE ALBANIAN YOUTH SECTOR



Volunteerism Perceptions and Realities in the Albanian Youth Sector

A Research Study prepared by
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The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme is the UN organization that contributes to peace and development through volunteerism worldwide. Volunteerism is a powerful means of engaging people in tackling development challenges, and it can transform the pace and nature of development. Volunteerism benefits both society at large and the individual volunteer by strengthening trust, solidarity and reciprocity among citizens, and by purposefully creating opportunities for participation. UNV contributes to peace and development by advocating for recognition of volunteers, working with partners to integrate volunteerism into development programming, and mobilizing an increasing number and diversity of volunteers, including experienced UNV volunteers, throughout the world. UNV embraces volunteerism as universal and inclusive, and recognizes volunteerism in its diversity, as well as the values that sustain it: free will, commitment, engagement and solidarity.



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UNDP's main goal is to help Albania build its own national capacity to achieve sustainable human development; that is, to improve people's lives on an enduring basis - their work, their education, their health, their surroundings and their use of natural resources.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements

Abbreviations

1. INTRODUCTION	07
1.1 Situating the research problem	08
1.2 Research questions.....	09
1.3 Research methodology	10
1.4 Limitations of the study	12
2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	13
2.1 Definition of volunteerism	14
2.2 Volunteerism as inherited from the dictatorship period	17
2.3 Re-approaching volunteerism.....	19
2.4 Conclusions	22
3. YOUTH: Perceptions and realities	23
3.1 Youth in Albania	24
3.2 Perceptions and knowledge of volunteerism.....	25
3.3 Involvement in volunteer activities.....	29
3.4 Enabling and obstructing factors to volunteer participation.....	32
3.5 Essential issues for consideration.....	37
3.6 Suggestions and recommendations.....	38
4. NGOs: Participation in practice	39
4.1 A snap-shot of youth NGOs in Albania.....	40
4.2 Volunteerism as part of the civil society sector	41
4.3 Volunteer needs, obstacles and enabling factors in the civil society sector.....	42
4.4 Essential issues for consideration.....	45
4.5 Suggestions and recommendations.....	46
5. PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS: Policy framework	47
5.1 The legal framework on participation	48
5.2 The Albanian National Youth Strategy - from paper to reality.....	49
5.3 Attempts to prepare a draft-law	51
5.4 Essential issues for consideration.....	52
5.5 Suggestions and recommendations.....	53
6. INSPIRATION IN ACTION	54
6.1 Role models and testimonials	55
6.2 Best practices.....	58
ANNEXES	
I. MATRIX of findings, obstructing and enabling factors.....	65
II. National Youth Strategy, National Action Plan matrix on volunteering	68
III. Excerpt from the Law on Civil Emergences	69
IV. The International Year of Volunteers (IYV).....	70
V. UN Resolution 63/153: Follow-up to the implementation of IYV.....	71
Useful resources.....	73
Bibliography.....	73
Map of Albania.....	74

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

CBO	Community Based Organization
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DCYP	Directory of Coordination of Youth Policies
EU	European Union
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
INSTAT	Albanian National Institute of Statistics
IYV	International Year of Volunteers 2001
FG	Focus Group
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MoES	Ministry of Education and Science
MoF	Ministry of Finance
Mol	Ministry of Interior
MoLSAEO	Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities
MoTCYS	Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NYS	National Youth Strategy
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNV	United Nations Volunteers
VIO	Volunteer-Involving Organization

INTRODUCTION



Lack of volunteer participation is a huge handicap in the Albanian society nowadays. Referring to Robert Putnam's theory regarding social capital, volunteering as a form of civic participation is part of the measurement criteria of democracy success in a country, and decline or apathy may be a predictor of democratic crisis.

1.1 Situating the research problem

Living in a world of upheaval makes civic participation all the more important. Recent events in Europe and other parts of the world show that citizens, be they students, young or old people, want to be closer to the decision-making process that shapes their present and their actions to be the driving force of change for the future. The most well known dictum among young people today is: Act locally - Think globally,¹ which shows that young people should and are playing an important part in the irreversible process of globalization.

As a form of civic participation, volunteerism plays an important role in the democratic process, social cohesion and human development. While encompassing a myriad of activities, including assisting old people, raising awareness about peace and human rights, planting a tree or constructing roads, volunteerism also offers an enormous contribution to the achievement of global strategies, such as the Millennium Development Goals.

Volunteerism is an old phenomenon rooted deeply in old traditions and customs. In many societies it is more regulated by moral and cultural values, than laws and regulations. However, a culture of mutual support and altruism can play a great role in small communities, while in society, at large, there is need for encouragement and development of such values through continued education, promotion and engagement.

Nonetheless, good traditions can be easily destroyed if forced manners are used to engage citizens in such activities. This was the case in Albania during the communist era, where the so called “volunteer work” was forced and often used as a punishment for the opponents of the regime. 50 years of dictatorship left deep scars within the Albanian social conscience, to the extent that not only those who lived through such experiences cannot participate in volunteer activities anymore, but also the population at large is confined in a state of volunteer apathy and indifference.

Today after 19 years of democracy, volunteerism in Albania is not only underused, but also understudied. Both these features are interwoven and influence the advancement of the other. On the one hand, the lack of data and thorough studies means that volunteer initiatives are neither based on the real needs and priorities of the community, nor do they influence appropriate policies and programmes. On the other hand, insufficient volunteer initiatives leave little space for research, appraisal of good practice and lessons from experience, resulting in a vacuum of information and practical expertise.

Because of scarce research and evaluation in this sector, there is a general need to encourage and undertake research in volunteerism. This is why, UNV Albania supported this study in order to collect data and information on the level of involvement of young people in volunteer activities, their perceptions, enabling and obstructing factors to participation as well as the existing social and legal supporting framework for volunteerism in the country.

This research is focused on the youth sector, considering that the youth of today, born between 1980 and 1994, is not influenced directly by the dictatorial regime and the fact that Albania continues to have a young population. Therefore, it is the right momentum to invest in this group and create a strong generation of active and committed citizens.

¹ Used for the first time in 1969, in a “Friends of the Earth” campaign and recently the most famous slogan of many youth campaigns. The phrase is also an in-joke among mathematicians, as it is often used in situations where the global structure of an object can be inferred from the local structure. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Think_Globally,_Act_Locally

This study is in line with the objectives of UNV and other research initiatives in the region. At the same time it is a contribution to the achievement of one of the priorities of the Albanian National Youth Strategy regarding the conduction of systematic studies on volunteerism. The findings and recommendations, along with positive practices provided in this report can serve as a guide to a broad range of audiences: policymakers at national, regional, and local levels; practitioners and researchers; grant-making organizations; media; educators; NGOs, CBOs, and VIOs. It will encourage in this way a supportive environment to volunteerism as a strategy to foster civic participation *Locally* and contribute to the achievement of development goals *Globally*.

1.2 Research questions

This research is undertaken with the aim of bringing to the attention of the Albanian public, civil society, Government Institutions and other interested actors key findings and recommendations on young people's perceptions and the reality of volunteerism in Albania. At the same time, by publishing some successful volunteer practices and testimonials the report highlights positive experiences and role models illustrating the significant contribution made not only to the development of the country, but also to wider development strategies, such as the MDGs.

By providing new information, the report aims to broaden the concept of volunteerism according to the new social realities in Albania and support the creation of an enabling infrastructure favourable to volunteerism.

There are four questions leading this research:

What are youth perceptions, information level and patterns to volunteer involvement in Albania?

This question aims at collecting data on the level of knowledge and information among young people concerning volunteerism and other related aspects. How they see volunteerism and volunteering and what benefits do they consider as individual gain and what they consider as social gain. What are the perceived trends and realities in Albania and how do young people respond?

What is the level of youth involvement in volunteer activities? The second question deals with the actual level of engagement of youth in volunteer activities. Related questions are shaped in order to measure the level of engagement, define the fields of involvement and those in which they would like to be engaged in the future.

What incentives and barriers influence volunteerism? Based on the third leading question the study report sheds light on the enabling and obstructing factors to volunteer engagement in the youth sector, from three different dimensions: Youth, Civil Society, and State Institutions.

What is the existing legal and social infrastructural support for volunteering in the youth sector? This question aims at analysing the existing legal and social framework favourable to volunteering in the country, aiming to better understand gaps and offer potential solutions.

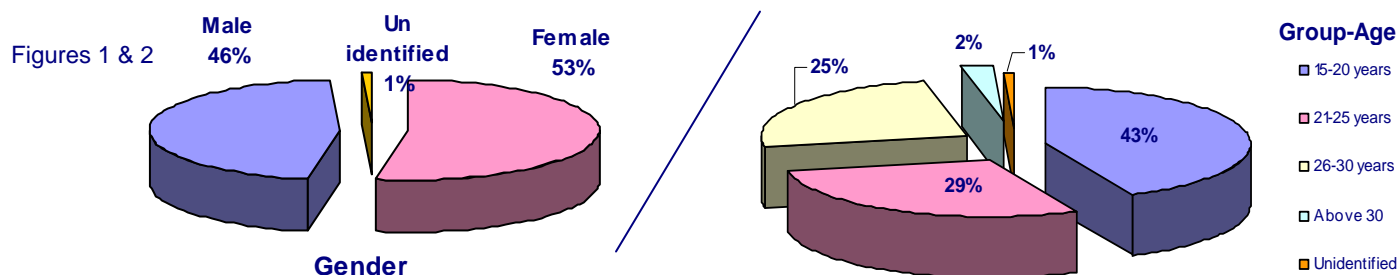
Examples of good practice from civil society and local government institutions are provided to illustrate success stories of volunteers contributing to the development of the country, and also to show how challenges are faced and perspectives broadened. Different methods of research made possible the analysis of different social, economic and geographical factors, such as: which section of the young population is more engaged in volunteer activities? Does the type of school, education level, economic situation or gender, age, geographical location influence youngsters' perceptions, motives and involvement?

While some of the findings confirm the general beliefs and assumptions, other results are quite surprising.

1.3 Research methodology

1.3.1 Sample

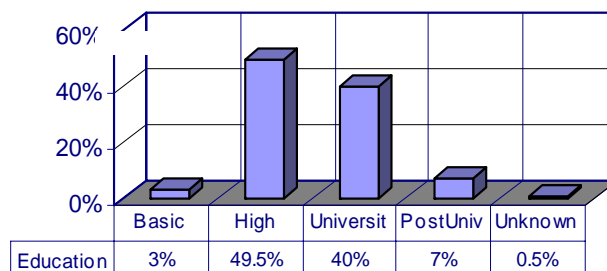
The research comprised the study of a sample of 800 respondents. 600 young people aged between 15-30 years took part in the survey, 200 students, volunteers, representatives of NGOs, and state institutions were involved in focus groups, meetings and face-to-face interviews. Respondents were selected at random and gender and age balance was kept in mind.



The sample is also balanced according to the level of education, bearing in mind the group-age studied. The number of university together with post-university graduates is comparable to the number of high school students; however in some cases the differences in the level of education are taken into consideration to analyze the answers of respondents.

Figure 3

Highest level of education



The triangulation² approach is used to analyze the problem from three different dimensions by studying the below target groups, however the results are published separately in order to increase the possibility of dissemination:

- High school and university students, young people aged 15-30 years old
- NGOs working in the youth sector, VIOs
- Relevant central and local state institutions

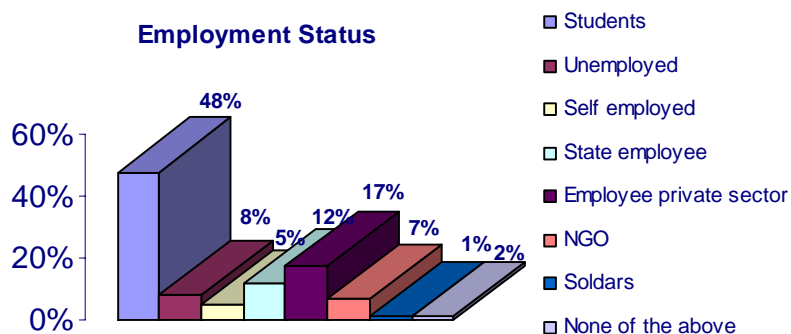
Random sampling was used to study the first group targeted, while cluster sampling was used to study the two last ones.

² Triangulation as a concept comes from mathematics, however in surveying it is used to analyze, merge, compare, and crosscheck data and information from different sources; in our case from three different groups.

Involving respondents from all over the country ensured a wide geographical coverage. The initial idea of the study was to involve young people from 14 areas, where UNV and U.S. Peace Corps volunteers were based, however in the course of implementation, support and answers were received from all over Albania, either by email, post or direct delivery of the survey questionnaires. The majority of respondents come from Tirana, Shkodra, Durrresi, Lezha, Rresheni, Vlora, Saranda, Pogradeci, Kucova, Lushnja, Elbasani and Fieri. The implementation of the research action plan was supported by many people, either involved as consultants or as facilitators of the survey, focus groups and interviews: UNV volunteers, U.S. Peace Corps Volunteers, students, volunteers from youth NGOs and CBOs in Tirana and regions.

The sample was also composed of different employment status categories. 48% of the respondents are high school or university students, while 41% employed within state institutions, private/NGO sector or self-employed; 8% of the young people aged 15-30 years are unemployed, which is 14.7%³ of the age-group 21-30 years old (workforce category).

Figure 4



In this light, it is therefore meaningful to talk about a representative sample and generalize the findings of the study for the youth sector in Albania.

1.3.2 Timeframe

The planning phase of the research began in autumn 2008, while the implementation and analysis of data finished in March 2009.

The study process involved a large spectrum of actors and volunteers and a broad range of activities to test the research tools, collect feedback, gather data, process and analyse the information, and hold consultations on the research findings until May 2009.

³ Unemployment rate for 2007, for the whole population according to INSTAT is 13.2%; while this figure may exceed 30% due to the preponderance of near-subsistence farming (2008 est./The World Factbook, Albania. www.cia.gov)

1.3.3 Data collection methodology

Both *Quantitative* and *Qualitative* methods are used, as no one methodology can answer all questions and provide insights on all issues related to the topic of this research. The instruments designed (questionnaires, interview forms, discussion points) were first tested by a sample of the target groups before being used. Key informants and experts in the field were consulted before the implementation of the survey and during the process of report writing.

1) QUANTITATIVE

A survey was conducted in different regions of the country involving 600 respondents aged between 15-30 years old. The survey findings are presented with diagrammatic illustrations in the third part of this report.

2) QUALITATIVE

A) *Observations* (outside observer):

- In simulation situations (workshop role plays with representatives of youth NGOs)
- Implementation of volunteer mini-projects (Model UN Albania)
- Volunteer presentations/sessions

B) *Interviews* (face-to-face, email, telephone):

- NGO representatives
- Central/Local Government representatives
- Key informants

C) *Focus Groups* (FG):

- UNV volunteers' retreat Nov'08
- Youth NGO activists FGs
- Workshop group-work activities
- FG with NGO or Interest groups' reps
- FG discussions with high school students in the regions

D) *Research Review* (Documentation analysis):

- Relevant publications
- Reports, newsletters, articles
- Comparative articles

E) *Case studies* and *Testimonials*

The preliminary results of the survey were presented in a roundtable to 30 representatives of central and local Government institutions, NGOs, INGOs, universities, key informants, experts, young people and volunteers. The round table reviewed and discussed the findings and results of the research. It called for practical steps to improve the situation in the country through an integrated and well-coordinated approach.

1.4 Limitations of the study

The combined methodology and involvement of many actors and supporters was of great benefit to this study as it allowed the collection of information from different perspectives, groups, geographical areas and institutional levels. However, a limitation to this approach is that it studies only the youth sector in Albania and is not representative for all the Albanian generations.

To ensure comprehensiveness, the study approaches the research questions from three different angles, analysing young people, civil society organizations and public institutions. However, the time and financial limits did not allow for the analysis of the private sector (business), which is a key factor in volunteerism development.

Within its area, this research could be considered an initial study, inducing questions for further analyses on this topic.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK



A civilization flourishes when people plant trees under which they will never sit.

Greek Proverb

2.1 Definition of Volunteerism

The roots of volunteerism are uncertain. Nevertheless, voluntary actions are known since ancient times and are inherited nowadays in the form of mutual or self-help, emergency relief, or civic participation.

Over the centuries, new forms of voluntary action emerged. The phenomenon was known by different names and expressed in various forms.

Over the last few decades, volunteerism is brought to a greater dimension, contributing to human and social development not only at local and national levels, but also globally.

There are different definitions related to volunteerism, some of which are presented herein for a better understanding of the issues and findings presented in this report.

- ❑ In these recommendations, the terms volunteering, volunteerism and voluntary activities refer to a wide range of activities, including traditional forms of mutual aid and self-help, formal service delivery and other forms of civic participation, undertaken of free will, for the general public good and where monetary reward is not the principal motivating factor. *(UN General Assembly resolution 56/38: Recommendations on support for volunteering)*
- ❑ Volunteerism is a form of social behaviour undertaken freely, which brings benefits to the community and society at large as well as the volunteer, and which is not driven by financial considerations. *(Developing a volunteer infrastructure, UNV)*
- ❑ A volunteer is someone who gives time, talents and professional expertise on a voluntary basis and without any remuneration. *(NCSS, 1977b)*
- ❑ Volunteerism is the willingness and ability of citizens to give their time, out of a sense of solidarity and without expectation of monetary reward. *(Developing a volunteer infrastructure, UNV)*
- ❑ Volunteering implies a wish to offer one's time, effort, skills and good will for the accomplishment of different tasks. *(T-Kit on International Voluntary Service, Council of Europe, 2002)*
- ❑ Volunteering is an activity undertaken in a community context without pay and of the volunteer's free will for the benefit of the community. *(Volunteering Australia)*

Whether expressed as volunteer service, mutual aid and self-help, campaigning and activism, or other forms of voluntary participation, the willingness and ability of citizens to give their time, out of a sense of solidarity and without expectation of monetary reward, will have a major influence on the extent to which the MDGs are attained and sustained.

Developing a volunteer infrastructure, www.unvolunteers.org

Main Characteristics

Looking at the definitions above, the three main characteristics of volunteerism are evident:

<p>It is an undertaking of one's own free will</p>	<p>It brings benefits to a third party as well as to the individual</p>	<p>It is not undertaken primarily for financial gain</p>
<p>One may discuss the involvement in school volunteer actions or required by a neighbourhood or city development strategy...</p> <p>Many times we have to volunteer as part of our <u>citizenship duties</u> <i>i.e. contributing to the improvement or resolution of community/social issues;</i> or volunteerism as part of the <u>education curricula</u> <i>which is necessary and helps us develop moral standards and social values.</i></p> <p>Individuals participate in volunteer activities aiming to help someone or contribute to issues of general interest for the community, society or the world at large.</p>	<p>The main benefits of volunteerism are:</p> <p><u>Individual</u> Through engagement volunteers enrich themselves, meet new challenges; discover their own potential; learn from others/experts/professional colleagues; learn by doing; work in a multi-cultural environment; meet new people, visit new places, and build friendships. <i>(Identified by UNV volunteers, UNV Albania retreat, November 2008).</i></p> <p><u>Social</u> Creating social cohesion, solidarity, inclusion of marginalized groups and human development.</p> <p><u>Economic</u> Financial added value and reduction of funding costs for taxpayers and society at large.</p>	<p>Volunteer work or service is unpaid. However, this does not mean that there should not be any financial assistance in buying the needed materials for the work undertaken, support travel, living expenses, or other substantial issues; there are costs.</p> <p>People volunteer for other benefits, such as: <u>Humanitarian or altruistic reasons</u>, i.e. charity participation, assistance to vulnerable people (children, orphans, elders, sick people), crises' prevention or recovery. <u>Social reasons</u>: community service, youth work, peer activities, social development. <u>Pleasure</u>: hobby, practicing a vocation, teaching, coaching, organizing. <u>Gaining experience</u>: learning by doing, sharing experience, gaining knowledge and skills in a particular field.</p>

A simple and tangible example that illustrates the benefits of volunteerism is **Wikipedia**, a multilingual, web-based, user-friendly, free-content encyclopedia project. Wikipedia is written collaboratively by volunteers from all around the world. Anyone with internet access can make changes to Wikipedia articles.

