Localizing the **Millennium Development Goals**: 

*The Albania Experience*
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1. Background: The Albanian Development Context

After 50 years of rule by a xenophobic communist dictatorship, the past decade in Albania has been one of great expectations on behalf of the population and rapid political, economic and social transformation. Early gains brought about by radical reforms during the period 1991-1997 were mitigated by the anarchy that followed the financial pyramid scheme crisis in 1997. Though Albania’s main political aspiration is integration in the EU community, there remain numerous obstacles to the fulfillment of this goal. Weak democratic governing institutions, lack of foreign direct investment, rampant criminal and black market economy activity, poor infrastructure, and a high rate or poverty in the predominantly rural areas are just some of the challenges that face Albania. Poverty in Albania is growing at an alarming rate; indeed, Albania is the poorest country in continental Europe. According to the Albania National Human Development Report for 2002, 29.6% of Albania’s population (approximately 920,000 individuals) live on less than USD$2 per day; of this number, over 500,000 live in extreme poverty – less that USD$1 per day. As illustrated in the map, there is a large disparity in the regional Human Development Indices between the northern and southern regions. Faced with this complex development context, UNDP and its partners within the UN Country Team, the Government of Albania and Civil Society undertook a concerted campaign to enable the achievement of the MDGs.

2. Localization of the MDGs: The Process in Albania

The term “localization” has been frequently used to describe efforts by countries to adapt the MDGs at the national level and develop country specific targets and indicators. UNDP-Albania continues to support the Government of Albania in these efforts (see Annex 1), but has simultaneously advanced the MDG agenda by promoting the sub-national localization of the MDGs. It must be noted that this dual approach is essential and mutually reinforcing. Efforts to localize the MDGs will be ineffectual without concerted national level initiatives that strive incorporate the MDGs into national planning and policy processes and create a political and policy environment that will enable the achievement of the MDGs. Similarly, actual substantive achievement of the MDGs can only occur at the local level whilst experiences and knowledge can provide crucial input to the National level. For the sake of this report, the national level localization will only be referred to briefly; despite the brevity of treatment of this topic, national level interventions are no less important. As noted above, when Albania signed the Millennium Declaration in 2000 the country was suffering from a myriad of issues. Faced with this ever-increasingly complex development context, the UN Country Team began an immediate round of activities to raise awareness of the MDGs and put into motion an agenda to ensure Albania achieved them. Annex 1 provides a brief synopsis of activities undertaken at the national level. At the sub-national level, the UN Country Team, selected MDG Ambassadors (renowned Albanian local personalities), and central and local government officials undertook a tour to all Regions of Albania and hosted town hall forums to raise awareness of the MDGs at the local level. Simultaneously, UNDP began assisting the Regional local governments in preparing reports and strategies on the MDGs. Utilizing both the expertise of local NGOs and the UNDP Local Governance Programme, two products have emerged: MDG Regional Reports (MDGRRs) and MDG Regional Development Strategies (MDG RDS).
### Features of the MDG Reports and Development Strategies

<table>
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<tr>
<th>MDG Regional Reports</th>
<th>MDG Regional Development Strategies</th>
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<tr>
<td>1). Prepared by local NGOs in cooperation with local governments;</td>
<td>1). Prepared by the Local Regional Council in cooperation with a broad array of stakeholders (CSOs, NGOs, Central and Local Government bodies, etc.) with capacity building support offered by UNDP Local Governance Programme;</td>
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<td>2). A “baseline” report containing detailed analysis of constraints and issues facing the local Region and provides a “snapshot” on where a region stands in relation to achieving the MDGs;</td>
<td>2). Both a baseline report as well as a strategy incorporating a Programme Framework (detailed projects with potential partners and costings, forecasted indicator tables until 2015 to monitor progress; see annex 3 for more information;</td>
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<td>3). Rapid preparation (less than 6 months) and does not rely upon extensive capacity building or field presence of UNDP. Utilizes a “mobile training team” drawn from staff of various UNDP projects and units to provide capacity building (eg: Public Information officer for media training, Project Officer Institute for Public Administration initiative for training on policy and project cycle management, etc).</td>
<td>3). 9-15 month preparation time (see annex 2) involving extensive capacity building of local government bodies, CSO, NGO and other stakeholders to ensure ownership over both the process and product. Field presence of UNDP with International and national UNVs is crucial to ensure daily liaison and delivery of trainings;</td>
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<td>4). Provides numerous broad recommendations for addressing development constraints that hinder the achievement of the MDGs at the local level;</td>
<td>4). Provides detailed programmes and projects for achieving the MDGs. MDGs relevant to the Region are prioritized in a participatory manner, with locally relevant targets and indicators developed by the stakeholders (with assistance from UNDP), and specific interventions/projects devised to achieve each target. Approximate project costs and partnerships are included;</td>
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<td>5). Can serve as the basis for future MDG Regional Development Strategies but does not contain detailed projects and forecasted indicators.</td>
<td>5). Adopted as a legal and binding local government document as per the Albanian Law on Decentralization and Local Government.</td>
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The process of localizing the MDGs has been evolutionary with each new MDGRR or MDGRDS drawing upon the lessons learned of the previous ones. The below timescale and maps illustrates the progression of localizing the MDGs. The remaining 6 MDGRRs and 1 MDGRDS will be completed by early 2005. Some of the parallel activities are also listed.

