

## **Annual Report**

### **On the activities performed in the framework of the project**

#### ***“Understanding Civic and Faith-Based Education”***

**1 September 2004 – 31 August 2005**

During the two years of its activity, the project “*Understanding civic and faith-based education in Albania*” has made an important contribution in promoting and fostering religious tolerance and understanding. It has also encouraged and supported concrete efforts to establish cooperation between local stakeholders, including public and non-public educational institutions, religious communities, local authorities, civil society, media, etc. Focusing on universal and civic values as well as on the remarkable contributions by both, educational community and religious community, on a local and national level, all the activities have helped provide the ground for cooperation and active participation in civic-oriented activities addressing issues of importance to the local communities. All the people involved in this project have emphasized the importance of concrete civic actions in promoting harmony, understanding, tolerance and diversity, as values worth cultivating.

Activities for the second year of the project “Understanding Civic and Faith-based Education in Albania” began with meetings with representatives of Muslim Community and the Medrese of Tirana. In these meetings we discussed the possibilities to continue the very good work performed during the previous year. Mr. Saimir Rusheku, Head of Department of Education in the Muslim Community, appreciated the contribution of this project in fostering religious harmony and helping the Medrese to open up to very interesting and fruitful civic experiences.

In the first meeting Mr. Rusheku offered the Community’s support to replicate last year’s project “Religious Holidays for Tolerance”, a joint project with students from the Medrese of Tirana and the “Çajupi” public secondary school, in some other cities of Albania. It was agreed to work together and replicate the project in the cities of Shkodra, Kavaja, Berat, Cërrik and Gjirokastra.

Another meeting was organized on September 15, 2004 with Mr. Saimir Rusheku and the principal of the Medrese in Tirana, Mr. Flamur Gjymyshka, to discuss about the introduction of civic education topics in the Medreses, beginning with the Medrese in Tirana. They both agreed on the importance and advantages of such education for the students of the Medreses all over Albania. Discussions focused on the topics to introduce and also on the possibility of introducing them in all grades.

After a careful and detailed review of the civic education curricula in public schools, it was agreed to teach civic education topics in all grades with one hour

per week. Together we decided to include 15 topics in grades 5, 6, 7 and 10 topics in grade 8 of the elementary level, and include the entire course of sociology in the first and second year of the secondary level.

To promote civic education and cultivate civic skills among students of the Medreses, Mr. Rusheku and Mr. Gjymyshka proposed the creation of the Youth Parliament and Students' Government, which can provide more ground for cooperation with similar institutions in other public and non-public schools. We also discussed the possibility for a small joint project with students from the Medrese in Tirana, students from "Skënder Çaçi", a neighbor elementary school and the Municipal Unit. Work is in progress for organizing a meeting in the Chairman of the Municipal Unit, Mr. Arben Tafaj, and representatives from both schools to discuss areas of common interest for civic action.

These are the civic education topics to be included in the curricula of the Medreses for the elementary level:

**Course: Civic Education**  
**Grade: V-a/b**  
**School year: 2004-2005**

Nr	Chapter	Hours	Topics
1.	<b>Civic Education</b>	1	Social Groups
2.		2	Roles within the Group
3.		3	Relations in Groups
4.		4	How to Organize a Meeting
5.		5	How has Family Changed
6.		6	Functions of Family
7.		7	Family Legislation
8.		8	Albanian Education Systems
9.		9	School Regulation
10.		10	How to Read a Painting
11.		11	Types of Communities
12.		12	Citizens Serving the Community
13.		13	Communities Have Multiple Purposes
14.		14	Voluntary Groups
15.		15	Team work

**Course: Civic Education**  
**Grade: VI - a/b**  
**School year: 2004-2005**

<b>Nr</b>	<b>Chapter</b>	<b>Hours</b>	<b>Topics</b>
1.	<b>Civic education</b>	1	What are Laws?
2.		2	Why Are They Necessary?
3.		3	Functions of laws
4.		4	Types of Taws
5.		5	Legal System in Albania
6.		6	Justice Authorities
7.		7	The Court
8.		8	Principal Human Rights
9.		9	Children's Rights
10.		10	How Can We Write an Official Letter
11.		11	Minority Groups
12.		12	What is Responsibility
13.		13	Citizen's Duties and Responsibilities
14.		14	AIDS-the Disease of the Century
15.		15	Juvenile Crime

**Course: Civic Education**  
**Grade: VII - a/b**  
**School year: 2004-2005**

<b>Nr</b>	<b>Chapter</b>	<b>Hours</b>	<b>Topics</b>
1.	<b>Civic Education</b>	1	What is State
2.		2	Types of State
3.		3	Purposes of Government
4.		4	Principles of a Democratic State
5.		5	Types of Power
6.		6	Types of Power
7.		7	Local Government
8.		8	Let us know our government institutions
9.		9	Difference between fact and opinion
10.		10	Elections
11.		11	Voting
12.		12	Political Parties

13.		13	United Nations
14.		14	Political Europe
15.		15	Energy for today and tomorrow

**Course: Civic Education**  
**Grade: VIII - a/b**  
**School year: 2004-2005**

Nr	Chapter	Hours	Topics
1.	<b>Civic Education</b>	1.	Enterprises and Organizations
2.		2.	Classification of Enterprises
3.		3.	Study of Markets
4.		4.	Study of Cost
5.		5.	Distribution
6.		6.	Advertisements and Promotion
7.		7.	Invoice
8.		8.	Checks and Banks
9.		9.	Bookkeeping
10.		10.	How to search for information in the computer

During 4 and 5 October 2004, meetings were held in the city of Kukës, for the purpose of organizing a round-table debate on civic and faith-based education issues. The first meeting was held with representatives of the Civil Society Development Center (CSDC) Mrs. Anila Karanxha, local office manager, who agreed to cooperate with IDRA for this and other projects in the city of Kukës and offered their support for the successful organization of this round table.