Since its creation in 2001, Wikipedia has grown rapidly into one of the largest reference web sites. It attracts around 65 million visitors monthly (2009 figures). There are more than 75,000 active volunteers contributing on more than 13,000,000 articles in more than 260 languages.

Despite criticism on the reliability and accuracy of its articles, Wikipedia, is a treasure to humanity, providing knowledge, data and information generated by volunteers around the world. This shows at the same time the unlimited human potential.

While reading the definitions in page 14, we can all realize that there are other similar notions to volunteerism, such as: advocacy, social activism, philanthropy and voluntarism.

Different experts and publications consider advocacy and social participation as purely volunteer actions, while other ones treat them as separate fields. This study sees these terms as interlinked in substance and in practice overlapping many times. Below are some simple examples.

- ❑ **Advocacy** i.e. talking to the council of the municipality on the need to improve the infrastructure in your neighbourhood. Advocacy includes lobbying and campaigning, actions that need volunteer contribution, i.e. planting or delivering plants together with a sensitizing message about the protection of the environment.
- ❑ **Voluntarism**, the action lead by the will, which is superior to the conscience and considered more as a psychological reaction.
- ❑ **Social participation**: implying the participation of the people in social activities (concert, neighbourhood party), citizenship /community meetings or activities (in a political party) and other such activities.
- ❑ **Philanthropy** is the act of donating money, goods, services, time and/or effort to support a socially beneficial cause, with a defined objective and with no financial or material reward to the donor.
- ❑ **Civic duty**, i.e. compulsory military service, which is not volunteerism, although an action in public service.

A group of people is standing at a riverbank and suddenly hears the cries of a baby. Shocked, they see an infant floating--drowning--in the water. One person immediately dives in to rescue the child. But as this is going on, yet another baby comes floating down the river, and then another! People continue to jump in to save the babies and then they see that one person has started to walk away from the group still on shore. Accusingly they shout, "Where are you going?" The response: "I'm going upstream to stop whoever's throwing babies into the river."

So, I guess we do need BOTH direct service AND advocacy volunteers!

<http://www.energizeinc.com>, parable submitted by Susan Ellis, president of Energize, Inc.

Types: Volunteerism can be divided into two main categories, expressed through the following ways:

Volunteerism is *Managed* or *Unmanaged*.

- ❑ Volunteering is considered part of the managed system, carried out through an organization, public institution or other structures.
- ❑ Voluntary action is mostly unmanaged. It may happen as an individual initiative or as community/group natural reaction.

Volunteering is expressed through these four different forms⁴:

1. Mutual aid (also called self-help⁵)
2. Philanthropy or service to others
3. Advocacy including campaigning
4. Participation and self-governance

⁴ www.unvolunteers.org

⁵ Self-help, i.e. if you will organize or participate in a volunteer action to clean up your neighbourhood, this is at the same time mutual and self help.

2.2 Volunteerism as inherited from the dictatorship period

As in many other Eastern European countries, the beginning of 1990s ushered in a new era of democracy in Albania after the severe dictatorship period of 5 decades. The communist party's iron fist not only ruled the social, economic, and political spheres but also the spiritual life in the country, and part of that was also volunteerism.



Today, after 19 years of democracy, the term volunteerism in Albania still has a negative connotation, as during the dictatorship period it was the first punishment in the black list of consequences for dissidents of the regime.

The so-called “volunteerism” was also used as a means of building the infrastructure of the country, from the construction of bridges, railroads, factories, schools, roads, terraces, drainage systems, tunnels, to the building of prisons and bunkers.

There are two views related to this issue.

- First, there are those who argue that “volunteerism” was used as a means to cut costs and enslave the people in a country, which was isolated and had to produce and live with its own efforts and resources.
- The second opinion supports the idea that “volunteerism” was a solution to the problems affecting the country at that time: destroyed and underdeveloped by consecutive wars through many centuries, as well as religious and geographical division.

Volunteerism before 1944:

“Agriculture and farming; personal and collective calamities; economic disasters in families neighborhoods or in wider proportions; common interest in common objects such as roads, bridges, water springs; these were the activities that made voluntarism appear naturally in its most typical forms, such as common and collective work and help. Being used so widely, voluntarism has become a basic feature of coexistence, part of culture and a mentality of our society. It is a manner for the individuals to testify their humanity, which has always been evaluated by the ethical code. Being so, voluntarism and all the elements entangled with it, were regulated by rules and laws of ethics and behavior. Voluntarism has gone through judicial regulations and was presented as a legal institution.

Not only in the regional canons such as the Canon of Lek Dukagjini (15th century), Canon of Skenderbeg, Canon of Dibra, but also in civic craftsman Statutes, voluntarism, civic help and support had their legal regulations, being treated as usual phenomena. A quick investigation of the canons and statutes of that time shows that voluntarism was judicially and legally elaborated, its contents functions and target groups were detailed, so was its status and nomenclature.

Prof. Bajram Mediaj

Another testimonial comes from the elders, regarding a new tradition related to volunteer work. In 1942-1943 doctors and lawyers offered each Saturday 2-3 hours of free service to poor and uneducated people.

Let's see some opinions collected from young and old citizens:

During a book fair organized for four days in November 2008 in Tirana, 25 small groups of people from different associations, social centres, religious organizations, research institutions, and public/private universities, delivering their publications and promoting their services and activities in the fair, were interviewed. All groups were gender and age mixed, and it was surprising to see their openness and willingness to share opinions and experiences regarding volunteerism.



The interview-conversation was lead in the form of the so-called Delphi method, where individuals from different age groups were presented with the comments of the older/younger people, giving them the chance to react to those comments.

Contrary to the perceptions, the interviews discovered that it was not the old generation, which had no appreciation for volunteerism. It was very interesting to see that almost all those who participated in the past in mass youth actions were vigorously protecting the positive values of volunteer activities; however none of them was willing to participate, today, in any volunteer activity.

The respondents identified positive and negative reasons of participation, which are grouped into six categories, as follows:

- ❑ Socializing process: young people were participating in the so-called “Youth Actions” in order to be part of youth groups, get to know new people from all over the country and see new places. *“Besides building tangible works, volunteerism built educative values. It helped breaking the prejudices between the north and south of the country, or those of different religions that used to divide the country in the past. Today’s respect and religious understanding in Albania is a derivate of those activities.” Cimi, 52 years, Tirana.*
- ❑ Propaganda: Love for the motherland/country, a feeling fed by well-built propaganda and education methods, which, nevertheless, managed to create a strong sense of community and participation for the good of all.
- ❑ Sense of community, being part of the group and doing the right thing together. People recall that even though they had to work hard, no one complained, they were a team that had a goal to meet and at the end the best reward was to see something tangible out of their work, be that a water-well, the paved road of a city, or Vlora -Durrës -Tirana railway.
- ❑ Emergency situations in social or natural disasters: *“In 1979, I volunteered as a specialist in the National Action for the eradication of the consequences of an earthquake in the area of Shkodra and Lezha. The action was called by the state and in a period of 5 months volunteers from every corner of the country constructed and repaired the houses of more than 100,000 people in 550 villages in the north of the country. I do not regret participating, I worked hard and I am proud of that, I would do it again if someone is in need.” Kristaq, 63 years, Tirana.*
- ❑ Fear from the oppressive measures that might have been taken for not participating. *“Not participating was seen as a “crime” to the mother party or to the country. Some of the castigations were: fliers and discussion with the staff members of the factory, neighbourhood or village; admonishment, transferral to remote cities/duty station, expulsion from the youth organization and other such punishments.” Flora, 42, Kamez.*

- ❑ Obligated by state structures. Young people were obliged to participate despite the fact that mass volunteer actions were very frequent, and sometimes the purpose of the mobilization was purely for demagogic reasons. *“We had to work very hard, and the payment we all received was too little. We had to work six days a week and only Sunday was a day off. Especially after the death of the dictator, we had to volunteer extra hours, even on Sundays, or in festive days, on the so-called “The day of Enver”, to honour the figure of the dictator or maybe to withstand the economic quick downfall. I was just a teenager at that time.” Mondri, 38, Durres.*

With regard to what was explained above, another surprising contradiction arose: when asked if they were willing to volunteer today, the young people were eager to, while the old ones said that they wouldn't directly (themselves physically) participate in any volunteer activity, however, they were all willing to give small financial or material contribution to any good cause, such as donating new books, donating blood, money to families/groups in need.

Maybe, this is part of a natural, psychological human reaction of trying to forget unconsciously a negative experience, which is recognized by scientists. As a form of auto-protection, the human brain tries to erase or contradict everything that is related to a negative experience. Therefore, even though many people are aware of the importance and benefits of volunteerism, as any other thing/idea associated to dictatorship, they want to cancel that from their memory. People feel and behave as if volunteerism is part of the past and if it should occur again they should be protected from any possible misuse.

While the young generation did not live through the dictatorship period, their negative perceptions and prejudices are built in their socialising process, in other words from: stories and opinions of older people, friends, media, community as well as lack of education, positive examples and role models in this field.

2.3 Re-approaching volunteerism

The fall of the iron curtain, starting with the historic fall of the Berlin Wall, opened the door towards democracy for all communist countries of that period. All Albanians embraced the new democratic era in the early 1990s; nevertheless the transition period was long and difficult.

Today, the biggest aspiration of the Albanian people is to be part of the Euro-Atlantic structures. Indeed, Albania made positive progress in this direction. Albania became official NATO member on 01 April 2009, which is an important step on the road to becoming an EU member.

With regard to European Integration it is a Potential Candidate Country, along with other Balkan countries such as: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia⁶. Albania signed the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA)⁷ with the EU on 12 June 2006; and submitted its application for EU membership on 28 April 2009. However, much time has been lost. Even though the establishment of diplomatic relations with EU started officially in 1992, with the signing of the Trade and Co-operation Economic Agreement; and it was second to Bulgaria⁸ among the Balkan

⁶ Croatia, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Turkey are Candidate countries; Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, and Serbia are Potential Candidate countries: http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/potential-candidate-countries/index_en.htm

⁷ For more information see: <http://www.delalb.ec.europa.eu/en/news/documents/sas.htm>

⁸ Bulgaria and Romania became EU members on January 01, 2007: <http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement>

countries to fulfil its greatest aspiration of becoming part of the big European family, for Albania the road seemed longer and tougher. According to many researchers and opinion makers, the reasons derive from the backwardness of the communist dictatorship period, as well as the difficulties to overcome the transition obstacles.

The accession criteria (Copenhagen Criteria) demand a strong and developed market economy (*economic dimension*), stable institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for minorities (*political dimension*) and adherence to the various political, economic and monetary aims of the European Union, incorporation of the Community *acquis* (*legislative dimension*). As the SAA provides a framework for mutual commitments on a wide range of political, legislation and economic issues, in Albania there is need for stronger democratic institutions and citizenship participation.

Albania is also part of many international organizations, such as: UN, Council of Europe, OSCE, WTO, and NATO. Albania signed many international or regional conventions and agreements and is part of global development strategies and cohesive policies, such as or related to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The MDGs⁹ are a set of eight global objectives to be reached by 2015:

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Develop global partnerships for development

Albania committed itself to achieve a ninth goal: strengthen good governance. This is a national goal, aiming to foster participatory democracy, the rule of law, strengthen state institutions and control corruption.

In this respect, the tough road towards sustainable development and great achievements seeks the commitment and participation of thousands of people in the country. How can this be achieved? Among other forms of participation, volunteerism has proved to be a driving force of development, bringing social and economic benefits to the society as a whole and individuals engaged in volunteer activities.

And while discussing volunteerism in the past and its real contribution as a civic answer to socio and economic problems, a question raises naturally: ***Why should we re-approach volunteerism in Albania?***

23 Million Citizens (36%) get involved in some kind of volunteering in Germany, 33% of the adult Irish population (i.e. approximately 1,287,000 people) volunteer in some capacity. Time devoted to volunteering within associations in France was equivalent to over 716,000 full time jobs in 2002. Belgians devote 5 hours per week to non-paid voluntary activities, which is equivalent to around 200.000 full time jobs.

These figures stem from the "Fact&Figures" research documents provided by CEV
<http://www.cev.be/facts&figures.htm>

To answer this question, let us explore the concept of Social Capital.

⁹ In September 2000, building upon a decade of major United Nations conferences and summits, world leaders came together at United Nations Headquarters in New York to adopt the United Nations Millennium Declaration, committing their nations to a new global partnership to reduce extreme poverty and setting out a series of time-bound targets - with a deadline of 2015 - that have become known as the Millennium Development Goals (<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/bkgd.shtml>)

If properly mainstreamed in youth policies and development strategies, volunteerism can be a powerful tool not only to the social and economic development of the country, but also to social capital. It helps groups of different ages, social, economic, religious and ethnic backgrounds to work together and bring change to society, constructing at the same time bridges of communication and integration between them.

In his book *“Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community”* Robert Putnam writes: *Whereas physical capital refers to physical objects and human capital refers to properties*



of individuals, social capital refers to connections among individuals -- social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them. With regard to social capital, he argues that there is a decrease in social cohesiveness and connectedness over the past 30 years. This decline, according to him, has been silent and deceptive. He writes. "Weakened social capital is manifested in the things that have vanished almost unnoticed - neighbourhood parties and get-togethers with friends, the unreflective

kindness of strangers, the shared pursuit of the public good rather than a solitary quest for private goods."

He lists several causes influencing the decline of social bonds, networking, socializing process, and participation, such as: the pressure of time and money (10%), urban sprawl (10%), commuting and leisure time, including the role of television and other electronic entertainment. Another important factor to civic participation, according to him, is the new generation's shift in values, with youngsters not interested in giving their time to support others and other social goals. Among other remedies, he suggests, better civic education in schools.

Putnam¹⁰ explains also the importance of social bonds, networking and participation for the individual and society.

- ❑ In *“Bowling Alone”* he writes: *As a rough rule of thumb, if you belong to no groups but decide to join one, you cut your risk of dying over the next year in half. If you smoke and belong to no groups, it's a toss-up statistically whether you should stop smoking or start joining. These findings are in some ways heartening: it's easier to join a group than to lose weight, exercise regularly, or quit smoking.* In other words this can be interpreted: if people would join more social groups, associations, volunteer activities, this would certainly contribute positively to their psychological and physical wellbeing.
- ❑ While in his other book *“Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy”*,

The ends and means of development call for placing the perspective of freedom at the center of the stage. The people have to be seen, in this perspective, as being actively involved - given the opportunity - in shaping their own destiny, and not just as passive recipients of the fruits of cunning development programs. The state and the society have extensive roles in strengthening and safeguarding human capabilities. This is a supporting role, rather than one of ready-made delivery.

Nobel Prize Winner Amartya Sen in
“Development as Freedom”

¹⁰ Robert D. Putnam, *“Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community”*; see also *“Democracies in Flux: The Evolution of Social Capital in Contemporary Society”* and *“Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy”*.

Putnam introduces the concepts of “civic virtue” and “civicness” (a sense of civic community and participation) as an impetus to the success of democratic institutions. He makes a comparative study of different Italian regional governments in the northern developed parts of the country to those in the undeveloped south, concluding that is not only the physical capital (natural, financial) or human capital that makes the difference in the development or non-development of the democratic institutions in different regions of Italy, but the development of social capital (civicness = the sense of community, participation and volunteerism as part of the secondary organizations¹¹). Therefore, the answer to "strong, responsive, effective representative institutions", what Putnam tries to find, is civic participation.

- Another interesting conclusion of Putnam is that "*economics does not predict civics, but civics does predict economics, better than economics itself.*"¹²

To summarize the answer to the above mentioned question, we can conclude that volunteerism is a powerful tool to democracy development, social cohesion, economic progress and cross-cultural understanding; while enhancing at the same time individuals' leadership and citizenship skills.

2.4 Conclusions

Suffering from a poor image, associated with bad experience from the dictatorship era, and the indifference of the citizens, **can we hope in the rebirth of volunteerism in Albania?**

Contemporary development theories suggest tackling the root causes of negative phenomena, not the symptoms. The few media articles or publications by NGOs on the subject of volunteerism continue to blame the dictatorship era for the current lack of willingness and apathy of people. Indeed, it is time to stop blaming the past for our present conditions and start analysing what is not working and why. Young people's preconceived volunteer notions and lack of appreciation are also aggravated by the lack of education and information.

Prof. Bajram Mediaj in his paper writes about the importance of self-help among community members, the strong impact and necessity of helping each other, helping the community, which during the dictatorship period took a tremendous dimension. At the same time, the examples of voluntary help and involvement come from beyond the dictatorship period, from the Canon of Lek Dukagjini and other mores. There are many of these aspects embedded in our culture and society, which can and should be revitalized. It is the role of government, civil society, and of us as individuals to educate future citizens. Now is the right momentum to learn from the past and start thinking about the future.

Let us see, in the following chapter, what the survey results show for youth perceptions, enabling and preventing volunteer factors in Albania.

¹¹ In "Making Democracy Work" Putnam writes: These secondary organizations are the main source of social capital, which are characteristics of social association, "such as trust, norms, and networks" which facilitate the workings of the society as a whole.

¹² R.D. Putnam "Making Democracy Work"

YOUTH IN ALBANIA PERCEPTIONS AND REALITIES



The right way to begin is to pay attention to the young, and
make them just as good as possible.

Socrates

3.1 Youth in Albania

Young people belonging to the 15-29 years group-age comprise 26.7% of the total population (844,921 out of 3,161,337 of the total Albanian population as per the 2007 population figures of the Albanian Institute of Statistics (INSTAT). Females and males are the same percentage. Officially, the age limits for youth in Albania are 15 and 30 years.

Albania continues to be considered a young population with an average age of 32.5 years and the median age 29.5 years. In 2007, the figures of students' enrolment at university showed 56.7% females and 43.3% young men.¹³

The biggest problems and challenges that the young people face in Albania are:

- Unemployment** - youth unemployment was estimated from 25 - 45% in the last five years.
- Education** - outdated curricula and a lack of equipment - many students wish to continue their education abroad.
- Mobility** - Albanians need visas to travel practically everywhere.
- Gender representation misbalance** - Even though in a proportion of 50% of the overall population, women are underrepresented in most of the leading positions in society.
- Living standards** - are very low and do not allow young people to spend much time in voluntary activities.
- Corruption** - is noticed in many spheres of society and young people sense its danger to society.
- Juvenile delinquency/Substance abuse/Violence** are also common problems.
- Lack of consistent policies and programmes for youth** - young people often feel excluded from most of the societal and political processes in Albania, even though they make up a large group of the population.
- A Common Space or a homogenising factor to bring together the youth** - the common space would manifest in a platform or forum that would act as an interlocutor between youth and the authorities.

