

Protection of environment - The LevizAlbania support

Prepared by: Olsi Nika

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Introduction

What is LevizAlbania?

LevizAlbania is a project that aims to strengthen local democracy in Albania through the engagement and empowerment of civil society organizations, informal groups, and individuals as the champions of democracy. LevizAlbania supports local democracy across the country by cultivating a locally rooted civil society, which increases the demand for good governance at the local level, through:

- *Comprehensive decision making*
- *Supervision of local government*
- *Transparency*
- *Responsibility*
- *Accountability*
- *Monitoring the quality of public services*

Through LevizAlbania civil society actors can come up and apply concrete ideas to resolve different issues of interest to their communities. The grant scheme is operationalized through periodic calls for applications.

Rapid Response is another important instrument of LevizAlbania, which supports the initiatives of civil society organizations and individuals related to causes or emergency issues that are threatened by time factors. Rapid Response is an opportunity to address the need for emergent intervention through civic actions. Applications to Rapid Response are appraised with a simplified procedure to respond in time and in the best interest of the situation/causes.

Furthermore, LevizAlbania (herein after referred as LA) undertakes strategic projects and national-level advocacy to enable a suitable environment for an improved and sustained local democracy, aiming to influence the national agenda. These include support for consolidated organizations/ coalitions to address systemic challenges.

LevizAlbania is funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and implemented by a consortium of three successful Albanian organizations, "The Open Society Foundation for Albania", "Partners Albania for Change and Development" and "Co-PLAN".

A journey over the years

LevizAlbania started its path in mid-2015 when initially the team was set up and the 1st call for application was announced.

Since the beginning, the project has been embraced by the NGO community, who have responded to the calls for application with increasing interest. In addition, LA has brought an innovative approach, through the application of diverse mechanisms, aiming coverage of a wide range of action areas aimed at achieving the final objective that has guided the project in these years: "Local Democracy in Action".

LevizAlbania from the beginning has been guided by the principle of inclusiveness. The support of individuals and informal groups is one of the main feature of LA, which was brought in as an innovation to be transformed later into an authentic model to replicate for other donors in Albania.

"Competition of Ideas" has been another innovative approach brought in a very original way by LevizAlbania, in fulfillment of the principle of transparency. The Competition of Ideas has also, served in many cases as an arena for the exchange of experiences and networking among the applicant organizations.

The creation of support instruments for organizations, informal groups and individuals included in the various calls for applications has helped the latter to find a more enabling environment for achieving the objectives of specific projects.

In this context, LevizAlbania developed 3 key supporting mechanisms: i) **Financat Vendore** that has served as a database and a reference point in addressing transparency issues and monitoring the local governance standards; ii) **Porta Vendore** which has served as an informative window to empower local media in addressing issues identified by LA grantees and by citizens in general; iii) **Klinika e Ligjit** that has also been an effective support instrument which has been frequently used by LA grantees on litigation process. This instrument has turned out to be a game-changer for certain advocacy and lobbying campaigns.

From 2015 to the end of 2022 LA has launched 9 Calls of Applications, 12 Strategic Grants, 23 Rapid Response projects, 362 individuals, informal groups and CSO supported, and more than 75,000 citizens involved in these projects.

About 40% of supported civic actors continue to carry out initiatives for the benefit of local communities after support is concluded, providing evidence of sustainable long-lasting impact¹.

LevizAlbania's support to the Environment

Although the environment is not the focus of LevizAlbania, since the beginning, LA has supported initiatives and actions that contributed to increase civic awareness for the environment, as well as actions that consist in the preservation of nature through the promotion of civic engagement via a participatory approach.

A clean, healthy, and sustainable environment, as a human right, has been the focus of many initiatives supported by LevizAlbania. Furthermore, being an interdisciplinary field, the environment is often naturally intertwined with the most fundamental processes of democracy, such as the right to information, access to decision-making, or access to justice for cases of environmental concerns.

Under this perspective, LevizAlbania's support for initiatives or projects aimed at preserving the environment over the years gradually began to increase to about 68 out of 309 projects that have been supported by LA in total.