The second meeting was organized on October 5, 2004 with Mayor of Kukës, Mr. Osman Elezi. The Mayor gave us a clear picture of the situation in Kukës, which actually has the highest unemployment rate in Albania, and where nearly half of the families lived on social assistance only. He also underlined the fact that because of migration, the social structure of the city had significantly changed, and a lot of new inhabitants kept coming from surrounding villages. According to Mr. Elezi the city lacked civic culture and projects like this could help increase the level of civic participation.

There was also a meeting in the Regional Department of Education in Kukës, with Mrs. Farie Zeneli, Head of Control and Qualification Sector. Mrs. Zeneli was of the opinion that similar round-table debates could help to bring together local stakeholders and generate new ideas for civic projects, which could benefit the local community. She offered the support of the Regional Department of Education for this activity.

The last meeting in Kukës was held in the mosque of Kukës with the Myfti of Kukës, Mr. Ali Hallaci. Mr. Hallaci appreciated the idea of the project to bring together the civic contribution of schools and religious communities and was eager to take part in the round-table debate, which he considered as a very good opportunity to exchange ideas and experiences and also make plans for future action. After all these meetings, it was decided that the round-table debate in Kukës would be organized on October 29, 2004.

During 13 and 14 October 2004, a visit was organized in the city of Peshkopia, in order to discuss the possibility of a round-table debate there. A meeting was held in the Municipality of Peshkopia with the Deputy Mayor, Mr. Adil Xhembulla, Mr. Gëzim Koçi, Head of the Regional Department of Education and the representative of Muslim community, the Myfti of Peshkopia, Mr. Ahmet Çausi. The three of them shared the same opinion about the importance of this civic round-table debate and expected that participants would come up with concrete ideas for future projects combining civic and faith based education to contribute for tolerance and cooperation. The round-table debate in Peshkopia was planned for November 4, 2004.

Both in Kukës and Peshkopia, an invitation including the following main issues to be discussed in the debate was given to local representatives to be distributed to participants:

- The functioning of democratic society largely depends on the system of universal values. Which values do we need to promote?
- What role does public and non-public pre-university education play in the civic education of younger generations?
- Cooperation between schools and universities on civic education issues.
- What experiences do we have from public, non-public and religious schools and how are fundamental moral values promoted by different faiths?
- How can we use “students’ governments” to increase their initiative and participation in school and community issues?
  
- How can we establish a continuous and effective cooperation between schools, religious communities, local authorities and civil society on issues regarding moral and civic education?

The round-table debate in Kukës was organized on October 29, 2004 with the participation of nearly twenty representatives of the entire spectrum of local stakeholders in civic and faith-based education.

In her opening speech, Mrs. Farie Zeneli, Head of Control and Qualification Sector in the Regional Department of Education, Kukës, thanked IDRA and the American Embassy for undertaking such a project and for involving the local community in Kukës in this project. In spite of the efforts made by the personnel

in the Regional Department to improve the quality of civic education in schools, a lot remains to be done, in order to ensure a wider civic participation in civic activities of interest to the local community. She admitted that they had no previous experiences of cooperation with the Muslim community in Kukës regarding any particular civic issues.

Mrs. Nermin Spahiu, teacher of literature and journalist stressed the need to engage students' governments and youth parliament in identifying civic issues, planning and carrying out civic activities to address those issues. She suggested that a project could engage school children in a televised debate about their rights and responsibilities as citizens, and that more space be devoted in the media to civic activities in the schools and community.

In his intervention, Mr. Nail Hoxha, Chief of Personnel in the Regional Department of Education, admitted that there is a lot of formalism in planning and performing civic activities in schools and that most of the civic education teachers need in-service training or certification. He was reluctant as to the cooperation between schools and local religious community and thought that the fact that schools in Albania are secular is a serious barrier to such cooperation. However he agreed that religious communities and faith-based education are important contributors to the education of younger generations, and as such it is worth trying to work together with them.

Mr. Mexhit Hajdari, specialist for social subjects in the RDE Kukës, Mr. Feriz Ahmeti, principal of a local private school and Mrs. Vita Muça, specialist for social subjects in the town of Has, all agreed that schools need to increase their awareness of the values taught by religion and that those universal values are complementary to those they learn at school and in their families as well. They also said that in-service training is urgent for teachers lacking the proper qualifications to teach civic education in schools. Whereas Mr. Rezart Çopi, Head of the Section of Culture in the Municipality of Kukës underlined the importance of civic education and civic activities in developing critical thinking among students, as an important tool to better understand and changing values in a democratic society.

The representative of CARE in Kukës, Mr. Bilbil Kera, underlined the importance of establishing priorities in addressing social and civic issues, because the numerous problems and the difficult challenge of resolving them often lead to pessimism and inactivity.

The Myfti of Kukës, Mr. Ali Hallaci, thanked IDRA and the American Embassy in Tirana for inviting the Muslim community to the round-table debate and stressed the fact that the regional department of education and schools should also use the influence of this community in Kukës, an almost entirely Muslim area, to resolve some of their problems. He expressed his willingness to cooperate in whatever projects schools could undertake and said that the better

schools and religious communities know each other, the more opportunities for cooperation they will be able to find.