**Elbasan MDGRR**
- First attempt of localizing the MDGs. Produced by a local NGO;
- Detailed analysis of the current situation, but did not provide detailed recommendations for the ways to achieve the MDGs at the local level;
- Formulation process was more oriented towards local government and not to a diverse set of stakeholders;
- Partially linked to PRSP priorities.

**Fier MDGRDS**
- Built upon the strong form of inter-regional comparative analysis offered in Elbasan MDGRR
- Prepared by the Local Government of Fier Region with extensive stake-holder support and participation
- Broad programme for achieving the MDGs locally and forecast indicators to 2015 but no specific projects or costings;
- Linked closely to PRSP priorities
- Selected MDG 3 (gender equality) as a separate goal and developed gender specific projects.
3. **Sub-national Localization: The Benefits**

Albania’s regional MDG reporting process has been effective because it has given meaning to the MDGs at the local level and in turn, contributed to national development. The MDGs can only be achieved through concerted action at the sub-national level; the MDGRRs and MDRRDS’ represent a bottom-up tool for development that empower local governments and stakeholders, streamline local development efforts and focus donor interest on sub-national development activities. The tangible benefits are numerous:

- **Increase regional awareness and mobilization around the MDGs.** At the Regional level, the MDGs represented a consistent message that was easily adapted to a variety of communications mediums whilst simultaneously being a flexible enough set of goals that could adapt to the vast regional differences. Simple goals made relevant to the daily lives of the citizens of a region increased their participation in the formulation of regional reports and regional development strategies. See **Annex 3** for more information on how the MDGs advocacy messages were adapted to the local level.

- **Strengthen decentralized government capacity.** Both the MDGRR and MDGRDS process involve capacity development of local governments. The support package offered through the MDGRDS process capitalized upon the existence of the UNDP Local Governance Programme and its skilled UN Volunteers offers a substantially more robust package of training delivered over a longer term. **Annex 2** illustrates the overall MDGRDS preparation process and highlights some of the capacity building activities.

- **Link regional development plans to national plans, including the National Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRSP equivalent) and the EU Stabilization and Association process, thereby benefiting from political will and momentum.** Linking the global, national and local levels through the MDGs and the consequent selection of relevant goals, and formulation of local targets, and indicators ensures effective planning whereby duplication or contradiction of efforts is reduced. It must be noted that though Albania has progressed far in terms of National and sub-national alignment, there remains little follow through from the international level. It will be crucial in the future to demonstrate that international commitment to assist countries in achieving the MDGs is as strong as Albania’s commitment has been to achieve them on the national and sub-national levels. See **Annex 3** for more information on how the MDGs were localized in Albania.

- **Develop trust and enhance social cohesion amongst the citizens in the villages.** The legacy of 50 years of communist dictatorship destroyed or greatly mitigated traditional models of social cohesion between villagers and villages. Through the MDG regional reporting process (and specifically through the MDGRDS formulation) citizens were gradually encouraged to work together for common goals. The participatory processes frequently involved group discussions thus providing a solid basis for dialogue between various stakeholders in the village. See **Annex 2** for a broad description of the MDGRDS formulation process that illustrates the numerous forums in which citizens work together.

- **Build trust and promote ownership and cooperation among the local government and citizens.** The Albanian political spectrum is characterized by conflict between the two dominant political parties and a lack of capacities to effectively govern. Debate in the parliament frequently dissolves into heated arguments whilst local levels of government are transferred authority from the national level without the capacities to oversee these new powers; as such, basic functions of local government are haphazardly functioning or not functioning at all which in turn leads to citizen resentment. Furthermore, 50 years of communist dictatorship has reinforced distrust of government. The MDGs bring the neutral caché of the United Nations system that when combined as a tool for MDG RDS formulation provides a crucial link between the local government and citizens. The MDGs have not been politically “hijacked” by the political parties in Albania and thus represent a neutral framework in which discussion can ensue. Furthermore, the MDGs are essentially “people focused” and when combined with UNDP’s mandate of sustainable human development removes discussion of development issues from politically fractious discourse. By
creating a neutral space for discussion the MDGs fostered cooperation between the local government and citizens.