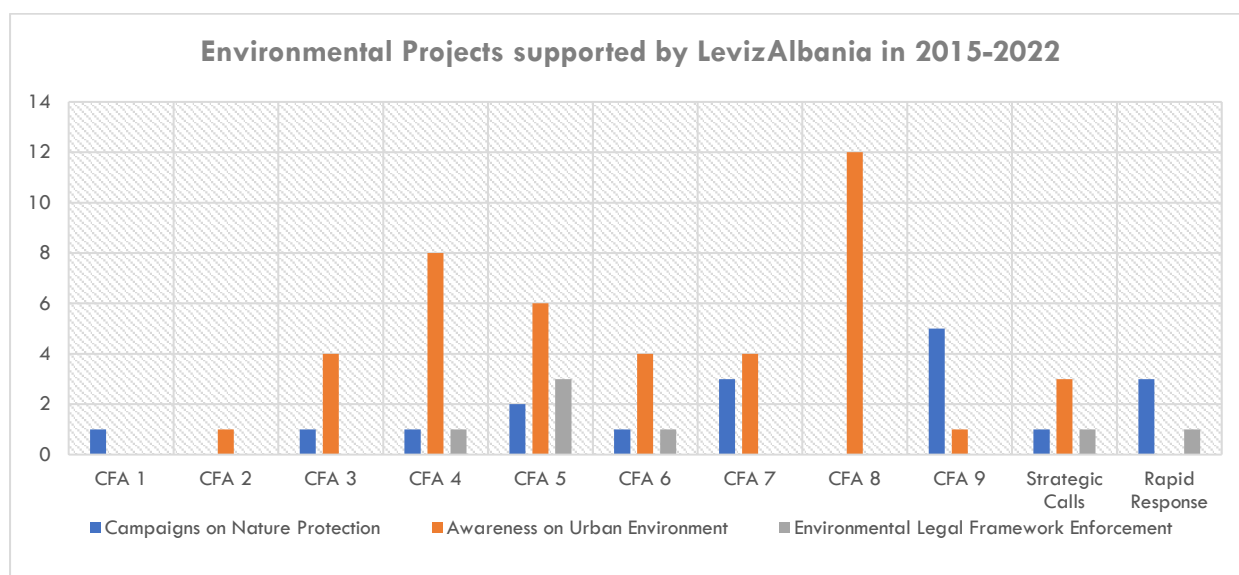


Figure 1: Environmental Projects supported by LevizAlbania in 2015-2022

¹ Zhulali, Floreta (2021) "External Evaluation of Call for Applications Nr. 6 of LevizAlbania"; and Sulka, Kastriot (2022) "External Evaluation of Call for Applications Nr. 7 of LevizAlbania"

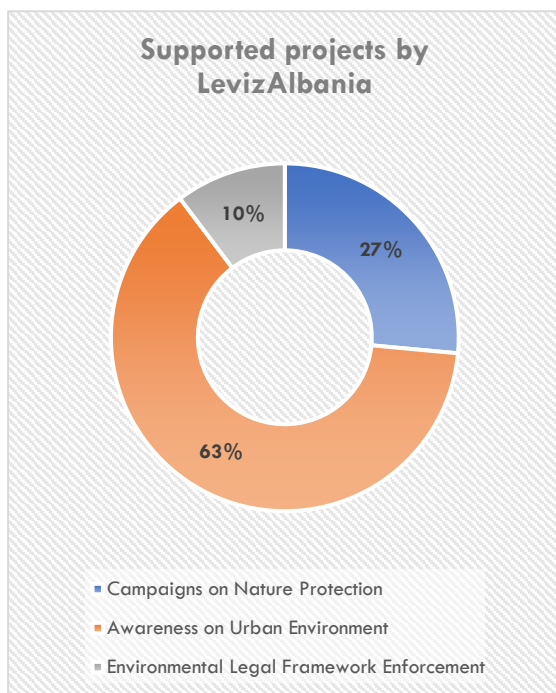
Referring to graph on Figure 1 above, it is clear that the trend of increasing LA support for initiatives and projects aimed at preserving the environment. This support initially aimed mostly to promote community-based initiatives and those related to local environmental decision-making. In this context, initially, the support had a small geographical distribution and sporadic coverage of environmental causes. However, the need for certain interventions through advocacy and awareness campaigns for very acute environmental issues, interwoven with a package of innovative, transparent, and quite facilitating grant procedures from the LA, has made more and more environmental organizations apply for LA support.

Significant consolidation is also seen in calls for **strategic grants** where environmental projects also have a significant weight. In addition to this, the orientation towards cooperation, raising the causes to a higher level and lobbying for a wider and stronger public outreach, has consisted of a larger, more important representation of environmental issues and the democratic processes related to them.

Since environmental interventions and damage to nature is often irreversible, it requires a higher environmental vigilance and an ability to react in time to prevent damage.

Often, the mechanisms of the grant and support schemes are slow to enable quick evaluation and disbursing of funds, making it impossible to quickly raise causes and respond in cases of environmentally damaging projects.

To overcome this, the **Rapid Response Mechanism** brought in as an innovation by LevizAlbania, has turned out to be a very efficient tool, especially in projects related to environmental protection.



The mechanism has supported public campaigns that oppose certain decision-making that could damage the environment, such as the "Protection of the Osumi Canyons Natural Monument"², "Stop HPPs in the Lure-Mali i Deja National Park"³ and "Stop the Urbanization of Divjaka-Karavasta National Park"⁴. To be emphasized is the fact that most of the environmental projects supported by LevizAlbania tackle the issues related to the urban environment followed by nature conservation actions. However, when it comes to the rapid response scheme, nature conservation campaigns dominate among the supported projects. In conclusion, even though it has not focused on the environment, during 8 years LevizAlbania has been an important promoter of the support of acute environmental causes in the country, contributing to addressing the issues, raising and supporting the causes as well as building an enabling environment and promoting cooperation between organizations, informal groups and specific individuals as well as providing support through facilitating instruments such as Financat Vendore,

Porta Vendore or Klinika e Ligjit.

²<https://www.levizalbania.al/sq/nisma-te-mbeshtetura/reagimi-shpejte/mbrojtja-e-kanioneve-te-osumit-si-monument-i-natyres>

³<https://www.levizalbania.al/sq/nisma-te-mbeshtetura/reagimi-shpejte/ndal-hec-eve-ne-parkun-kombetar-lure-mali-i-dejes>

⁴<https://www.levizalbania.al/sq/nisma-te-mbeshtetura/reagimi-shpejte/stop-urbanizimit-te-parkut-kombetar-divjake-karavasta>

CASE STUDY 1: *Persistent campaign on nature protection*

Protect Lure-Deja Mountain Campaign

LevizAlbania has initiated public campaigns that consist in the undertaking of concrete and direct actions for the preservation of natural ecosystems in Albania. As it was emphasised in chapter 3.3, such kind of support was tackled by almost all LA calls, including Rapid Response.