The round-table debate in Peshkopia was organized on November 4, 2004 with the participation of about thirty representatives of the local community, including teachers, principals, specialists from the Regional Department of Education, Municipality, religious community, students' governments, civil society, media, etc.

In his opening remarks Mr. Fajiz Cibaku, Head of Control and Qualification Section in the RDE in Peshkopia considered the round-table debate as a very good opportunity for the participants and the entire local community to share their civic experiences and discuss about future projects that can contribute to active civic participation of students and community.

In their discussions Mrs. Fanie Pira, deputy principal of the pedagogical school and Mrs. Rajmonda Mera, specialist in RDE underlined that the theory of civic education in schools is satisfactory and the programs are good. However, they were of the opinion that there is a lot more to be done in the real practice of citizenry, so that students use their knowledge to act as good citizens. They also stressed the need for social workers in schools and for in-service training for teachers of civics.

Whereas Femie Kaziu, specialist in the Section of Culture in the Municipality of Peshkopia admitted that there was little cooperation between the Municipality, RDE and schools, although there are several problems in the community that might provide a good ground for joint civic activities.

Mr. Mensur Murja, specialist of literature and language in RDE brought the very positive experience from the secondary school in Ulëz, where there was a very good and friendly communication between students and teachers, and local authorities. The students of this school, with the support of local authorities and their teachers, had built a functional library with books brought by the students themselves. The teachers and students' government in that school used surveys to identify students with economic, health or family problems, and based on that information they planned further assistance to these students.

The president of the students' government in "Myslim Shehu" elementary school, Erion Neziri added that it is important that students and their governments have support from teachers, principals and local authorities in all their civic activities. Students' governments mostly help in the work with problematic students, dropouts and they hardly get out in the community. However, he underlined that school students are very sensitive towards helping the poor and weak and there have been initiatives targeting some students of this category, which helped to strengthen solidarity among students.

Mr. Hysni Bodini, specialist in RDE argued that teachers, school principals and local educational authorities should allow more freedom for concrete civic activities and look for ways to take civic education out of the classrooms. He acknowledged the important contribution of the Muslim community in the establishment of universal values and said that cooperation with this community must become a priority for RDE and local authorities.

The Myfti of Peshkopia, Mr. Ahmet Çausi particularly thanked for the invitation to the debate and expressed his satisfaction that the project regarded religious communities and faith-based education as very important contributors to the education of future citizens. He admitted that so far there had been no cooperation whatsoever between the Muslim Community and schools or RDE. He said that, after receiving the invitation to the round-table debate, he had carefully looked at the civic programs in schools and had found them satisfactory. The Myfti stressed that if there is good will, there can be a lot of room for cooperation. He brought a very positive example of cooperation between local authorities and Muslim community in 1998: the inhabitants of a village were destroying the entire forest surrounding their village and the local authorities were unable to stop it. They asked for help from the Muslim Community, which sent their people in the village (Muslim inhabitants) and helped stop the destruction. He also suggested that schools and Muslim community could also work together to minimize dropouts or help students and families in need.

Work is now underway to organize two other round-table debates during December, one in Librazhd and the other in Gramsh. There will be meetings to this end with local authorities and representatives from the regional department of education.

During the second trimester, December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2004 – February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2005, a series of activities have been carried out in the framework of the project “Understanding Civic and Faith-based Education in Albania”. According to the plan, two round-table debates were successfully organized in the towns of Librazhd and Gramsh.

The round-table debate in the town of Gramsh was organized on December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2004, with the precious support of the Municipality and the District Department of Education in Gramsh. Nearly thirty participants in this debate included the Mayor of Gramsh, Mr. Tajar Bici, the Vice-Prefect of Gramsh, Mr. Enver Qose, the Head of the District Department of Education, Mrs. Sofie Fejzo, the representative of the Muslim community, the Myfti of Gramsh, Mr. Agim Terziu as well as elementary and secondary school principals, teachers, representatives of students’ governments, civil society, media, etc.

In her opening remarks the Head of the District Department of Education, Mrs. Sofie Fejzo, underlined the importance of the debate and also extended her thanks to IDRA and the American Embassy in Tirana.

Mrs. Violeta Nishku, civic education teacher and principal of a local secondary school said she was happy to see so many people together to discuss about civic and faith-based education. She considered teachers an extremely important factor to the quality of Albanian citizens and demanded teacher's books and special training sessions for civic education teachers so that they improve their teaching, especially in topics like accounting, law and government.

The chairman of the students' senate in "Shefqet Guzi" secondary school, Mr. Olian Cenaj, thanked the District Department of education and the Municipality for their support to the students' governments to organize civic activities. He, and some other participants, including the Mayor and Vice-Prefect, who took the floor afterwards, expressed their concern about the rapid widespread of drug trafficking, especially among youth in their small town, and asked for assistance in promoting an awareness campaign among youth. Their idea is to stage an open debate among secondary school students with a special focus on drugs to try to prevent further widespread and other victims.

The Mayor of Gramsh, Mr. Tajar Bici, insisted that cooperation, which is quite possible in a small town like Gramsh, should be further extended and promised support from his institution to civic projects, particularly to those initiated by students.

In his discussion, Mr. Xhevit Dyrmyshi, specialist in the District Department of Education particularly emphasized the need for training civic education teachers with a special focus on practical civic activities. He and some other participants were of the opinion that the present Albanian society seems to be more inclined towards material values and they underlined the importance of serious civic efforts to focus attention on moral and spiritual values, an area where the religious communities must be considered as partners. We need to join efforts with religious communities and work on a common program to fight against negative phenomena like prostitution, drugs, divorce, etc.

