



United Nations  
ALBANIA



# Empowering Vulnerable Local Communities of Albania

## A ONE UN JOINT PROGRAMME

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Photo: Panajot Alushi, working for his neighborhood as part of infrastructure development project in EVLC programme.

### Community member employed by a local company to work for his neighborhood

*Interview with Panajot Alushi, Roma activist from Driza*

#### **What has your experience been as a Roma activist in Driza?**

As an activist, I have been engaged in several activities to support the Roma community members in Driza. The activities held mainly by EVLC team in Fier have taught me how to help people in need and how to succeed in life.

I have been involved in different volunteer initiatives such as: craftsmen fair in Tirana, cleaning the Seman village coast line, planting trees in the Driza kindergarten, plumbing repairs in Roma families and the kindergarten.

I became a plumber by attending a vocational course with the support of EVLC team in Fier. Additionally, I have participated in several trainings and awareness-raising campaigns related to health, education and child protection issues.

#### **How have you benefited from this experience?**

Besides my voluntary work in the community I was always looking for a job as a plumber. I shared my concern with EVLC team in Fier and they assisted me on the best way to approach potential employers. While I was registered at the Employment Office, I worked occasionally as a plumber in my neighborhood but it was difficult to find a permanent job.

Recently, the sewage system in Driza went under construction and this seemed to be a good employment opportunity for me. With the support of the EVLC team, I managed to succeed in the interview and was hired for the duration of the construction work in Driza. To my surprise, a few days ago the company informed me that I would be employed permanently even after the work in Driza is complete.

I am very happy that I will be able to provide a better life for my wife and my two children. I am deeply thankful to all EVLC program staffs and especially to Klodi and Edi for this job opportunity. I will work hard to be the best employee in the company.

## Talented Roma musicians to perform with a professional multicultural orchestra

*Tirana*

5 Roma boys performed in front of a Japanese conductor who visited Albania to look for Roma musicians to join a professional multicultural orchestra. Luftar (singer), Mario (clarinet), Kadri (violin), Diagen (tarabuk), and Erando (accordion) surprised the conductor with their excellent musical performances of the Roma anthem and other traditional songs. After considering their skills, the conductor decided to offer the opportunity to all of them. The 5 musicians identified by Romani Baxt are happy to join the professional multicultural orchestra in November and looking forward to presenting Roma musical tradition for multicultural audience.



Photo: Young Roma musicians showing their talent to the Japanese conductor.

## Working for healthier communities

*Durres*

In the framework of a series of activities held on health and hygiene in the Roma community of Nishtulla, Vasil Ziu, Director of Durres Regional Health Directory stated his institutional commitment to work for the empowerment of Roma and Egyptian communities. He said that "We will support every initiative that will contribute to build healthier communities for all".

The activity raised awareness of Roma community members on how to approach respective local authorities for addressing issues related to urban waste, water supply and sewage services. The activities were held in partnership with the Regional Health Directory of Durres, the Family Service Medicine and the Promotion Cabinet.



Photo: Community members, promoting better hygiene and health in Nishtulla.



Photo: Beautiful handicrafts by Roma artisans sold on International Roma Day.

## Roma Handicrafts Fair on International Roma Day (IRD)

*Tirana*

On April 8th, EVLC programme supported Roma artisans to celebrate the international Roma Day through a cultural handicraft fair. The event was held in partnership with the Ministry of Labour Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, and the Ministry of Culture, Tourism, Youth and Sports.

The fair aimed to promote the Roma culture; strengthen the Roma artisan's network, and support the marketing of Roma handicrafts. The fair brought together a diverse collection of handmade artwork produced in a wide variety of materials including: paper, fiber, wood, glass, metal, cotton, and wool which attracted many visitors. Etleva and Valbona from Korca said, 'Our participation to the fair made us proud of being Roma and feel equal to other Albanian citizens because we had the opportunity to introduce and sell our products on this special day.

## Promoting progress in the Roma community

*Durres*

On May 7th, Roma volunteers and community members from Nishtulla area participated in a meeting and discussed community issues including education. "Our hope is to improve every aspect of our lives, but it is difficult if people are marginalized and lack access to education. I am ready to open my house for all Roma youth and adults who are eager to learn, but with several reasons, do not have an opportunity to do so", highlighted Shpresa Avdi, one of the volunteers. The meeting was held in cooperation with Terres des Hommes.



## International Children's Day

### *Tirana, Elbasan, Durres, Fier, Lushnje*

To celebrate the International Children's Day, activities were held in all the regions for children in difficult situation.