*“Youth Work Development Report on the Study Visit to Albania”
European Youth Forum, May 2007*

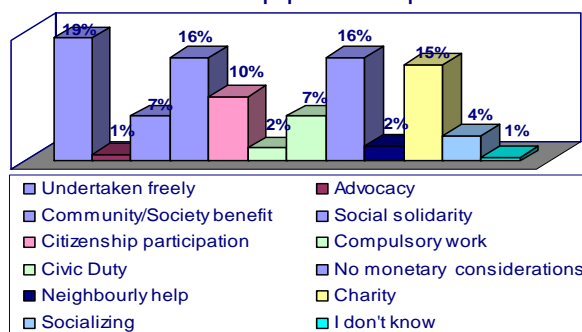
¹³ INSTAT, Women and Men in Albania, 2007 and http://www.indexmundi.com/albania/demographics_profile.html estimations 2008.

3.2 Perceptions and knowledge of volunteerism

Data and analyses in this section are based on a survey conducted in different parts of the country, involving 600 young respondents. It provides a snapshot of their perceptions, motivations or obstacles to participation. In order to give a clear picture of the reality, the findings are illustrated with examples or conclusions gathered in different seminars, focus group discussions and observations in role plays.

The survey shows that young people have knowledge and information about the term and meaning of volunteerism. We see from the chart below that 58% of the respondents associated volunteerism with the right terms: undertaken freely, with no monetary considerations and for social solidarity or community/society benefit. It is obvious that a large number of respondents see volunteerism as charity (15%). 9% (7%+2%) of the answers identified volunteerism with “civic duty” and “compulsory work”. It was interesting to see that 96% of the respondents associating volunteerism with “civic duty” and “compulsory work” belong to the third group-age studied: 25-30 years. This shows the impact of the dictatorship period experiences or information.

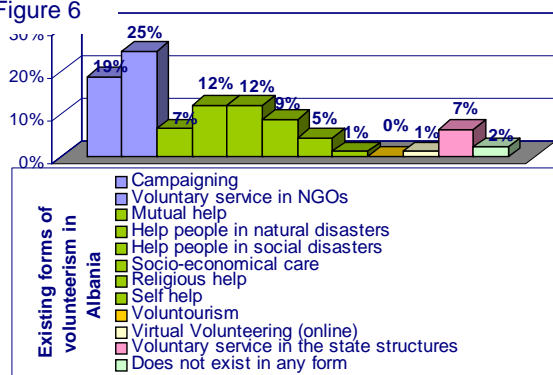
Figure 5



The general perception of volunteerism among young people is related to doing something for the community without being paid and it should be undertaken by the individual's free will. In this regard, it was difficult for young people to grasp the idea of being contracted to serve as a volunteer (volunteering). Many of those who have information about international volunteering schemes (i.e. UNV, EVS) think mistakenly that these opportunities are for foreigners (not for Albanian youngsters).

Regarding the forms of volunteerism in Albania, young people provided different activities and fields covered by volunteer actions. A large part of the respondents, 44% (19%+25%) see volunteerism as part of the work of NGOs and campaigns or other activities organized by their structures.

Figure 6



46% believe that what exists today in Albania is sporadic help in the forms of material support, in kind or charity to people in need: in social or natural disasters, mutual or self help, social and economic care to marginalized groups, children at risk, sick people or poor families. This kind of volunteerism is not organized and occurs occasionally. Another 5% of this category is related to volunteer activities organized by religious organizations or unorganized and lead by religious principles.

Voluntary service in/by the state structures comprises only 7% of the forms, as we will see in the following chapter it is mainly organized by local government institutions, rather than central ones. 2% is the number of sceptical and pessimistic young people, who believe that there is no form of volunteerism in the country.

Some new trends and terms related to volunteerism, used recently in the international vocabulary of young people, are not recognized by Albanian youngsters. Online or virtual volunteering (used to engage volunteers to support organizations, companies, or research centres and at the same time gain experience and enrich their knowledge), is not familiar to Albanian young people. Another term “Voluntourism” used to define people who go around volunteering but also see new places (used sometimes as a positive and other times as a negative term) is also not part of the forms of volunteerism in Albania. However, young people are aware of other forms of combination of volunteer actions in different non-related activities, i.e. young people brought examples of volunteer activities incorporated to the re-education process of juveniles involved in petty crimes. They also discussed and shared their opinion about open prisons/education centres or the inclusion of short volunteer periods in schools, which in fact are quite unknown and unfamiliar to the general Albanian public.

In conclusion, the collected data shows that there are two main forms of volunteerism in Albania: volunteerism organized by NGOs and volunteerism undertaken on sporadic basis as a response to emergency situations or people/communities in need.

We will discuss the first case in the following chapter of this report, while charity was intensively discussed in focus groups, interviews with young people, key informants, and experts of the field. Analysis of the interviews and relevant documents suggest that there are four factors influencing its amplification lately:

1. Socio-economic situation
2. Lack of proper volunteer activities
3. Media coverage
4. Transformed context of the communist forms of volunteerism

1 – The most powerful factor influencing this trend is the difficult socio-economic situation: unemployment, poverty, especially in remote and isolated regions, marginalization of vulnerable groups. All these factors make mutual and self help essential. People support those in need, while other mechanisms are not functioning, i.e. *no one of us can stay indifferent and give nothing to the people isolated for several weeks from bad weather conditions in many cities and villages in the northern part of the country; or to the permanently disadvantaged situation of Roma and Egyptian communities settled in the suburbs of many Albanian cities.* Volunteer activities are not organized; therefore the only way to support is by donating something.

2 – The insufficient organization of volunteer activities is another factor that influences this trend. While volunteerism is not recognized, neither used, such sporadic forms will emerge as a natural response of human nature to social problems or civic crises.

3 - Besides the reasons identified above, another powerful stimulant to this trend is the media, especially television. Many people prefer to donate money or provide other tangible donations, when they know where their contribution is going. *Youngsters provided recent examples of response to the call of the media, such as: to help a poor family living in a shabby shanty, the children of a victim of family violence or a sick teenage, who didn't have enough money to pay for an expensive surgery.* Religious organizations are also playing an important and positive role in supporting people in need or mobilizing the citizens in times of crises.

4 – Moreover, students illustrated it as a new form, or maybe the only one in which they or their parents can freely participate, a form which according to them, does not require the organization of a third party, neither is it directed by someone else, but simply an action of doing something good for people in need, totally different from the one dictated during dictatorship era.

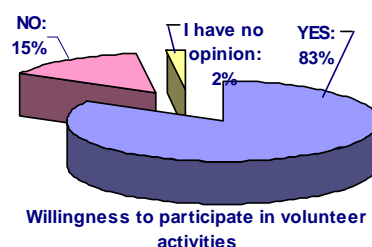
However, the research came across many pros and cons regarding the super-developed-form of charity-volunteerism in Albania nowadays.

- ❑ Many key informants believe that charity is a form of voluntary action that should be cultivated and according to them that is the pure form of human volunteerism.
- ❑ The representatives of development NGOs claim the contrary. They believe that by offering something for free to someone, and especially repeating that constantly, the beneficiary is not supported to develop, on the contrary that might become a form of patronage that does not help the development of individuals or communities. This conclusion can be linked to a popular expression, which illustrates best the above mentioned situation: *If you give someone a fish, you will feed him for one day; but if you teach him how to fish, you will feed him and his kin for lifetime...*

In conclusion, charity (philanthropy) is an efficient means to support people and communities in need or in times of emergencies. While volunteerism and volunteering in charitable activities is the most effective way to create leaders, ensure sustainable change and build the capacity of local communities.

Figure 7

To the question “Would you like to volunteer?” 83% of the respondents answered “Yes”, while 15% replied “No” and 2% “had no opinion”. The large number of positive responses shows that young people are willing to engage in volunteer activities.



Let's see below what their reasons and motives are.

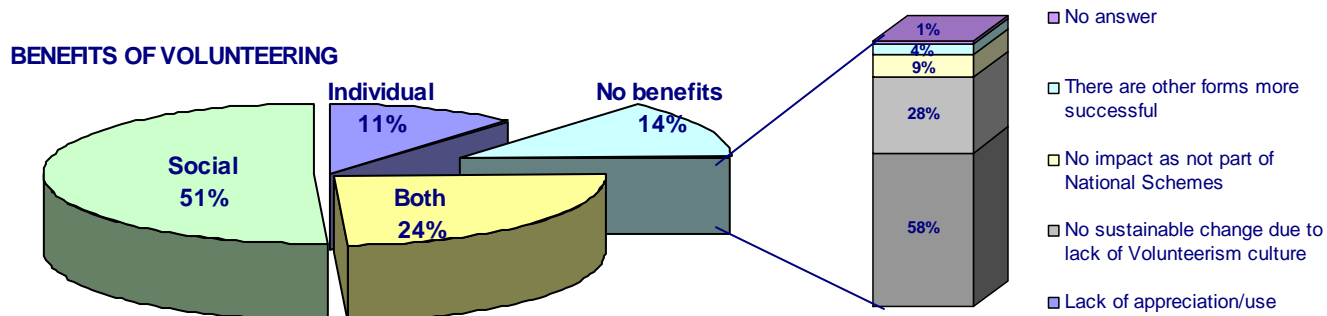
Another point of interest is the identification of the benefits of volunteerism for the society and for the individual.

The table below illustrates the benefits of volunteering as identified by International and National UNV volunteers in a seminar session in November 2008. The benefits are grouped in order to provide a clear picture of their viewpoints.

Benefits to the society	Benefits to the individual
Social development	Learning new skills
Civic participation	Professional development
Sustainable change	Mental and physical benefits
Creating a sense of community and solidarity in the society	Being able to make a difference in somebody's life
Bridging communities and authorities	Work in a multi-cultural environment
Transferring the experience/skills of someone to an individual or a group from the community	New experiences; Learning about new people and new places
Make a difference in somebody's life	Career self-perspectives
Bridges divided communities, as a tool for reconciliation and reconstruction, especially in the divided societies/communities.	Enriching yourself: meeting new challenges/discovering own potentials
Significant economic contribution, decreasing the financial bill of many activities.	Gaining experience/knowledge Learning from others/colleagues
Building links of cooperation, partnerships and communication among different interest groups, NGOs and communities.	Being part of networks Making friends/New connections
Volunteerism can change the society, even the world	Makes you feel precious, and good in yourself

As the chart below shows, young people see volunteerism as an activity contributing more to the society, than to the individual. 51% believe that there is only the society benefiting from volunteerism, while 11% believe that it is the individual; and 24% that both categories benefit from it.

Figure 8



There is another category of 14% that believes that there are no benefits from volunteerism.

- ❑ 58% of the respondents (of this 14%) believe that there is no benefit from volunteerism in the country for lack of appreciation and as a consequence, lack of use of volunteer activities. In the focus groups organized, this issue was raised several times. Young people's comments were related to the need for awareness raising and sensitizing campaigns regarding volunteerism importance to the society and individual. They claimed that *"the situation will not change, and volunteerism will not bring any benefits, if people are not aware and do not appreciate it"*.
- ❑ 28% feel that most of the initiatives do not have a sustainable impact, because of a lack of education in this field or what they started to call in the focus groups *"culture of volunteerism"* and a lack of appreciation of collective work. Such a culture cannot be forced; neither can it be created if different institutions, civil society organizations, or youth groups work separately. There is need for coordination of the interlinked activities or those initiatives which influence/support each other. *I.e. volunteerism actions combined with environmental campaigns.*
- ❑ 9% argue that the country and individuals' necessities and problems are enormous and such activities should be part of national schemes in order to bring the due benefits and respond properly to the difficult situation.
- ❑ A small number of young people are sceptical and claim that there are other forms that might bring more benefits to the society and especially to the individuals. They provide examples related in particular to financial profits and the past forced methods of the dictatorship era.

Conclusions:

The index of about 14% of young people dubious about the benefits of volunteerism illustrated a large deficit in volunteerism information and sensitization. This gap influences at the same time the motivation of this group to participate in volunteer activities (15% of the young people are not willing to participate in volunteer activities, figure.7).

At the same time, the young people identified some of the causes and solutions to their hesitant and discouraged attitude:

- ❑ There is need for education and awareness raising in this field. There is therefore a need for combined actions between the education state system, civil society and other

potential partners to raise awareness among young people about the importance of volunteerism, to support interesting and meaningful volunteer activities and encourage participation through nationally recognizing schemes.

- ❑ Young people need to see sustainable change; at the same time they are aware that despite their efforts they cannot achieve it alone. There is a need for coordination between different actors, in order to harmonize all efforts, activities and strategies to achieve sustainable and tangible change.
- ❑ Positive examples and exchanges of experience would also be useful tools to encourage participation and break the circle of a biased mentality, either coming from the past or created by the current unrecognized volunteer work.

3.3 Involvement in volunteer activities

The survey data shows that 59.5% of young people have been involved in volunteer activities before, while 40.5% have not (most of the answers were: I have never had the chance). We analysed the data to check whether the last category was conditioned by any social or economic factor. The analysis of data, direct meetings, focus groups and round tables show that **many young people are involved in volunteer activities, nevertheless, most of them either do not recognize it as such, or are not aware that what they are doing is volunteerism**. The general attitude is that these types of activities are most of the time named with different words avoiding the term volunteerism, such as: activities for groups in need, community work, youth work, and initiative for the community. The avoidance of the term volunteerism/volunteer is also related as explained above with the negative connotation of this term in Albania.

a) 40,5% - No, I have never volunteered.

We analyzed the economic conditions of this group, their education level or place of education, and the analysis showed that there is no link between these conditions and their absence from volunteer participation.

We noted that the determining factor to this issue was the geographical area: 71% of the respondents of this category live in rural areas. Such finding needed further research, so a number of interviews and group meetings were organized with young people in rural areas.

Two are the prevailing reasons that prevent young people from participating in volunteer activities in the rural areas:

- 1) Lack of civil society organizations
- 2) Stereotypes created by the past

As it will be explained in the following chapter, it is necessary to point out that there are approximately 90-150 youth NGOs in Albania, and according to the MoTCYS only three or four of them are active at the national level. There are only a few youth organizations which implement activities in rural zones, and none of them is based in these areas. Distance from the city or capital and the lack of internet access make it impossible for these young people to engage in such activities. The other factor influencing this phenomenon is rooted in the country's communist past, particularly to the life and work organization in the countryside. All villages were grouped in agricultural cooperatives. There was no private property. Everything, except for personal items, was state property. People had to work collectively in cooperatives and the products or benefits, which also belonged to the state, were planned by the state structures to meet the needs of the

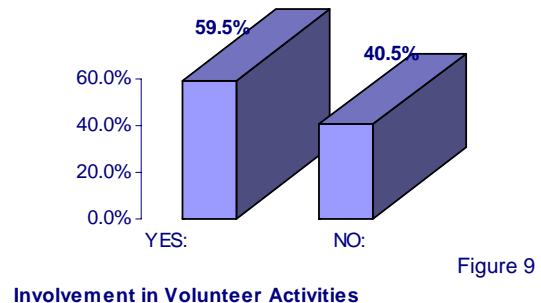


Figure 9

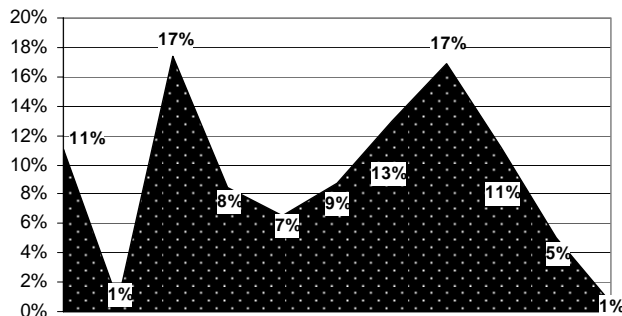
country as a whole. Therefore, like volunteerism, collectivism is another term with negative connotation in Albania. This means that organizing, working or volunteering collectively, or to the benefit of the collective is a difficult undertaking in rural areas.

Fields of engagement

b) 59,5% - Yes, I have been engaged in activities (volunteered).

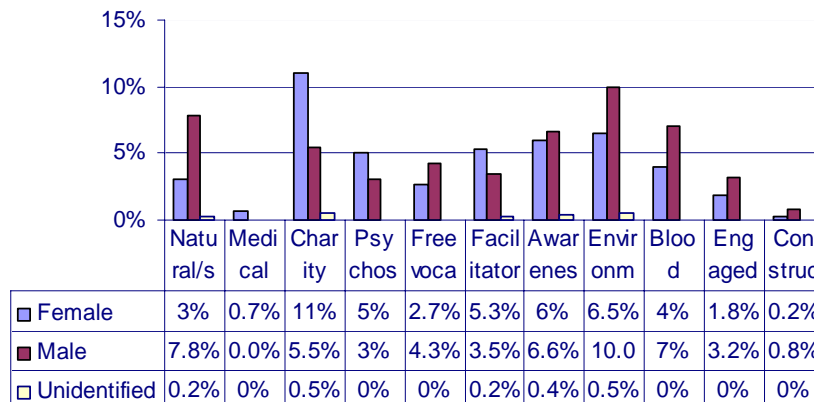
It seems that young people are involved in different fields. The two main areas of engagement are charity and environmental issues, having each 17% of the responses. Youth are also involved in sensitizing campaigns (13%), blood donation activities (11%) and support in natural or social disasters (11%).

Figure 10



1. Volunteer engagement in a natural/social misfortune situation
2. Medical care for sick people /children /elders
3. Charity activities for poor people
4. Psychosocial care to vulnerable people/youngsters
5. Free vocational/artistic training to children/young persons
6. Facilitator in different seminars or studies on social problems
7. Awareness raising campaigns
8. Environment protection activities
9. Blood donation activities
10. Engaged as observer in central or local election polls
11. Construction/reparation of public infrastructure

Fields of engagement disaggregated by gender:



The free discussions in focus groups and the interviews showed that young people see campaigning as a trendy activity. They prefer to engage in such activities because the process in general is very creative; they are not only engaged in delivering the information but many times they have to prepare posters, info-fliers, leaflets, street banners, talk to different people, write articles, draw pictures and many other activities.

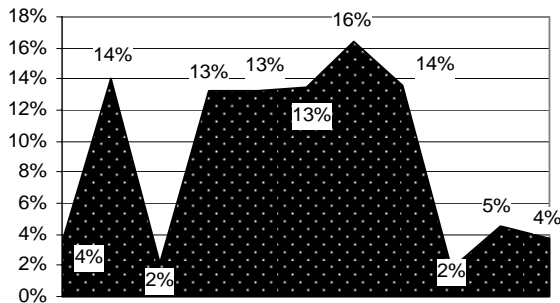
In all focus groups and meetings in high schools, this idea was compared to the volunteer activities asked to be performed by their teachers, which is not part of the school curricula. Only a few interesting activities were described, while in general they pictured them as very drab and cheerless, i.e. cleaning the school yard, fixing the library of the school.

Students claimed that their potential, creativity and ideas are much more developed, that initiatives should be fulfilling, and in line with their potential or the modern times' acquirments. Contrary to school volunteer activities, students feel more motivated to participate in similar activities organized by NGOs or other interest groups. They are more likely to participate if the

activities are lead by inspiring leaders, high ideals and meaningful interventions which bring change in their community or society.

The fields of interest of young people are also studied, finding out the activities in which young people would be more willing to participate. The results are illustrated in the chart below.