- **Increase transparency and accountability at the local level.** As noted in Annex 3, the MDG RDS’ contain forecasted indicators for tracking progress towards achieving the MDGs at the local level. The indicators themselves are important, but the process of selecting the relevant goals for a region, the targets, and indicators is much more so. In Albania, the demand for democracy is very low as is evident in the poor turnout for local and national elections and the lack of citizen participation in government processes. The MDG RDS formulation process (see Annex 2) is based upon the principle of participation. It is well known that citizens’ participation in development processes (be it through social mobilization for the construction of a road, or in the setting of development priorities) leads to sustainable interest in the initiative. Involving a broad array of stakeholders through a variety of means (open forums, working groups, public opinion surveys etc.) has ensured local ownership over the entire MDG RDS formulation process. As the MDG RDS’ are legal Government documents, the Governments are accountable for achieving the goals it set with its citizens. Thus citizens not only become contributors to their development strategy, but also evaluators of the government’s success.

- **Link community priorities with local government’s planning and budgeting processes.** As the MDGRDS’ progressed and developed to meet the demands of the regions in Albania, several shortcomings were immediately apparent. Firstly, there exists in Albania a vague law on local government functions and only partially transferred powers to the local (regional and municipal/commune levels). As such, while the Regional Council has powers of regional planning, it is the municipal/commune level of government that has powers of revenue generation via taxation and levies on services. The law does not clarify the relationship between the planning of the Regional Council and the funding that comes from the municipal and commune levels. Further complicating matters is third level of local government called the Prefecture and its Departments which represent the central government at the local level and has its own budget from the central level. The MDGRDS process was confronted with the challenge of assisting in the clarification of responsibilities amongst the various government layers whilst also incorporating their priorities and plans into the overall regional development strategy. The Kukes MDG RDS benefited extensively from the experience of Fier and concentrated capacity building activities for the regional council on consensus building and strategic planning to incorporate the myriad demands and complexities of the local levels of government. UNDP’s experience was noted by the Ministry of Local Government and upon the Ministry’s request a review on the Law on Local Governance and Decentralization was conducted by the UNDP Local Governance Programme. The recommendations of this study are being considered by the Ministry of Local Government.

- **Focus donor attention on local needs.** There has been a steady decline of donor resources in Albania that has been exacerbated by the inability of many donors to deliver resources on time due to bureaucratic difficulties with organs of the Government of Albania, lack of experience operating in the Albanian context, and various other reasons. Indeed, Albania is at a crucial moment where mounting donor frustration at the inability to follow through on initiatives, populace disillusionment at the slow pace of reforms and progress, and lack of Government capacity threatens to undo the substantial progress achieved in Albania thus far. The sub-national localization of the MDGs has allowed UNDP to refocus both Government and Donor attention at the local level. Again, the MDGs linkage from local to national and global priorities is one of their distinct advantages. It must be noted that despite considerable discussion and attention to the work of UNDP-Albania and its local partners there has been little financial follow through. A financial catalyst is needed to test a truly localized version of MDG 8.
4. **Challenges and Best Practices: Lessons Learned in Albania**

Codifying the lessons learned and best practices is an ongoing process for UNDP-Albania as the MDG campaign continues to gain momentum and grow. A summary of challenges and best practices is below divided into the process of formulating MDGRRs and MDGRDS’ and the products themselves.

**Local Ownership**

UNDP’s role as a trusted advisor and provider of capacity building was crucial to achieve local ownership over the formulation process of the MDGRRs and MDGRDS. Due to the longer local government led process and more extensive capacity building offered by UNDP, the MDGRDS’ regions express stronger ownership over the process and product than the MDGRR regions.

**Capacities for Dialogue**

Closely related to local ownership was the need to build capacities within both local governments and civil society to discuss development issues. Such capacities were greatly lacking in Albania. Extensive advocacy was conducted concerning what the MDGs are, followed quickly by workshops and trainings on participatory development, setting of goals, etc. The creation of a “level playing field” for dialogue between government, civil society and other stakeholders was crucial for the success of the MDGRRs and MDGRDS’.