During his discussion, the Myfti of Gramsh, Mr. Agim Terziu, extended his thanks for this wonderful opportunity to discuss about how schools, local authorities, civil society and religious communities can work together to cultivate values that can contribute to a more democratic, diverse and tolerant society. The fact that schools are secular does not mean that education and religion must fight against each other, on the contrary, he said, it inherently carries the message of non-interference, respect and tolerance. Religion and education have one very important thing in common: they both try to prevent through educating values. This provides a very positive ground for cooperation and it is up to us to make it happen. He mentioned some very good examples of vocational training courses offered by the Muslim Center "Kadin Bimbuti" to local youth and adults, regardless of their religious affiliation.

Mr. Pellumb Xhelili, school principal, and several other participants, proposed the creation of a Community Forum for Citizenry, which, as Mrs. Luljeta Dollani, specialist in the District department of Education said, must prioritize our needs for local-level civic activities, one of which could very well be the televised debate on drugs. Whereas, Mr. Edmond Hida, representative of CEFA and Mr. Arbër Zaimi, representative of the Youth Parliament, both underlined the need to better use the media to enhance the positive impact of all civic and faith based activities organized in Gramsh.

In their concluding remarks, the Mayor of Gramsh, Mr. Tajar Bici, the Vice-Prefect of Gramsh, Mr. Enver Qose and the Head of the District Department of Education, Mrs. Sofie Fejzo, considered the debate very fruitful and constructive and promised their support to the Community Forum for Citizenry.

The second round-table debate was organized in the town of Librazhd, on December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2004, in close cooperation and with the support of the District Department of Education and the Municipality of Librazhd. There were about twenty participants, which represented the local stakeholders and community, including the representative from the Municipality, Mr. Ismet Kasa, Head of Cultural and Educational Section, Mr. Musa Alliu, Head of the Human Resources Section in the District Department of Education, Mr. Isuf Sula, inspector for public services in the District Council, Mr. Muhamet Muça, Head of the Local Cultural Center, school principals, teachers, representatives of the students' governments and youth parliament from various schools, representatives of the media, etc.

The participants thanked IDRA and the American Embassy in Tirana for organizing this round table, which, they agreed, was an important step in promoting the cooperation among local capacities with the purpose of taking joint action to address important issues of a civic and religious character.

In his discussion, Mr. Ramazan Berberi, inspector responsible for social subjects in the local District Department of Education, underlined the fact that the burden of civic education was almost entirely left to the schools and there was scarcely any cooperation with or support from local authorities, parents' community, which makes things really difficult for schools. He called for more support especially from parents and stressed the importance of strengthening cooperation with the parents' community in the future. Issues like city cleaning could provide the ground for taking joint action on a local level. He also said that it was very difficult for them to find ways to cooperate with the local religious community and expressed his reluctance about the influence of faith-based education in public schools.

Mrs. Nexhmije Prrenja, civic education teacher in "Genc Leka" elementary school was of the opinion that there has been considerable improvement in civic education textbooks. Yet, there are still concepts borrowed from American Literature, which need to be better adapted to the Albanian reality. Textbooks

include practical activities, which are always neglected, and this is another reason why a lot more needs to be done for strengthening the practical skills among students so that they can act as active citizens.

Mr. Pandi Popovski, principal of the elementary school in Prrenjas, pointed out the big changes that have occurred in the mentality, outlook, and family background of the Albanians during these last 15 years. He said that civic education and the acquisition of universal moral values should be given special importance in this period of rapid change. However, he, and some other participants, underlined the fact that the organization of successful civic activities largely depended on funding, which was extremely difficult to get.

In her discussion, Eneida Krasniqi, representative of students' government, agreed that there were very few activities or projects, which could help students to take active part in school or local civic life. Students' governments think that annual educational plans prepared by teachers and students are scarcely fulfilled and most of the activities are routine and boring. She suggested that there be fewer activities but which should catch the students' interest and also demanded that school principals and teachers have more confidence and provide more support to students' governments. Eneida said that many activities could be organized with no or little funding and that funding would be good for local-level projects of interest to the community.

Mr. Ismet Hasa, Head of the Cultural and Educational Section in the Municipality of Librazhd, agreed that there was very little cooperation between local authorities and schools for civic issues of common interest to the community. He mentioned some activities organized by his office, but which, as he said, were insufficient. However, he underlined the importance of working together with schools, students, parents and religious community to address issues of concern for the community, especially drug and prostitution, which had made several victims among the youth of the town in the recent years. The participants concluded that it was very important to realize that good citizens were not made in a day and that every little and modest civic activity was worth the effort.

On January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2005, a meeting was organized with Mr. Saimir Rusheku, Head of Department of Education in the Albanian Muslim Community, the principal of the Medrese of Tirana, Mr. Flamur Gjymyshka and representatives from the newly created youth parliament of that school, to discuss about how they could organize a week of solidarity with the Victims of the tsunami and make their modest contribution.

Representatives of the youth parliament, teachers and the principals created a team, which worked for the whole week, 10 – 14 January, 2005, and collected contributions from the students of the Medrese, mainly clothes, food and some cash, which were sent to the Albanian Red Cross on January 17<sup>th</sup>, with a

dedication from the Medrese students. The next day, the representatives of the youth parliament and the school principal organized a short meeting in the school hall to thank all the students for their contributions and underlined that such events contribute to love, harmony and peace and bring people closer.