Figure 11



1. Volunteer engagement in a natural/social misfortune situation
2. Medical care for sick people /children /elders
3. Charity activities for poor people
4. Psychosocial care to vulnerable people/youngsters
5. Free vocational/artistic training to children/young persons
6. Facilitator in different seminars or studies on social problems
7. Awareness raising campaigns
8. Environment protection activities
9. Blood donation activities
10. Engaged as observer in central or local election polls
11. Construction/reparation of public infrastructure

It seems that campaigning is not only the most engaging activity, but also the most preferred as per the data shown in the chart above (16%). As explained above, campaigning is considered a direct form of volunteerism and young people see that as a tool to solve problems and enhance the situation in their communities.

The other two preferred fields are: assistance to people in need (sick people, children, elders - 14%) and environmental activities (14%). These two categories are followed by: psychosocial care to vulnerable people/youngsters (13%); free vocational/artistic trainings to children/peers (13%); and facilitating different seminars or social studies (13%). It is interesting to note that, even though charity and blood donation are very high in the chart of actual engagement (figure 10), in their field of interest both activities acquire very low quotes of 2% each of them.

This shows that, even though young people are adapted to the opportunities available in the country, their interests are more related to social change and development.

Fields of interest disaggregated by gender:

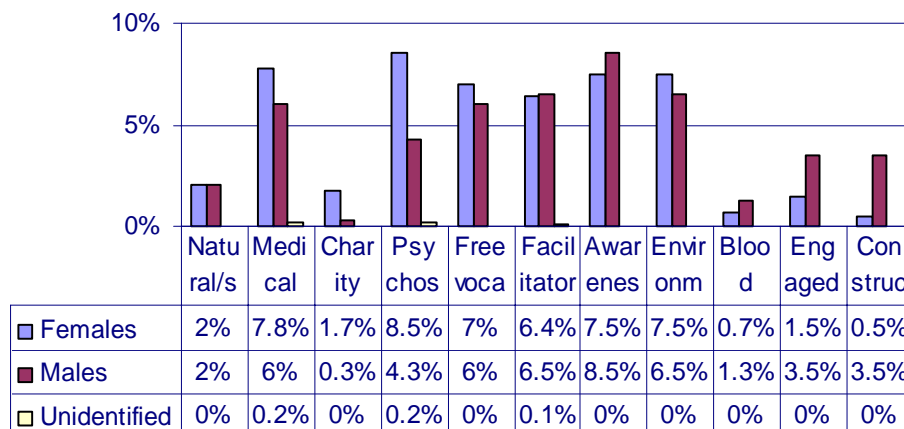


Chart No. 12 illustrates which groups young people are interested in working with.

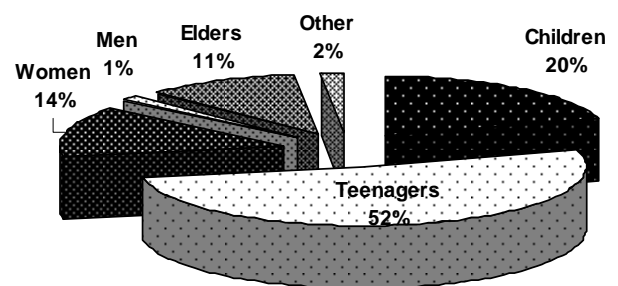


Figure 12

3.4 Enabling and Obstructing Factors

a) Another important issue to the scope of our study is the **ENABLING FACTORS** to volunteer engagement. The survey shows that there is a large spectrum of reasons motivating young people to volunteer.

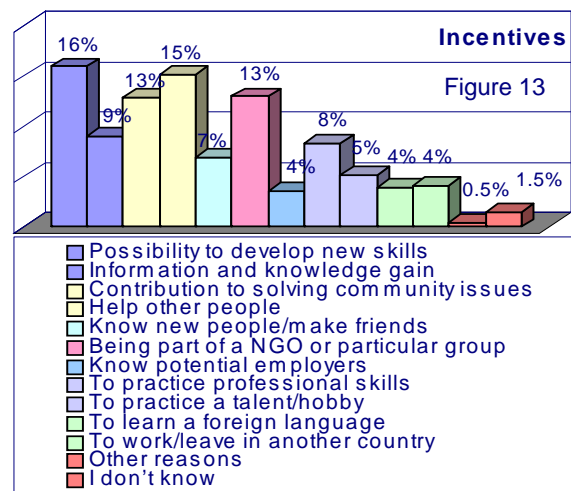
Contribution to solving community issues or helping other people (28%) is one of the most motivating factors to volunteer mobilization. Young people see many problems in their community, they feel that many things should change, and that everyday life should be improved. The most important conclusion in this point is that they do not only want to change it, but also be part of the change.

Possibility to develop new skills, gain knowledge and information in a certain field (25%) is another incentive to participation. Indeed, volunteerism is a good way to learn new skills and gain knowledge, especially nowadays, when employers and the job market require capable people with experience and able to cope with their everyday job-challenges. The employers, do not only require professional skills, but most of all people who have abilities to work as part of a team, taking initiatives, sharing responsibilities and successfully leading groups; such qualities can be gained and fostered through volunteering. Except for enriching the individual with new experiences, volunteering provides a good opportunity to gain leadership and management skills, as it is about solving problems, leading people with new ideas and visions, resolving conflicts, changing situations, negotiating, lobbying and communicating with people.

Being part of an NGO, interest group, and other such structures (13%) is the following incentive. As a representative or member of such groups, young people would not only have the possibility to better protect their interests, but also stand up for the rights of their community. Being part of a representing organization from another angle provides good opportunities of participation in different social events, group-activities, trainings, seminars, or exchange of experience visits with other NGOs, peers, countries.

To practice a vocation, a talent or a hobby (13%) is another good reason to be involved in volunteer activities for young people. Volunteering provides a myriad of opportunities to practice, learn, rehearse, exchange experience, and experiment in practice. Indeed, it is easier to practice and learn by doing than to study twenty books related to a topic. Through volunteering young people exercise their skills, and in this way they can explore new possibilities, experiment with potential solutions and do something they are found of, while using their talent to help others.

Another incentive is learning a foreign language or visiting a foreign country (8%). Learning a foreign language, especially English, is the most common after-school-activity for young people in Albania. Being “trendy”, using a mobile phone or the Internet, listening to the music, and finding a job (even the simplest one: waiter) needs the knowledge of a foreign language in Albania and everywhere nowadays. Therefore, volunteering in an international organization, interpreting for foreigners, translating documents or publications, teaching to children/peers a foreign language are some good ways to practice and learn a language. To volunteer abroad is also seen as a good opportunity for young Albanians, who are otherwise restricted in their choices of foreign travel.



Socializing (7%) (meeting people, making friends, building links of communication with other peers) can also be useful in mobilizing young people. Participating in volunteer actions is always rewarding in terms of meeting people, potential employers, people who live and experience the same problems, the neighbours you never have the chance to see, the VIPs that live in the city, the leaders of the community and many more.

To know potential employers (4%) seems a good reason to volunteer, however only 4% of the young people think about that. Volunteering in an NGO, state institution or private company serves to know potential employers, explore the fields of work in which one would or wouldn't like to be involved in.

Among other motivating reasons young people listed:

- ❑ *Change the monotony and being creative* are also good incentives to volunteer involvement for young people. Volunteering can be fun, innovative, changing the everyday rhythm of life and of course offering surprises and new challenges.
- ❑ *Recognition* of ones skills, contribution, name by the others/the group and by the individual itself, by gaining self-esteem and confidence in their potential to change the world.
- ❑ *Role models* are another incentive to young people, who are more willing to do an activity if positive examples and models are shown.

b) The IMPEDING FACTORS are also studied by the research, trying to find out what prevents young people from volunteer participation in the everyday life, school, work and society. The reasons are randomly listed below, as no one of them is stronger and influences more the phenomenon, and the focus in tackling only one would not ensure sustainable improvement.

Lack of information concerning volunteer opportunities: Indeed, there are only a few websites available and they provide very little information about opportunities to volunteer. There are no specific publications, e-newsletters or any other system to deliver the information. Regarding the activities organized by NGOs, it is not difficult to spread information in the capital city, where more than 80% of the NGOs are concentrated, the media is very strong, social activities are easier to be implemented, while in remote regions, rural areas and small towns this is considered a challenge.

Lack of organization and volunteer activities: It is also true that the scarce volunteer activities do not allow for the development of volunteerism. To maximize volunteer potentials and benefits, it is not only important to organize more volunteer activities, but also to mainstream volunteerism in strategic plans, projects, and activities. In this way it will not continue to remain an underutilized field.

Insufficient motivation and sensitization: Participating in volunteer activities should not be a chore. Young people need strong incentives to participate. To motivate and sensitize them is essential to achieving positive results in practice. Positive social environment should be created as a prerequisite to successful volunteer work, and the incentives mentioned in point 3.4.a should be considered.

Lack of knowledge on the benefits of volunteerism: This issue was discussed in page 28, highlighting the importance of education and sensitizing campaigns regarding the impact of volunteerism to society and individual.

Family and social education is another obstacle. On the one side, the example of parents and relatives show that individual profits against those of the others are an integral part of the capitalist system. On the other side, volunteerism is not part of the school curricula, therefore the new generation and those generations to come will not be able to participate as real citizens in the democratic process, where volunteerism is an essential element.

Public perceptions on volunteering (prejudices and mentality): It was very sad to realize that one strong impediment in this field is the mentality of people. 416 young people (69%) mentioned among other reasons being embarrassed when approaching the subject of being a volunteer with friends, relatives and people they know. The “lack of a feeling of value” was another expression used by volunteers, in the sense that the people do not appreciate volunteer work and see it as a time and energy consuming activity without any benefits. Bad experience of the dictatorship period is also a contributing factor. Only a few young people claimed that the dictatorship period was an obstruction to their or their peers’ volunteer participation. Mainly they related this fact to the prohibition or discouragement they revived from youngsters’ parents. Changing public’s mentality may need years of well-built attempts; however it is now the right momentum to start.

Time constraints: More and more people live their life in a hurry. “Everything in real time” is the latest expression. Young people in Albania feel that having no time is the second reason to prevent them from volunteering. Indeed, in times of fast cars, mobile phones and laptops nobody has time to stop the car, when travelling from town A to town B, and enjoy the nature, collect some wild flowers or mountain tea; we are always preoccupied to go as fast and as soon as possible to our destination. The day is still 12 hours long; however young people say they have to work extra hours, study additional courses and spend hours in the Internet, and they have never enough time to engage in extra community activities.

Indifference, interest for entertaining activities: This tendency is not characteristic only for the Albanian youth. Many studies show that the increase of entertaining possibilities, especially the big bang explosion of technology, electronics, intercommunications and the media in the last decade, decreases the willingness of young people to participate in civic activities in their community or society. Another factor nurturing this tendency is the lack of proper engagement of those responsible for guiding young people towards more educative activities.

Economic situation: A fraction of the responses in this part of the questionnaire identified the poor economic situation of the majority of people in Albania, as an obstacle to volunteer participation. Earning a living or struggling to improve their living conditions has become, according to them, a major challenge to many families, and especially to many young people finishing their schooling and finding that in spite of a diploma there are few employment possibilities.

November 2008, UNV Albania supported the implementation of 15 Mini-Volunteer Projects in different regions of Albania. The initiative was part of “Model UN 2009” project.

Working groups of high school students/volunteers, lead by U.S. Peace Corps volunteers and local teachers, were created. The working groups organized several preparatory meetings in their schools, to decide together about the nature and concrete activities of the volunteer project. The implemented projects did not only promote volunteerism among young people and the team spirit of the working groups, but also addressed important issues in the respective communities

Some of the implemented activities are: environmental education, animal protection, and volunteer awareness raising campaigns; collection of food, blankets and books and donation to poor families; film festivals, concerts and cultural activities for marginalized groups; reparation of the park of the city; trainings or seminars on gender equality, discrimination or prevention of human trafficking, the organization of volunteer fairs, preparation of posters, leaflets and other such creative activities.

Lack of credentials and incentives recognized by the state

Volunteerism is not officially recognized and as a result not appreciated by young people. While in many countries, it is part of the legislation or a requirement of the school curricula, in Albania it is in a “state of denial”¹⁴.

What are the difficulties volunteers in service face in their everyday activities?

UNV volunteers serving in Albania identified three main elements that should be improved:

- They feel their efforts are not properly acknowledged due to the lack of recognition and negative connotation of volunteerism in the public, despite their incredible work and impact on individuals, communities and groups in need.
- Lack of a common approach of volunteerism in the implementation of different projects.
- Low perception of volunteers (by the others), which see volunteers as not properly educated, despite the fact that they all have Bachelor or Master’s degrees.

Identified by UNV volunteers serving in Albania.

c) MOBILIZATION APPROACH

The way we try to mobilize young people in volunteer activities is very important. New and evolving trends should be taken into consideration when designing and implementing volunteer activities. Let’s see which are the best mobilizing methods according to our survey and compare that to another one conducted in 2002.

Survey data shows that there are two main mobilizing approaches: Peer to peer gatherings (23%) and TV programs/ads (23%).

Peer-to-peer get-togethers: This activity seems to be successful, considering the importance of friends and youth-group-activities for this group-age. As discussed above, public perception matters to a large extent of young people, therefore they would easily accept something that has come as the work and idea of the group and where other youngsters are involved, that will be considered not only a good activity, but also special.

Media a double-edged sword: Media, the fourth power, plays an important role in the Albanian social life, and particularly in shaping youth perceptions and realities. However, its role is a double-edged sword. On the one side, it is the media that can mobilize young people through educative and sensitizing programmes or advertisements; but on the other one, it can shift the attention of youth from the wider societal reality. The sparkling images of developed countries and societies broadcasted everyday through soap-operas, shows, and films are a window through which young people see a better life and a luxurious reality far from the one they live in.

Civil society organizations, a source of volunteer possibilities: The study shows that young people are willing to be involved and work with NGOs. On their part, NGOs also need the energy, innovation and strength of youth.

School activities, represent another category to which students would respond, however the nature of volunteer activities organized, as explained above, plays an important role in the scale of their mobilization.

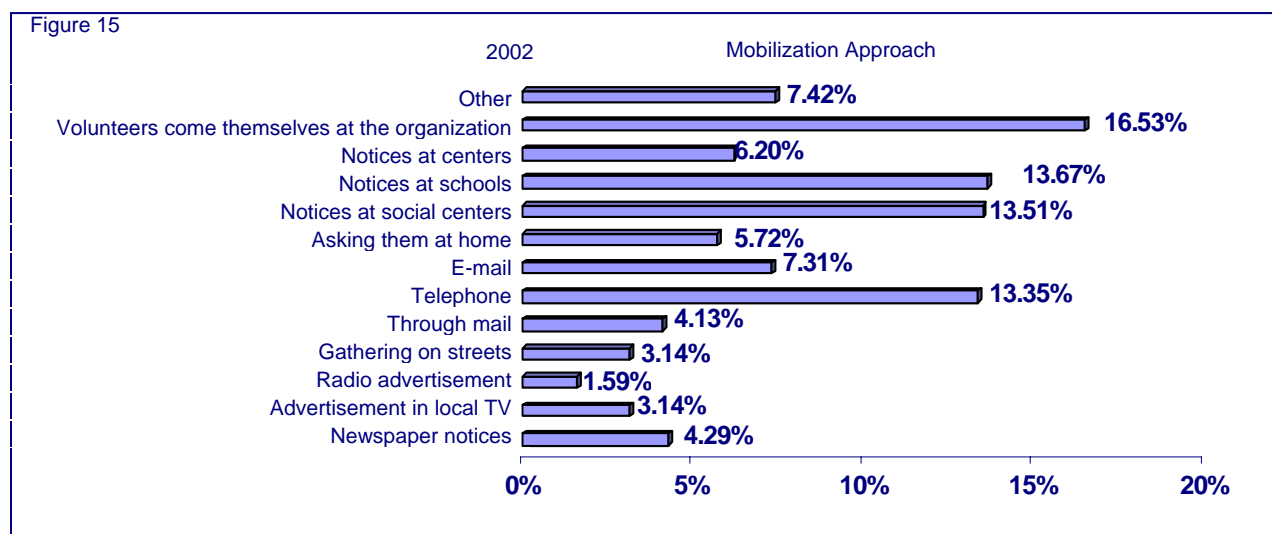
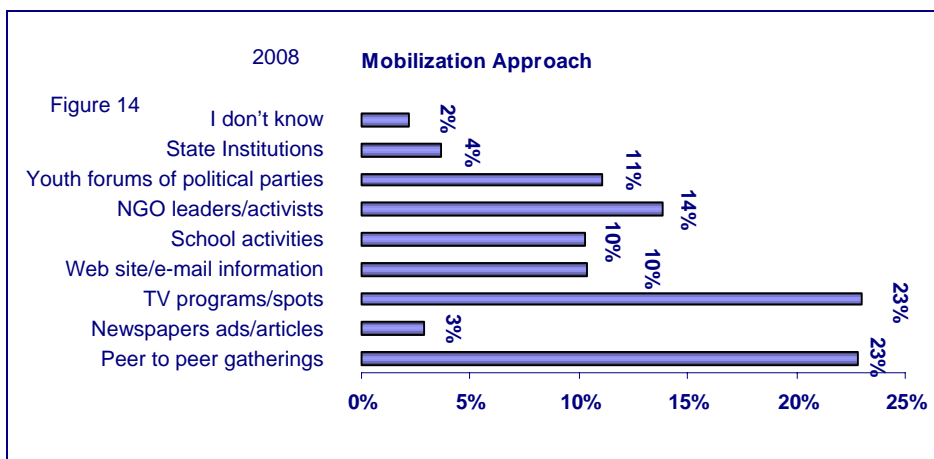
¹⁴ Used in this study to illustrate the avoidance of the use of the word “volunteer” or “volunteering” in order to get acceptance by the majority/friends/peers to the involvement in a volunteer activity or as a volunteer. Alternative words are used instead: activist, member, etc. For more see page 41.

Web/email information: Websites, blogs and email-groups including thousands of young people in Europe and the region (i.e. Balkans (6506 members), YDA International (4773 members), HR-education, KRIIK Albania, etc) are a secure, fast and cheap way to spread information, without spamming¹⁵. Young people seem to be keen to respond to calls for volunteers, trainings, or seminar applications offered by different NGOs.

Call from political parties, this is the other group where youth is actively involved. Young people would answer mobilizations by their leaders positively.

Newspaper advertisements/articles and Organizations by local state structures, are not preferred by young people.

A UNV Albania survey conducted in 2002 by Prof. Zyhdi Dervishi, shows that 7 years ago people were more enthusiastic to respond to advertisements at social centres, schools or city centres 33.38% (6.2%+13.67%+13.51%). While 16.53% of the people gathered themselves in the organizations' offices, 13.35% would respond to a volunteer action called by phone.



We experimented this year with some of these methods, to see whether young people would respond to some of the techniques identified in 2002. Telephone calls in 2008/9 showed not to be a good tool to mobilize citizens, only 0.5% of those contacted in this way reacted; the other part (99.5%) did not show up in the activity or refused directly. The percentage of people responding to a mail, or gatherings on streets was also extremely low. It is obvious that, in 7 years, the way people live and participate in civic life has changed a lot.

¹⁵ Spam is considered a cyber crime.

3.5 Essential issues for consideration

Engaging vulnerable and groups at-risk in volunteer activities

Volunteerism can be a successful tool to assist victims of different phenomena, such as: trafficking in human beings, drug addiction, and juvenile delinquencies. The involvement of young people in volunteer work can provide a healthy environment, engagement in meaningful work and educational activities for youngsters.

a) Drugs abuse

There is no place for the treatment of drug-addiction in Albania. According to the Ministry of Health, there are around 40,000 users in Albania (65% use cannabis, 25% use heroine, and 10% use cocaine), while there are only 15 beds in the department of treatment from intoxication. Also according to the same Ministry, the age of drug consumers using needles has decreased under the age of 15.¹⁶ The age group ranges from 14-45 years, but other cases are also known. The newest tendency is the use of ecstasy.