**Data for Dialogue**

Presentation of data in a means that is readily understandable to all was a key factor for success. Tables, graphs, charts, and other means were often used, though the need for even better methods led the UNDP-Albania office to localize the human development index at the commune level (smallest level of government in Albania). Though the methodology is not as rigorous as the global HDI’s (and thus direct comparisons between global and commune levels are not possible), the cumulative representation of development of the HDIs was extremely useful for the citizens of Kukes to understand in a comprehensive fashion the status of human development in their communes. In Kukes, the HDI’s were overlaid on a map, thus providing a graphic description of the differences in development between communes. This provided for intense debate on why neighboring communes were better (or worse off) than others.

**Gender Equality**

Ensuring gender equality in the participatory processes has had mixed success in Albania. In the southern and central regions more women participated in the formulation processes of the MDGRRS and MDGRDS’ than in the North where cultural norms on the role of women are stronger. It should be noted that extremely rarely was there equal participation of men and women. Numerous methods were used to ensure women could participate to a greater extent; these included focus group discussions with women only, public opinion polling that specifically sought responses from women, and inclusion of women community based organizations formed under the UNDP Local Governance Programme in the MDGRDS formulation processes.

**Local Advocacy**

Coupled with the national level media campaign (see Annex 1) was an extensive local level effort for all MDGRR and MDGRDS processes. Local radio stations, televisions and print media outlets were consistently used to inform citizens of the MDGs and encourage them to participate in the formulation processes. Any documentaries or broadcasts done at the national level were subsequently repeated at the local level to ensure coverage. Town hall meetings were also organized and Public Information Centers utilized (see Annex 1). Radio was an especially powerful vehicle for communication in the mountainous north where TV transmission was poor and print media difficult to transport. A key factor of the media campaign was to stay on the message: *Albania: On the Road to the EU through the MDGs!* while changing the medium.
Local Ownership
As with the process for formulating the MDGRRs and MDGRDS’, the ownership of the documents themselves must be local. From the selection of graphic layouts, the pictures on the front of the documents, prominent placement of regional logos, minimal UNDP and UN advertising, and in the case of the MDGRDS the resolutions from the Regional Council approving the strategies all ensure local ownership. Ownership extends further then presentation as well. Each Regional Council that works to produce an MDGR or MDGRDS also takes responsibility for creating a unit to deal with questions and queries from the public, organizes and even pays for the entire launching of the document. Building ownership through he process and product will ensure ownership over the most crucial phase – the implementation of the strategy.

Validation
As the implementation of the MDGRDS’ is the responsibility of numerous parties, it was crucial that the documents were validated with a wide array of stakeholders. This validation process was led by the regional council with assistance from UNDP and occurred before the launch and finalization of the text. Central level line Ministries, local and international NGOs, the UN system in Albania, and a vast array of other stakeholders were consulted for feedback on the documents. Such an extensive validation process not only ensured wide awareness of the documents served as a basis for forming partnerships that will be crucial for the implementation phase. MDGRRs were not validated on such a broad scale due to the absence of a strategy and need only to gather current information on a region.

MDG 3 versus Gender Equality
At the outset of the formulation processes for the MDGRRs and MDGRDS’ concerted efforts were undertaken to inform local governments of the need to include a gender perspective in their documents. While the MDGRRs typically have selected MDG 3 as a standalone section of the documents, the MDGRDS’ have taken different paths depending on cultural context in the Region. For the Fier MDGRDS, the local government and stakeholders selected MDG 3 as a priority goal for their Region. In Kukes, the cultural context was extremely different; the north of Albania still refers culturally to traditional roles of women that do not favor their participation in certain aspects of daily life. As such, the inclusion of a separate section focused on MDG 3 was hotly debated by stakeholders. A compromise was to gender mainstream the entire document rather than include as a priority MDG 3. The flexibility of approach to the topic of gender concerns being represented adequately in the documents was extremely valuable.

Data Deadlocks
Whenever possible, official national statistics were used in the MDGRDS’ and MDGRRs. INSTAT (the Albanian National Institute of Statistics) was an invaluable partner in providing data. However, localizing the MDGs requires data at a regional level or lower which may be difficult to find, or may be of questionable veracity. In both the Fier and Kukes MDGRDS formulation processes local level data from the Regional departments was used despite some obvious errors such as under-reporting of infant mortality. It was clearly noted within the text that the data needed to be improved for the next edition of the development strategies. But of more importance was the inclusion of qualitative data as a foil to the local level data; in many instances people’s perceptions noted the discrepancies in the data and gave a more accurate picture. The Kukes MDGRDS included call-out boxes titled “The View from Here” that supplemented the gaps in local level quantitative data.

