

## From Monologue into Dialogue

There have been moments along Albania's road to democracy when people spilled into the streets, guns flowed from armories and progress seemed impossible. Even though those days are not so very far behind, hope for change lives and progress remains a possibility.

### Exponential Impact

- 2 Prefectures
- 4 Districts
- 6 Political parties
- 7 TV & print hits
- 9 Communes
- 28 Villages
- 97 % Surveys returned
- 3,290 Surveys fielded
- 53,000 Voters
- 100,330 Residents

In June and July of this year, citizens took a bold step, demonstrating that even those who live in small, rural communities can be informed and active participants in the democratic process. As a result of these simple efforts, more than 53,000 voters in Tirana, Durrës, Kavaje and Kruje, will be voting on party lists and platforms already informed by the ideas of thousands of citizens. One man in rural Kavaje put it best: "These citizen platforms have changed politics in our communities from a monologue to a dialogue."

This is not the first step, though. The creation of community platforms builds on three years of hard work by citizens and the staff of NDI's Civic Forum program, and not the least from the support by USAID in Albania.

The community platforms emerged from a simple survey. The sampling was not scientific; just community activists and informal leaders seeking out ideas and opinions from neighbors. Citizens used the survey to sort through the crush of concerns in their communities and to give direction to political leaders as to the choices they would like to see made to improve the situation. In total, 3290 surveys were distributed in more than 38 communities across central Albania. A remarkable 97 percent of the surveys were completed and returned for analysis. The results of the survey were then used to create community platforms that were delivered to local officials.

What these efforts reveal is a willingness and a capacity for democratic action by citizens in central Albania. Many citizens were surprised by the overwhelmingly positive response political party representatives expressed when they received the considered views of citizens. Not all local officials shared this view, but those who resisted the platforms are in a very small minority.



*Organizers in Maminas sent a survey to every family in the commune – 1200. All were filled and returned.*

In addition to contributing to the election platforms of the political parties, citizens envision a range of applications for the process and the product they created. For example, a number of citizens plan to use their platform as a starting point for debates among competing candidates. Other citizens see a more immediate application of their community platform priorities, especially during the review of local budgets, scheduled for August in most communities. Still other citizens see the platform results as a way to educate the media as to local priorities to help improve the coverage of important issues.

## Participating Communities

Not all communities that fielded surveys decided to compile platforms or to engage directly political party representatives. There were a variety of reasons for these decisions. However the communities listed below actively engaged in the survey process, going to friends and neighbors in their community, seeking ideas and opinions.

### Tirana

- Baldushk Commune
- Bathore Commune
- Berxulle Commune
- Mullet Commune

### Kruje

- Bubq
- Thumon
- Berizon

### Durres

- Nishtulla Village
- Shkallnur Village
- Porto Romano Commune
- Rrashbull Village, Xhafzotaj
- Maminas Commune
- Bilalas Village, Maminas
- Rrubjeke Village, Maminas
- Karreç Village, Maminas
- Vlashaj Village, Maminas
- Karpen Village, Maminas
- Metalla Village, Maminas
- Bodinok Village, Maminas
- Armath Village, Manëz
- Rade Village, Manëz
- Hamallaj Village, Manëz
- Kucok Village, Manëz

### Kavaje

- Synej Commune
- Synej Village, Synej
- Pequinaj Village, Synej
- Hajdaraj Village, Synej
- Bago Village, Synej
- Rrikaj Village, Synej
- Rrakull Village, Synej
- Lekaj Commune
- Kryeluz Village, Lekaj
- Shkozet Village, Lekaj
- Luz i madh Village, Lekaj
- Harizaj Village, Lekaj