The Emanuel Community Albania is the only organization offering treatment and rehabilitation for drug addicts above 18 years old. The community has two centres: the Hearing centre for alcohol and drug addicts and the Polyvalent Social Center in Vaqarr. Currently Vaqarr residential centre hosts around 20 alcohol and drug addicts, despite the fact that the centre has the capacity to offer professional and rehabilitation service for 60 people. Father Mario Marafioti and another representative of Emanuel Community in Albania Luciano Gialdi, explain that Vaqarr centre can be fully operational and host 60 people, if there is potential to employ more professional staff and if there were volunteer schemes that engage students of related fields in this centre or other treatment or drug-prevention info-centres that should exist in each city and not only in Tirana.

b) Youth delinquency

Prisons in Albania serve as institutions of isolation, rather than re-education, this has considerable importance for juveniles, who do not need strong punishment, but rather education and support. The Albanian Helsinki Committee (AHC) raises the problem of juveniles and women treatment, especially in pre-detention centres at police commissariats, which does not meet internationally accepted standards. At the same time there is a lack of policies and strategies targeting both juveniles and women in closed institutions as well as lack of enforcement of the legal and sub-legal acts in their everyday work.

Japanese prisoners allowed volunteering outside of jail

Tokyo: Prisoners in Japan will be allowed to work for companies and join volunteer activities as part of their responsibilities during their terms in jail.

www.worldvolunteerweb.org

c) Trafficking in human beings

The trafficking in persons is a worldwide phenomenon, involving almost all countries serving as places of origin, transit or destination, and Albania is no exception. It is a country of origin, transit and a temporary destination of trafficked persons. The main forms of trafficking include those for prostitution and child labour in Italy and Greece. After that, many victims are transferred to other developed European countries. According to different studies children and young people, especially girls are the most vulnerable groups. The victims belong to different social strata and geographical areas. The main factors that contribute to this phenomenon are: a lack of information regarding trafficking forms of recruitment, no knowledge on the real situation of the victims, low economic level, unemployment, gender discrimination and family violence, and lack of information on legitimate migration options.

¹⁶ Round Table, Albanian Ministry of Health, "Koha Jone" newspaper: <http://kohajone.com/artikull.php?idm=36328&idr=7>

3.6 SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.6.1 Suggestions

Media

- Ensure adequate coverage of volunteer activities, public debates, educative programmes and volunteer success stories in order to sensitize the public to the benefits of volunteering.

Educational Institutions

- Organize attractive and meaningful volunteer activities in combination with related topics of the school curricula, bearing in mind at the same time students' motives, opinions, interests and the needs of the school/community.

Civil Society Organizations

- Establish an electronic database with information on volunteer opportunities, relevant civil society organizations and interested individuals;
- Design and implement volunteer projects taking into consideration not only the priorities of the country, but also the incentives for young people to volunteer, their potential and new trends. In addition, local initiatives should be linked to global ones and support pro-activism.
- Volunteer exchange/study visits should be organized at local, national, regional and international levels.

Government

- Establish a national system for volunteer recognition/registration (e.g. Volunteer card, enhanced employment opportunities, job skills, free local and national transport, health insurance in case of work incidents, and reduced prices for artistic and cultural events);
- Create special incentives and programmes to support capacity building and networking alternatives for the young unemployed people;
- Establish enabling schemes and programmes to engage marginalized or at-risk youth groups in volunteering activities.

3.6.2. Recommendations

- Inclusion of information on volunteerism combined with practical sessions in the primary/secondary/high school and university curricula;
- Design and implementation of sensitizing campaigns to raise awareness of the social importance of volunteerism and create a culture of citizenship participation.

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS PARTICIPATION IN PRACTICE



Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.

Margaret Mead

4.1 A snap-shot of Youth NGOs in Albania

As part of the democratic changes that Albania experienced in the '90s, non-political and non-governmental organizations emerged. The supporting factors were internal and external, while many challenges were inherited from the dictatorship era, such as: a lack of traditions and experience, a totalitarian mentality, a lack of financial support and social and economic tensions.

Youth NGOs were also established during this period, starting initially in Tirana and with time extending steadily throughout all other districts. In the beginning youth NGOs were weak, facing many problems, lacking capacity, experience and committed leaders, including here the disdainful reaction to voluntarism and collective activities.

Nonetheless, it did not take long for them to empower and become the voice of youth in Albania. The expertise gained and the considerable technical and financial support of international organizations supported the development of this sub-sector.

According to the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports, there are currently 90 - 150 Youth NGOs in Albania. Only a few of them are active at the national level and many others are not registered so it is difficult to fully identify their real number¹⁷. The National Youth Council created in 2000 served for several years as an umbrella organization for the whole spectrum of 99 youth NGOs registered as its members. Today this platform does not exist anymore, however there are other organizations playing a significant role in representing young people in Albania, such as: Albanian Youth Parliament, Mjaft! Movement, Albanian Students' Governments, PVN, IRSH, KRIIK Albania, Youth Citizens' Project, DEA, and many more.

Youth NGOs in Albania are distinguished for:

- ❑ *A wide geographical distribution* (in all the regions of the country);
- ❑ *Coverage of different youth interests* (high or university students, volunteers, youth in general, unemployed, vulnerable groups, youth at risk);
- ❑ *Wide spectrum of fields of operation* (students, environment, volunteerism, citizenship rights, minorities, democracy, human rights, youth with disabilities);
- ❑ *Different types of organizational structure* (association, centre, think-tank or other forms e.g. students' senates).

The wide range of forms and fields covered by their work plays an important role in preparing a future class of accountable and committed citizens to support democratic processes in the country.

*A woman was walking along a beach filled with starfish.
As she walked, she would stoop down, pick one up at random, and throw it back into the ocean.
A man came upon her and asked why she was bothering with throwing some back when there were so
many - how could it possibly make a difference?
She picked up another starfish, threw it back into the ocean, and said:
It made a difference to that one.*

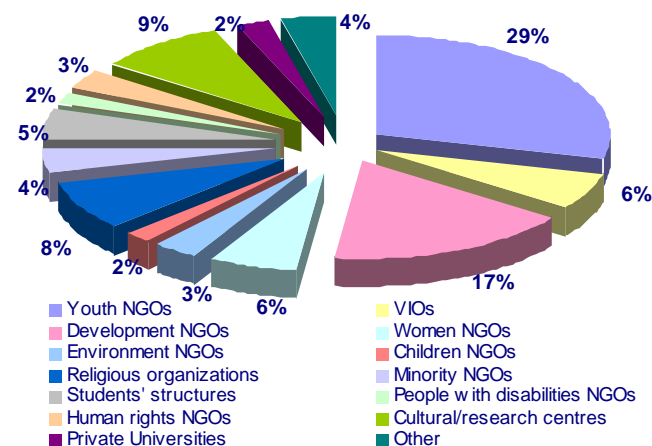
www.energizen.org

¹⁷ European Youth Forum "Youth Work Development Report on the Study Visit to Albania", May 2007

4.2 Volunteerism as part of the Civil Society sector

In this research we studied 100 NGOs involved directly or indirectly, fully or partially in youth or volunteer work. The organizations were engaged either by completing a questionnaire, or through interviews, meetings, focus groups and study sessions in seminars.

Figure 17



Volunteerism is used mainly by youth and volunteer involving organizations, and partially, as part of the other NGOs' activities. In general, all organizations try to include volunteers' support in their activities in order to increase the participation of the public, achieve better results, however only a few of them had a clear strategy to mainstream volunteerism in their activities. All the organizations supported pro bono activities, offering volunteer, in kind, or financial contributions. Only 23% of the NGOs are familiar with International volunteering schemes, while 73% are not. In addition, these schemes are used only by 12% of the studied NGOs.

The spectrum of volunteer work is very wide and in general in line with the field of work of the respective NGOs. Religious NGOs are more involved in charity activities for the poor or victims of civic disasters. Fruitful use of volunteerism was illustrated by a group of NGOs classified here as Development NGOs. These organizations use volunteer mobilization to achieve sustainable results, ensure the ownership of the initiatives, avoid clientelism among the beneficiaries, and build the individuals' capacity, however such examples are very limited (e.g. for the reparation of a community centre the organization offered some funds to purchase raw materials and ensure its transportation. The members of the community offered their volunteer work in doing the labour part of the activity. Other such activities are: pavement of a community road, sensitizing campaigns, tree planting).

Many youth and other NGOs engage volunteers in their activities, but paradoxically they avoid calling them "volunteers", they rather call them "activists"¹⁸, "members", "participants", "our people". All NGOs recognize the benefits of using volunteers in their activities, hence they call it "a challenge" to name them with the right name "volunteers" as it is difficult to gain acceptance by the young people. However, to this "state of denial" a few other NGOs respond by using it and create with their work a new dimension of volunteerism. Some of them are: Mjaft! Movement with 10,000 members and about 1,000 all-time-ready volunteers; PVN which implements a large number of volunteer activities involving national and international volunteers; and the Albanian Red Cross a voluntary humanitarian organization.

¹⁸ In the Albanian context, the words: activism and activists are used purely to describe participation in an activity or organization on voluntary basis.

4.3 Volunteer needs, obstacles and enabling factors in the civil society sector

The needs and obstacles limiting NGOs to involve volunteers in their work are listed below, based on the discussions and conclusions of different focus groups. As in the previous chapter, regarding youth involvement constraints, the percentage of the obstacles is not provided believing that all the facts below are equally important and the response should be comprehensive and well-coordinated, involving all the possible actors.

Policy	There is lack of promoting policies on the recruitment and administration of volunteers.
Cooperation& Coordination	Due to the fact that most NGOs have to compete for funds, there is lack of a collaborative spirit among them. There is no network, consortium or any other structure that can support or facilitate such work.
Capacities	VIO and other NGO activists and employees have insufficient capacities to design, organize, implement and exploit volunteers' contribution.
Perceptions	Due to prejudices and mental aversions to volunteerism, it is difficult to use it despite its recognised public and individuals' benefits.
Information	On the one hand there is a lack of information on the availability and services offered by volunteers and on the other hand, there is insufficient information about volunteer possibilities. A national, public database of volunteer involving organizations and interested volunteers is missing.
Studies and orientation	There is a lack of studies and orientation with regard to volunteer potentials, trends, and possibilities towards the priority needs of the country/society.
Resources	There is a lack of resources in promoting, supporting and increasing the volunteer work.
Incentives	There are no legal or social incentives to support volunteerism, such as: the taxation system, support to the unemployed, youth at risk or vulnerable groups.
Common approach	There is no common approach to volunteering/volunteer activities. Positive examples/practices and lessons from the experience are also lacking.
Management	There is a lack of an appropriate manner in managing and treating human resources.
Recognition	There is a lack of Volunteer Status in Albania. If volunteer work is not recognized, young people are not motivated to participate.
Exchange experience	The international volunteers' services are not known, and not used in Albania. The exchange programs are very limited, while the Albanian NGOs have no financial possibilities to support such study and exchange work.
Participation	In Albania there is lack of participation by young people in volunteer activities.

The **limited volunteer management capacity of VIOs** is an important factor which should be taken into consideration while discussing future strategies for volunteer mobilization. UNV encountered this problem also in other institutions. A group of young students from the University of Tirana approached UNV asking for support in trainings on how to practically implement project activities. The information on project design at the Faculty of Social Science is very useful, but rather theoretical and there is need, as the students say, for trainings on how to practically design and implement development activities including activities of a volunteer nature.

In this light, it is deemed necessary to prepare a practical instrument on volunteer mobilization and practical organization of volunteer activities, as well as to raise capacity through different trainings.

- ❑ The instrument should aim to build capacity among NGOs, teachers, peer educators and/or other groups working directly with young people. It should contain both guidelines and successful examples of practical activities. The instrument, which can be a Training Manual, a Volunteer Guide, Manual of Best Volunteer Practices or a Training of Trainers Package (ToT-Kit), should be offered to young people through the non-formal education approach, avoiding biases and providing a better learning and practicing ground.
- ❑ The organization of different trainings, seminars, exchange visits, public debates and practical undertakings of volunteer activities are some other instruments which can build capacity and foster cooperation among NGOs in this field.

Working with volunteers and NGOs, I've noticed that there is lack of coordination and management of volunteers in the civil society sector. Recently there is a high interest on volunteering, especially amongst young people students at the Social Sciences Faculty, which seem very motivated to volunteer, in order to gain experience. But, when they present to an NGO, they see a lack of organization, and confusion. There is no application form, or any kind of volunteer contract/agreement, and no one can recruit a volunteer as they don't know how to do it, for how long, and at which conditions. This leads to disappointment and detachment of young people from volunteer activities once and forever.

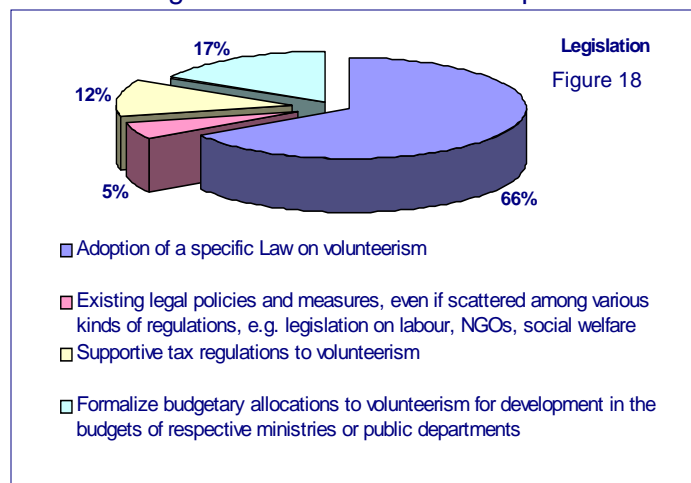
Alma Çullhaj, ISS Albania

Another important issue discussed with the NGOs was the **establishment of a favourable infrastructure** to volunteerism in Albania.

With regard to a legal framework supportive to volunteerism, civil society representatives suggested that a comprehensive law (66%) would be the right response to such a complicated issue, with strong ramifications in the dictatorship era and leading visions towards the European coexistence.

Another section of civil society studied suggests allocating funds to volunteer actions, which contribute to development, in all respective ministries and local government institutions. "Supportive tax regulations to volunteerism" was also considered a useful instrument to promote and enhance volunteerism in the country.

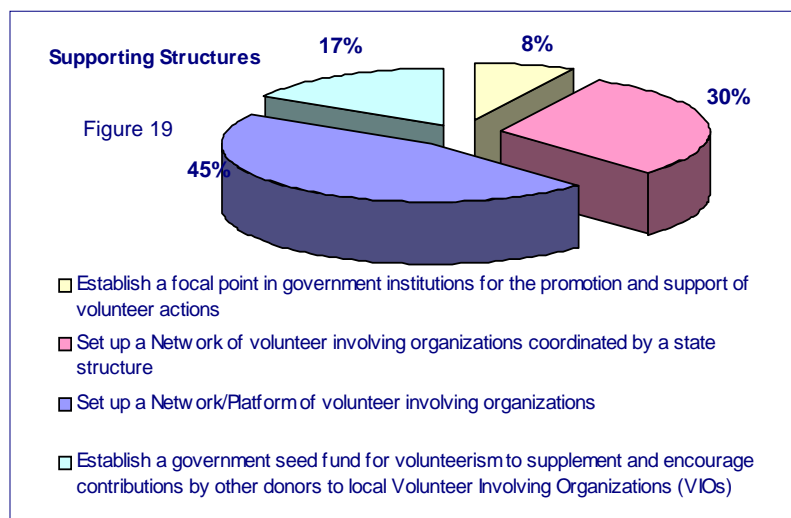
A small percentage suggests streamlining volunteerism measures within existing legislation, such as that of labour, non-governmental organizations (non-profit organizations) or social welfare. This option was contradicted by other organizations in meetings and focus groups, explaining that scattered regulations would be easily lost and never put in practice.



The following structures are considered as important to be established in favour of a volunteer supporting infrastructure in the youth sector:

Creation of a national network of volunteer organizations, in order to support each others work,

avoid overlapping of activities and advocate effectively for volunteerism improvement in the legislative and social perspectives. A network of volunteer involving organizations can also be coordinated by a state structure. Establish a government seed fund for volunteerism to supplement and encourage contributions by other donors to local volunteer involving organizations (VIOs). Since the Directorate of Coordination of Youth Policies (DoCYP) is a very small unit of three employees (director and two specialists) besides MoTYCS, a suggestion was raised to establish a focal point besides the



MoLSAEO to promote and support volunteer actions for the whole country.

Regarding the level of information on volunteerism/youth state structures, strategies and legislation, the research shows that NGOs in general have information about the NYS, however 24% is not familiar with it. 54% of the NGOs know the contents of the strategy while 46% (37%+9%) do not have such information. Better promotion and information should be considered for the strategy, in order to maximise the efforts in implementing its Action Plan in cooperation with NGOs.

The work and efforts of the DoCYP part of MoTCYS is well known and appreciated by civil society organizations. However, they claim that better communication and cooperation between DoCYP and the NGOs should be established in order to put the NYS in practice.

Civil society is aware that there is no volunteer legislation in the country, and they consider it as important and necessary. While a structure dealing with volunteer issues is seen as very important, be it part of the existing DoCYP, or a separate unit in the Albanian MoLSAEO.

Strategies & Structures	Knowledge & Information			Is it needed?		
	Yes	No	I don't know	Yes	No	I don't know
Is there a National Youth Strategy?	76%	2%	22%	100%	0%	0%
Is there a special law on volunteering?	0%	100%	0%	100%	0%	0%
Is there a special law on emergency situations in Albania?	3%	52%	45%	100%	0%	0%
Does the national youth strategy include volunteerism sufficiently?	54%	9%	37%	100%	0%	0%
Is there any special state structure that deals with youth issues?	100%	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%
Is there any special state structure that deals with volunteering issues?	0%	89%	11%	61%	7%	32%

With regard to *strategic plans* in emergency situation NGOs consider this to be very important for Albania; the following measures should be taken:

- ❑ Include civic volunteer activities in the local development strategies designed and implemented by local government institutions (i.e. Communes, Municipalities, Regional Councils, Police directorates);
- ❑ Organize special national service periods in response to strategically defined issues, e.g. fighting a disease, HIV/Aids prevention, or rehabilitation after severe natural/social disasters.

NGOs do not have information regarding the existence of a law on emergencies: *Law nr. 8765 date 26.03.2001 "For Civil Emergencies"* and some other *Decisions of the Council of Ministers*.

The **Enabling Factors** include the developed civil society in Albania, able to undertake initiatives and successfully implement projects. Raising capacity on the volunteers' inclusion and management, but also on the correct use of volunteerism can be a good instrument to empower this factor further more.

An important finding of the survey shows that the young people are willing to be involved in volunteer activities, which can with no doubts support every initiative that comes from the NGOs.

The third and most important element of this part is the inclusion of the volunteer component in the Albanian National Youth Strategy, which provides a clear, focused and useful frame of work for all NGOs and other relevant institutions.