Priority Linkages
The MDGRRs and MDGRDS’ began with tenuous linkages to the PRSP and EU priorities. As the demands form local governments and stakeholders changed, UNDP responded with greater capacity building support and analysis for linkages between the local, national and global development frameworks. As is illustrated in Annex 3 these linkages are created between the goals, targets, indicators, and projects listed in the MDGRDS’. As the MDGRDS’ enter the implementation phase the strategies should benefit from these linkages in term of political will, and alignment with funding priorities from the PRSP and EU funding structures.
UNDP-Albania and its partners are moving forward on several fronts to test new modalities for implementing the MDGRDS’ and achieving the MDGs at the local level. From the outset it must be noted that there is a scarcity of financial resources available and thus all initiatives thus far are either in a pilot stage or not yet funded.

i). **UNDAF Joint Programming.** With the CCA completed, the UNDAF will soon follow. The theme for Albania’s new UNDAF is disparities in terms of levels of human development, income, gender, age, education, access to health services etc. With such a focus it is possible to plan and implement joint programming with other resident and non-resident UN agencies. A region such as Kukes which has the most advanced MDG RDS and was vetted thoroughly with UN agencies would seem ideal for this purpose.

ii). **Area Based Development (ABD) Framework.** Drawing upon RBEC experience with ABD programmes (such as those in Crimea and South Serbia) UNDP-Albania recently invited experts from the BiH office and New York to assist in the formulation of an ABD Programme Framework in cooperation with Kukes Region local government bodies, civil society and private sector. Kukes Region was selected as it is the poorest in Albania and is site of three UNDP projects (Local Governance Programme, Support to Security Sector Reform, and Mine Action) that have gained valuable experiences in working with rural communities and the local government bodies over the past 3 years. The ABD Framework establishes broad areas of intervention in support of the implementation of the Kukes MDGRDS and is intended to build partnerships and provide direction for ongoing and future development initiatives in the Kukes Region. ABD is not a new concept; indeed, it has been well-refined by the UN system and its partners as a way of organizing interventions to concentrate on a specific geographic area that is facing particular development problems. The ABD Programme Framework is complementary to and closely linked with the Kukes MDG RDS. The Framework focuses on several potential initiatives to support the achievement of the prioritized MDGs in the MDG RDS. There are three cross-cutting areas in the Framework including economic development, capacity building, and cross border cooperation. Not only is the Framework supportive of the MDGRDS in terms of content, but also in spirit; the Framework was also developed in a participatory manner after extensive consultations with local stakeholders in Kukes. Already an infrastructure project has been presented to the EC with a favorable response. A cross-border initiative is being developed in cooperation with the UNDP-Kosovo office and was presented in September as a working concept paper to the Netherlands Embassy for consideration.

iii). **Democratic Governance Thematic Trust Fund Project.** Funded by the DGTTF, the Project titled “Showcasing the Regional Dimension of the MDGs through Local Governance” is currently being implemented with promising results. The broad aim of the project was to test the MDGs more thoroughly as a planning tool for the MDGRDS’ formulation process as well as a tool to assist in the implementation. Each Region where the Local Governance Programme is present has been implementing the project. In Fier, the MDG RDS was completed in the summer of 2003 and thus the showcasing activities have been centered upon the implementation of the strategy. Key issues in Fier Region identified by the local authorities concern the capacity building of monitoring skills within civil society and local government and forming partnerships to develop projects, mobilize resources and implement them. The formulation process for the Gjirokastra MDG RDS has only begun in December 2003. As such the showcasing activities have been focused on increasing people’s participation in the development needs prioritization process, building the capacity of local authorities and civil society in utilizing the MDGs as a planning tool, and utilizing the MDGs to link local development goals, target and indicators to national plans (such as the PRSP). In the Kukes Region, the showcasing activities have been focused on increasing the capacity/skills of local authorities and civil society in the implementing, monitoring and reporting on local development initiatives and developing a resource mobilization and project implementation partnership (localized MDG 8).
iv). **Capacity 2015 Partnership Facility Project.** Again taking advantage of the presence and expertise of the UNDP-Local Governance Programme, the overall objective of the Partnership Facility (PF) is to test a concept of responsive local citizenship in the development planning and implementation process of the MDG RDS’ for expansion to the remaining Regions in Albania. Under implementation for 8 months in the regions of Fier, Kukes and Gjirokastra this project has achieved impressive results. To achieve its overall objective, the PF has localized MDG #8 (global partnership for development). The partnership facility consists of a broad group of stakeholders (government officials, students, business people, women and minority groups, community based organizations, and other citizens) that have mobilized skills, personnel, and financial resources in the identification, formulation and implementation of projects in support of achieving the MDGs. In Fier, the MDGRDS has been completed and thus the PF is being utilized to implement programmes and monitor the progress of achieving the MDGs. In the Kukes Regions, the PF has advanced quickly to the implementation of projects. Lastly, in the Gjirokastra Region, the PF has assisted in the prioritization of goals, setting of targets, identification of personnel and financial resources (or needs) for achieving the MDGs at the local level, and the implementation and monitoring of projects. The PF in each region is comprised of an overall committee (formed with as wide a stakeholder group as possible), and several Action Groups based on each of the MDGs that are comprised of stakeholders interested in the specific topic addressed by the MDG. The actual number of Action Groups will vary per Region depending upon what MDGs they citizens discern as important and decide to form Action Groups around. The below organigram illustrates the overall composition of the PF.