One of the campaigns that explores many aspects in its progress is the campaign for the protection of the Lure-Mali i Dejes National Park. The campaign consisted of opposing the construction of hydropower plants in Zall-Gjoçaj. The area has been officially included in the Lura National Park after the Decision of the Government of Albania for its enlargement in early 2018.

The construction of HPPs in Albania started since 2005, based only on increased energy demand. However, no comprehensive and strategic study was ever conducted. HPPs have no geographical restrictions, and hence can be constructed in Protected Areas. In this regard almost a decade later the situation has aggravated significantly whereas in 2018, the HPPs planned to be constructed within the Environmental Protected Areas Network of Albania exceeded 39% of the total planned HPPs country wide.

Being developed in a chaotic way, soon the construction companies faced strong opposition of local communities with regards to sharing water usage rights. In this context, almost a decade after the start of this “dam tsunami” an anti-dam movement has emerged. This movement has initially started locally in the Shkumbini and Vjosa River, to be followed by the dam opposition movement in the Valbona River and many others. The movement consisted of a genuine local reaction against the destructive hydropower projects which is essentially linked with the unequal utilization of the natural resources.

The campaign to protect Zall-Gjoçaj National Park started with the local community’s mobilization against the HPP construction in late 2018. Initially the community was denied access to official information related to the HPP construction project. Once construction started, the local community was mobilised, organised meetings and relied on the support of NGOs in Tirana, while blocking the construction site by isolating themselves in a tent as a public expression of objection towards the decision-makers. The local community opposition slowly began to grow and got more structured when the small nucleus of local people from Zall-Gjoçaj started to establish a network with other communities, NGOs, media, lawyers, and donors.

The legal battle started in March 2019. The local community filed 5 different lawsuits at the Tirana Administrative Court aiming the cancellation of the HPPs. After a slow judicial process due to pandemic of Covid-19, there have been battles lost and won on the way. Finally, the Supreme Court did not validate the HPP’s connection to the grid because it is constructed within a Protected Area. Despite the finalization of the construction works, the hydropower is legally forbidden to operate, causing nothing but environmental and social destruction.

The other successful puzzle-stone of the campaign was the direct action on the ground. These coordinated actions between the awareness raising, scientific assessment of HPPs impact, and colourful protests attracted the public and media support on the case. Several protests, on-site and in the capital, were organized. On spot analysis of renowned experts confirmed the negative impact of the hydropower on the environment. In addition, roundtables, public and TV debates supporting the case were also broadcasted in different media with national outreach.

The campaign also brilliantly used the power of social media. Being under the Covid-19 lockdown, the Zall-Gjoçaj Community turned this limitation into opportunity by finding and using innovative ways on how to increase the public pressure through social media. A zoom meeting was projected in front of the court while the online protests and speeches were heard through loudspeakers, denouncing the authorities’ corruption, and supporting Zall-Gjoçaj case. Another online campaign was held on articulating the importance of Lurë-Dejë national park emphasising the ongoing court case as possible

solution. Moreover, info sheets, video-messages and documentaries aiming the public awareness raising, were extensively produced.

The importance of online campaigns for building a multi-layered political discourse was highlighted during the pandemic. It helped the activists to support other forms of actions through textual and visual arguments. Moreover, it helped to build a stronger and more sustainable solidarity with other activists, communities, and environmental NGOs.

In this regard, this campaign is a symbol of the movements that start small but with a clear vision and a dedicated team of people that are determined to reach the goal, may grow big, involve more and more people and finally may serve as a blueprint for other cases to follow.

The campaign consisted of a successful mixture between the action on the ground, legal action and online positive approach having persistence as its backbone.

The campaign had a significant importance on setting up a model of community resilience for the protection of nature and for strengthening of democratic processes. LevizAlbania's role in this campaign was determinant as it supported the movement in multiple ways.

In addition, it has changed the approach of community in regard to their engagement in environmental issues. The multiangle legal battle initiated in this case has been also an important step ahead towards exploring new paths on how defend environmental rights. As such, this case study can be considered as one of the most complete regarding the rational use of several instruments of democracy together such as: protests, media pressure, administrative and judicial complaints.

Finally, the campaign is a reference model on mindset change and on reacting to decision-making threatening the public good.

This case can be considered as an unusual case of success which can serve as a reference model regarding the practices used in a legal battle for environmental issues. The strategy of building several fronts simultaneously during the legal battle, supported by public pressure through protests and the media campaign, has made the case go through all judicial levels in a fairly short time. This also constitutes a success not only for the case but in the way that certain issues can be approached in court proceedings.

"We started our battle alone to protect the National Park, but we soon realized that we would never have succeeded fighting alone. LevizAlbania has been a strong support in our long journey where we have learned that persistence is the key to success" Dhimiter Koleci, Zall-Gjoçaj Community Leader.

Conclusions

The campaign for the protection of the national park of Zall-Gjocaj constitutes a change in the approach of community activism by combining leadership with ownership in an environmental cause.

The cooperative spirit and inclusive approach can guarantee sustainability and effectiveness. Also, coordination, persistence, and the use of as many tools as possible to achieve the objective can be a winning formula to dissolve all the campaign ingredients.

CASE STUDY 2: Changing the mindset.

