REPORT ON

COMMUNITY-BASED SCORECARD 2017

MUNICIPALITY OF LEZHA
REPORT

COMMUNITY-BASED SCORECARD
2017

MUNICIPALITY OF LEZHA
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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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We extend our appreciation to the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Women Empowerment and the USAID Planning and Local Governance Project for their financial and technical support in the implementation of this project.
# ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CBS</td>
<td>Community-based scorecard</td>
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<tr>
<td>GADC</td>
<td>Gender Alliance for Development Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>LGU</td>
<td>Local Government Unit</td>
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<tr>
<td>TAR</td>
<td>Territorial-Administrative Reform</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN Women</td>
<td>United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Women Empowerment</td>
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<td>USAID</td>
<td>United States Agency for International Development</td>
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1. INTRODUCTION

While progress is being made to advance the decentralization process in Albania, the challenges to successfully implement decentralized and democratic local governance are immense. The territorial-administrative reform (TAR) initiated in June 2015 had a significant impact on the functioning and administration of local government units (LGUs). The reduction of LGU number from 373 to 61 led to a huge increase of the territory and population as well as to the complexity of their governance. The reform had a great impact not only on the additional responsibilities and functions of the LGUs, but also on their ability to provide quality and efficient services to the citizens in the expanded municipality. In addition to this, municipalities are coping with greater challenges than before to truly inform, involve and represent women and men in their decision-making.

To this end, the USAID Planning and Local Governance Project (PLGP) and UN Women, in collaboration with civil society organizations and citizen advisory panels (CAP), have undertaken a Community-Based Scorecard (CBS) initiative in 10 of Albania’s largest municipalities since 2015. Prior to the territorial-administrative reform and local elections of 2015, CBS was implemented in the municipalities of Elbasan, Berat, Kamza, and Vlora. The concerns and recommendations of men and women from these municipalities were presented to and incorporated in the agendas and programs of the candidates for mayor of these cities. In year 2016, CBS was implemented in 6 other municipalities, including Fier, Gjirokastra, Kuçoşa, Vlore, Lushnjë and Shkodra and in 2017 in six additional municipalities: Lezha, Patos, Vora, Kukes, and Saranda. Community-based scorecard involves major aspects of local governance, such as (I) Quality and efficiency of public services; (II) Local democracy and good governance; (III) Local economic development; and, (IV) Human rights at local level.

By soliciting citizens’ opinions in identifying and determining local priorities, CBS seeks to establish and promote citizen mechanisms to improve local democracy. The CBS process facilitates monitoring and evaluation of local administration’s performance, in addition to creating bridges of dialogue, interaction, and cooperation at local level.

The community-based scorecard is a good approach and opportunity for municipalities to gain an understanding of citizens’ needs and priorities. Incorporation of CBS results in local programs and their efforts to influence development of local policies is a positive indicator of the democracy in action. A combination of CBS methodology with key local stakeholders, such state administration Citizen Advisory Panels (CAPs) and civil society organizations, has rendered the successful implementation of this process possible.
2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The information provided in this report presents the progress of community-based scorecard process in the Municipality of Lezha for December 2016 – April 2017. It provides local community and administration’s assessment of the performance of services delivered at local level as well as citizens’ findings and recommendations. The CBS process gives to the Municipality of Lezha a clear picture of citizens’ evaluation of public services, economic development, functioning of local democracy, and human rights at local level.

The community-based scorecard process was carried out by the Gender Alliance for Development Center (GADC) in cooperation with the Municipality of Lezha, the administrative unit of Shengjin, Shenkolle and Balldre with the participation of the communities in the abovementioned administrative units.

The Community-Based Scorecard Project ran during December 2016 – April 2017, and included 6 municipalities – Municipality of Lezha being one of them. The goal of this project is to improve local democracy by empowering citizen mechanisms. Its specific objectives seek to encourage interaction and dialogue between citizens and local authorities by incorporating citizens’ priorities and needs in local programs and budgets, by creating conditions for sustainable improvements of service delivery to communities, and by strengthening cooperation between both parties.

CBS implementation required close work with the municipal administration to ensure their readiness and cooperation in this process. Indeed, this called for preparatory meetings and discussions on the methodology, areas to be examined by CBS, and on the selection of zones for project implementation and participation of citizens. It is worth mentioning the valuable contribution of the Citizens’ Advisory Panel.

An array of documents and strategies were examined in the course of this process, including draft Strategy on Territorial Development, municipality’s budget for year 2016, the work plan of the Crosscutting Strategy on Decentralization and Local Governance 2015-2020, Law No. 119/2014 “On Right to Information”, Law No. 135/2015 “On Local Self-Governance”, municipality’s website, etc.