Another interesting activity was organized with the Medrese of Tirana on January 19<sup>th</sup>, on the occasion of the famous Muslim Holiday, Bajram. The first and second year students of this school, who last year took part in the small project "Religious Holidays for Tolerance", invited their team members from the public secondary school "Çajupi" to take part in their celebration of Bajram. Students greeted one another with songs and poems and celebrated together.

During this period, there have also been two meetings in Kavaja and Lushnja, with representatives from Municipality and Departments of Education, to discuss the idea of initiating a small project called "What is Local Government". The purpose of this project is to give students of grades 6 and 7 from one elementary school in each city an opportunity to learn about local government through visits in their respective Municipalities, with the possibility of making this a regular event and open these municipalities to similar visits from school students.

The meetings in both cities were very fruitful. In Kavaja, the Mayor, Mr. Refik Rrugia and the Head of the District Department of Education, Mr. Sulejman Dakoli, appreciated the idea and promised their support. There was equal appreciation of the proposal in the city of Lushnja from the Mayor, Mr. Kadri Gega, and the Chief Inspector in the District Department of Education, Mr. Agim Bakushi. Both Mayors said they would be very happy to welcome students in their offices and establish a tradition of regular visits from school students to their municipalities. They said this would not only be an opportunity for them to learn about local government, but also to understand that Municipalities are their and all other citizens' institutions. It was agreed that the District Departments of Education in both cities would select the schools and make a plan of visits during February and April. The Department of Education in Lushnja selected the elementary school "Kongresi i Lushnjes", and in Kavaja they selected "3 Dëshmoret". The first visits to the respective municipalities will be organized within March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2005.

On 20-21 January, 2005, two meetings were organized with Mrs. Sharon Moran, from the Center for Civic Education, Calabasas, California, to discuss the potentials for future cooperation with this Center. Mrs. Moran was informed about the state of civic education in Albania. Mrs. Mariana Sinani, from the Institute for Pedagogical Research, also took part in the second meeting. The discussions mainly focused on three issues: 1. the possibility to introduce Project Citizen in a local university; 2. an in-service certification program for teachers of civic education; and 3. cooperation for a South-East European Freeman Butts Institute on civic education.

During the period March-May 2005, a series of activities took place in the framework of the project "Understanding Civic and Faith-Based Education in Albania". A very fruitful activity was carried out in the town of Gramsh. In the round-table debate, organized in the town of Gramsh on December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2004, with the support of the Municipality and the District Department of Education in Gramsh, almost all participants unanimously expressed their concern regarding drugs and its threats for the youth of Gramsh. For this purpose, there were continuous contacts and meetings with the Head of the District Department of Education in Gramsh, Mrs. Sofie Fejzo and the representative of the local Muslim community, the Myfti of Gramsh, Mr. Agim Terziu. It was agreed that a debate, broadcast on local TV would be a very good way to increase awareness in the local community in general, and youth in particular, as to the dangers this phenomenon involves and the ways to prevent and fight against it.

The person in charge of organizing the debate was Mr. Xhevit Dyrmyshi, Head of the Pedagogical Counseling Section, in the District Department of Education in Gramsh. Participants in the debate would include youth from the secondary school in Gramsh, representatives from the District Department of Education, students' government, parents, representatives of the local religious communities, local government, etc. The debate was organized on May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2005. Participants included students from the 9-year schools "35 Vjetori", "Rilindja" and "Asllan Shahini" and secondary school "Shefqet Guzi", Gramsh. Other participants included: Mrs. Antoneta Çobani, Chairman of the Parents' Committee, members of the City Council, representatives of the religious communities, Baba Xhelali from the Muslim Bektashi community, Mr. Agim Terziu, Myfti of Gramsh, Mrs. Shpresa Brahimi, pastor in the Catholic Church, Mrs. Antoneta Kokla, specialist of psychology from the District Department of Education, etc. Speakers expressed their gratitude to the American Embassy in Tirana and IDRA for giving them the opportunity to discuss about this issue on a local TV and help increase awareness among youth as to the dangers the drugs involve as well possible solutions to the problem.

Students and parents, in particular, underlined the need for more cultural and sport activities, as well as involvement in civic projects of interest to the local community, in order to provide students with other alternatives for action and leisure. For this, they suggested that students' governments and District Department of Education cooperate together to organize such events, especially during the holiday season. They also invited local government authorities to help them with such activities. Ersjana Shahini, student in the secondary school "Shefqet Guzi", emphasized that one of the main reasons for the rapid spread of drugs among the youth in Gramsh, was the lack of knowledge and awareness among youth as to drugs and the dangers they involve. Whereas Blendi Dyrmyshi, student in the same school, said that there must be more cooperation with local police in order to help prevent the spread of this disease. Edison Kishta, student in the "Rilindja School" demanded more time and attention devoted to this issue during classes at school, especially in civic education

classes and a more active commitment from psychologists and advisers in schools.

In their interventions, the representatives of religious communities pointed out that schools and teachers in their everyday work must put more focus to the cultivation of universal values, and particularly help students with drug abuse problems. They agreed that organizing summer holiday camps in cooperation with students' governments and District Department of Education would be a very good way to provide alternative activities to youth to spend their free time. Whereas, Mrs. Antoneta Çobani, Chairman of the Parents' Committee, emphasized the fact that there is urgent need for parents to also get educated in order to be able to help their children to better understand the dangers from drugs, alcohol, etc.

