

BUILDING AND EMPOWERING THE CAPACITY OF NGO COMMUNITY

YEAR 1999



Based on the experience of the Foundation staff and that of the trained local coordinators, it is considered of special importance to extend capacity building and this experience to the distant districts of the country, where there are no training possibilities. It is worth mentioning that in the remote areas of the country there is a deep lack of information and knowledge concerning civil society, the role of organizations, public participation at community level, while in bigger cities, especially in the recent years, a lot of NGOs have been established and they have already started to take their initial steps in the field of social activity.

During the year 1999 the Foundation implemented the second phase of the program for the further building of NGO Capacity and empowering of NGOs community. It should be underlined that the Foundation has focused its efforts on enhancing the NGO capacity through the training of Local NGO leaders. Two years ago ACSF started the implementation of this project, funded by Mott Foundation (USA). During the period 1997-98, 15 local trainers selected from 12 districts attended the training course. Their intensive training in some phases brought about the anticipated fruits. Last year these people were active actors in conducting local training. They served as co-coordinators and facilitators and, for special topics treated in the training, they brought up their positive experience referring to the successful cases of their organizations.

During the year 99 training courses were accomplished in Kavaja, Elbasan, Gramsh, Pogradec, Korça and Kruja. 18 leaders of local NGOs and 2 representatives of the local authorities participated in each of the training courses.

Some achievements of this program for the year 99:

- Representatives of local NGOs and local authorities were trained in the following topics: knowledge on civil society, legislation referring to NGOs, compiling strategic planning, project-proposals, project-budget, record keeping, seeking donors, fund raising etc.
- 125 people from NGO sector were trained. The participants in the training were selected by the local coordinators, on the basis of some criteria such as: rational gender proportion, priority to younger group age, NGO leaders (chairperson or board member or members of the steering committee), NGO members assigned to compile and manage the projects, representatives of various sectors of local NGO

- community.
- All in all women participation consisted 55% of the trainees while youth participation consisted 40% of them. These figures are satisfactory taking into consideration the fact that generally in the district, youth commitment to associations is inconsiderable.
 - For the first time in 1999, in the training courses have participated 10 representatives of the local authorities. Some of them were representatives of the Municipalities such as in Kavaja, Gramsh, Korça, Elbasan, etc. In this way attempts are being made to set up bridges of future co-operation between NGOs and local government.
 - On the basis of a standard evaluation form the trainees assessed the main elements of the training course such as the level of the lectures and the lecturers, the utility of the training kit, the organizing procedures etc. In general the participants' evaluation was superlative. The Board discussed and concluded that there are a series of reasons which justify this level of evaluation for instance: for all of them it was the first time they participated in a training course and they had no earlier referring standards. They have not got used to the evaluation techniques and lack the courage to be critical and open to make any comments.

Apart from this, in June 99, in co-operation with OSCE, in continuation of the joint project started in 1998; the training staff of the Foundation conducted an intensive training of 15 NGOs in Korça city (two days).

“Like fresh water in a desert” - this is how one of the participants of Korça NGOs characterized the training course.

YEAR 2000

ACSF has concentrated a part of its efforts to the capacity building of NGOs operating throughout the country. Based on the experience acquired while training the trainees the work has been organized in such a way that the valuable experience can be transmitted to people working in the environment of Civil Society. In our country there is a lack of information and knowledge on the role of the third sector and effectiveness of the NGOs activity especially in the remote districts. For this reason we focused our activity in these districts. The year 2000 was also characterized by another aspect as Mott Foundation provided ACSF with an extra fund, which was decided to be used for follow-up workshops after the training courses and to set up a network of cooperation and information among trained NGOs.

The main objectives were as follows:

- The development and improvement of the training program so that it meets the main interests of the NGOs leaders.
- Compiling the training manuals to provide the participants in every training course.
- Involvement of the Trainees in the TOT program and training courses as coordinators and facilitators.
- Training of 180 members of local NGOs and 18 representatives of the local government in the scheduled training courses.
- Establishing NGOs networks and a closer cooperation among them according to

the terrene convenience.

The selection of the topics was based on the need to accomplish an overall qualification of the NGOs leaders and on the last year experience. The main topics were:

1. Legal Aspects and the new Draft Law on NGOs.
2. The third Sector and its role in the society.
3. Strategic Planning
4. Project proposals for the achievement of strategic planning.
5. Budget and accounting.
6. Fund raising.
7. How to search for the prospective donors.
8. Planning the campaign for fund raising

The training courses were conducted in nine districts: Durres, Shijak, Librazhd, Permet, Burrel, Peshkopi, Bulqize, Vlore.

