



Tirana, Albania – Catawba County, NC Partnership
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INTRODUCTION

In late 2001, the partnership between the City of Tirana, Albania and Catawba County, North Carolina began. This was a critical period for reforms inaugurated by the new mayor of Tirana, Mr. Edi Rama. The previous decade left the nation's local government system full of corruption and mismanagement. In addition, the neglected public infrastructure was further crumbling due to migration from the north and ever increasing urban expansion, especially in the City of Tirana. The partnership between the City of Tirana and Catawba County, funded by USAID under the Resource Cities Program (2001-2004)/City Links Program (2005-2007), was formed to assist with addressing these formidable management challenges.

Catawba County, with a publicly recognized well-managed department of public works, was an excellent choice of partner to assist the City of Tirana with the issues of infrastructure management and municipal codes enforcement. The City of Tirana lacked a system of planning, and as a result, city officials did not link annual projections with actual expenditures. Catawba County officials worked with the City of Tirana officials to balance municipal budgeting and revenue generation with capital infrastructure development. In addition, the officials worked together to improve citizen participation and ensure a transparent decision-making process.

The City of Tirana-Catawba County partnership achieved impressive results during its first phase which covered the period 2001-2004. Some of the results included the following: improved environmental conditions, maintenance, and life extension of the Sharra landfill through better operations; improved management of the City of Tirana's infrastructure assets; created a model practice for more cost-effective contracting with the private sector for waste collection services; and developed a model pilot waste container program.

Challenges remained, however, particularly in the area of solid waste collection and disposal. First and foremost, even though the level of litter in the City of Tirana's center was reduced significantly by the metal waste container pilot project, there were still waste spillovers due to an ineffective cycle of trash collection. The City of Tirana needed to take additional measures to reduce unsightly waste spillages in its downtown.

Secondly, the City of Tirana has continued to grow rapidly with new building being constructed frequently and quickly. The City of Tirana has not implemented environmentally sound practices of industrial waste compacting, reuse or disposal. With the current rate of population growth with the city, this issue needed to be addressed.

PARTNERSHIP OBJECTIVES

The second phase of partnership (2005-2007) addressed the above challenges through two main components: 1) a solid waste collection, disposal and recycling education program and 2) a construction and demolition (C&D) waste operation.

A focal point of the first component involved cleaning the City of Tirana streets and reducing the amount of waste collection container spillovers. Activities were

implemented to include both streamlining the City of Tirana's waste collection operations and raising the City of Tirana's citizens' awareness of disposal schedules. Catawba County officials assisted the City of Tirana officials with developing solid waste educational and environmental programs designed to decrease street-side and sidewalk litter and garbage and introduce recycling.

The second component included the creation of a C&D waste disposal, reuse, and recycling program – both as a means to promote a cleaner environment in the City of Tirana and as a remedy to the already overburdened Sharra landfill. The program provided methodology for the City of Tirana officials to use for collecting, disposing, and marketing the C&D materials. The waste disposal program also involved coordination with construction businesses, major property owners, suppliers, and potential manufacturers and buyers of recycled material goods - all who would be potential stakeholders for the City of Tirana. In addition, the program was designed to raise the awareness of the stakeholders and educate stakeholders about the benefits of reusing industrial waste such as concrete and scrap metal.

PARTNERSHIP IMPLEMENTATION

I. Solid Waste Management

Solid Waste Collection

Recycling Pilot Program

Materials Recovery Facility (MRF)

Upon completion of the first partnership phase, solid waste collection and the introduction of a recycling program was considered an area of urgency and importance for the City of Tirana. The Catawba County and City of Tirana officials not only wanted to improve the City of Tirana's solid waste collection and method of disposal one step at-a-time but also begin a pilot recycling program, within a designated neighborhood, that included citizen participation.

The Catawba County officials assisted the City of Tirana officials with making progress through various methods that included establishing partnerships with private companies, gaining stakeholder support, discussing issues with the Roma representatives, holding a kick-off event in a designated neighborhood, and introducing a citizen awareness and education campaign.

To begin the process, Catawba County and City of Tirana officials assessed Tirana's solid waste collection management and infrastructure including regulations, contracts with waste collection contractors, and tariffs. New waste collection system areas, based on area and street distances, were designated. The city of Tirana was divided into four waste collection zones, areas, or sectors. The associated waste collection contracts with private contractors were also assessed by the officials in concurrence with the waste stream, collection points, and number/size of containers.