### Top Five Community Platform Priorities – by District, Commune and Village

Village	Infrastructure	Water	Roads	Sewage pipes	Lighting	Schools	Econ. Devt	Property	Jobs	Agriculture	Credit	Animal husband	Social Devt	Education	Social asst.	Public health	Vocational Ed.	Preserve traditio	Transparency	Announce mngs	Publish Decisio	Organize mngs	Info. office	Citizens' councl
<b>Tirana</b>																								
Mullet			2	3		1			2					1			2				2	3		1
Baldushk		2	1						1	3	2			2		3	1			3	1	2		
Bathore		1	3					2	1		3			1		3	2			3	1	2		
Berxulle		2	3					1	2		3			1		2	3			1	3	2		
<b>Durrës</b>																								
Shkallnur		1		2		3			1		3			1	2	3				1	2	3		
P.Romano		1				3			1		2			1	3		2			2	1		3	
Nishtulla		1		2	3				1		3			3	1			2		2	3	1		
Maminas		1	2		3			2		1		3			1	2	3			2	1	3		
M.Village		1	2		3			2		1	3				1	3	2			1	2	3		
Rrubjeke		1	2	3				3		1		2			1	2	3			1	2	3		
Bilalas		2			3			3		1		2			1	2	3				2	1	3	
Karreç		1	2					3		1		2			1	2	3			2	1		3	
Vlashaj		3	2		1			1		2	3				1	2	3			1	3	2		
Karpen		1	2		3			3		1		2			1	2	3			1	2	3		
Metalle		1	2	3				3		1	2				1	3	2			1	2	3		
Bodinok		1	2		3			3		1	2				1		2	3		3	1	2		
Armath		1	3	2						1		3		1	3	2					1	2	3	
Rade		1	3					1	2	3				1		2	3				3	1	2	
Hamallaj		1		2		3			1		3			1	2	3				1	2	3		
Kucok		1		2				3	1		2			3	1	2				1	2	3		
<b>Kavajë</b>																								
Lekaj		2		3		1		1	2	3				1	2		3			1	3	2		
Shkozet			1	2				1	2		3			1		2	3			1	3	2		
Kryeluz				2				1	2		3			1		3	2			1	3	2		
Luz i madh		1		2				1	2		3			1		2	3			1	3	2		
Harizaj		2		1	3			1	2	3				1	3		2			1	3	2		
Synej		1	2	3				1	2		3			1		2	3			3	2	1		
Synej Vill.		1	2	3				1	2	3				1		3	2			3	2	1		
Pequinaj		3	1					1	2		3			1		3	2				1	2	3	
Hajdaraj			1							2	1			1	3	2				3	2	1		
Bago		1	2			3		1	2	3				1	3	2				3	2	1		
Rrikaj				1	2				1	3	2			1		3	2			2	1	3		
Rrakull		1	3		2			2		1				1	3	2				2		3	1	
1s x 10		20	4	2	1	2		12	8	10	1	0		20	11	0	1	0		14	9	7	1	1
2s x 5		5	12	8	2	0		4	12	2	6	4		1	3	16	11	1		6	13	12	1	0
3s x 2		2	5	6	7	4		7	0	7	12	2		2	6	10	12	1		7	9	11	4	0
<b>TOTALS</b>		<b>227</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>28</b>		<b>154</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>24</b>		<b>209</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>7</b>		<b>184</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>10</b>



## Community Platform Survey

Data \_\_\_\_\_ 2003

code \_\_\_\_\_

Commune/Municipality \_\_\_\_\_

City/Village \_\_\_\_\_

**Which are the most essential issues that must be resolved by Local Government, in your community regarding these issues?**

**Pick up 3 alternatives for each square**

- Use
- 1 for the most important alternative
  - 2 for the second most important
  - 3 for the third most important

Infrastructure	Economic Development	Social Development
<input type="checkbox"/> Water supply <input type="checkbox"/> Sewerage <input type="checkbox"/> Waste management <input type="checkbox"/> Public lighting <input type="checkbox"/> Green areas <input type="checkbox"/> Roads <input type="checkbox"/> Schools <input type="checkbox"/> Urban transport <input type="checkbox"/> Health Centers <input type="checkbox"/> other	<input type="checkbox"/> Private property issues <input type="checkbox"/> Jobs <input type="checkbox"/> Loans <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> Animal farming <input type="checkbox"/> Promote business <input type="checkbox"/> Tourism <input type="checkbox"/> other	<input type="checkbox"/> Education <input type="checkbox"/> Professional courses <input type="checkbox"/> Public health <input type="checkbox"/> Cultural traditions <input type="checkbox"/> Social assistance <input type="checkbox"/> other

In your opinion, how can we make LG transparent to citizens?	In what way, do you think, to monitor their accomplishment?	In the alternatives you chose, what might your contribution be?
<input type="checkbox"/> Notify public of council meetings <input type="checkbox"/> Publicize council decisions <input type="checkbox"/> Organize frequent meeting with the citizens <input type="checkbox"/> Citizens' information center	<input type="checkbox"/> Periodic accountable meetings with the elected officials <input type="checkbox"/> Participate in local council meetings <input type="checkbox"/> Direct monitoring	<input type="checkbox"/> Time <input type="checkbox"/> Professional skills <input type="checkbox"/> Attention <input type="checkbox"/> other

How many political parties participated in the last local elections? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you want to be an independent observer in the elections? \_\_\_\_\_ ( yes/no )

### Simple techniques, sophisticated results

Citizens used a simple weighting technique to create a final "value" in the responses from others in their community. All responses of "1," were multiplied by a factor of 10; "2" replies by a factor of 5; and "3s" by a factor of 2.