135 NGOs representatives participated in the training courses. They were mainly leaders and common members of the organizations not trained before. In selecting the participants we made sure there were representatives from all age groups as well as gender-groups. 14 representatives of the local government participated in the training courses, constituting **78%** of the foreseen participation. Even this percentage is positive evidence that reveals the assessment by the local government of the NGOs activity in the districts they operate.

The participants from the local government in some cases were high officials of the Municipality or Prefecture.

With regard to the participation in the seminar we can range the following figures:



Illustrating photo of the training course

- Participation of women was 60 %
- Participation of Youth 35 %
- Over the age of 40, the participation was 24 %

The evaluation of the training course was based on the form that included information on the various aspects of the training course enabling us to get a profile of this activity from the viewpoint of the participants. From town to town it results that the participants evaluated this training course seriously for they were active in filling them out not remaining anonymous. Only in a few cases the participants remained anonymous in their evaluation. However the results speak for a very good evaluation, the graph of the training course displays the weak points that need to be reviewed and improved. The compilation of the indicators and questionnaires for evaluation will be another object of our further work in this project.

Last year there were conducted a number of workshops as a follow-up of the

training courses previously organised in them.

The additional program of the workshops was arranged as follows:

- The preparation and accomplishment of 6 workshops in six districts where training courses were organized before.
- Appointing the trainees of the preceding training courses as local coordinators and facilitators.
- Workshops with the participation of 120 Members of local NGOs and some representatives of the local government.
- Establishing networks of co-operation among NGOs trained according to the present conditions in the respective areas.

The essential difference between the workshops and the training courses consist in the fact that the participants work in groups, compile projects on the basis of an idea defined by them after discussions and then present their work done as a group. The best projects are chosen and with the assistance of the trainers they are corrected and improved. This procedure was applied in all the workshops and the results are encouraging. The workshops were conducted in six districts: Librazhd, Gramsh, Elbasan, Permet, Durrës, and Vlore.

Attendance in the workshops was satisfactory. Representatives of 103 NGOs took part in them: They were chosen in cooperation with the Local Coordinator making sure the participants had attended the preceding training course. In selecting the participants we were cautious to have people of all age groups and genders.

Only 8 representatives of the local government took part in the workshops, which is equal to 67% of the foreseen target. The number of the trainees in the workshops was 108 that are 20 participants from every town. Women participation was 65%, youth 35% and those over 40 years old - 30%.

YEAR 2001



ACSF has concentrated a part of its efforts to the NGOs capacity building throughout the country. Based on the legacy acquired while training the trainers and training NGOs during the year 2000, we organized the work in such a way that the valuable experience could be transmitted to people, working in the environment of civil society. A new special aspect for this year was a training project on Gender Issue, funded by Open Society Foundation for Albania. This project was attached to the training

activity, ACSF has been implementing. In this way the packet of training modules was enriched and new topics were added.

In the context of the project funded by MOTT Foundation during the year 2001 we focused our work and our efforts into the remote and small districts especially to those NGOs, which had not previously been trained and did not have any experience.

We conducted advanced training and treated special topics on Project Cycle Management and Logical Framework and GO Planning.

The main objectives of the training program for the year 2001 were:

- The development and improvement of the training program for the seminars in order meet the main needs of the NGOs leaders.
- Enrichment of the training modules with contemporary topics required by the donors and dictated by the needs, observed in the districts.
- Involvement of the trainees, trained through the TOT program and the training courses of the previous year, as local coordinators, facilitators or active participators in the activities, conducted in the districts.
- Organizing training courses in 18 districts of the country.
- Training 320 members of local NGOs and 32 representatives of the local government.
- Establishing a closer cooperation and fostering the work of the NGOs network, set up to meet the needs in the field.
- Conveying information with regard to fund raising to the Forums of Local NGOs.
- Cooperation with Open Society Foundation for Albania about the Training on Gender Issue.

The selection of the topics was based on the need to accomplish an overall qualification of the NGOs leaders and on the experience of the previous year. This year a new topic on Gender Issue was added due to the cooperation with the OSFA and Women's Center – Tirane. Inclusion of this topic enriched and made the three-day training course more interesting for the participants, a thing, which was reflected in their evaluations.

During this year the following topics were elaborated: Legal aspects and characteristics of the NGOs Law, third sector and its role in society, strategic planning, project proposals for the accomplishment of strategic planning, budget and book keeping, fund raising, estimating the NGOs capacity for fund raising, how to search for prospective donors, planning the campaign for fund raising, gender issue.