The City of Tirana, with assistance from Catawba County officials, then determined the City of Tirana's waste management and waste collection points citywide and recorded its

waste collection points in a geographical information system (GIS). The waste generation rates of collection points were observed and assessed. City of Tirana “hot teams” and contractor representatives were dispatched for street and bin inspections three times a day in their respective zones.

Next, a street cleanliness program and scale was developed by the City of Tirana and Catawba County officials. The program included street-cleaning zone development issues and review of the private contractors’ 2007 contracts with the City of Tirana. It was based on New York City’s Scorecard Program, which was managed by the mayor’s office, to monitor street cleanliness and citizens’ awareness about the issues.

To kick-off the street cleanliness program and initiate the City of Tirana’s recycling pilot program, the City of Tirana officials selected a pilot zone. Known as the “Television Block” neighborhood, the selected zone had a broad base of waste generators that included residential buildings of various size, villas, differing business types, educational institutions, and several embassies.

A volunteer task force was created to lead the efforts within the Television Block. This volunteer task force included City of Tirana staff, government officials from the health department, a national ministry-level representative, staff from the Environmental Center for Development Education and Networking (EDEN), private contractors, university students, a paper mill representative, and a paper recycler representative. The City of Tirana officials gave the task force volunteers an overview of the solid waste challenges throughout the city and introduced the city’s plans for a pilot recycling program. In addition, the task force volunteers shared their concerns, needs, and ideas regarding the City of Tirana’s overall solid waste management program.

One of the volunteer task force’s first tasks was an outreach campaign within the Television Block. The door-to-door campaign used a questionnaire developed by the City of Tirana and Catawba County officials. The task force sought to determine the rate of the City of Tirana household waste; volume of recyclable plastics, paper and aluminum; and assess citizens’ attitudes toward separation of household waste at the source. This effort was significant because the City of Tirana had gone from zero participation to formation of a volunteer task force.

To highlight the progress made to date and kick-off the City of Tirana’s pilot recycling program, a *Clean-up and Recycling Day* event was held on May 19th, 2007 in the Television Block neighborhood. Approximately 30 volunteers from the City of Tirana and Catawba County, IDRA (Institute for Development Research and Alternatives), EDEN (Environmental Center for Development Education and Networking), Red Cross, local universities, and ICMA gathered at the Tirana Artistic School -Jordan Misja courtyard to participate in the event. Volunteers registered and received an event T-shirt. They were then split up into four different teams each led by a Catawba County or City of Tirana official. The four cleaning and recycling teams worked with shovels, brooms, and scrapers to clean and pick-up recyclables in an E-shaped area, covering at least four streets within the Television Block neighborhood. After the teams completed cleaning

and collecting recyclables, new recycling bins were distributed and the streets were washed and sanitized. The four cleaning and recycling teams then distributed brochures to citizens on the street and leaflets to businesses. The materials were created by the City of Tirana officials and will be used for future recycling programs the city implements. In conjunction with the four teams, the City of Tirana officials worked with the solid waste and recycling contractors; conducted interviews with the media; interacted with the surrounding neighborhood businesses and residents; and prepared for the City of Tirana Mayor's arrival at the event.

A poster art award ceremony followed the morning's street cleaning and recycling efforts. In order to involve the community and youth in the City of Tirana's recycling campaign, the City of Tirana and Catawba County officials decided to invite the Tirana Artistic School - Jordan Misja students to participate in a poster art competition. The theme for the competition was "I Recycle for Tirana's Future." With this theme, the poster art competition engaged another citizen group – students, parents of the students, teachers, and school administration. The goal of the competition was to create artwork that embraced the concepts and practices of recycling, solid waste reduction, and street cleanliness. Participating students were given guidelines and technical requirements in order to ensure equity amongst all students. Awards for first, second, and third place prizes were given to students at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.

The poster art competition award ceremony was facilitated by the Mr. Auron Pasha, Director of the Institute for Development Research Alternatives (IDRA) as Master of Ceremonies, and introductory remarks were made by two dignitaries – City of Tirana Mayor, Mr. Edi Rama and the USAID Mission Director, Mr. Ted Landau. Both Mr. Rama and Mr. Landau spoke about the City of Tirana's efforts to manage their solid waste and specifically, the morning's recycling pilot program kick-off. The remarks were followed by the presentation of awards by the Catawba County Manager - Mr. Tom Lundy, Mr. Rama, and Mr. Landau. The awards (camera, paint brushes, paints, paper, supply box, portfolio, etc.) given to the students reflected their interests in the fine arts. To complete the event, a light lunch was served for the volunteers to thank them for their efforts.