## Political Parties and Elected Officials

Citizens decided which political parties and local officials would receive the community platforms based on previous election activity and those who citizens thought would be interested in their opinions. As of 18 July 2003, the following political parties and their representatives received the community platforms of citizens:

Political Party	Person/Title	Date
<b>Tirana</b>		
Democratic Party	Vili Minarolli, Branch Head/Tirana Ramiz Halili, Branch Secretary/Tirana	15 & 17 July 15 July
Socialist Party	Skender Gjata, Branch Secretary/Tirana Musa Illpiri, Branch Head/Bathore	15 July 15 July
Republican Party	Ibrahm Kurumi, Branch Head/Baldushk Fatmir Mediu, Party Chairman	15 July 17 July
National Front	Adriatik Alimadhi, Branch Head/Baldushk	15 July
Christian Democratic Party	Nikoll Lesi, Party Chairman	17 July
<b>Durres</b>		
Socialist Party	Fatmir Kulloli, Branch Head/Shkallnur Leonidha Gjermeni, Branch Head/Durres Shyshyri Mema, Branch Head/Maminas	14 July 15 July 22 July
Democratic Party	Edmir Kapidani, Branch Head/Durres Fatmir Kertesha, Branch Head/Shkallnur Jonuz Tafili, Branch Head/Shkallnur Anton Peci, Branch Head/PR Dashnor Osmani, Branch Head/Maminas	14 July 15 July 15 July 16 July 22 July
<b>Kavaje</b>		
Socialist Party	Ramazan Keta, Branch Head/Synej Bezhet Harizi, Branch Head/Lekaj	16 July 16 July
Democratic Party	Bilal Kellici, Head/Synej Isa Uku, Branch Secretary/Lekaj	16 July 16 July
National Front	Hilmi Keta, Branch Head/Synej	16 July
Social Democratic Party	Qani Bekshiu, Branch Head/Synej	16 July
Democratic Alliance	Daut Beda, Branch Head/Synej	16 July
Republican Party	Reshit Dedej, Branch Head/Lekaj Besim Daiu, Branch Head/Synej	16 July 16 July
<b>Elected Officials</b>		
<b>Tirana</b>		
Jaho Rama	Mayor, Baldushk Commune	15 July
Ylli Kupi	Head of Local Council, Petrele	15 July
Fran Gjini	Mayor, Bathore Commune	17 July
Zjarrm Shehu	Head of Local Council, Bathore	17 July
<b>Durres</b>		
Ismail Dervishi	Municipal Counsellor (PD), Durres	14 July
Ilimi Gjeçi	Mayor, Maminas Commune	22 July
Shyqyri Mema	Head of Local Council, Maminas	22 July
<b>Kavaje</b>		
Burhan Caca	Mayor, Synej Commue	16 July
Durim Caca	Head of Local Council, Synej	16 July
Zija Mema	Mayor of Lekaj Commune	16 July
Beshet Harizi	Head of Local Council, Lekaj Commune	16 July
Isa Uku	Village Elder, Lekaj	16 July

## **Citizens' Plans for Follow-up Action**

Citizens told NDI how empowered they felt after completing and delivering their community platforms. In no way do citizens see the platforms they created as an end. They see these documents and the dialogue created, as the basis for near-term and long-term action with politicians, political parties, local officials, and other citizens in their communities.

### **Debate and dialogue**

- One citizen in Synej, Kavaje summed up the impact of the process: “Other electoral campaigns have been a monologue where the only speakers have been the parties’ candidates. This time it will be a dialogue between politicians and citizens.”
- Citizens from Nishtulla, Durres expect to use their community platform to prepare for debates between citizens and candidates of political parties and local officials prior to elections.”
- Citizens from Bathore, Tirana noted that now they will ask direct questions to politicians, political parties and local officials: ‘How will you respond to our community priorities? What vision do you have for X priority?’ The citizens will give the vote to the candidates who have included community priorities in their electoral program.”

### **Share with other citizens and officials**

- Citizens from Bathore, Tirana: “Platform results will be shared again with citizens. During the fall electoral campaign the citizens will confront the political parties candidates with the pre-set priorities of citizens community platforms.”
- The citizens of Synej, Kavaje asked for the publishing of the community platforms in their local newspaper. Thus it will serve as a tool in the hands of every citizen to remind the politicians of their promises.
- Citizens in Baldushk, Tirana plans to deliver a copy of the platform to the Prefect Council and Prefecture.

### **Monitoring and evaluation**

- Citizen from Lekaj, Kavaje: “The platforms have short- and long-term expectations. The short-term expectations have to do with inclusion of priorities of community platforms in the electoral party programs. The long-term ones have to do with the step-by-step monitoring of political parties and local officials promises.”

### **Budget development and discussions**

- The mayor of Synej, Kavaje pledged to consider the priorities of the community platforms when drafting the commune budget as well as when local officials ask for budget from the central government.
- Citizens from Petrela, Tirana intend to organize meetings with representatives from local government before the budget is drafted.