First 7 seminars were planned, but later on due to the need assessment and the encouraging and effective results in the workshops conducted soon after the seminars, we reduced to 5 the number of seminars and increased the number of workshops from 7 to 11. The Seminars were organized in five districts: Shkoder, Berat, Lezhë, Sarandë and Lushnjë.

In the training participated 55 NGOs representatives. They were mainly NGO leaders and members who had not been trained before. In selecting the participants we made sure there were participants of all age groups, and both genders. We have made detailed lists with the respective data and have recorded them.

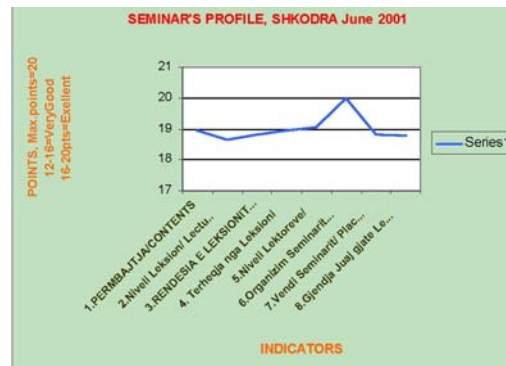
Nine participants of the local government participated in the 5 seminars we conducted, which constitutes 90% of their foreseen participation. Even this result is an achievement as it reveals the assessment from the local government of the work and NGOs activity in those districts, where they operate. In some cases the participants from the local government were Mayors or Directors of the Departments in the Municipality or Prefecture. The best examples are those of the Local Government of Lezha, Berat, Saranda and Lushnja.

The total number of the trainees for the year 2001 was 102, which approximately is equal to 20 people from every districts. It was our goal to have a proportional distribution of the young participants of the two genders as well as some experienced adults. Judging from the list of participants in each seminar we can range the following figures:

- Women's participation was 58%;
- Youth's participation was 35%
- People's participation of over 40 years of age was 26 %

The evaluation of the seminars this year was also based on the same evaluation forms we had compiled a year before. It included information on various aspects of the seminar, which enabled us to get a profile of this activity from the viewpoint of the participants. From district to district we observed that the participants considered this part of the seminar seriously, for they were active in filling them out giving their proper evaluation. Only in few cases the participants did not give their names in their evaluation, as they wanted to remain anonymous. The opinions expressed in the evaluation forms will help us to improve our future work. However, the results speak of a very good evaluation. The curve of the seminar profile displays the relative weak points, which need to be revised and improved.

We have included below the evaluation made by the participants in the seminar we conducted in Shkodra district.



In the training program we included some follow-up workshops, as we considered them indispensable to enhance the NGOs members' skills in compiling and presenting projects with the assistance of our team of trainers.

The plan of the workshops consisted in:

- Preparing and conducting 7 workshops in seven districts where previously we had organized the seminars.
- Appointing the trainees of the preceding training courses as local coordinators and facilitators.
- Training 140 representatives of local NGOs as well as some representatives of the local government.
- Establishing networks of co-operation among NGOs, trained according to the conditions in the respective areas.
- Enriching the topics of the training by including some new necessary elements such as :
 - Method of Logical Framework in drafting project proposals according to the objectives

- Project Cycle Management
- Practical Analysis of the problems and objectives and their tree.

The program of the workshop was conducted in two days and all the foreseen topics were treated. During the workshops the participants worked in-groups, compiled a project on the basis of an idea, suggested by the participants after a discussion and then they presented the work they did as a group. The projects were drafted according to the method of Logical Framework, beginning with the problem analysis, then the objectives, building their tree and then continuing with the planning of activities and on their basis the budget sheet was worked out. The Calendar Plan of the implementation and elements of its evaluation constituted the management phase of the project and its evaluation and reporting. Then the best project was chosen and with the assistance of the trainers the participants corrected and improved them. This procedure was applied in all the workshops and the results were really encouraging. Some representatives of the local government expressed their appreciation considering the Method of Logical Framework as indispensable in their daily work as they have to manage different projects and situations.

Eleven workshops were conducted in 11 districts of the country: Kavaja, Kruja, Burreli, Korça, Pogradeci, Kuçova, Shkodra, Berati, Lezha, Lushnja, Peshkopia.

The workshops in Lushnje, Berat, Lezhë and Shkodër were organized soon after the seminars and the results were very good.

Attendance in the workshops was also very good. There participated 203 NGOs representatives. The participants were selected in cooperation with the local coordinators making sure they had been trained in the seminars. We were also cautious with regard to having participants of youths and adults as well as of both genders.