The City of Tirana and Catawba County officials, IDRA, and ICMA developed several media campaign products for this event that included the following: brochures for the public; posters to advertise the event; leaflets for businesses participating in the recycling campaign; public television announcement regarding event; and a kids' coloring and game book from a section of the City of Tirana Recycling Handbook. In addition to the event products, several documents were drafted by the City of Tirana and Catawba County officials, IDRA, and ICMA in order to prepare/organize and implement this event. These event documents included the following: an assignment matrix; mobilization plan with team leaders, responsibilities, and physical areas assigned; event schedule; poster art competition talking points; event map; event press release; and participation list.

After the event was completed, supplies (example – shovels, brooms, gloves, hand sanitizer, T-shirts, etc) bought by the partnership specifically for the event were distributed to the City of Tirana and host for the event, the Tirana Artistic School - Jordan Misja.

A week after this event, the City of Tirana held week-long activities focusing on environmental topics. New pilot areas within the Television Block area were targeted for event replication though to a lesser degree, scale than the May 19th event. The City of Tirana also developed an implementation plan and budget for the replication activities.

In joint collaboration between the City of Tirana, IDRA, and ICMA, a Recycling Handbook was developed and produced as a resource and tangible tool for the City of Tirana officials. It is anticipated that this handbook will be revised and updated as necessary. (**Note: See the Recycling Handbook folder*).

Materials Recovery Facility (MRF)

Meetings were held in 2006 and early 2007 with the Sharra landfill engineers, from the T.E.I. Group in Milan, Italy, to develop plans for a materials recovery facility (MRF) at the Sharra landfill and/or possible future landfill site. The proposed City of Tirana MRF would remove recyclables from waste stream prior to waste transportation to a remote disposal site. (**Note: See the Landfill Case Study, Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) Plan, Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) Transfer Case Study, and the Tirana-Durres Regional Landfill Site Placement Plan under the Catawba County folder*).

II. Construction and Demolition (C&D) Component

As a first step, the City of Tirana and Catawba County officials conducted assessments of the construction and demolition (C&D) waste generated by the city, C&D waste disposal at the Sharra Landfill, and illegal C&D dump sites in and around the city. The City of Tirana and Catawba County officials also collected the European Union's C&D waste statistical data in order to have an internationally recognized standard when working with the assessment data.

The Catawba County officials then drafted a waste stream analysis and C&D waste management concept paper as a first step in developing a program for the City of Tirana. The concept paper included management and participation by a number of existing city departments. Because both legal and financial issues needed to be resolved in order for the City of Tirana to develop a C&D waste management program, the City of Tirana and Catawba County officials worked concurrently with the City of Tirana's financial and legal departments; national Ministries of Policy and Planning for Public Works, Urban Planning, and Environment; and the building community.

As meetings were held with the various stakeholders, the C&D waste management concept paper drafted by Catawba County officials was presented. The program was generally accepted however several concerns were expressed by ministry officials. Before further action was taken by the City of Tirana, a minimum of two items were requested – first, a study to determine the financial feasibility of a C&D facility and

secondly, a “management and control” study to determine the best operational course for proceeding with such a facility.

The Catawba County officials also met with two staff attorneys from the City of Tirana procurement office to discuss the need for including a bidding provision to require recycled material in new construction. The attorneys agreed that national procurement law allowed for technical requirements such as the recycled content provision. However, the attorneys suggested that the Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Public Works, and the Council of Ministers needed to adopt/approve a new regulation requiring the use of recycled material and further, that the laws pertaining to inspection of construction projects would have to be amended.

As a next step, the Catawba County officials held meetings with representatives the Ministries of Policy and Planning for Public Works, Urban Planning, and Environment. The primary purpose of these meetings was to share the main concepts within the C&D waste management concept paper along with Catawba County’s suggestions about what the City of Tirana should consider when building a facility. These suggestions included the various types of models that the City of Tirana could use. One of these models - a DBOT (Design, Build, Operate + Transfer) facility was recommended to the City of Tirana officials. With a DBOT, financing of the C&D waste management facility would be provided by the private sector entity who would then design, build, own, and later transfer ownership to the City of Tirana at an agreed upon time. This option may be the best for the City of Tirana since they may not have the upfront investment.