**Tirana;** More than 80 children at risk were mobilized in an educational activity in Shkoze and Mini-municipality nr. 8. The activity consisted in playing games in groups, drawing pictures and performing a mini-concert with songs and rhymes. Roma parents also participated in this activity and one of mothers said, "The activities made me realize the importance of the overall well-being and education of children so that they can better integrate themselves into the society."

**Elbasan;** Around 32 children and parents of the Egyptian community in Cerrik visited the city of Durres where they joined a cleaning activity in the coastline as a part of an environmental campaign. At the beach, children and their parents also enjoyed playing sports and interacting with children from different ethnic backgrounds.

**Durrës;** 130 Roma / Egyptians and 220 mainstream children and their parents gathered in the center square of Durres where they organized games, played football, were involved in art work and distributed messages on the child rights.



Photo: Children from communities in Durres participating the activity on International Children's Day.



Photo: Children participating "Enhancing Early Childhood Development Opportunities for Roma Communities of Albania."

**Fier;** About 200 children and 30 parents from Levan, Driza, Mbrostar and Baltez area attended the concert with songs, poetry and declaration of the child rights. This activity was held in collaboration with Terres des Homme, Orphan Association, the municipality of Fier, Police Directory and Roma organization.

**Savra/Lushnje;** This activity was held as part of the project "Enhancing Early Childhood Development Opportunities for Roma Communities of Albania" which aims to ensure access to preschool and better parenting initiatives for Roma children and their families. This project is funded by UNICEF and implemented by Albanian Roma Union "Amaro-Drom". About 50 Roma and non Roma children in Savra and 30 children in Baltza created a lovely and colorful atmosphere at the kindergartens, performing various songs, rhymes and dancing, also spreading different messages on child rights.

These events did not only help to establish relationships between Roma and non-Roma children, but also served to promote the EVLC programme and create a wider base for implementing future activities in the respective areas. Very important components of these activities were discussions about human rights, specifically those related to children and their education. These activities were held in collaboration with the respective municipalities the Regional Police Directory, the Orphanage, "Terres des Hommes", "Tjetër Vizion", "Today for the future center", "Nehemia Foundation", the Football Federation in Durres, and the volunteers from the community and the University of Durres.



Photo: Community members paying a particular attention to Adi Pajani's personal story.

## Awareness raising activity against drug use Tirana

On July 28th, an awareness raising activity against drug use took place at Niko Hoxha School in Valias, an area highly populated by Roma and Egyptians in Tirana. 50 participants including pupils, teenagers, adults and parents listened with a strong interest in the personal story by Adi Pajani (a well-known figure from "Big Brother"), who overcame drug addiction. Sonila, one of community members said "We needed to learn the negative impacts of drug abuse to prevent many youngsters from starting to use drugs. It was very nice to meet with Adi and learn his own story. I don't want my friends and neighbors to use drugs, and suffer from drug addiction as Adi and his family once did".

The activity helped community members to be more aware of the side-effects of drugs, how to seek for assistance from the rehabilitation centers and to report drug related problems to the police. The activity was held in collaboration with police authorities, UNDP and UNFPA.



## Football game brings community members together Fier

"I very much enjoyed taking part in the football competition with other youth from different areas. It helped me to get along with fellows from areas such as Mbrostar, Baltez and Levan". Nikollaq Alushi, Driza, May 26.

## Self-help cleaning activity in Rrapishta Elbasan

"I voluntarily joined this environmental campaign because I wanted to contribute to the cleaning of our community river. I believe that we all should be responsible for improving our environment" said by Agrone Ademi, community member who participated in the self-help activity in Manazderje stream. 15 community members, activists, health mediators and education mediators volunteered in this environmental campaign.



Photo: Environmental Regeneration Activity in Elbasan

## House of colors - a center for abused children launched Tirana

The "House of Colors", a municipal multi-purpose center established to protect children from abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation was launched in March 2011. The center is supported by UNICEF under the EVLC programme. Key beneficiaries include 7 Roma and Egyptian communities in Tirana, a total of 234 families with 530 children and 467 adults. Children and their families are supported with psycho-social services, legal assistance, health services; food; and educational activities. An outreach team works in the communities to identify and support new cases. The center provides 24hrs emergency services for severe cases of children living in the street. The launching event was attended by the high representatives of Tirana municipality, UNICEF and other partner organizations as well as beneficiaries.

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