![Organigram of Partnership Facility Committee](image-url)

**Partnership Facility Committee**

- **MDG#1 Action Group**
- **MDG#2 Action Group**
- **MDG#3 Action Group**
- **MDG#4 Action Group**
- **MDG#5 Action Group**
- **MDG#6 Action Group**
- **MDG#7 Action Group**
- **MDG#8 Action Group**

*These groups represent only some of those to be engaged in the PF*

*The number of action groups will differ depending on regional priorities*

*UNDP-LGP Regional Coordinator serving as PF Committee Advisor on MDGs and liaison for training requests*
v). National Level MDG Monitoring. With the completion of the MDG consensus building exercise at the national level (see Annex 1), UNDP-Albania is investigating several opportunities in terms of monitoring the integrated policy framework. Firstly, the roll-out of DEVINFO software (coupled with the joint UNICEF and UNDP support that has been provided to the Albanian Institute of National Statistics) offers the opportunity to monitor not only the baseline indicators established through the consensus building exercise, but also Albania’s overall progress towards the global MDGs through monitoring of clusters of indicators within the 48 presented for the eight goals. Ideally, civil society as contributors to the both the national consensus process as well as to the MDGRRs and MDGRDS’ would assist in monitoring through cooperation with the Regional INSTAT offices; such cooperation can take the form of conducting surveys and collecting data, or advocacy efforts. Potential also exists to extend the ownership of the MDGs campaign based on the Parliamentary Resolution (see Annex 1). Parliament could adopt an oversight function in cooperation with civil society and the Institute of National Statistics to monitor Albania’s progress towards achieving the MDGs. Ideally, improved monitoring will result in improved policy formulation and implementation. Implementation may also be assisted by the study conducted by UNDP-Albania on costing the attainment of the MDGs.
Annex I: National Level Localization of the MDGs and other Supporting Tools

National level localization of the MDGs is best defined as integration of the MDGs into the existing country policy strategies and frameworks. In Albania, the three main frameworks that are designed to shape public actions in the years to come are the MDGs (political agenda to reduce poverty over the long-term), the National Strategy for Socio-Economic Development (NSSED, or PRSP equivalent in Albania over the short-to medium-term) and Stabilization and Association process (SAp, the long-term political process towards EU integration). Though the content of the above three frameworks is different, they do intersect and complement each other on numerous levels. The NSSED/PRSP and SAP are supported by reporting, monitoring and evaluation systems as well as financial instruments, while the MDGs are not. Therefore, the only way to ensure the MDGs are adapted into nationally-owned policy monitoring, evaluation, and financing schemes is to support efforts to incorporate them into and improve upon existing NSSED/PRSP and SAP frameworks. There are numerous supporting instruments that UNDP-Albania has used to advocate for the inclusion of the MDGs in the national policy frameworks; among these tools are:

- **A Concerted Advocacy Campaign:** A considerable number of advocacy initiatives have been conducted by UNDP-Albania including: roundtables, public debates, conferences, workshops, television and radio advertisement, MDG banners in prominent places throughout Albania, utilization of renowned Albanian personalities as MDG Ambassadors, leaflets, posters, and innovative events such as screening popular Albanian films in rural areas as a vehicle to disseminate information on the MDGs.

- **Parliamentary Resolution:** A component of the advocacy campaign included seminars for parliamentarians on the MDGs. Stemming from this came the adoption of an MDG Resolution by the Albanian Parliament on 30 July 2003 “…encouraging all stakeholders to track progress in achieving the MDGs on a regular basis through national monitoring and evaluation systems and the preparation of annual progress reports that encourage public debate and offer recommendations on ways to improve national and regional (decentralized) development policies.” Formulation of the draft Resolution and lobbying for its adoption was supported through close working relationships with key Parliamentarians, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Finance. Once the draft Resolution was presented for discussion, most of the hard work had been done - it was unanimously approved. With the Order in place greater national ownership of the MDGs has been established and institutionalized beyond the Government. Many Parliamentarians are involved in related MDG work at central and local levels. In addition the Resolution reinforces efforts to integrate the MDGs into national development mechanisms including the Albanian PRSP and EU integration process: “Concrete Millennium Development targets and indicators are already included into the National Strategy of the Social and Economic Development, as well as into sector strategies and programs, and are in complete harmony with the reforms undertaken in the framework of the EU Stabilization and Association process.”