The Flowers initiative

Projects that aimed the improvement of the urban environment as stated above, have been strongly and massively supported by LevizAlbania over the years all-over the country. Many of these initiatives have aimed to interfere into local policies, awareness raising or policy enforcement on issues that tackle the urban environment. Many others have consisted of concrete small actions undertaken by civic grassroots groups.

One successful example of this is the action undertaken by the "Flowers Initiative".

The Flowers Initiative (Nisma e Luleve) is a civic initiative with the aim of promoting civic activism and collective responsibility for the common public good. It was established in October 2018 by a group of young people from the town of Saranda, initially called "Donate a Flower for Saranda".

The initial idea was to invest in the growth of green spaces, in close cooperation with the ordinary citizens. Green spaces in Saranda have been significantly reduced over the last three decades because of numerous constructions in the town. The initiative focused on increasing the planting of "Bougainville" or "Saranda flowers", as it was known for years as the symbolic flower of the Saranda town, brought for the first time by Naim Frasheri to the coastal town.

The idea was massively supported within a few months, and, through citizen activism, it was possible to plant about 500 Bougainville and hundreds of other decorative trees. In March 2019, Saranda blossomed with trees and colours because of the commitment of hundreds of active citizens who joined this initiative. In 2019, the initiative was formalized under the name "Nisma e Luleve" (Flowers Initiative).

"I have always believed that it is good to give ideas to do things differently, but it is even better to conduct some of these things in practice, that is, to try to make civic opposition through concrete actions, to show that things can change even in the micro scale. What we did was just that, to show that we want a better place." Adriatik Lapaj, Member of the "Flowers Initiative".

In addition to the actions in the urban area of the city of Saranda, the "Flowers Initiative" proved that the interior of the Ionian Sea is not as clean as it can be perceived from its surface. In the fall of 2019, as part of voluntary activities in environmental protection, the first underwater clean-up of the bottom of the Ionian Sea in the town bay was conceived. The idea of this initiative also identified the next problem for the Saranda town, where thousands of tires and plastic waste remained in the depths of the waters for years without any intervention from the state authorities or local government.

The sea clean-up project by the "Flowers Initiative" started in September 2019, supported by LevizAlbania. Only during the first phase, 585 tires were extracted from the bottom of the sea.

In the period May - September 2020, the project continued with the actions of the sea clean-up in the bay of Saranda and Ksamil, resulting in the extraction of 426 tires and about 15 thousand bottles and cans, plus other waste.

In total, the number of tires extracted from the bottom of the sea in two years was 1011 tires in total and 30,000 other wastes. In parallel with the cleaning, volunteer divers have also identified about 4000 other tires in new, previously unexplored areas, increasing the target from +1000 tires to extract to +4000 more tires in the depths of the Ionian Sea.

The project, being a civic initiative, was based mostly on voluntary actions. Nisma e Luleve continued the cleaning actions even after the support of LevizAlbania. In this way, it can be considered a sustainable intervention and a model of involvement of citizen groups in concrete actions to improve the urban environment.

Since the start of the initiative, around 2100 tires and thousands of other wastes have been extracted from the bottom of the sea in 30 cleaning activities carried out so far by the Flowers Initiative.

"The good news is that after 4 years of our commitment, the bay of Saranda is completely clean, where we have extracted over 2 thousand tires and we are continuing with Ksamil, and we will continue with Himara as well. The goal is to also make the state aware as we find that the citizens are already aware to a large extent and in the areas that we have cleaned when we return, we find no longer other tires thrown into the sea" Adriatik Lapaj, Member of the "Flowers Initiative".

By identifying the problems of coexistence in a common environment, the initiative tries to bring its model of the solutions thanks to the concrete activities of a group of civil society, this initiative has found a wide citizen support.

In addition to raising awareness, the initiative aims to propose a new way of managing the waste that comes from tires in Albania, since even though 1.5 million tires are imported in the country annually, there is no correct way of treating them. There is a legal framework which is deficient, and the "Flowers Initiative" has committed to work with a group of lawyers and will propose changes to the Council of Ministers so that Albania finally has a real tire tracking system from their entrance at customs until the final step when they go to the landfill.

The initiative has clearly made the problem visible and thus local community have a better picture on the dimensions of undersea pollution. This case brings a new approach on how to tackle common environmental issues. The community engagement on a volunteer basis, shows a significant shift of mindset regarding pollution. Moreover, small actions of the community give a good example, that great things can be achieved. The initiative gives a contribution towards setting up successful models, as it can be followed and replicated in other similar cases.

In addition to concrete actions, the initiative is completing the circle by tackling a shift in policy as it has initiated the change on law for improvement of the regulatory framework that deals with treatment of the tires at the end of their lifecycle.

Conclusions:

The clean-up actions undertaken by the "Flowers Initiative" are not random. The specific nature of the environment that is being cleaned presents specific challenges and difficulties. Furthermore, the persistence and inclusiveness in these actions have managed to "clean" a behavioural mindset of the society towards the environment that has been wrongly set up for the last 30 years.

The massive embrace of these initiative shows that small civic actions are the best example to encourage a positive civic movement, which can bring about a big change in mindset. In this view, the accountability towards the decision-makers comes more natural and decisive because it is based on practical evidence that situations can be changed based on strong will.

The stability over time, regardless of financial support, as well as the spread and embrace of the initiative in other coastal areas over the years proves that grassroots activism is a successful and functional model, which deserves to be supported and promoted.