Besides, eighteen representatives of the local government participated in the workshops, which is equal to 77% of the foreseen target. This percentage is lower than that of their participation in the seminars. The most active participants were in the districts of Lezhë, Berat, Sarandë, Krujë and Peshkopi. Recently we have received some requests from the Municipality of Lezha and Elbasan districts to train them on “The Project Cycle Management” and “Method of Logical Framework”.

The total number of the trainees in the workshops was 218, which constitutes an average of 20 participants from each district. Women’s participation was 67%, youth - 40% and the participation of those over the age of 40 was 28%.

During this year the training packet was enriched, as there were included some new topics prepared by the training team. These topics were: Method of Logical Framework in Drafting Project Proposals and Project Cycle Management.

A new element of this year training was the introduction of the module concerning “Gender Issues” which was carried out in Cupertino with OSFA Foundation and Women’s Centre, Tirana.

YEAR 2002

During the year 2002 the activity of the ACSF was mainly focused on the Capacity Building Program, Development of NGO Forums with the intention of strengthening the Non- Profit Sector in Albania and in particular in the remote areas of the country.

Information Dissemination and NGO Technical Assistance consist in our third domain of activity.

This year's Capacity Building Program was characterized by a wider participation of the local government authorities in the training sessions that we have held in different districts of the country. This was based on our trend to orient the Capacity Building program towards the Local Government in collaboration with the local NGO's. Informing materials on the life of non-for-profit sector, its remarkable activities its role in the society, were systematically disseminated.

Considering an important aspect of the ACSF activity we continued with the development of the pilot models in the cities of Peshkopi, Burrel, Bulqize and Përmet, where the forums of local non-governmental organizations were supported with logistics and necessary materials to develop dialogue and debate with the local government, to organize various activities especially with the youths and the citizens of urban and rural areas around them.

For the first time Albanian Civil Society Foundation supported the pilot schemes for the social and economic development issues in the rural areas of Tirana district as well as projects of consolidated associations, which are contributing with their conclusions to the formulation of the policies for the development of the rural areas in particular.

Introduction of the Information Technology was achieved through the establishment of the Internet Centre, which has become a resource centre of information and education for a considerable part of non-governmental organizations and the community near the Foundation location in Tirana.

Albanian Civil Society Foundation has further consolidated the partnership and cooperation with other donors like the World Bank, OSFA Foundation, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and others.

According to the project presented and co-funded by MOTT Foundation and Albanian Civil Society Foundation for the year 2002 we had to accomplish the following objectives:

- Seven three-day seminars in different districts of the country.
- Seven Workshops in the districts where before three-day seminars were conducted.
- Four one-day seminars on basic knowledge about civil society and activities of this sector.
- Through these activities we intend to train 220 people who are members of 105 non-governmental organizations in the respective districts.
- To encourage the establishment of non-governmental organizations in those districts and communes where there is no activity of this kind.
- To increase the number of projects compiled by the non-governmental organizations to 20% and improve the quality of the Project Presentation and increase the number of the grant winners.
- To encourage and establish the network of NGO operating in the districts so that they can exchange information and experience in project implementation.
- To set up NGO houses in some districts and to better use the computer and printers, they have been provided with in the contexts of the project.
- To provide some NGOs Forums in the districts with computers and printers in the context of NGOs network and exchange of information among them.



Work in Grups

We have already accomplished these activities based on the objectives of the project.

The trainers have improved and enriched the written materials that we hand out to the participants concerning the following topics: Civil Society, Goal Oriented Project Planning and Fund Raising.

The training team of ACSF intends to include other topics such as the Method of Logical Framework and Project Cycle Management for a higher level of audience and especially the local governors.

In the period March – June 2002 we planned the workshops we had to conduct after the theoretical seminars, we had organized earlier. In fact we conducted three workshops out of seven that we had planned in the following districts: Sarande, Fier and Gjirokaster. 45 non-governmental organizations participated in the training and 64 participants were trained. 11 of them were under 25 years of age, 38 from 25 to 40 years old and 15 of the participants were over 40 years old. This statistics shows that there is not sufficient commitment from the youth to the development of civil society.



During this period we have organized four theoretical seminars according to the plan in the districts of Gjirokaster, Fier, Kukes and Rreshen. In these seminars 90 participants were trained including representatives from the local government [except for Fier in all the districts there were two participants from the local government]. They represented 59 NGOs in the above mentioned districts. The theoretical seminars were attended with a high interest especially in the districts of Kukes, Gjirokaster and Rreshen. A letter of appreciation was sent to the Foundation from Kukësi NGOs which was also published in ACSF newsletter.