Another tool, though not specifically related to the national level are the public access centers established in the regions.

- **Public Access and Information Centers (PACS):** PACS are located in local Government premises, libraries, youth centers and universities. In addition to these Centers, ICT tools have also been introduced in the work of local Governments and NGOs including the following:
  i). Content and information management ([Albanian regional development portal](http://www.regions.org.al)), including mailing lists on development subjects, web-polls on MDGs and local priorities, on-line discussion boards dedicated to issues of local development etc.;
  ii). Nation-wide E-mail service in Albanian language linked to the Development Portal;
  iii). Internet connectivity and hardware for local government offices and selected NGOs;
  iv). ICT Training for representatives of local governments and civil society.

Thus far 10 PACs have been established in 7 regions of Albania, with 3 more to be completed by the end of 2004. In all participating regions, a formal relationship has been established with local partners, through the signing MoUs that provide an operational and legal basis for cooperation. Local ownership and responsibility are obvious vital pre-conditions for successful operations of the PACs in the regions; hence, there is a mixed degree of success in some regions reflecting the general problems of low capacity in local administrations and lack of knowledge and understanding of the value of information among communities. These constraints are being addressed though accelerated advocacy using both traditional methods (such as posters...
explaining the mission, services and locations of PACs) and public relations technologies of the digital age (such as banner exchanges with popular Albanian news portals).

With the assistance of the above mentioned supporting tools, an inter-institutional dialog has been ongoing for more than two years to integrate successfully the MDGs into the NSSED/PRSP. Beginning with the document “The Albanian Response to the MDGs” launched in May 2002 that provided a general situation analysis of Albanian’s standing vis-à-vis achieving the MDGs, momentum has increased with significant progress made towards integrating the MDGs into the NSSED/PRSP. During the same period of 2002-2004 the NSSED/PRSP has evolved to cover the work of all line ministries and other state ministries. This process of integrating the MDGs into the NSSED/PRSP has involved civil society and international organizations in Albania to identify the goals and indicators of the MDGs that are relevant to Albanian conditions. In other words, the MDGs, although identified internationally, are being modified and adapted to national conditions as part of a joint national MDG consensus process and review of the NSSED/PRSP process. The primary objective of the consensus process has been to agree upon Albania-relevant goals, targets, indicators, and baselines.

After ten months of consultations the process has been completed and a final template of the Albanian relevant MDGs, targets, indicators and baseline has been prepared. This template has been extensively validated in each of the country’s twelve regions and included both a review of the proposed Albanian relevant MDGs, targets, baselines and indicators as well as a participatory critique of the draft NSSED/PRSP Progress Report. To help to undertake this joint exercise, 72 local civil society representatives from all 12 regions of Albania along with 7 facilitators were trained in consensus building techniques. Approximately 650 stakeholders in 11 regions (not including the capital region) from Local Government, Youth, Women, Ethnic Groups, Civil Society and private sector participated in this process from February-March 2004. They discussed and challenged the proposed Albania-relevant MDGs initially proposed at the central level. Through workshops they shared their concerns and views on regional development, the MDGs, and NSSED/PRSP policies in place to achieve them. They also discussed about Albanian non-relevant indicators and targets. A main concern during these workshops was how the central level will take into account their suggestions. A national workshop was held in Tirana, the capital of Albania in May 2004 to present feedback and conclusions from the regional validation process. Summary findings were presented to the NSSED/PRSP Department in the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other line ministries and will be used to prepare the National MDG Report and NSSED/PRSP Progress Report. Efforts have also been made to better institutionalize the MDG Reporting process within the NSSED/PRSP Secretariat that is responsible for the annual preparation of the NSSED/PRSP Progress report. In this respect, it is necessary for the Monitoring and Evaluation Units in line ministries that deal with the NSSED/PRSP Progress Report also to engage in the periodical reporting process for the MDGs. This cooperation has already started between the Ministry of Finance (in charge of the NSSED/PRSP) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (responsible for reporting on international treaties and conventions, including the MDGs). The efforts to institutionalize this relationship include the drafting of an Order through the Council of Ministers that more clearly defines reporting roles and responsibilities of each institution.