CASE STUDY 3: Improving the Local Environmental Governance – Bridging Accountability and Cooperation

Barometer of Devolli Municipality. Measurement of local governance electoral promises according to Article 27. Functions of the municipality in agriculture, rural development, and forests

One of the specific areas of the environment sector is the intervention for the improvement of environmental policies at the local level through cooperation and accountability. The Territorial Reform of 2014-2015 in Albania, which was finalized with the approval of Law 139/2015 "on local self-government", created a new reality regarding Local Government Units. The creation of new Municipalities which included a wider territory under administration and a series of new competences was one of the biggest challenges for the implementation of this reform.

The fields of environmental protection, rural development, forests management, and agriculture, etc., would henceforth be governed exclusively by the new Municipalities.

In many cases, especially the small municipalities, were not adequately prepared due to limitations of resources, both financial and human capacities to administer the new sectors. In some municipalities, new structures were created which resulted to be inefficient in fulfilling the new competences. Thus, the addressing of these issues constituted a considerable challenge. Measuring the level and the way these issues were tackled has also been a challenge on its own.

In this context, the Project "Barometer of Devolli Municipality" is one of the best examples to be considered as a success case. The project has been implemented by the Albanian Centre for Environmental Governance (ACEG) during the period 2018-2019 as part of LevizAlbania 5th CfA.

The Albanian Centre for Environmental Governance (ACEG) is a non-governmental organization founded in March 2016, with the aim of promoting the values of environmental governance, the development of Agri-tourism in this direction, environmental justice, and the green economy. Since its creation, the ACEG Centre has focused its activity in Devolli and its administrative units, working as a grassroots community organization with solid ties in the community. The ACEG centre is a strong advocate of the area and works to convince decision-makers to adopt the innovative solutions it presents.

The "Barometer of Devolli Municipality" project consists of its 3 basic elements:

- Collecting and analysing the electoral commitments of the 2015 elections campaign.
- Evaluation of local government performance in the period 2015-2018 in 5 specific topics
- Drafting of the Local Government Priorities Document for the next Governing Mandate of the Municipality.

Built on an inclusive and participatory methodology, the project objectively interweaved accountability and participation towards local governance. The applied methodology constitutes a complete cycle and professional evaluation of the governance performance, which can be repeated from one mandate to another, as well as being adapted for other municipalities.

"The main purpose of our work has been the construction of a model that would evaluate not only the fulfilment of electoral commitments, but also the objective evaluation of the performance of the environmental governance at the local level, which would serve as a blueprint for evaluating and increasing accountability in other periods or municipalities". Margarita Buxhaku, Executive Director of ACEG.

The study "Barometer of the Devolli Municipality performance" is a study that is carried out for the first time in the Devolli area after the entry into force of the administrative territorial reform in 2015. In concrete terms, the methodology is based on two main pillars: the first one is the objective evaluation of the governance performance of the Devolli Municipality in the 5 targeted topics, while the second pillar is following a participatory approach as it consists of adoption of governance priorities on the upcoming mandate, set up by the community members. The role of the NGO is to collect, assess, prioritise, and adopt the Priority Policy Paper based on the direct communication with local communities. This document can serve as a tool in the hands of citizens to demand more accountability from their elected officials.

Through the evaluation of about 33 indicators in 5 governance topics, the report shows the difficulty that the Municipality faced in coping with new situations for the fulfilment of the competences arising from Law 139/2015. The difficulties are identified in both human capacities and qualifications as well as in financial limitations.

In addition to the watchdog monitoring approach, the third stage of the intervention consisted in the drafting of the Governing Priorities Document.

"The key role of grassroots NGOs is to bridge the local communities needs with the Local Government priorities. Thus, the mediator role consists of collection, articulation, and amplification of the community's voice". Margarita Buxhaku, Executive Director of ACEG.

In this context, the Document consists of a list of priorities determined by the community of Devolli Municipality in the 5 analysed topics. The drafting of the document is based on a participatory process, gathering the needs of the communities in all the administrative units of the Devolli Municipality through direct meetings.

After collecting and prioritizing the needs, the document was presented to the Municipality, from which it received a full endorsement. In addition to the priorities, the Project also aimed at providing alternatives for addressing some of the main issues.

Conclusions:

Although the project represents an intervention in a specific municipality, from a methodological point of view, it represents a case of success in building an objective evaluation methodology that is easily replicable in other municipalities, serving as a blueprint for evaluating the performance of governance, increasing accountability, and encouraging decision-making based on a participatory approach.

The Governance Barometer is a mechanism for evaluating local democracy which is used very efficiently, bringing an innovation in the participation of NGOs and the public in local environmental governance policies.