At the end of the debate, they decided to organize a special day devoted to the fight against drugs: "The Anti-Drug Day", which will consist of demonstrations with posters against drugs in the city, activities on school level, etc., which will keep students and community alert and active. Students in the debate were also very positive about the presence and the contribution of local religious community leaders. They welcomed the idea of organizing joint summer holiday camps and activities and appreciated the contribution of religious communities in assisting families and children in need.

On March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2005, there was a meeting in the District department of Education in Elbasan, with the Head of this Department, Mrs. Natasha Poroçani. The focus of this meeting was replicating the mini-project "Religious holidays for tolerance" in secondary schools in Elbasan. Mrs. Poroçani agreed to have this project with first-year students in two secondary schools of the city: "Dhaskal Todri" and "Ahmet Dakli". For this purpose, another meeting was organized with Mr. Gëzim Nushi, principal of "Ahmet Dakli" school, Shqipe Shyti, Sociology teacher in the same school and responsible for work with students' government, Mrs. Teuta Radoniqi, vice-principal and responsible for work with students' governments in "Dhaskal Todri" secondary school. In this meeting we discussed about the purpose of the project and how to involve students in it. It was agreed that two groups of students from both schools would work together for this project. The total number of students would be 24, and they would be divided in three teams of 8 students each, one for each religion. The presentations were scheduled for May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2005.

As planned, the presentation was done in the "Ahmet Dakli" school with the participation of first-year students from the two schools, teachers, the principals of the two schools, parents, etc. The activity was organized in the form of a show, in which students' presentations intertwined with songs, poems, dance and jokes the students of these schools had prepared for this event. There was also a showcase illustrating the work of each group. The environment was decorated with symbols of religious holidays for every religion and students discussed about

the common universal values these holidays promote among Albanians and the importance of the exemplary religious tolerance in Albania. Students said they were impressed by the similarities between religions and by the willingness and appreciation for their work they had noticed among the religious community leaders they had met with. Participants underlined that such projects help them better realize how much they have in common and how many opportunities they have to work together, respecting their diversity and considering it a precious value, worth preserving.

On April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2005, there was a very fruitful visit in Berat. During this visit there were interesting meetings in the “Vexhi Buharaja” Muslim Medrese School with its principal, Mr. Bedri Telegrafi. Mr. Saimir Rusheku, Head of the Department of Education in the Muslim Community, was also present in the meeting. Mr. Telegrafi welcomed our proposal to undertake joint projects and activities with public schools in Berat. The Medrese of Berat enjoyed a very good reputation in the city, and this was also confirmed in the meeting we had with the Head of the District Department of Education, Berat, Mrs. Fatmira Mustafaraj. She welcomed the idea of organizing joint projects, like that of “Religious Holidays for Tolerance” between the Medrese and local public schools. The students of the Muslim Medrese in Berat came up with a proposal for a joint project between them and other public secondary schools in the city. The project will engage students and the local community in joint activities to preserve historic, cultural and religious values in Mangalem, one of the oldest and most picturesque neighborhoods in the city. The Head of the District Department of Education, Berat, Mrs. Fatmira Mustafaraj, promised her support and welcomed cooperation with IDRA to the success of this project.

Below is the agreement reached between the representatives of students’ governments involved in this project, which has the community’s complete support:

### **COOPERATION AGREEMENT**

Between students’ governments of the following schools:

Vexhi Buharaja (Medrese)  
Babë Dudë Karbunara (General Secondary)  
Mangalem (General Secondary)

Partners in cooperation:

Municipality of Berat  
Regional Department of Education, Berat  
Department for Cultural Monuments, Berat  
Ethnographic Museum Department, Berat  
Greenery Department, Berat  
Committee of Elders, Mangalem Neighborhood

“Onufri” TV  
“Lajmëtarë” Newspaper  
“Antipatrea” or “Berati” Association  
Palace of Culture ‘Margarita Tutulani’

This activity is initiated and supported by Mr. Shefqet Shyti, Project Coordinator from the Institute for Development and Research Alternatives, IDRA, in the framework of the project: “Understanding Civic and Faith-Based Education in Albania”, funded by the American Embassy in Tirana.

### **Scope of agreement**

Cooperation between governments of the three schools in order to gain better knowledge, enrich and preserve historical values and cultural traditions in the Mangalem neighborhood in Berat.

### **Values to be promoted**

Mangalem is one of the oldest neighborhoods with particular historical values for the city of Berat. It is situated on the northern hill, on top of which the old city fortress is built. The windows of the houses in this neighborhood all look to the East and because of the sloping hill, they produce a very unique scenery and have given Berat the name of “on-on-one-window city” This old neighborhood has both picturesque and architectonic values and the buildings have characteristics of urban architecture. The interiors of some of the houses also preserve special architectonic and ethnographic values. The study of the spiritual culture preserved and transmitted through generations is of special value. The majority of the native population in this neighborhood is orthodox, but there are Muslims as well. This neighborhood is a perfect example of religious tolerance, understanding and co-existence. The project “Understanding Civic and Faith-Based Education in Albania” will support the activities organized for this purpose.

### **Purpose of agreement**

Establish and maintain cooperation between school students through participation in joint civic activities.

- Schools and students will strengthen their relations and cooperation in joint civic activities of value to the community.
- They will contribute to the preservation of historical values and cultural traditions in this museum neighborhood.
- They will gain deeper knowledge of the history and the lives of prominent people from this neighborhood.
- They will learn more about cultural and spiritual values in general, and religious culture and tradition in particular.