4.4 Essential issues for consideration

Volunteerism is also affected by negative stereotypes that are embedded in the mentality and traditions, or are just newly emerged in the Albanian society.

a) Gender discrimination

As a rule Albanian society is male dominated, where the power to make decisions in the family is dominated by men. Despite the fact that more and more women are working in public/private institutions and enrolled in universities is significantly increasing, the majority of women and young girls, especially in rural and isolated areas remain victims of gender discrimination and inequality, which isolates them from social and youth activities.

b) Corruption is a phenomenon encountered in almost all the countries of the world. The index for Albania shows a high level despite the efforts of past and present governments to tackle it.

4.5 SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.5.1 Suggestions

- Foster dialogue and cooperation between civil society organizations in the country and abroad, in order to ensure the sustainability of interventions, avoid overlapping of the initiatives, maximize the efforts and achieve long-term community impact;
- Foster communication and cooperation links with local and central government institutions to design favourable policies and connect volunteer initiatives with the national priorities and international development strategies;
- Foster cooperation with the local and national media, as a powerful ally in mobilizing and sensitizing youth in the country;
- Encourage youth participation through the development of long-term volunteer-supported projects with meaningful, attractive, innovative activities and the involvement of prominent leaders or well-known public figures;
- Promote good practice and the exchange of information on volunteerism through awareness raising campaigns, publications and exchange visits in-country and abroad;
- Promote the undertaking of periodic research and publications in order to provide accurate data on the gaps and existing resources of volunteerism, interests of the young people, and lessons learned in practice.

4.5.2 Recommendations

- Creation of a National Network or Steering Committee of volunteer organizations and other NGOs which include volunteer actions in their activities, to serve as a representative, consulting and advocating body on volunteer issues in the country;
- Mainstream volunteerism in development projects, programmes and strategies;
- Capacity building support for trainers, teachers, youth workers, and business managers through the design of a Training Manual on Volunteering and the facilitation of different trainings.

PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS A POLICY FRAMEWORK



Volunteerism is a powerful tool to democracy development, social cohesion, economic progress and cross-cultural understanding; while enhancing at the same time individuals' leadership and citizenship skills.

5.1 A legal framework for participation

In Albania there is no law on youth or volunteerism and there is no ministry exclusively in charge of youth issues.

The Albanian Constitution of 1998 is a contemporary document ensuring democratic functioning, human rights and the rule of law in the country. Despite the fact that it does not mention volunteerism in its contents, it creates the needed space for the creation of a legal framework on volunteerism.

Penal Code: The Penal Code provisions on the punishment: Re-education through labour work, were abolished by Law no.7769, in November 1993.

Ministry of Education and Science: Volunteerism is not mentioned in the Albanian National Education Strategy (2004 – 2015). The National Integrated Plan of MoES aimed a series of reforms and the achievement of different objectives of major importance to the education system in Albania. Despite its aim to educate young citizens about democratic values and with the due knowledge to face the requirements of the market economy in line with national and European priorities, volunteerism is not part of this integrated plan (2007 - ongoing), neither is it part of the school curricula in the country.

Ministry of Interior: The Law No. 8765, dated 26.03.2001 “For Civil Emergencies”, is an important part of the Albanian legislation regarding volunteerism. Article 24 of this law determines the conditions to be a volunteer in civil emergencies, as well as establishes some basic rights of volunteers, such as: the right to keeping the job, full payment while being engaged as a volunteer, invalidity pension if accidents occur during the activity. However, despite the clear provisions in this regard and expressed need for cooperation with volunteer-based organizations, the National Action Plan coordinated by the Directory of Emergencies, Ministry of Interior needs support and consultation to ensure the implementation of the Plan in practice, despite the good cooperation between this structure and civil society structures, such as the Albanian Red Cross.

Ministry of Defence: The military service in Albania is compulsory and voluntary (professional). The first category includes: Active Service, Alternative Service and the Reserve. The Alternative military service is an option offered for the individuals who for conscience reasons do not want to take up arms. These individuals have the possibility to serve in state institutions, humanitarian organizations, and local government institutions, (which in fact is a form of volunteering). The voluntary/professional option is not common so far, however, as a NATO member (from 01 April 2009), Albania's compulsory conscription will end completely at the beginning of January 2010 and the Armed Forces will become all-professional (individuals will be recruited voluntarily as paid professionals).

Ministry of Health: Volunteerism in this field is limited within the frame of the law on creation and functioning of the Red Cross. Therefore, this organization has the leading role regarding health-volunteer initiatives, such as blood donation campaigns.

MoTCYS: The Ministry of Culture, Tourism, Youth and Sports is responsible for youth issues. It works through the Directorate of Coordination of Youth Policies (DoCYP), which employs 3 experts (director and two specialists). This directorate is responsible for the coordination of the implementation of the National Youth Strategy (NYS) for the period 2007 – 2013, adopted by the Albanian Government on November 16, 2007. Volunteerism is included in the most important

chapter of the strategy, planning concrete actions to foster volunteerism in the youth sector. DoCYP is responsible for the coordination of work between the Ministry and youth NGOs.

MoLSAEO: Currently there are no programs or policies supporting volunteerism activities separately or as part of other strategies by this ministry. Its programs on development, gender, social inclusion does not contain specific measures to volunteerism support. Labour Legislation treats the writes regarding wage and compensation of labour/service offered by an individual; therefore volunteerism is not part of it.

Other public institutions: In other public institutions volunteerism is not part of the internal regulations, however, sporadic initiatives are undertaken by their employees; e.g. the staff members of the Directorate of Tirana Prisons organized a volunteer activity consisting of book donations for the libraries of prisons of the region. The staff members volunteered in organizing the activity, participating in shifts in the four-day Book Fair delivering a simple sensitizing leaflet prepared by them and collecting the books donated by members of the public. The main difficulties according to them were: first volunteerism is not regulated by law and second it was not part of their internal regulations.

Local Government institutions:

Only the Municipality of Tirana has established a network of youth volunteers. Its volunteers organize different activities for the public and vulnerable groups of the city. In other cities and regions, volunteer activities are rare and there is no strategy or local approach to undertake volunteer initiatives, neither is volunteerism recognized as a means of social and economic development.

5.2 The Albanian National Youth Strategy

In 2007, a group of experts composed of representatives of different ministries and civil society organizations lead by the Directorate of Coordination of Youth Policies (DoCYP) reviewed the existing National Youth Strategy adopted in 2003. The revised NYS constitutes a comprehensive document to ensure youth development in a long-term perspective. The Strategy is designed for the period 2007-2013 and contains a detailed and well-structured National Action Plan for 2007-2011.

The revision and concrete steps in this field are part of the actions undertaken by the Albanian Government in the framework of the Stability Pact and the Stabilization and Association Agreement. They are also in line with other stipulated directives of the “Global Program for Youth Action to the Year 2000 and Beyond” of the United Nations; “White Paper Policy” of the Council of Europe; and “Youth in Action” a supporting instrument for youth policies endorsed by the Council of Europe and the European Parliament.

NYS contains 8 chapters, as follows:

1. Inter-sectional coordination and collective involvement
2. Representation and participation of young people
3. Youth and economy
4. Health and social protection
5. Recreation and free time
6. Albanian youth: future European citizens
7. Priority programmes for the National Youth Strategy
8. National Youth Action Plan 2007-2011

Contrary to the old strategy, where volunteerism was only mentioned in three lines, the revised strategy comprises volunteerism as part of its sixth chapter: Albanian Youth: future European citizens, stipulating a wide range of policies to be undertaken. The strategy affirms the low use of volunteerism and engagement of young people in volunteer work and considers volunteering as a critical component of the education of young people as active citizens contributing to the social development of society. The strategy proclaims the close collaboration between the Albanian government with youth NGOs and the business community as a main priority in this field, along with the drafting and implementation of clear policies and a legal framework for volunteerism, the definition of the volunteer status, the realization of projects for increased efficiency in the management of volunteer contributions, as well as fostering public awareness about the value of volunteer work. Other fields of priority are related to the cooperation and technical assistance of international organizations, as well as the government's commitment to offer orientation and assistance to volunteer organizations and other actors providing services to groups in need, such as children living in poor conditions, pensioners, people with disabilities, women living in institutions (rehabilitation centres, prisons) etc.

The National Action Plan includes the promotion of youth volunteering and enhancing volunteer contributions to national development as the leading goal regarding volunteerism in Albania. In this respect, the Action Plan matrix defines four main outputs to be achieved:

1. Drafting of the legislation on volunteering and the creation of the administrative infrastructure required for its implementation (starting from 2007);
2. Education and promotion of volunteering (2007-2011);
3. Promotion of volunteering in the sector of special needs services (2007-2011);
4. Volunteer exchange programmes among organizations at national, regional, and international levels (2007-2008).

Referring to the Matrix of the Action Plan for 2007-2011 (Annex I, pg.56) it is obvious that most of the objectives are far from being achieved, meaning that despite the favourable institutional conditions and inclusion of volunteerism in this strategic document, young people are not yet able to benefit from these provisions.

What are the constraints in this regard? The research collected the opinion of different institutions and organizations, analyzed reports and different data, concluding with the following points:

- ❑ There is a need for more cooperation among governmental agencies at the central and local levels, with civil society groups and international organizations operating in the youth sector, as well as the business community;
- ❑ Cooperation between governmental agencies at the same level should be fostered, i.e. collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Science, which is responsible for the implementation of key actions in designing and including information on volunteerism in the school curricula as stipulated by the strategy;
- ❑ Despite the willingness and great efforts of the director and two other specialists of DoCYP, the unit seems to be small (only three people for a group that comprises around 1/3rd of the population) compared to the needs, priorities, activities and number of the target group;
- ❑ The implementation of the strategy is also limited by the lack of funds' allocation and availability;
- ❑ The creation of an NGO, as per the Albanian Constitution, requires a registration process in the tribunal of the city; this means that it is not difficult to collect data and information regarding the exact number of registered youth NGOs.

- ❑ The climate of competition and weak cooperation between civil society organizations operating in this field;
- ❑ DoCYP functions as a coordinating body, while it is also important to have a monitoring system with clear landmarks and indicators.

The study also analyzed the existing favourable factors and conditions that would allow and further develop the implementation of the volunteerism component in the strategy:

- ❑ Willingness of the Government of Albania and other state structures, especially DoCYP/MoTCYS to take concrete action in this area;
- ❑ Strong inclusion of volunteer priorities in the National Youth Strategy;
- ❑ Well-prepared Action Plan with clear responsible actors and timeframe;
- ❑ The initiative of IDEA (a Think-Tank part of LSI Party) in preparing a new draft law on volunteerism, taking into consideration other models from both developed and neighbouring countries and the particular conditions and situation in Albania;
- ❑ Willingness of youth NGOs to cooperate in fostering a positive climate of volunteerism in the youth sector.

5.3 Attempts to prepare a draft law on volunteerism

2002 – Albanian Youth Council, UNV Albania, Red Cross Albania, VIS, and other NGOs, in cooperation with MoTCYS and MoLSAEO drafted a bill on volunteering and the creation of the administrative infrastructure required for its implementation. The conditions did not allow further work on its preparation and adoption. One of the main actors, the Albanian Youth Council, which served as an umbrella organization representing the interests of a large group of youth NGOs, ceased functioning. In addition, time, resources and willingness constraints prevented further work on this issue.

2006 - The group of experts that review the National Youth Strategy took into consideration the attempts of AYC and UNV and included the adoption of a specific law as the main priority of the new strategy regarding volunteerism.

2008 – A group of young people and experts in the field of legislation, members of IDEA, a Think-Tank part of LSI Party, took the initiative to draft a bill on volunteering in 2008. The draft is comprehensive, taking into consideration successful models from both developed and neighbouring countries and the particular conditions and situation of Albania. The initiators plan a series of round tables and a consultation process with interest groups and other interested actors for early 2009; before presenting it to the relevant parliamentary group.

2009 – This year seems to be the right momentum to work and advocate for a concrete legal and social framework on volunteerism. DoCYP is willing to cooperate with the civil society sector and other relevant actors in the field of volunteerism, and from another angle the energy of young people of IDEA Institute, initiators of the draft law seems unrestricted. Despite the fact that this is the year of general elections in Albania, such an apolitical issue like volunteerism, cannot be influenced by political pertinence. The achievement of such results should be sought in the role, cooperation and advocacy work of civil society organizations as well.

5.4 Essential issues for consideration

a) Emergency situations

With regard to volunteerism in emergency situations, Prof. Bajram Mediaj writes:

“During the dictatorship period, the endurance of calamities and disasters such as earthquakes, flooding, fires, epidemics etc. has always encouraged voluntarism in a huge way. The help toward flooded families, rehabilitation of the damaged properties, the efforts to reduce the harm and damage and turning the situation into normality, have always been a massive show of voluntarism. There was a great participation of specialists and professionals of almost all profiles that would be necessary in confronting the situation. Individual volunteers were very active and participate in such sectors and processes where professionals and specialists are present and usually there’s accordance between needs that the situation presents and professional skills and profiles of volunteers.”

The local development strategies designed by local authorities do not include proper emergency plans including the volunteer participation and contribution of the community. In this respect, the involvement of the community in such situations is either sporadic or lead by civil society organizations. An example of the first category is that of the volunteer support of many families and individuals during the Kosovo crisis in 1998, when thousands of volunteers were mobilized to help in camps and many others opened their houses to host refugee families in their homes. While concerning the organizations by the NGOs, research data shows that these interventions brought a strong impact at community level in a short-term point of view, and because of the poor coordination and cooperation of the interventions between the organizations, they proved not to be sustainable.

The collected opinions in this field suggest the following measures:

- Translation in practical steps of the Law on Emergencies including volunteerism plans;
- Preparation of a volunteer-contingency plan to cope with emergency situations at local level;
- Preparation of a volunteer-contingency plan to cope with emergency situations at a national level.

b) Unemployment

At the end of 2007 there were 143,000 (13.2%)¹⁹ registered unemployed in Albania, however the figure is much higher, due to the fact that many people are not registered. Many youngsters are also part of this category, and inclusion in volunteer activities/service can be both a trigger for career opportunities and a vocational challenge.

c) The financial value of volunteering

Volunteers constitute a powerful resource for development. The social and economic benefits of volunteerism are well known and accepted facts. Data and indexes of the financial contribution of volunteerism in the economies of different countries are impressive. They show the importance of the assessment and dissemination of data related to the monetary value of volunteer work in the country; identifying and calculating its contributions to the GDP, or other specific fields such as: national average wage, employment, or market value estimates.

-- In the UK 23 million people volunteer each year, providing a workforce equivalent to 180,000 full-time workers. For every Euro of public funding spent to support volunteering, volunteers give 30 Euro worth of work. The economic value of formal volunteering in the UK has been estimated at more than 65 billion Euros per year, or 7.9% of GDP.

-- In Poland, around 5.4 million citizens volunteered in 2004, which is 18.3% of the population. The estimated economic value of volunteering, calculated by multiplying the number of full-time equivalent employees (volunteers) by the average wage in the particular sector, amounted to 124 million Euros.

These figures stem from the “Fact&Figures” research documents provided by CEV. <http://www.cev.be/facts&figures.htm>

¹⁹ INSTAT, Women and men 2007

5.4 SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.4.1 Suggestions

General

- Foster cooperation among local and central governmental agencies with national and international organizations operating in the youth sector, as well as the business community;
- The mapping of needs, resources and potentials and the mainstreaming of policies and initiatives at local and central levels aimed at better supporting and exploiting a wider range of volunteer services;
- Reflect volunteer involvement in the programmes of ministries and public departments;
- Creation of mechanisms that measure the contribution of volunteerism to development by the Ministry of Finance;
- Support periodic research studies analysing perceptions, trends, amount, motivations, and barriers to youth volunteer involvement.

For the Albanian National Youth Strategy

- Ensure better cooperation and communication links between governmental agencies at the horizontal and vertical levels;
- DoCYP at MoTCYS, responsible for the coordination of NYS, should design and follow clear monitoring, evaluating and reporting plans, instruments and indicators to ensure the implementation of the volunteering component from paper to reality;
- Increase the number of specialists in the DoCYP in order to better respond to the needs and objectives of NYS, one specialist should be assigned to cover the volunteer component;
- Formalize allocations of funds to the implementation of NYS - volunteer component in the budgets of respective ministries or public departments;
- The establishment of youth information units that facilitate youth employment in 12 Counties of the country as part of NYS should also cover volunteer opportunities.

Law

- The drafting of a specific law on volunteering should be extensively consulted with civil society organizations, relevant interest groups and different public institutions operating in this field;
- The law should be based on the best examples of developed and neighbouring countries and at the same time take into consideration the specific needs and situation of the country;
- The law should be comprehensive, providing a clear definition of the rights and obligations of the individual, organizations and hosting institutions;
- The law should provide clear incentives and facilitating schemes in order to encourage volunteer involvement and organization for young people, civil society, business sector, and in the state institutions.

5.4.2. Recommendations

- The development of a specific law on volunteering in Albania is essential;
- Establish a focal point as part of MoLSAEO for the promotion of volunteerism, and coordination and harmonization of all efforts, activities and strategies; achieving sustainable and tangible change;
- Establish a government start-up fund to support volunteerism development in the country and encourage contributions by other donors.

ROLE MODELS AND TESTIMONIALS



Let him that would move the world, first move himself.

Socrates

6.1. Following a dream...

Arbër Çepani, is the winner of Big Brother Albania 2008 and of a 50,000 € monetary prize. Arbër, 21 year old, studies Politics at the University of Bari, Italy.



As many other students studying abroad, the financial reward could have been a great help to him: not to think about the monthly rent of the apartment, not to be stressed for the payment of school fees, or not to worry about a better life. Nonetheless, the young student did not think a single moment about the way he was going to spend his money. He prepared an action plan for the implementation of a sensitizing campaign “Change starts with you”. The campaign mobilized at the beginning a small group of volunteers, which became larger and larger after each campaign activity organized in different regions of the country. Arbër says in his book “Diary of a sensitizing campaign”, published at the end of his campaign: *Everything started with the idea of doing something positive for our society... Often we want to do meaningful things... Other times we want to change the world...but, in order to change the world, we should first change our country...and to change our country, we should change our city... and to change our city, we should change first our neighbourhood... Thus, to start the work, we should first understand that to change the world, we should first change ourselves... The change begins with us... A minor change in anyone of us would bring with no doubt the big change we are all waiting for...*

Arbër did not only provide a good example for young people during his 100 days in “Big Brother’s house”, but he also managed to sensitize thousands of people that with little money, good will and a volunteer heart you can really change the world... *I knew that 50,000 Euro will not change Albania, says Arbër, but that was my chance to convey a message I always thought about and dreamed for: “Albania can change. And we can do it; we can make this country a better place for children, young people, orphans, elders, women and men wherever they live.”*

Some of the implemented activities are:

- Planting 100 pine saplings to stop the deforestation “massacre” in the National Park of Lura;
- 100 Alcoran fish for Lake Ohrid (a kind of trout found only in Lake Ohrid, at risk of extinction);
- Solidarity concert for people with disabilities;
- A day with the old people in the elders’ house of Tirana;
- Construction of a sport field in Muçaj village and a park for children in Marqinet village;
- “All different, All equal” an awareness raising campaign against all types of discrimination;
- Delivery of books for children in marginalized and poor communities;
- Offering of scholarships for excellent students in economic difficulties;
- Planting olive trees and organizing solidarity days in support of social problems;
- A fundraising marathon to raise funds for a heart surgery for Sara, an 18 months old child;
- Support to the creation of a giant mosaic with wine bottle-corks, created by Saimir Strati.