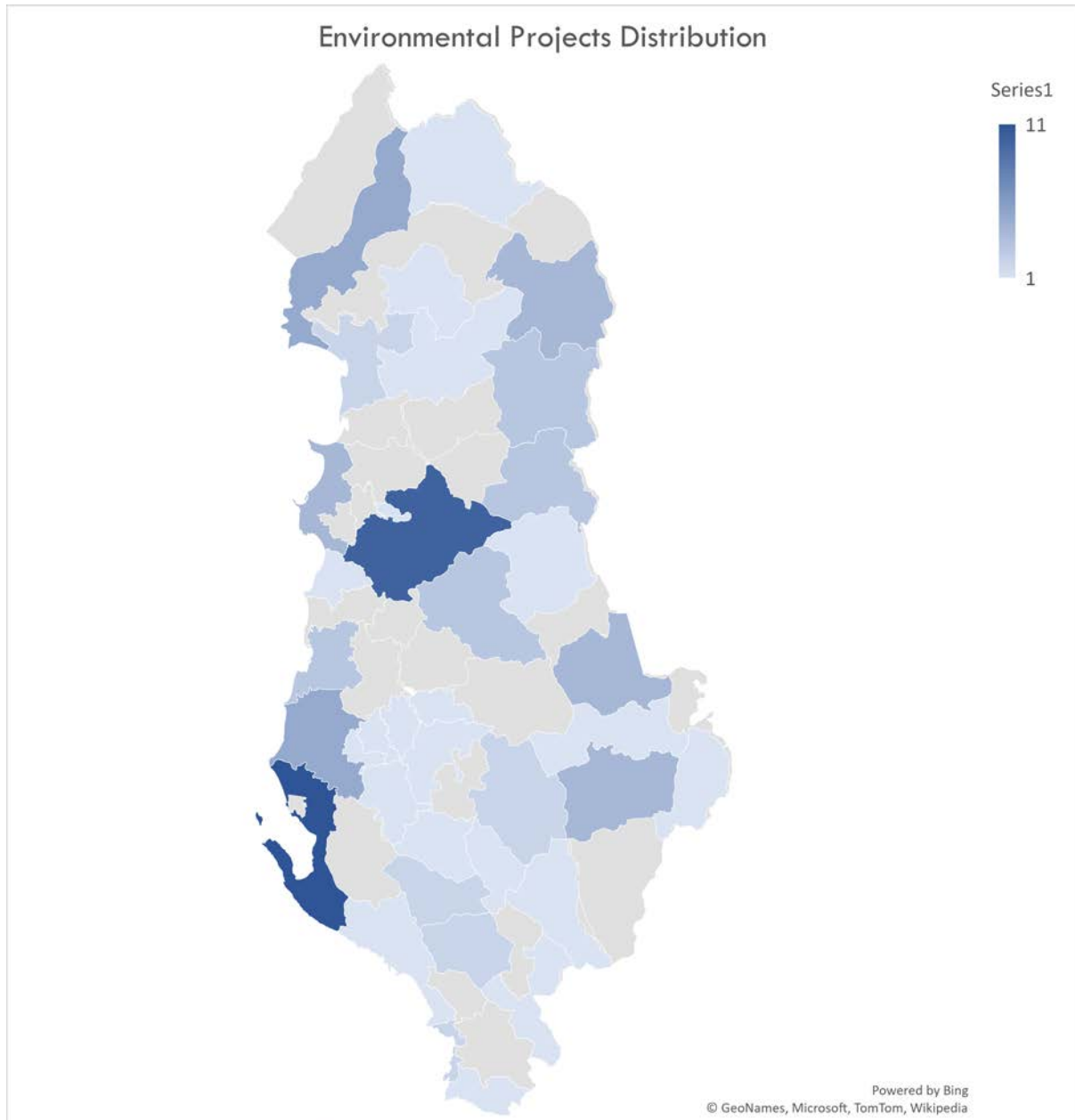
Furthermore, in concrete terms the project has led to a success in setting up a participatory approach on setting up the local governance priorities. This has made a big shift not only into mindset change but also into structural behaviour of the civil society, by pointing the NGOs into a natural role of acting as mediators that bridge the community needs and priorities with the government objectives.

Finally, the project may be considered as a significant shift on bringing the democratic processes of the governance on the ground via wide consultation with the communities.

From Legacy to Empowerment

This paper summarizes the legacy of the work and support of LevizAlbania in the field of environmental protection in Albania. This continuous support has managed to intervene in decisive moments to prevent the destruction of the environment, to stop projects from being developed, having irreversible negative effects on the environment.

Figure 3: The geographical distribution of the projects supported by LA in the field of Environment.



Encouraging civic activism for the serious and rigorous treatment of various environmental issues.

Changing mindset and establishing precedents that the decision-makers for environmental issues can be challenged in court.

The creation of an enabling environment for citizen activism by building puzzle-stones that seem to have been scattered throughout Albania but that all together have contributed to the big picture of a very proactive and vivid approach to the environmental movement in Albania.

Bringing models for the first time, the work of young people in the field of the environment, the records in geographical scope distribution and the strategic organization in networks and coalitions oriented to the supported by LA is a very important moment in the chapter of the legacy of the program in these 8 years.

Encouraging the organization of informal groups in more stable structures, such as NGOs or forums, has been another quite evident achievement of the LA program in these 8 years, contributing to the strengthening of civil society and its ability to undertake sharp and major initiatives jointly.

Now 8 years later from the start of this journey, all the experience gained is not only a legacy of the past but a mean of further strengthening the civil society and the environmental movement in Albania.

Guides, Datasets, experiences, stories, strategies, and actions together with achievements, battles won, improved legal framework and models of success for a stronger accountability are definitely a tool for the further improvement of the environmental civil society in Albania.

In this context, the LevizAlbania program, in addition to other areas of action, has an exceptional contribution to the evolution and strengthening of the environmental movement in Albania.

Conclusions

Conclusions:

Over the last 8 years LevizAlbania has contributed significantly to the enforcement of environmental movement in Albania by supporting **about 70 projects** implemented by NGOs, Informal Groups, or Individuals in more **54 municipalities** all over the country.