The meetings with the ministry representatives also included discussions regarding each ministry’s role with the selection of a new landfill site and building of a construction and demolition waste facility. The ministries’ involvement varied depending on the location of the site, number of local governments involved, and size of the site. They seemed eager to move forward with plans for the new landfill by offering their support. In addition, the ministry representatives not only wanted only to support the City of Tirana in their efforts but also set and apply country-wide policies and standards for processes like this. They also felt that it was especially important to complete a cost benefit analysis considering how the City of Tirana would build and finance the new site.

Meetings with the director and staff of the Tirana Building Association were also held. The Catawba County officials felt that it was important to provide the association with an update on the City of Tirana’s plans for a future C&D waste facility as well as the ministry representatives’ cooperation.

*(*Note: See the Construction and Demolition (C&D) Transport License, C&D Waste Management System Case Study, C&D Certification form, C&D Program, C&D Processing Center, and C&D Business Plan under the Catawba County folder).*

III. Partnership Exchange in the US

From June 10-15, 2007, the seventh partnership exchange, and only one based in the US, took place in Catawba County, NC. This first exchange in the US under the current

partnership phase included work sessions with the Catawba County officials, visits to surrounding municipalities, and informational exchanges on the solid waste management process and structure. Attending the seventh exchange on behalf of the City of Tirana were four officials who had been involved with the second partnership phase since it began in 2005. The in-country coordinator representing ICMA's local subcontractor also attended.

Exchange week highlights included a Catawba County government center tour; tour of a materials recovery facility in Catawba County; presentation on Catawba County's history with recycling and current "Keep Catawba County Beautiful" campaign; tour of Catawba County's landfill and state-of-the-art EcoComplex; presentation by Charlotte city staff on Construction and Demolition Waste Management; tour of the Winston-Salem inner city waste management system and discussion; and tour of the Mecklenburg County state-of-the-art landfill.

During the exchange presentations and discussions, many topics and issues were addressed by the host officials. These topics and issues ranged from the functions and management of a solid waste system and landfill site to how to determine costs and budget for solid waste collection. The host officials also described what techniques and tools can be used for establishing a sustainable recycling program, for example - index, task force/committee, and guided by mission. Some of the tools included guides/manuals/reports that can be produced to lead a local government's efforts such as the following: how to include stakeholders (ex. educational institutions, environmentalists, board/council, engineers, businesses), how to educate the community (ex. radio, TV, newspaper, educational events), and what is needed for recycling to be successful (ex. must be convenient for customer, provide service, and offer an incentive).

The important aspects of a Construction and Demolition Program were presented by host officials as well and discussed with the City of Tirana exchange participants. A successful program included some of following aspects: must have markets, environmental stewardship, must give recognition to commercial contractors and subcontractors, and must be sustainable. The issue of barriers to a successful program were addressed as well, for example - infrastructure, markets not fully developed for some materials, cheap disposal fees, and plenty of disposal capacity. The City of Tirana officials were also given ideas as to what a local government needs for a successful C&D program. Some of the elements included in successful programs included the following: develop a resource guide, use direct mail, survey the C&D community, include recognition efforts, hold workshops/exhibits/networking, have a business awards program, assist the local market development, strengthen partnerships, and set benchmarks.

The City of Tirana officials met with a variety of city and county host officials during their workweek in North Carolina. These host officials included Catawba County staff, contractors, federal employees, Winston-Salem city staff, Charlotte city staff, and Mecklenburg County staff.

A variety of guides, leaflets, reports, etc. were handed out to the City of Tirana officials when they visited the various counties and cities in North Carolina.

KEY RESULTS

- Analyzed and revamped solid waste collection system
- Developed citizen surveys for collection system and pilot recycling program
- Introduced pilot recycling program with a neighborhood event and public awareness campaign
- Developed “how to’s” for solid waste management
- Developed “how to’s” for construction and demolition management
- Developed “how to’s” for landfill management
- Developed “how to’s” for a materials recovery facility (MRF) and transfer station
- Produced a Recycling Handbook for local government officials and youth

CHALLENGES AND OBSTACLES

The partnership experienced delays and little progress in late 2006 and early 2007 due to the City of Tirana’s elections as many of the City of Tirana officials were involved with the mayor’s re-election campaign. This campaign involvement also affected the partnership stakeholder relationships.

The Catawba County officials and ICMA staff also found it difficult to work with and coordinate activities with City of Tirana officials that were not involved with the partnership activities. This lack of involvement and eventually buy-in led to a lack of progress within the City of Tirana and completion for some partnership activities.