We think that the goal of the project and its general objectives are being accomplished in conformity with the project approved and supported by MOTT

Foundation.

We also organised the one-day seminars, which were very effective, in those districts where there are not many evident activities of the civil society. These districts were Konispoli, Çorovoda and Bilishti. Sixty-four people were trained and they were intellectuals mainly working in the field of education, agriculture and animal husbandry. Representation from NGOs was very limited. Only in Konispol there were representatives from the non-governmental organization of veterans, the Beekeepers NGO and the cultural organization of Çamëria. Besides, in Konispol a representative of the local government participated in the seminar. The above activities showed that in those communities where the activities of civil society are limited, there is a group of people committed to the development of this sector and interested in being trained to find solutions to the problems that preoccupy the community in general. The encouragement of the civil society sector through these seminars is a positive undertaking in the context of this project. We think that these activities were successful and met the goal of the project. We hope to contribute to the establishment of at least a modest number of non-governmental organizations in these communities.



The factors that were useful in accomplishing the activities as scheduled were:

- Cooperation with the ACSF local coordinators in the districts
- The preparatory work and visits in the districts planned for training.
- The direct contacts with the NGO leaders in the districts to define and schedule the training course or select the participants that need to be trained.
- Finding the appropriate venues for training.
- Preliminary preparation of the written materials in the form of complete files for each participant.
- The experience and the proper preparation of the trainers.

The Characteristics of this Phase

- The increasing interest of the participants in the topics of the training.
- Active participation in the work-groups of five people.
- Improvement of the quality of compiling project-proposals.
- Ideas for common projects of NGOs network.
- Absence of donors in Albania
- Low sustainability of NGOs activities in the districts.
- Establishment of connections among the NGOs included in the training program and exchange of information among them.
- Facilitation of the project typing and layout in those districts, where the NGO houses have been set up and are provided with computers and printers in the context of the project.

- A new cooperation was established between ACSF and SOROS Foundation to include a training module on Gender Issues in ACSF seminars. This additional project enriches the actual one and enables the participants to acquire some knowledge on gender issues.



YEAR 2003

One of the main goals of Albanian Civil Society Foundation has been the decentralization of its activity. To carry out this process, ACSF has set up NGO Forums in some remote districts of the country such as Peshkopi, Burrel and Permet.

Observing the need for civil society development in general and the enhancement of local NGOs' role in the community, ACSF submitted the above project to the Norwegian Embassy.



Within a six-month period, ACSF funded 42 mini-projects of local NGOs in Burrel, Bulqize, Peshkopi and Permet district and two projects in Kruja district.

The main target groups of the mini projects were: women, children and the disabled people.



Photo: Aspects from the mini-projects implemented by Local NGOs in Burrel and Peshkopi

From the monitoring and evaluation of the results of the NGOs' mini-projects implementation, ACSF concluded that:

- The Activities organized by NGO-s in different areas are mainly of awareness raising nature. They consist of distribution of leaflets, questionnaires, round tables and seminars. These have proved to be effective means. However, as they are so often applied, they run the risk of being monotonous and not sufficiently challenging that is why they sometimes do not have the proper impact. The NGOs need to be more creative concerning the type of activities in order to organize increasingly effective ones.
- The target groups of NGOs activities are mainly vulnerable groups, a thing which has contributed to the integration of this category to the society.
- Though ACSF has organized the NGO training in the relevant areas, the NGOs still lack the proper skills in making the needs analysis of their community in order to address the proper crucial issues, in compiling projects and evaluating the results of the projects.
- Through the establishment of the NGO Forums, ACSF has institutionalized the cooperation among NGOs by providing the facilities to them and has encouraged NGOs' joint project. However, only few of them have presented joint projects. It was noticed that the latter were better-compiled and more effective.
- The local governments proved to be increasingly interested in participating in the round tables on public participation in decision making. However, they still do not practically enable the public to have a voice in solving community problems. On the other hand there is much hesitation and indifference among a considerable number of citizens concerning their participation in decision making. So there still prevails to a considerable extent the concept that the citizens as community members have delegated to the appointed or elected representatives the right to decide upon their problems excluding themselves from this procedure.



Photos: Aspects from mini-projects implemented by local NGOs in Permet and Kruja

Project Results

- Through the implementation of the project, ACSF contributed to the development of new models of self-governing by setting up Local NGO Boards to allocate grants for the best projects. The Boards have already gained some experience in assessing the project proposals no matter how small were the projects that they approved.
- The round tables and open discussions proved to be good means for the promotion of dialogues and constructive debates between Community and the representatives of the local government, which is a premise for the decentralization of local government at local level.