The **range** of projects support by LA in the field of the protection of Environment has been **significantly wide** by tackling issues related to nature conservation, improvement of state of urban environment or even more strategically on improvement of environmental legal framework.

Most of the projects have been tackling the protection of **urban environmental features** followed by the nature protection campaigns. The initiatives aiming the improvement and enforcement of the environmental framework have been few. However, the lobbying and advocacy actions are often an overarching approach.

Over the years LevizAlbania has encouraged the **inclusiveness, cooperation, networking, and empowerment**. Thus, the program has developed and pushed for coalitions and alliances on the project it has supported.

The projects supported by LevizAlbania have brought about a **change in the approach** of the **involvement of small local communities** to the solution of environmental problems. By breaking apathy and organizing themselves in the establishment of positivist campaigns, the communities have brought a new model of civic action. The cooperation and coordination of the use of several tools, such as protests, public campaigns, media campaigns, judicial processes also bring a complete solution to the treatment of environmental issues.

Innovation, transparency, and flexibility has been the leading principle of LevizAlbania over the years. Supporting the individuals and informal groups, ideas contest, and flexible grant management have been the key elements that have ensure the relevant response to the circumstances and needs of the society and environment.

In this perspective, the initiatives supported by LevizAlbania have revived the model of **civic action** as a powerful lever for **mindset change**. Small voluntary actions can be transformed into models of change for very large and acute environmental issues. Combining the efforts of citizen action with elements of advocacy and lobbying for changes in the regulatory framework constitutes a shift in approach to environmental problems.

Despite for financial support, LevizAlbania has **developed strategic tools** such as Klinikat e Ligjit, Financat Vendore dhe Porta Vendore, to help the NGOs community and the activists on their mission. These tools have been offered for free to the grantees as well as to the public.

LevizAlbania has also continuously encouraged the construction of models that guarantee transparency, fairness, and citizen participation in the democratic and governing processes at the local level. In this context, the supported projects have brought a **shift in the proactive approach of communities** from local government programs and have also developed innovative mechanisms for evaluating the performance of local government.

Recommendations:

The fact that there have been significantly high number of the projects in the field of environmental protection, shows that there has been a need for a more strategic and programmatic support approach by LevizAlbania. In this regard it is recommended that a **dedicated program on environment** should have been developed and applied.

The **capillary distribution of the grants** and support is not necessary an indication to success. A structured and sustainable support can reach more successfully the goals. In this regard, **sustainable networks** based on topics would have been more recommendable than temporary networks based on CFAs.

Sometimes is difficult to achieve the big goals under the **time-limited projects**. This has limited the NGOs to set up short-time objectives that not always have contributed significantly into the big picture. Thus, a programmatic approach should have been followed by LA already in the second year of implementation on setting up **thematic NGO structures or networks** with the clearly set of strategic goals.

There have been developed too many communication tools over the years, but there is a miscoordination on collecting all this knowledge and offering to the public a comprehensive platform. Thus, it should have been clear priority the **capitalization of the knowledge** since the early stage.

Annex 1

List of Environmental Projects Supported by LevizAlbania Program

No.	Title of the Project	Aplicant	CFA	Cluster
1	AKTIV - I	EcoAlbania	1	Nature Conservation
2	Monitoring of Integrated Waste Management (IWM), an instrument for encouraging and sustainable reflection of the citizens of Kuçova Municipality	Center for Good Governance	2	Urban Environment
3	Gjanica the Dead River	Sokol Kosta	3	Urban Environment
4	Quarries, lobbying, advocacy through the creation of ecological groups	Arjana Bardhi	3	Urban Environment
5	Monitoring of the service provided by "Eco Tirana", the Italian-Albanian public-private partnership for the realization of the cleaning of the capital	UET Center	3	Urban Environment
6	Multimedia platform for a clean Kavaja town	VISARE Association	3	Urban Environment
7	Advocacy and lobbying at the municipality of Dibër for the drafting of a medium and long-term action plan for the preservation and management of low and high forests	Runja Association	3	Nature Conservation
8	AKTIV - II	EcoAlbania	4	Empowering of Legal Framework
9	Shkodra on two wheels	Bepin Kolvataj	4	Urban Environment
10	Valbona you are ours	Sajmir Kalbaj	4	Nature Conservation
11	No Noise	Ogerta Ujkashi	4	Urban Environment
12	Your Voice - Our Voice	Gjelberimi 2000	4	Urban Environment
13	I decide for the future without mercury	CRCD	4	Urban Environment
14	Community Engagement for a clean Environemnt	Social Center for Support of People	4	Urban Environment
15	Monitoring and evaluation of urban waste management service in Kruja, Permeti and Saranda Municipalities	Milieukontakt - Albania	4	Urban Environment
16	Giving a voice to the citizens - stimulating environmental public participation in Tirana	Environmental Center for Development, Education and Networking (EDEN)	4	Nature Conservation
17	Monitoring, Accountability and Transparency for the best management and sustainable development of Presa-Ohrid Ecosystem	Friends of Korça Association	4	Nature Conservation
18	Barometer of Devolli Municipality.	ACEG	5	Empowering of Legal Framework
19	Environmental monitoring in the procurement procedures of the Municipality of Korça, Erseka, Maliq	Center for Development and Regional Integration - CDRI	5	Empowering of Legal Framework
20	Monitoring and evaluation of urban waste management service provision in Bulqiza Municipality	Young Environmental Experts Association - SHERM	5	Empowering of Legal Framework
21	Active Durres for a clean coast	Active Durres Center	5	Urban Environment
22	Vlora Bay: The beauty facing pollution and away from attention	ECAT Tirana	5	Urban Environment
23	Installation: STOP Pollution in Fieri	ANTIK Association	5	Urban Environment
24	Assessment of the quality of the environment through air, water and soil monitoring in the city of Elbasan	Abdulla Diku	5	Urban Environment
25	Not on the road, not by streams and rivers, not every unit with individual landfill, for a clean environment, for a healthy life	Center for Studies and Development	5	Urban Environment
26	Let's clean Maqellara. Community advocacy for the provision of urban waste cleaning services in Maqellare Administrative Unit, Dibër Municipality	Behar Dema	5	Urban Environment
27	Two Lakes in one focus	Roland Beqiraj	5	Nature Conservation
28	Zero Waste	Institute for Marketing and Management Consulting - IMMC	6	Empowering of Legal Framework
29	No Trash - Clean Ksamil	Association "Movement for the Development of Ksamil Tourism"	6	Urban Environment