In addition, during the partnership, the original “team” of City of Tirana officials that had been working with Catawba County officials was removed and a new “team” was selected to participate in the partnership. This interrupted the flow of the partnership and impacted the pre-existing relationships the Catawba County officials had with the City of Tirana officials.

The Catawba County officials experienced obstacles when faced with coordinating between the City of Tirana and the national government level, *the participating ministries. These obstacles were especially apparent when the Catawba County officials worked on the C&D waste and landfill issues.

LESSONS LEARNED

When the City of Tirana officials were asked what lessons they had learned during the partnership, they responded with a list of “how to’s” including the following:

- How to do a pilot program, *recycling
- How to create and manage public awareness campaigns and work with citizens, schools, stakeholders, etc.
- How to improve contracts with the private sector, *solid waste and recycling contractors
- How to improve solid waste collection
- How to improve the solid waste management system

- How to develop a tax and tariff system to cover the total cost of waste collection and disposal
- How to draft a solid waste collection and recycling guide for citizens and businesses

NEXT STEPS AND/OR POSSIBLE FUTURE ACTIVITIES

The City of Tirana officials, in the months since the partnership has ended and in the coming year (2008), will continue some of the activities implemented during partnership if possible. The activities proposed for continuation by the City of Tirana officials were as follows:

- Replicate the May 19th event in 7 newly selected neighborhoods
- Conduct a recycling program in schools
- Improve public-private relations for the recycling program
- Draft an incentive fee/tax recycling plan for businesses and citizens
- Continue working with the volunteer task force begun in Television Block
- Create a recycling management plan that includes strategies
- Draft a C&D conceptual outline and program
- Design a plan for the Sharra landfill and find a new location for a new landfill

It is anticipated that the Recycling Handbook will be used by Tirana officials and updated, revised as necessary in the future. The handbook will provide the officials with a good resource for implementing and sustaining a successful recycling program. It also includes a kids' section for distribution to teachers and students.

The Catawba County officials have provided the City of Tirana officials with their assessment and recommendations for solid waste management; construction and demolition including a materials recovery facility (MRF); and the Sharra landfill. Both the Catawba County officials and ICMA staff hope that the City of Tirana officials will use the assessments and recommendations as a resource for further developments and implementation for each of these components.

*(*Note: See the Catawba County Component documents folder).*

SECOND PHASE PARTNERSHIP PARTICIPANTS

City of Tirana Partnership Team: Mr. Endrit Ducka, Director, General Department of Public Works – Cleaning Department; Ms. Erjola Muka, Chief Sector, General Department of Public Works – Cleaning Department; Mr. Redion Biba, Chief Sector, General Department of Public Works – Cleaning Department; Mr. Olsi Isufaj, Specialist, General Department of Public Works – Cleaning Department

Other Participating City of Tirana Officials: Mr. Edi Rama, Mayor; Ms. Vali Bizhga, Vice Mayor; Ms. Majlinda Dhuka, City of Tirana Attorney

Catawba County Partnership Team: Mr. Tom Lundy, County Manager; Mr. Barry Edwards, Director of Utilities and Engineering Department; and Mr. Rodney Miller, Director of Finance Department

Other Participating Catawba County Officials: Mr. Jack Chandler, staff of Utilities and Engineering Department; Toni Norton, staff of Utilities and Engineering Department; Cindy Meadows, staff of Utilities and Engineering Department

The International City/County Management Association (ICMA) staff: Ms. Sue Cosner, Senior Governance Advisor; Ms. Daniela Kissova, Partnership Manager; Ms. Brancy Finkler, Partnership Manager; Ms. Amelda Beluli, Program Assistant

ICMA Local Subcontractor/partner - Institute for Development Research Alternatives (IDRA) staff: Mr. Auron Pasha, Director and Ms. Irma Tanku, in-country partnership coordinator

US-based partnership exchange hosts: City of Winston-Salem, County of Mecklenburg, City of Charlotte, and Forsyth County

Albanian Ministries of Policy and Planning for Public Works, Urban Planning, and Environment

Tirana Building Association

Tirana Artistic School - Jordan Misja

City of Tirana Television Block Neighborhood

Albanian university student volunteers

City of Tirana Recycling Contractor - B.I.A.P.

Italian Engineering Firm – T.E.I. Group, Milan, Italy

National and City of Tirana Police

Tirana Red Cross

Environmental Center for Development Education and Networking (EDEN)

Association of Albanian Municipalities

City of Kruje

US pro bono consultant/professional engineer (P.E.) – Mr. Joe Wiseman