### Creation of functioning structures:

- a) Steering Board :  
Presidents of students' governments  
Teacher Coordinators
- b) Organizing group :  
Organizes activities of student governments in the three schools
- c) The group for studying and enriching cultural and material values.
- d) The group for studying historical and spiritual values.
- e) Promotion and publication group.

### Work Plan

1. Meetings of senates from three schools and teacher coordinators to discuss the platform.  
5-7 May, 2005
2. Meetings with civil society partners.  
7-10 May 2005
3. Proclamation of activities and their discussion among students' governments on a school.  
11-12 May, 2005
4. Meeting of steering board, creation of commissions and distribution of tasks and.  
13-14 May, 2005
5. Approval of the program of activities.

### Main activities:

- Cleaning and maintenance of Mangalem neighborhood
- Installment of trash cans
- Decoration of windows and balconies with characteristic and traditional flowers
- Cleaning of stone streets, repair and replacement of damaged stones
- White painting of frontages to give the neighborhood its characteristic white color
- Opening of popular culture room in one of the houses in neighborhood – Neighborhood museum
- Creation of the neighborhood choir with the participation of students from the three schools to perform on special days
- Creation of a theatrical group in the neighborhood

- Creation of a football team in the neighborhood

Planned activities

- 1) Neighborhood Cleaning Day – once a month
- 2) Greenery and Flower Distribution Day
- 3) Traditional Dishes and Sweets Exhibition Day
- 4) Traditional Clothes Fair – exhibition and trading of artistic handcraft products (embroideries, wood carved products, etc) with motives from Mangalem neighborhood.
- 5) Photograph exhibition – Photos of Mangalem neighborhood
- 6) Photo album of Mangalem – traditions and culture
- 7) Videocassettes "Let us get to know Mangalem"
- 8) Leaflets – photos from various activities organized in Mangalem
- 9) Posters – Exposition and calls to preserve cultural tradition values

Teacher Coordinators:

Përparim Gjergjani  
Kozeta Boçi  
Lenci Buda  
Alketa Rama (psychologist)

Sotiraq Mishaxhiu  
Zana Sinani  
Alma Prendi

Agreement signed by:

Presidents of students' governments:

'Vexhi Buharaja'  
Dorian Zyka

'Babë Dudë Karbunara'  
Klevi Myslimi

'Mangalem'  
Anila Çuku

**Berat on, 04 May, 2005**

Below is the the first poster students have alsready drafted to make their project known to the local community and increase civic awareness and participation:



## **Join Us For a cleaner and more beautiful Mangalem!**

Mangalem, the most picturesque neighborhood of our one-on-one-window city with its very rich history, unique architecture and diverse material and spiritual culture, needs to be taken from all of us together.

Join us at 8.00 AM on Saturday, June 28<sup>th</sup>, 2005, in an activity for cleaning and this neighborhood. Environment reflects our culture. This activity starts the implementation of the project:” **Let us better know and preserve the cultural and museum values of Mangalem”**.

Our project is supported by the Municipality of Berat, District Department of Education, Berat, Department of Cultural Monuments, inhabitants of Mangalem, association “Antipatrea” and Institute for Development and Research Alternatives (IDRA) in the framework of the project “Understanding Civic and faith-Based Education in Albania” funded by the American Embassy in Tirana.

### *Students’ Senates of the secondary schools*

*“Vexhi Buharaja”*

***“Mangalem”***

***“Babë Dudë Karbunara”***

In April, a meeting was organized in the city of Shkodra with the participation of Mr. Saimir Rusheku, from the Albanian Muslim Community, Mr. Ismet Bekteshi, Principal of the Muslim Medrese in Shkodra and Mr. Gaetano Brambillasca, principal of “Pjeter Mëshkalla” Catholic general secondary school. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss about a potential cooperation

between these two non-public religious secondary schools the possibility for them to replicate the project “Religious holidays for Tolerance”. Appreciating the proposal, both school principals said they found the idea very interesting, but because of their other commitment, they suggested that this activity be performed by October 2005.

Two other activities were also successfully carried out in the framework of the small project: “What is local government” in Lushnja and Kavaja. The meeting with the Mayor of Lushnja., Mr. Kadri Gega took place on April 6<sup>th</sup>, 2005 and that with the Mayor of Kavaja, Mr. Refik Rrugia, took place on April 12<sup>nd</sup>, 2005. Both meetings were characterized by vivid discussions from school students as to what they thought the municipality could support them with. Students ask for the Mayor’s support to organize civic, cultural and sport activities, which would actively fill up their leisure time. As their first experience in the Municipality and Mayor’s offices students said they felt very comfortable and welcome probably because the two Mayors were originally teachers. Both Mayors agreed to institutionalize monthly visits from school students to learn about their local government, in hope that this would also boost direct cooperation between students’ governments and local authorities for civic projects in the future.

As planned, the main activities during the period 1 June – 31 August consisted in organizing the second round table debate in the cities of Kavaja and Lushnja and the follow up on the activities in the framework of the small project with the students of the Medrese “Vexhi Buharaja”, “Mangalem” and “Babë Dudë Karabunara”, Berat. This period coincided with the electoral campaign, because of which it was impossible to organize the round-table debate in the city of Lushnja, whereas the round-table debate in Kavaja was successfully organized on 16 June, 2005, in cooperation with the District Department of Education and the Municipality of Kavaja.