30	Cleaning the Ionian Sea bottom-floor	Flowers initiative	6	Urban Environment
31	The citizens of Durrës are actors and factors in local decision-making	Active Durres Center	6	Urban Environment
32	We change the environment, we educate the community	Aurora Konomi	6	Urban Environment
33	Let's protect the lake from urban waste pollution	Spartak Dikellari	6	Nature Conservation
34	CGEs @Albania – Circular and green economy, opportunities for promoting an active society and economic development in the municipalities of Patos and Roskovec	Albanian Social – Economic Forum – ASET	7	Urban Environment
35	Training and engagement for community action in the Belsh Municipality: Conservation and protection of the environment	Qerim Elezi	7	Urban Environment
36	Manza without waste	Valdet Qyrfiçi	7	Urban Environment
37	Youth, Recycling, Respect - Ecosystem of love for the Environment	Hand to Hand Against Nation Apathy	7	Urban Environment
38	“Dynamite” STOP, I am “the Black Drini“	North green Association	7	Nature Conservation
39	Barriers in the community: The effects of the hydropower construction cluster on the socio-economic status of the local population	Albanian Center for Quality Journalism - ACQJ	7	Nature Conservation
40	Speak For Those Who Are Silent	Lake Shkodra Forum	7	Nature Conservation
41	"I want my air" - Increasing citizen pressure for cleaner municipalities	Art in women's hands	8	Urban Environment
42	Metamorphosis of the Ishëm River - Tomorrow's Itinerary	ENFORCE – Albania	8	Urban Environment
43	Water vs. Oil	Zharreza Association	8	Urban Environment
44	Environmental damage from waste disposal due to non-management by Velçan Administrative Unit, part of Pogradec Municipality	Fabiol Rapçe	8	Urban Environment
45	Divjaka saved by youth	Vento Di Terra Albania	8	Urban Environment
46	Educating children on the importance of the recycling process and separation of waste at source	Anduana Shahini	8	Urban Environment
47	Involvement in civic initiatives related to the issues of the environment where we live	Xhoel Nikaj	8	Urban Environment
48	The city of my dreams	Informal Group of Kukesi	8	Urban Environment
49	Recycling Plastic Before Waste	Organization for Destination Management	8	Urban Environment
50	Recycling and Tradition	Ariona Prenga	8	Urban Environment
51	Walk, photograph, clean! Civic activation along the rural roads of the Korab-Koritnik Nature Park to protect them from environmental degradation	Center for Youth Progress	8	Urban Environment
52	Let's get to know Bulqiza while protecting the environment	The Association for Nature and Tourism in Bulqiza	8	Urban Environment
53	Alliance Against Garbage Import (AKIP)	AKIP	RR	Empowering of Legal Framework
54	Let's listen to the community of Vlora - Burning oil or tourism?!	Artes Ferrunaj	RR	Urban Environment
55	Rejection of incinerators, garbage import gates (PIPIP)" - Case of Fier	AKIP	RR	Urban Environment
56	Protection of Natural Monument of Osumi Canyons	Albanian Rafting federation	RR	Nature Conservation
57	STOP HPPs in Lure – Deja Mountain National Park	Dhimiter Koleci	RR	Nature Conservation
58	Stop Urbanization of Divjakë-Karavasta National Park.	Albanian Ornithological Society - AOS	RR	Nature Conservation
59	Environmental NGOs Networking in Albania – ENGONA	EcoAlbania	SG	Empowering of Legal Framework
60	Monitoring of noise pollution in coastal areas	Milieukontakt - Albania	SG	Urban Environment
61	Networking and advocacy for community action to conserve local natural resources	Institute for Nature Conservation in Albania - INCA	SG	Nature Conservation
62	Our beautiful nature	Naturalist Club	9	Nature Conservation
63	The safe future that flows. Awareness raising for the protection of Osumi River	Informal Group "Active Youth for Environment"	9	Nature Conservation
64	Move against the poisoning of wild fauna	Conservation Youth Club Gjirokastra	9	Nature Conservation

65	Inspiring environmental and civic actions on youngsters	Ecovolis	9	Urban Environment
66	Memories from the pheasant forest	Teachers for Change	9	Urban Environment
67	Rooster Valley and "Olives Hills" as a model of renewing the identity of local environmental values in rural areas	ISBUR Center	9	Urban Environment
68	#FushëStudën invitation for a Check-In	Argela Llushi	9	Nature Conservation
Total				68