As part of the ongoing efforts to integrate the MDGs into the national development policy environment, the Albanian Government recently organized with UNDP and UN Country Team support a National Conference “Toward EU Integration and Achievement of the MDG through the NSSED/PRSP” that was attended by over 200 national and international representatives of the public and private sector, civil society, and donor community. Through a series of presentations, working-group discussions, and background materials, the conference advocated for more complementary linkages between the MDGs, NSSED/PRSP and SAP, while serving as a vehicle for continued participatory dialog on and transparency of national policy issues.

The participatory process has proven to be an essential and well received component of the overall MDG RDS formulation and MDG localization process. While UNDP supports the Regional Council in all endeavors when requested, ultimately it is the Regional Council that leads the formulation process with UNDP being a provider of technical services and skills.
Annex 3: Localization in Action – An Example from the Kukes MDG Regional Development Strategy

As noted in the previous diagram, the citizens of the Kukes Region and their local government authorities undertake a participatory prioritization and selection process to choose the MDGs relevant to their region. While the global MDG selected is always kept in this process, local targets and indicators are developed to ensure that the development context of the local area is addressed accurately. **Thus national and global goals are being achieved at the local level.** The example below illustrates how the Kukes MDG Regional Development Strategy adapted the MDG goal of Achieving Universal Primary Education to the local context. Note that the Kukes goal actually sets much more ambitious targets than the original MDG goal. Another interesting feature is the explicit reference to both boys and girls; this is due to the alarming drop-out rate of girls form secondary education and the desire of the citizens and local government authorities to highlight girls as a key beneficiary group.

![Diagram showing the adaptation of MDG goals](image)

**Global MDG:**
Achieve Universal Primary Education

**National PRSP Goal**
100% enrollment in primary education, 90% in secondary education and not less than 13.5 years of education per student

**EU SAp Goal (of national significance):**
Improving attendance in compulsory and primary education

**Local Kukes Region MDG:**
100% of boys and girls complete primary education and a minimum of 13.5 years of education in total for all students
The below table is an excerpt from the Kukes MDG Regional Development Strategy’s section on MDG Goal #1 – halving extreme poverty. The table is designed to provide citizens of the Kukes Region and local government officials with a clear way to track progress towards achieving the MDGs. This table further illustrates how the MDGs have been localized – taking the global MDG, applying localized targets for the Kukes Region, and then linking the indicators to the national context and overall ambitions of the citizens to join the EU.

National averages allow a comparison between the local level and Albania’s overall situation. Data sources are provided to ensure clarity.

The sub-national baseline for the Kukes Region provides citizens with a quick overview of their Region’s current status. Note that the lack of national level statistics causes the utilization of less reliable local level data.

Forecasted indicators encourage accountability by making the local authorities responsible for achieving the targets set jointly by the citizens and themselves. Note how the indicators progress towards EU averages.

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Current and Forecasted Indicators:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Albania National Average</th>
<th>Kukes Region Baseline</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>EU Average (Data from Eurostat unless otherwise noted)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1, 1.3</td>
<td>1. Unemployment rate (%)</td>
<td>14.6 (INSTAT, 2002)</td>
<td>29.94 (2001, INSTAT)</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8% (2003 EU average)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1, 1.3</td>
<td>2. % of families benefiting from social assistance</td>
<td>22.06 (INSTAT, 2002)</td>
<td>56.6 (2001, District Level)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5.97% (1992, based on average of 12 of 15 EU Countries)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>5. Water running in average day (% of the 24 hrs)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>38 (2001, District Level)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>98% (2000)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This column refers to the targets set by the citizens and the local government officials. These are MDG targets relevant to the Kukes Region.

The indicators are selected by the citizens of the Kukes Region and their local authorities with support provided by UNDP and the Institute for National Statistics. The indicators for other Regions Poverty Eradication Goals are different as Poverty is manifested differently in them.

As Albania’s overall ambition is to enter the EU, these statistical averages provide citizens with a clear comparison between the local/national levels and the EU. Inclusion of EU statistics has been invaluable in encouraging citizen participation in the monitoring of the Kukes MDG RDS; the distant ambition of EU accession is now directly relevant to people’s everyday lives.
Advocacy and communications materials were also localized for the Kukes MDG RDS. One example of this is the poster campaign for the MDGs. The images of the global MDG posters were adapted for the national Albanian context with images for each of the 8 MDGs that were relevant to Albanians across the country. This concept was pushed further with an individual poster set being developed for the Kukes Region with images specific to the area. Such a simple yet concrete product brings the MDGs much closer to citizen's daily lives. The poster below shows the Valbona River in Kukes Region – a source of pride for much of the Region. What does MDG #7 on Environmental Sustainability mean to the citizens of the Kukes region? It means a clean Valbona River that is will be used for tourism in a sustainable fashion.

The localized MDG #7 poster for the Kukes Region