In Kavaja, there were almost thirty participants in the debate, including the Mayor, Mr. Refik Rrugia, Head of the District Department of Education, Mr. Sulejman Dakoli, teachers, school principals, representatives of religious communities, students’ governments, civil society, etc. Although in the heat of electoral campaign, the Mayor of Kavaja took part in the meeting. He thanked IDRA and the American Embassy for supporting civic projects in cities like Kavaja and highlighted the need to increase civic participation of students and deepen their knowledge of central and local government. He appreciated the successful steps taken in this respect in the framework of the small project “What is Local Government”. The Mayor said that the students had an opportunity to learn from first-hand experience in the Municipality of Kavaja through meetings with the Mayor and other municipal officials; they had an opportunity to present their needs and those of the community and discuss about how the Municipality could assist them in their efforts. Mr. Rrugia said that he was glad to continue to practice regular visits from school students to his office and promised them his support for other civic initiatives.

The Head of the District Department of Education, Mr. Sulejman Dakoli, underlined the importance of projects like “What is Local Government”. He said that it was a special experience for the students of the “3 Deshmoret” elementary school to discuss with the Mayor about what and how the municipality could do for them. They learned about the problems that the Municipality of Kavaja is facing and were glad that the Mayor welcomed their contribution in resolving local community issues. Mr. Dakoli said that the District Department of Education looks forward to other civic projects, which would encourage students’ civic participation and teach them civic skills through concrete actions.

In his intervention, Mr. Eqerem Agushi, teacher in the “Rilindja” school, emphasized that it is important to change the way civic education is taught in our schools, by shifting attention to civic action and participation in small projects of common interest, instead of simply teaching mere civic concepts to the students. He also underlined that teachers teaching civic education should receive training in order to develop and adopt appropriate techniques for a participatory civic education.

Mr. Zija Teferici, official in the Municipality of Kavaja, agreed that it was a special experience for municipal officials to talk to the children and observe how seriously concerned they were for learning more about the Municipality and how each office operated. On behalf of the students engaged in the project, Besnik Mosi, student in “3 Deshmoret” elementary school, thanked IDRA and the Mayor of Kavaja for supporting the project and insisted that this experience of students’ visits in the Municipality should be institutionalized. He also thanked the teacher, Mrs. Thellenxa Koshi, for her continuous support.

The president of the students’ government from “Alexander Moisiu” high school, Rigers Gugashi, said that it would be interesting if students’ governments of different schools in Kavaja could also have regular visits in the Municipality. He also suggested that the Municipality should also fund small civic projects in local schools to address common civic issues concerning the local community. All the participants welcomed future civic projects in Kavaja and promised their commitment to support IDRA in its efforts to promote civic and faith-based education in their city.

In Berat, students proceeded with their joint activities to preserve historic, cultural and religious values in Mangalem, one of the oldest and most picturesque neighborhoods in the city. During the last week of May and the first week of June a group of students from the Vexhi Buharaja (Medrese) Babë Dudë Karbunara (General Secondary) Mangalem (General Secondary) exposed their posters all over the city, and particularly in the “Mangalem” neighborhood to make their project known to the community. There open were meetings with all the students and teachers in the three schools to present the project.

On 10 June, 2005 the students of the three schools and their teachers organized the first cleaning day in “Mangalem” neighborhood. For three hours, from 8.30 to 11.30 the students and neighborhood inhabitants worked together for cleaning the streets and collecting garbage in the neighborhood. There was a wide support and participation from inhabitants for such activity. A poster prepared by the students was delivered to every house.

The next activity was an exhibition with photos of Mangalem neighborhood organized by the students’ governments in cooperation with the Municipality of Berat, Regional Department of Education, Department for Cultural Monuments, and Ethnographic Museum Department, Berat. The photos were exposed for two hours in the main boulevard of the city in the evening of 17 June, 2005. The students also distributed more posters to local inhabitants who stopped to see the photos and asked for their support. It was nice to see students from the three schools work together and collect the numerous thanks from their fellow citizens. Almost everyone walking in the boulevard that evening learned about the project. Project activities will continue next year and the students are very optimistic that what they are doing will be part of the lobbying to include Mangalem and Berat in the UNESCO list of historical and cultural sites.

For the year 2005 – 2006, activities in the framework of the project “Understanding Civic and Faith-Based education in Albania” will focus on three main directions:

1. Organization of six small projects in six different cities of Albania, with the participation of students from public and faith-based schools, which will jointly address in depth an issue of local interest and come up with respective solutions. Students will develop portfolios and conclude with a showcase of their projects for their schoolmates and afterwards make a presentation to a local TV channel. There will also be a final gathering in Tirana of all groups, which will make a national showcase of their projects and share them with a selected audience. These projects will involve about 15 public and non-public faith-based schools with approximately 1300 students and they will directly involve 40 students from upper elementary (grade seven and eight) and lower secondary (grade 9 and ten).
2. To follow up activities from the previous year, it is the intention of the project to provide in-service training for teachers in faith-based non-public schools, which have agreed to also teach civic education. The idea is to provide them with the required knowledge and skills for an effective teaching of civic education in their schools. This would help to further strengthen the relations between civic and faith-based education, provide students in such schools with civic knowledge and skills, and also improve the climate for further cooperation between public schools and faith-based non-public schools.

3. Publication of materials which can help teachers and students in the area of civic and faith-based education and participation, education for democracy, and also materials promoting the work performed in the framework of initiatives: 1000 glossary of civics to be distributed to public and non-public faith-based schools; 500 brochures or leaflets illustrating activities performed in the framework of the project "Understanding Civic and faith-Based Education in Albania", 600 leaflets illustrating activities performed in each of the six joint projects for 2005-2006.

### **Project Coordinator**

**Shefqet SHYTI**