However, there were many challenges faced in this initiative. The analyst and public opinion maker, Mentor Nazarko, in the foreword of the above mentioned book, emphasises the willingness, patience, and persistence of Arbër, despite the indifference of the media, that ignored systematically his initiatives, for which everywhere in the western world would have been talked for long. He also highlights Arbër’s positive attitude to many other people that see him and his volunteer initiative as unusual in the society of the usuals.

6.2. Discovering volunteerism...

My name is Marjo Stroni and I am currently in the fourth year at high school. I am studying different courses, which hopefully will help me succeed in college in an engineering major, potentially Aerospace Engineering. Part of my studies is also my involvement in an Internship program with a private company. One of the tasks I had, as an intern was the design and projection of a transportation system to facilitate the transposition of goods produced in different parts of the factory.



I migrated with my family to the USA five years ago. During my first week in America I met many people who volunteered their time and energy to help others. My cousin worked for the Lodi Ambulance as a driver and an EMT (Emergency Medical Technician). The concept that I couldn't grasp at first was that HE DID IT FOR FREE. I had never heard of such a thing throughout my whole life in Albania. I was very inspired, but being thirteen at the time I could not volunteer. Now I'm eighteen years old and I am a volunteer fire-fighter for Garfield Fire Company #3. Anyone is able to join, as long as they are healthy and a good citizen.

Once you join you get a pager and all the gear needed to do the job. When you get a call from the Police Communication Centre, you go at the firehouse, get dressed, and get in the fire-truck along with your fellow fire-fighters. If you are at work, or you have a family emergency, or you simply cannot make the emergency, you are excused. The motto of our company is, "Family comes first, then it's your main job, then comes fire fighting".

We also have drill nights. This is meant to train my friends and me for the future, since we are only probationary fire-fighters, meaning we are the last people who can go inside a house on fire since we have not completed fire school. During this time we take the engine (truck) out, go to a place with non-active warehouses, and put out imaginary fires. This way we can easily handle the hoses with high water pressure, and see what a fire situation is like. We train to be quick and precise in all tasks, like opening and connecting the fire-hydrant to the engine. Our company also responds to accidents, floods, and other weather-related emergencies. As training, we take out the rescue boats and ride around Passaic River and shoot ropes with a pressurized gun, which we'd do for people in the water. For car accidents we had to take a twenty-hour course; a very fun class I might add. In case of a car entrapment we have to stabilize the vehicles, cut off the posts of the car to take off the roof, pop the doors, and brake the windows, in order to get the victims out safely. The tools we use, such as the "jaws of life", can cut metal as if it is paper. They are fun to use during drills, but in a real emergency you have to be quick without danger to the person/s, or your teammates. Being quick with these heavy tools is a real challenge.

Of course, being part of this community is a lot of fun too. We have thanksgiving dinner, family dinners, game nights, and lots of fun events. We have a big plasma TV and cable, so we can watch the best TV, something I can't do at home. However, all these nice things come with a price. The city does not pay for us. We have to make the money for the Company. We do this by organizing fundraisers. We sold raffle tickets about a month ago to make money for new equipment and supplies. People are very helpful with donations.

So volunteering is a lot of fun. You get to put emergency lights in your car and drive to the emergency while every other car opens the way for you. You hear stories from the guys that have been in the company for decades. It's an incredible experience.

The best part is that you help people, understanding that this is not a job for money, but a responsibility and pleasure to help fellow human beings in need.

BEST PRACTICES



All our societies need more social capital... and in my view the single most promising area of initiative is youth service.

Robert Putnam

In this part of the report a collage of different volunteer initiatives is included in order to provide positive examples of volunteer work. These examples can at the same time be a good tool to encourage young people to volunteer and for civil society organizations to incorporate volunteerism in their activities and projects. At the same time, the illustration is a call for support for the government, potential stakeholders and policy makers on the important change and contribution that volunteerism can make in the country and other global strategies, such as the MDGs.

Projects Volunteers International (PVN)

<http://www.pvnalbania.org>

Strategy of Success:

- Combining the needs of the target areas/groups with attractive activities;
- Cooperation with International and National NGOs;
- Use of innovative methods of exchange of experience and non-formal education.

Title of the initiative: Work-camp in Theth: Sustainable tourism development and Environmental protection in northeast Albania (2007)

MDG Contribution: MDG 7

Between July 28th and August 11th a PVN work camp took place in Theth, a mountainous and isolated area in the region of Dukagjin (northeast Albania). The aim of the work-camp was to track paths in the mountains, put directions signs and teach Basic English to hosting families in order to develop sustainable tourism in this beautiful valley. The volunteers were accommodated in a host family, which renovated the house to make it a Bed & Breakfast for next year. During the work the international and Albanian volunteers got guidance from Christian and Barbara, two Swiss volunteers passionate by Albanian mountains who have been working in the area for many years.

The volunteers tracked paths in the mountains in a “Swiss manner”. Furthermore volunteers put many direction signs in front of the houses of the host families: now tourists coming to Theth can more easily find accommodation and can know beforehand how many beds and bathrooms are available in the house and if meals are served on the spot. The volunteers taught also Basic English to the host families in order to improve the communication between Albanian families and foreign tourists. The German Assistance for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) financed the project, supporting Theth in tourism development and raising awareness amongst the local community on the traditional cultural heritage of the valley and environment protection.

Title of the initiative: Work-camp in SOS Children Village (2008)

MDG Contribution: MDG 2

“For two weeks volunteers from all over Europe got together to work with the children of SOS Village. During our stay we performed different activities like painting, dancing, theatre plays, collage and other such activities, in order to offer to the orphan/abandoned children care, respect and motivation. However, in this way we got to know people from different countries, for which the world was closer through this special experience. The intercultural exchange in these days was

an enriching experience at individual level. As volunteers we took back with us more than we thought. We came just to offer our work and commitment, but we got compensated through lasting satisfaction.”

Tania Gonzalez Fernandez

MJAFT Movement

www.mjajt.org

Strategy of Success:

- Fighting against tangible social, economic or political problematic phenomena;
- Effectively linking the interests of different groups with acute issues to be addressed;
- Creating a pro-active, open, and inspiring environment for all their volunteers;
- Using creative and unusual ideas and actions that attract youth;
- Use of the media in promoting and reflecting their activities;
- Involving visionary leaders, VIPs, and respected public figures in their actions.

February 2005: After the worsening of the meteorological situation in northern Albania that ended up blocking off many villages and communes in the Kukes circle, leaders of Mjaft! Movement and also Mjaft! Club of Kukes gave their support to overcome the crisis. In collaboration with the Commercial and Industrial Chamber, Mjaft enabled additional tools for cleaning and opening up the streets. Also, 500 blankets were given to the Mayor of Kukes, who would distribute them in the dormitories of the high professional school.

January 2005/ Contribution to MDG 8: MJAFT! Movement initiated the “Team Albania - Tsunami Assistance”. After the catastrophe in South-eastern Asia, MJAFT! Immediately establishes contacts with the Indonesian Government, where it sent an equipage made of 5 doctors and 3 emergencies specialists, who worked as volunteers for a month in Banda Aceh, the most damaged province by Tsunami. Except the assisting with people, Team Albania helped also with different medicaments.

Title of the initiative: The International Book Day: MJAFT, books for the students of Bathore

MDG Contribution: MDG 2

On the International Day of the Book, the MJAFT! Movement donated to the community of Bathore around 400 artistic books, during a meeting held with teachers, parents and students, in the school of this area of Tirana. Activists of the MJAFT! Movement discussed with the community on the importance of the book and the culture of reading. With this activity, they started the national campaign “Read a book”. In the framework of this campaign, MJAFT is organizing different activities giving a concrete contribution on promoting the culture of reading in Albania.

Title of the initiative: National campaign "Live Green"

MDG Contribution: MDG 7 and MDG 9 (national goal: strengthen good governance)

On the international Earth Day, MJAFT movement started a national campaign to make the communities and authorities of every city, aware on the environment protection. This campaign is called "Live Green". Activists of MJAFT movement and other intellectuals interested in environmental issues opened the "Live Green" Campaign with concrete action. They cleaned the environment of the national park of Dajti in Tirana. The aim of "Live Green" campaign was to raise people's awareness and interest in environment protection; to encourage positive stands towards the environment; to mobilize the communities to take volunteer actions keeping their cities clean and to facilitate dialogue between citizens and public institutions". MJAFT think that the above activity increased public participation in the decision-making process on environment issues. "Live Green" continued during the whole month of May 2006. MJAFT volunteers travelled in a caravan stopping in all the cities of Albania. The aim of the caravan was not only to make people aware of environment issues but it also initiated debates on concrete environmental issues and problems effecting cities in Albania, including all factors. The National Environment Caravan took place during 8 - 18 May 2006; starting from Tirana and continuing on to: Peshkopi, Shkodra, Fier, Vlora, Saranda, Gjirokastra, Korça, Pogradec, and Elbasan

Title of the initiative: Live Result (2007)

MDG Contribution: MDG 9 (national goal: strengthen good governance)

The "Live Results" project was financed by the Open Society Foundation in Albania (SOROS); it included 150 electoral observers, volunteers of Mjaft, who were all accredited by the CEC and subsequently placed in twelve counting centres nationwide. Consequently, this project remains within the boundaries of Albania's legal framework. Sleepless nights inundated with difficulties and continuous tension rendered this project an arduous one. The project's main objective was to transmit the electoral results as Local Governments' Commissioners released them. The project's 150 electoral observers transmitted continuously the results immediately after all the local commissioners signed the certification report. They also photocopied the reports for record-keeping purposes. The data was transmitted over the Internet through the utilization of personal digital assistants and laptops. Each counting centre was provided with a team of three observers: two of them were responsible for gleaning the precise data directly from the signed report whereas the third one was responsible for transmitting this information to the Operational Centre in Hotel Tirana. There were thirty young people from ECA and Mjaft! at the Operational Centre – they coordinated the entire process and ensured that all the information from the field was accurately put onto the web.

Title of the initiative: Campaign on blood donation (2008)

MDG Contribution: MDG 4, 5 and 6

Mjaft! Movement took part in a conference that the Ministry of Health organized to launch an appeal for blood donation. This event served to raise awareness within the framework of a campaign for blood donation. The reduction of blood in the Albanian hospitals was a cause of serious concern. Thus, Mjaft! Movement volunteers together with the Association of Albanian Journalists supported the initiative by donating blood and urging citizens to donate blood to replenish hospital supplies. Mjaft! Movement suggests the opening of blood donation centres in the cities where Mjaft! Clubs operate.

Municipality of Tirana (The Network of Youth Volunteers of the Municipality of Tirana)

www.tirana.gov.al

Some existing incentives that can foster volunteer participation and initiatives in the future:

- Offering positive incentives to volunteers/students, i.e. not only volunteering but also being the voice of the youth and students of the city in different meetings; knowing the work of the municipality, different departments; being recognized for urban planning of one of the main squares of the city and other such incentives;
- Bridging the activities with important issues for the city;
- Feeling of community belonging, i.e. every family in the capital city received a new-year postcard from the Mayor of the city;
- Good coordination with other local institutions and the business sector operating in the city.

On the occasion of the International Volunteer Day 2006 (IVD), students of psychology, volunteers of the Municipality of Tirana, organized several activities in an old peoples' home in Tirana. There were 30 old people living in this institution. Young volunteers offered their help to residents by reading newspapers, and making up the bed. What the elderly citizens appreciated most was the opportunity to talk and reflect upon their life, tell stories from the past, and discuss the political and social situation in Albania. The Municipality of Tirana hosted a modest lunch for all participants in the asylum.

A thematic meeting was organized with the members of the Network of Youth Volunteers of the Municipality of Tirana to celebrate the International Volunteers Day 2007. In this activity, the main theme of discussion was related to volunteerism, its benefits and values, the role of young volunteers and their help in the community. Different projects and activities were also discussed in this framework, including a sensitizing presentation "Do something small, Change something big". During the meeting many invited students had the chance to fill in a questionnaire in order to become members of this network. The meeting was considered successful and very important to young people.

Other volunteer initiatives of this Municipality are: "One citizen – One tree"; Blood donation groups; and the inclusion of volunteer-architects in the urban planning of one of the main squares of the city.

Regional Environmental Centre (REC) Albania

<http://albania.rec.org>

Factors of success:

- Good planning and coordination of the actions/activities of the project;
- Prepared staff, experts and committed volunteers;
- Good cooperation with public institutions and civil society organizations.

Title of the initiative: Promoting MDG 7 principles in Albania through awareness raising and Volunteerism (2006-2007)

MDG Contribution: MDG 7 and MDG 3

The main goal of this project was to raise awareness of sustainable development according to the MDGs and mobilize specific target groups to actively participate in the development of their regions. The project was financially supported by UNV and its activities were expanded in 12 districts: Berat, Lezha, Gjirokastra, Elbasan, Korça, Shkodra, Fier, Dibra, Vlora, Tirana, Durrës, and Kukës.

Some of the direct results of the project were: ensured better understanding of the principles of sustainable development at regional and local level, including their linkages to the MDGs and volunteerism by promoting the natural, historical and cultural values of specific regions. Promoted and enabled the participation of key target groups in the regional and local development efforts, following the MDGs and other strategic development documents as per the principles of volunteerism. Improved the planning and implementation of development plans in regional and local levels by ensuring the contribution of all stakeholders. The activities of the project consisted of Round Forums, MDG week in six universities; exchange of high school students; public and media events; promotional products.

ISS - Albanian Delegation

<http://iss-volunteer.org>

Strategy of Success:

- Committed volunteers to achieve social change;
- Use of non-formal education in trainings and youth exchanges;
- Use of successful methodologies to inform, sensitize, train, and prepare volunteer managers, and promote their actions;
- Use of online networks of young people interested in volunteering and other social activities (facebook, email-groups, forums, blogs);
- Use of one-day activities for the young people who do not have time to participate in longer initiatives;
- Use of the spill-over-effect in transmitting the information to other peers.

Title of the initiative: - Training and Management of Volunteers
- Healthy Family, Healthy Community

MDG Contribution: MDG 9 and MDG 4, 5 and 6

On International Volunteer Day, 05 December 2008, ISS Albania in the framework of the "Training and Management of Volunteers" and "Healthy Family, Healthy Community" projects organized different activities in partnership with different NGOs, with the aim of promoting volunteerism and child rights. Twenty volunteers were engaged in organizing activities in three secondary schools: "Ali Demi", "Sabaudin Gabrani" and "Marqinet School".

Volunteers, social workers and the psychologist of the school worked closely with 30 children in each school. The activities were comprised three main components: drama, collage, and art craft works. Some of the results of the activities were: the promotion of the importance of voluntarism in Albania; increased youth participation and improved awareness of child rights.

Factors of success:

- Inclusion of National and International UNV Volunteers in the implementation of the project;
- Joint efforts and share of expertise between different actors.

Title of the initiative: Empowering the Vulnerable Communities of Albania

MDG Contribution: MDG 1 and MDG 2

The project “Empowering the Vulnerable Communities of Albania” coordinates the activities of agencies working with vulnerable minorities (Roma and Egyptian) and provides direct assistance to the poorest and most marginalized minority communities by facilitating community access to basic services, promoting participatory planning, developing local infrastructure and increasing community access to the labour market.

The project is a joint project between UNDP and UNV, working in close partnership with civil society organizations to strengthen, support and benefit from the expertise and work of the organizations. Terre des Hommes, Tirana Legal Aid Services, the Albanian Red Cross, the Spanish Red Cross and the Regional Environmental Centre provide input to the different project activities.

The project uses volunteerism and volunteers as core features of all activities. The project engages National and International UNV volunteers, some of whom are from the marginalized communities, working closely with local communities and local governments in carrying out project activities. The project also facilitates the formation of Community Based Organizations, volunteer community education mediators, volunteer-health-mediators, and voluntary Regional Committees.

Title of the initiative: UNV Support to Local Governance Programme in Albania

MDG Contribution: MDG 1 and MDG 9 (National Goal)

Between 2002 and 2004 UNV partnered with UNDP's Local Governance Programme (LGP) to integrate volunteerism within local development planning. Working in partnership with local government, UNV directly supported the project by building the capacity of community based organizations and advising local government on policy development. A central theme running throughout this project was promoting the integral role that volunteerism plays in social mobilization practices. By partnering with LGP programme, UNV directly supported the process of decentralization and was ideally placed to integrate volunteerism into local development planning.

During the project, 26 UNV volunteers, 17 national and 9 international, served in some of the poorest communes and municipalities in the regions of Kukes, Gjirokaster and Fier. Supporting greater transparency and participatory methods of development planning, UNV volunteers facilitated dialogue between local and regional government in the sharing of information, skills and best practices. In all, 126 community-based organizations were set up to support local development projects, mainly in the construction of local infrastructure and healthcare services.

Title of the initiative: Fostering Regional Confidence through Community Mobilization

MDG Contribution: MDG 1 and MDG 8

The UNDP/UNV project *Regional Integration through Volunteers Exchanges for Reconciliation in South East Europe* successfully fostered regional integration, social cohesion and poverty reduction through the promotion of volunteerism and community mobilization. The initiative, which ran from 2005 to 2007 made a positive contribution towards building regional confidence and connected people and governments throughout the Balkans following the recent social, political and economic upheavals. Through regional volunteer exchanges UNV was able to strengthen communication networks that promote volunteerism and community mobilization as an invaluable tool in sustainable local development. Volunteers who joined the initiative developed the organizational and coordination capacity of local community groups, providing them with the tools to drive their own development.

While responding to local needs the initiative built the capacity of implementing partner organizations within which the volunteers served, to identify, mobilize, manage and retain a large volunteer workforce. In addition, the project worked to raise the profile and visibility of the partner organizations. At the initiatives conclusion in 2007, UNV Albania was proud to have strengthened the capacities of volunteer involving organizations that were fully recognized nationally for their invaluable contribution towards civil society development through community mobilization and the skilful management of volunteers. The project was designed and implemented by UNDP/UNV in close partnership with European Union (EU)/European Voluntary Service (EVS), Volunteer Service Overseas (VSO), One World and South Eastern European Youth Network (SEEYN).

The Youth Citizens Project

www.projektiqytetar.com



Snapshots from volunteer actions in Tirana

Annex I: Matrix of findings, obstructing and enabling factors

Findings - Youth in Albania	Obstructing Factors	Enabling Factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Young people understand volunteerism and its related terms. - Youth is affected by negative volunteer stereotypes derived from the dictatorship period. - The group-age 25-30 is more influenced by negative bias regarding volunteerism - Young people are not familiar with international volunteering schemes; they think mistakenly that these opportunities are only for foreign youngsters. - Online volunteering is not recognized by the Albanian youngsters. - There are two main forms of volunteerism in Albania: NGO activities and sporadic volunteerism (mainly in the form of charity). - Philanthropy (charity) is a very developed, due to the: socio-economic situation, insufficient volunteer activities, lack of media coverage, and transformed context of the communist forms - While 83% of young people are willing to engage in volunteer activities, 15% prefer not to be involved. - 51% of the respondents are not aware of the volunteer benefits for the individuals, they believe that from volunteer engagement, there is only the society which benefits. - 14% of youngsters' opinion is that there is no benefit from volunteering. They associate that with the lack of appreciation and use, so there are no tangible results, no impact as such activities in Albania are not part of larger scale schemes. - Many young people (59.5%) are involved in volunteer activities, nevertheless, most of them either do not recognize it as such, or are not aware that what they are doing is volunteerism. - Environment issues, sensitizing campaigns and charity activities are the main areas where young people have been engaged. - 40.5% of the respondents have never been involved in any volunteer activity. 71% of the respondents of this category live in rural areas, where civil society is weak and the stereotypes inherited from the dictatorship period strong. - Youth seeks meaningful, challenging and innovative volunteer activities to be involved. They want to see sustainable change. They see the need for coordination between different actors, in order to harmonize all efforts, activities and strategies to achieve sustainable and tangible change. - The main fields where young people would be interested to participate are: involvement in different campaigns (16%), assistance to people in need (sick people, children, and elders - 14%) and environmental activities (14%), psychosocial care to vulnerable people/youngsters (13%); free vocational/artistic trainings to children/peers (13%); and facilitating different seminars or social studies (13%). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Volunteerism is not part of the school curricula and there are no regulations for volunteer engagement - Lack of credentials and incentives recognized by the state - Low perception of volunteers and low perception of its benefits - Lack of a common approach of volunteerism in the implementation of different projects - Insufficient volunteer activities, exchange visits and co-actions with different NGOs in and out of the country - Insufficient coverage of volunteer issues/activities by the media - Inexistence of a recognition/registration system (e.g. volunteer card, enhanced employment opportunities, job skills, free local and national transport, health insurance in case of work incidents, and reduced prices for artistic and cultural events) - Lack of incentives and programmes to support capacity building and networking alternatives for the young unemployed - Lack of enabling schemes and programmes to engage marginalized or at-risk groups in volunteer activities - Lack of information concerning volunteer opportunities - Lack of organization and volunteer activities - Insufficient motivation and sensitization - Lack of knowledge on the benefits of volunteerism - Family and social education - Public perceptions on volunteering (prejudices and mentality) - Time constraints - Indifference, interest for entertaining activities - Economic situation. 	<p>Incentives/Enabling Factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contribution to solving community issues or helping other people (28%) - Possibility to develop new skills, gain knowledge and information in a certain field (25%) - Being part of an NGO, interest group, and other such structures (13%) - To practice a vocation, a talent or a hobby (13%) - Another incentive is learning a foreign language or visiting a foreign country (8%) - Socializing (7%) - To know potential employers (4%) - Change the monotony and being creative - Recognition of ones skills, contribution, name - Role models - Youth is more likely to participate if the activities are lead by inspiring leaders, high ideals and meaningful interventions which bring change in their community or society. <p>Mobilization approach:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Peer-to-peer get-togethers (23%) - Media programs/ads (23%) - Civil society organizations (14%) - School activities (10%) - Web/email information (10%) - Youth forums of political parties (11%) - Phone calls, newspaper ads, and activities organized by state institutions are not preferred.

Suggestions and recommendations related to these findings are provided in page 38.

Findings - Civil Society Sector	Obstructing Factors	Enabling Factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Low number of consolidated youth organizations. - There is no umbrella organization to represent youth NGOs. - The climate of competition and weak cooperation between civil society organizations operating in this field. - Diversity of types and fields of work of Youth NGOs. <p>In remote/isolated & rural areas Civil Society is almost inexistent.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Only 23% of the NGOs are familiar with International volunteering schemes, while 73% are not. - No NGO has a clear volunteerism mainstreaming strategy. - Religious NGOs are more involved in charity activities. - Development NGOs use more effectively volunteerism ensuring sustainable results, ownership of the initiatives, and build capacity. - Examples of volunteerism used as part of development initiatives are very limited. <p>- Most of the NGOs that involve volunteers avoid using the term volunteer and volunteerism.</p> <p>- There is lack of lobby and advocacy on behalf/with/by youth regarding the design of favourable volunteer policies and measures.</p> <p>- Civil Society sector suggests the creation of a Network or Committee of volunteer NGOs.</p> <p>- NGOs do not have information regarding the existence of a law on emergencies. They see a total lack of mobilization of volunteers in response to natural/social disasters or strategically defined issues.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Civil society is aware that there is no law on volunteering. - Civil Society in Albania is in favour of a Law on Volunteering. - While a structure dealing with volunteer issues is seen as very important, be it part of the existing DoCYP, or a separate unit in the Albanian MoLSAEO. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of policies on the recruitment and administration of volunteers. - There are no legal or social incentives to support volunteerism, such as: the taxation system, support to the unemployed, youth at risk or vulnerable groups. - There is a lack of resources in promoting, supporting and increasing the volunteer work. - There is a lack of Volunteer status/recognition in Albania. - There is no network, consortium or any other structure that can support or facilitate such work. - Limited volunteer management capacity of VIOs. - VIO and other NGO activists and employees have insufficient capacities to design, organize, implement and exploit volunteers' contribution. - There is no common approach to volunteering/volunteer activities. - The international volunteers' services are not known, and not used in Albania. - The exchange programs are very limited, while the Albanian NGOs have no financial possibilities to support such study and exchange work. - Exchange and cooperation between civil society organizations in the country and abroad should be fostered. - Due to prejudices and mental aversions to volunteerism, it is difficult to use it despite its recognised public and individuals' benefits. - There is a lack of information on the availability and services offered by volunteers and volunteer possibilities. - Positive examples/practices and lessons from the experience are also lacking. - There is a lack of studies and orientation with regard to volunteer potentials, trends, and possibilities towards the priority needs of the country/society. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NGOs are willing to promote good volunteer practices and exchange of information through awareness raising campaigns, publications and exchange visits in-country and abroad. - NGOs are willing to encourage youth participation through their projects; however the support of potential donors is a key factor. - Civil society is able to undertake initiatives and successfully implement projects. Raising capacity on the volunteers' inclusion and management, but also on the correct use of volunteerism can be a good instrument to empower this factor further more. - Young people are willing to be involved in volunteer activities, which can with no doubts support every initiative that comes from the NGOs. - Adoption of the Albanian National Youth Strategy, providing a clear, focused and useful frame of work for all NGOs and other relevant institutions.

Suggestions and recommendations related to these findings are provided in page 46.

Findings - The State Sector	Obstructing Factors	Enabling Factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In Albania there is no law on youth or volunteerism and there is no Ministry exclusively in charge of youth issues. - The Albanian Constitution does not mention volunteerism in its contents, but it creates an open space for a legal framework on volunteerism. - Volunteerism is not mentioned in the Albanian National Education Strategy, neither is it part of the school. - Law No. 8765, dated 26.03.2001 "For Civil Emergencies" in Article 24, determines the conditions of being a volunteer in civil emergencies. - The Penal Code provisions on the punishment: <i>Re-education through labour work</i>, were abolished by Law no.7769, in November 1993. - As part of NATO, Albania's compulsory conscription will end completely at the beginning of January 2010 and the Armed Forces will become voluntary (all-professional). - There is no organization or structure of volunteers' management in any of the first or second levels at Local Government structures, except for the Municipality of Tirana, which has established a network of youth volunteers. - The National Youth Strategy (NYS) includes volunteerism in one of its most important chapters (2007 - 2015). - The objectives of NYS regarding volunteerism are far from being achieved; therefore young people are not yet able to benefit from these provisions. - The preparation of a volunteer-contingency plan to cope with emergency situations at local or/and national level is deemed necessary. - Volunteerism is not part of regulations/programmes of ministries and other public institutions. - There is need for better promotion and information on the NYS and its plan of action. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is no mapping of needs, resources and possibilities regarding volunteerism. - Lack of a specific law on volunteering, or other regulating framework. - Lack of incentives and facilitating schemes to encourage volunteer involvement. - Volunteerism is not included in the local development strategies. - Cooperation between governmental agencies both at horizontal and vertical levels should be fostered. - Cooperation with civil society organizations and the business sector should be enforced. - DoCYP is composed of three specialists, meaning that there are only three people responsible for the development of youth policies, implementation, coordination, and monitoring of NYS (youth comprises almost 1/3 of the population). - The implementation of the strategy is also limited due to lack of funds allocation. - There is lack of clear monitoring, evaluating and reporting plans, instruments and indicators to ensure the implementation of the volunteering component by DoCYP. - Mechanisms that measure the contribution of volunteerism to social/economic development are lacking. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inclusion of volunteerism development in the Albanian National Youth Strategy. - Well-prepared NYS Action Plan with clear responsible actors and timeframe. - Willingness of the Government of Albania and other state structures, especially DoCYP/MoTCYS to take action in this field. - The initiative of IDEA Think-Tank in preparing a new draft law on volunteerism. - Willingness of youth NGOs to cooperate in fostering a positive climate of volunteerism in the youth sector.

Suggestions and recommendations related to these findings are provided in page 53.

Annex II:

National Youth Action Plan - 2007-2013

Matrix of actions and results for the volunteerism component *(excerpt from the NYS)*

NATIONAL YOUTH ACTION PLAN 2006-2011 / ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAM OUTPUTS MATRIX					
PROGRAM	OUTPUT	OUTPUT DESCRIPTION	ACTIVITY	RESPONSIBLE INSTITUTIONS	TIME TABLE
Promotion of youth volunteering and enhancing volunteer contributions to national development					
	1. Drafting of the legislation on volunteering and the creation of the administrative infrastructure required for its implementation	AYC five-year-old initiative, which has thus far been discussed on the level of international organizations, shall be treated on the governmental level.	Consulting, finalization of the law on volunteering	UNV, AYC, Red Cross Albania, VIS, other NGOs, other NGOs, MTCYS, MPCSSHB.	2007
		Recognition of volunteer work, inclusion of volunteer credits as advantages in application for undergraduate studies	Recognition and certification of volunteer work, inclusion of volunteer credits as bonus crediting during the university entrance process	MoES, youth organizations	2007-2008
	2. Education and promotion of volunteering	Increased awareness among younger generations and the community on the importance of volunteer work	Awareness-raising campaigns on volunteering and its importance	Youth NGOs, UNV, media.	2007-2011
		Inclusion in coursework materials on all three academic levels of information on volunteering (accompanied with practical sessions since the primary education level)	Drafting of new curricula or improvement of existing ones through the inclusion of information on volunteering.	MoES, youth organizations	2007-2008
	3. Promotion of volunteering in the sector of special needs services	Programs that provide for an interface between interested volunteers and different organizations and institutions – the creation of a youth information center.	The creation of Youth Information Center that offers information on internship openings both in the public and private sectors	AYC, MTCYS, MJAFT.	2007-2011
		The Drafting and implementation of volunteer service programs in public service institutions (such as hospitals, dwellings, disabled people etc.)	Youth NGSO, governmental agencies, local authorities, Social Sciences Faculty, state public institutions	OJF-të rinore, Qeveria, pushteti vendor, Fakulteti i Shkencave Sociale, institucionet publike shtetërore	2007-2008
	4. Volunteer exchange programs among organizations on a national, regional, and international level	Promotion of thematic volunteering (regeneration abandoned place, old buildings, green areas) and the investment in enhancement of recreative and tourist destinations	Youth volunteer activities for the reconstruction and greening of public space.	Youth NGOs, MTCYS, local governing authorities	2007-2011
		Volunteer exchange programs with a particular focus on national and regional coordination and exchange	- Volunteer exchange among organizations; - The creation of functional coordinating centers for the exchange of volunteers.	UNV, AYC, MJAFT, local youth NGOs, MTCYS	2007-2008

Annex III:

Law No.8756, dated 26.3.2001

“ON CIVIL EMERGENCIES”

Article 24:

Volunteer Service

1. Endurance of civil emergencies will require organizational work and the action of volunteer services.
2. Any Albanian citizen that's over 18 years old, who has completed basic education and training in regards to emergency situations, or who accepts to participate voluntarily in a civil emergency is called a volunteer.
3. Foreign citizens would be accepted as volunteers during the endurance of civil emergencies.
4. Persons, who voluntarily ask to participate in rescue operations, have the following rights:
 - The right of keeping his job
 - The right to be fully paid even by a private subject
 - The right to benefit disability pension, according to the law, in case of accident or loss of life during a civil emergencies.

Annex IV:



The International Year of the Volunteers IYV 2001

The International Volunteer Day (IVD) provides an opportunity for volunteer-involving organizations and individual volunteers to work together on projects and campaigns promoting their contribution to economic and social development at the local, national and international levels. By merging UN support with a grassroots mandate, IVD is a unique opportunity for government agencies, non-profit organizations, community groups, the private sector and volunteer-involving organizations to work together to attain common goals.

IVD was established by the United Nations General Assembly through Resolution 40/212 on 17 December 1985. Since then, governments, the UN system and civil society organizations have successfully joined volunteers around the world to celebrate the Day on 5 December.

IVD and the International Year of Volunteers 2001: Building momentum

Following a proposal of the Government of Japan to the United Nations Secretary General, the UN General Assembly proclaimed 2001 the International Year of Volunteers (IYV) in its 52nd session on 20 November 1997. Resolution 52/17 was co-sponsored by 123 countries. The UN Volunteers (UNV) programme was designated as the focal point for the Year within the UN system.

The idea for an International Year of Volunteers at the beginning of the 21st Century was to stimulate national and international policy debate around, and to advocate for, the recognition, facilitation, networking and promotion of voluntary action. The year led to a much better appreciation of the power of volunteerism in its many forms and the ways to support it. Through the years, IVD has been used strategically: most countries have focused volunteers' contribution to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) during recent celebrations. The MDGs are a set of time-bound targets to combat poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation and discrimination against women.

The organization of IVD is generally the result of a partnership between the UN system, governments, volunteer involving organizations, and committed individuals. Representatives from the media or academia, foundations, the private sector, faith groups, and sports and recreational organizations are also often involved.

www.unvolunteers.org



General Assembly

Distr.: General
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Sixty-third session
Agenda item 55 (b)

Resolution adopted by the General Assembly²⁰

[on the report of the Third Committee (A/63/424)]

63/153. Follow-up to the implementation of the International Year of Volunteers

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolution 60/134 of 16 December 2005 on the follow-up to the International Year of Volunteers,

Noting that the momentum created by the International Year has contributed to the vibrancy of volunteerism globally with the involvement of more people, from a broader cross-section of societies,

Recognizing that volunteerism is an important component of any strategy aimed at, inter alia, such areas as poverty reduction, sustainable development, health, disaster prevention and management and social integration and, in particular, overcoming social exclusion and discrimination,

Recognizing also that volunteerism makes significant contributions to development and that appropriate policies are needed to ensure that this potential is realized,

Acknowledging the existing contribution of the organizations of the United Nations system to supporting volunteering, especially the work of the United Nations Volunteers programme around the world, and acknowledging also the efforts of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to promote volunteerism throughout its global network,

Bearing in mind the need for an integrated and coordinated follow-up to the International Year to be pursued in the relevant parts of the United Nations system,

1. *Welcomes* the report of the Secretary-General;²¹
2. *Reaffirms* the need to recognize and promote all forms of volunteerism as an issue that involves and benefits all segments of society, including women, children, young persons, older persons, persons with disabilities, minorities, migrants and those who remain excluded for social or economic reasons;
3. *Recognizes* the importance of supportive legislative and fiscal frameworks for the growth and development of volunteerism, and encourages Governments to enact such measures;

²⁰ This resolution and other ones related to volunteering can be found at: <http://www.worldvolunteerweb.org/resources/policy-documents/united-nations.html>

²¹ A/63/184

4. *Welcomes* the work of Governments, the United Nations system and other stakeholders to create a supportive environment for the promotion of volunteerism;
5. *Takes note* of the actions by Governments to support volunteerism, and reiterates its call upon them to continue such action;
6. *Acknowledges* the importance of civil society organizations for the promotion of volunteerism, and in that respect recognizes that strengthening the dialogue and interaction between civil society and the United Nations contributes to the expansion of volunteerism;
7. *Encourages* Governments to establish partnerships with civil society in order to build up volunteer potential at the national level, given the important contribution that volunteerism makes to the fulfilment of the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration;²²
8. *Welcomes* the expanding involvement of the private sector in support of volunteerism, and encourages Governments to support this trend;
9. *Invites* Governments to mobilize and support the research community globally to carry out more studies on the subject of volunteerism, in partnership with civil society, in order to provide sound knowledge as a foundation for policies and programmes;
10. *Recognizes* that greater efforts are needed to ensure that climate change and the environment feature on the volunteerism agenda of Governments and the United Nations;
11. *Calls for* the relevant organizations and bodies of the United Nations system to integrate volunteerism in its various forms into their policies, programmes and reports, and encourages the recognition and inclusion of volunteer contributions in future United Nations and other relevant international conferences;
12. *Reaffirms* its recognition of the work of the United Nations Volunteers programme as the focal point for the follow-up to the International Year of Volunteers, and requests it to continue to raise awareness of the contribution of volunteerism to peace and development, to act as a convener on the subject for the various interested stakeholders, to make available networking and reference resources and to provide technical cooperation to developing countries, upon their request;
13. *Invites* the Commission for Social Development to consider “volunteerism for development” in the context of its theme of social integration at its forty-seventh and forty-eighth sessions, in 2009 and 2010 respectively;
14. *Decides* that, on or around 5 December 2011, the International Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development, two plenary meetings of the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly shall be devoted to follow-up to the International Year and the commemoration of its tenth anniversary, under the item entitled “Social development”;
15. *Invites* Governments, with the active support of the media, civil society and the private sector, as well as development partners and the relevant organizations and bodies of the United Nations system, to carry out activities focused on marking the tenth anniversary of the International Year, in 2011, at the regional and national levels;
16. *Requests* the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session on the implementation of the present resolution under the item entitled “Social development”.

*70th plenary meeting
18 December 2008*

²² See resolution 55/2

Useful Resources

- www.worldvolunteerweb.org
- www.unvolunteers.org
- www.energizen.org
- www.un.org/millenniumgoals
- www.projektiqytetar.com
- <http://unv.undp.org.al>

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- <http://unv.undp.org.al> and www.undp.org.al
- <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals>
- *Measuring Volunteering: A Practical Toolkit*, United Nations Volunteers and Independent Sector
- *United Nations Resolution 56/38: Recommendations on support for volunteering.*
- *Volunteering: the Human Face of Democracy*, Jennifer Wilkinson and Michael Bittman, published by the Social Policy Research Centre.
- *Volunteerism, a missing dimension*, Eduard Zaloshnja, Ph.D. (article published in Panorama newspaper)
- *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*, Robert D. Putnam (with Robert Leonardi and Raffaella Nannetti, 1993)
- *Developing a volunteer infrastructure. A guidance Note.* available through: <http://www.unvolunteers.org>
- *Volunteerism, a multi-functional tissue of society*, Prof. Zyhdi Dervishi (in Albanian)
- *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, Robert Putnam
- *UNV Albania Annual Newsletter 2007*, available through: www.unv.undp.org.al
- *Youth Work Development Report on the Study Visit to Albania*, European Youth Forum May 2007
- *Development as freedom*, Nobel Prize winner Amartya Sen
- *Albania, Women and Men*, INSAT 2007
- *UNV Annual Reports*, available through: www.unvolunteers.org
- <http://en.wikipedia.org>
- *The Albanian Constitution ratified by the Albanian Parliament in 1998*
- *Albanian laws, codes and decisions*, available through: www.qpz.org

Pictures:

- *UNV Albania*
- *Bom-Bom radio (cover page)*
- *Vision Centre Albania*

Map of Albania



Source: <http://www.albania-hotel.com/al/map.html>

One day an elephant saw a hummingbird lying on its back with its tiny feet up in the air. "What are you doing?" asked the elephant. The hummingbird replied, "I heard that the sky might fall today, and so I am ready to help hold it up, should it fall." The elephant laughed cruelly. "Do you really think" he said, "that those tiny feet could help hold up the sky?"

The hummingbird kept his feet up in the air, intent on his purpose, as he replied, "Not alone. But each must do what he can. And this is what I can do."

Chinese Parable

<http://www.energizeinc.com>