This report includes: 1) A brief profile of the Municipality of Lezha; 2) Project methodology; 3) Project Description; 4) A summary of results of citizens’ evaluation on local governance; 5) Findings and recommendations for the future.
3. A PROFILE OF MUNICIPALITY OF LEZHA

The city of Lezha, the legal center of the district by the same name, lies in north-western Albania near the Adriatic Sea. Records show that that Lezha has been inhabited without interruption since at least since the 8th century B.C. by an Illyrian-Albanian population. However, it has been said that the city was founded on 385 B.C. by Dyonis of Syracuse. The name "Lisso" or "Lissus" is an adaptation of the old Illyrian name for the town, "Lisi." Even before it was a Greek colony under Dyonis, there is evidence of Lezhe being settled by the Illyrians. What is undisputed is that throughout history, Lezha has played a distinct role in the broader Illyro-Albanian history.

The geographical position of the city and its surroundings dictated its importance as a commercial and political center of the region. Through the nearby port of Shengjin, (Saint John of Medua), the merchants and inhabitants of Lezha had a lively interaction with the world, in different economic and cultural fields, thus building a highly developed society. The city as a hub close to the sea meant that it was, over time, the scene of several events of great national importance such as "Lidhja e Lezhes" (the League of Lezha) in 1444 and "Kuvendi i Arberit" (The Arber Council) in 1703. Because Lezhe was at a crossroads between Shengjin and the rest of the Balkans on the road to Kosovo, Kukes and Zadrima, it thrived economically.

The city of Lezha is the administrative center of the Lezha district in the northwestern part of the country. The region stretches from the region of Shkodra in the north to Mati River in the south, from the Puke-Mirdite Mountains to the east to the Adriatic Sea to the west. Lezha lies at a latitude of 41° 57' 30" and 41° 39' 45" and a longitude of 19° 32' 20" and 19° 53' 20". Lezha is situated 55 km north of Tirana, 35 km south of Shkoder and 70 km from Durrës (the port and ferry terminal). Rinas airport is 40 km away and the road to the northeast to Pristina, the capital of the Republic of Kosovo is 220 km long. At a closer distance of only 6 km lies the port of Shengjin with its adjoining beaches. Other nearby beaches are Kune (8 km), Vain (3 km) and Tale (15 km).

The territory of Lezha features a temperate Mediterranean climate. The Adriatic Sea keeps the climate mild. The district of Lezha has a hot dry summer, and a mild wet winter in the lower altitudes. In the higher regions it is a bit colder and there is snow in the winter. The average temperature of the year is 15 Celsius degrees. Average for January is 7 degrees Celsius while for July it is 25 degrees Celsius. The highest temperature ever recorded in Lezha is 39 degrees Celsius (on 18-07-1973) while the lowest is -10 degrees Celsius (on 24-01-1963). It rains on average 1700 mm in a year.

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After a Roman occupation Lissus was named as "Municip", having the same military and economic importance as a naval base on the Adriatic. The name of the city was recorded by different Greek and Latin historians who lived before Christ. It was also named in the Venetian chronicles when the city was under domain of the Republic of San Marco. But, the city did not gain it prominent status in history until the 15th century A.D., when Skanderbeg brought together the Albanian princes in Lezhe to create an alliance against the Ottomans. During this glorious period Lezha was the diplomatic capital of Albania. In the year 1468, Gjergj Kastrioti Skanderbeg - died and was buried here. The memorial at his burial place is now a center of pilgrimage visited every year by thousands of tourists from all around the world. Today Lezha has a population of thirty five thousand that is continually growing from the influx of immigrants from the inner mountainous areas of northern Albania. Because of its historical and cultural importance, there is great potential for tourism in Lezha. Of special interest is the Medieval Castle, imposing on the hill above town. Current archaeological excavations around the castle and inside the Illyrian walls expose new value to these monuments each year. The Franciscan Convent, founded by Saint Francis from Assisi himself in 1220 represents another point of interest in town that is both cultural and educational. The river Drini flows through town and empties into the sea, a mere 3 kilometers downstream.

Today the city remains a transportation node as it connects major national highways, railways and the port of Shengjin. Lezha has good connections with Montenegro, Macedonia and Kosovo. Currently national highways under construction will add to the accessibility of the region. In addition to buildings and roads, the educational, cultural and sport sectors are also under development. There are six functioning kindergartens, three public and three private, in addition to three public elementary schools and two public secondary schools (one functions as a professional school). Construction of a new secondary school is underway and a private American academic center just opened in town. In order to better understand the multidimensional growing of this city we invite you to come and see for yourself. Welcome to our city "welcome to Lezha"!
4. METHODOLOGY

The community-based scorecard process\(^1\) is a monitoring tool employed by the community as an analysis unit to promote social and public accountability and responsibility of the local decision-making institutions. CBS is also known as ‘community voice’ as it enables citizens to communicate their evaluation of the quality, relevance, and efficiency of public services and propose changes to the delivered services including local decision-making. The CBS mechanism is applied at an utterly important level – local level, where citizens are in direct contact with decision-making authorities and, above all, with the services delivered by them.

This process facilitates the dialog between community and local authorities juxtaposing possibilities (resources available to local authorities) with the real needs of the community. The application of this mechanism at local level impacts: development of participatory democracy and accomplishment of local good governance. It should also be pointed out that CBS is not merely an evaluation process. Indeed, it goes further. It builds interaction among community, local authorities, civil society organizations, etc., by creating conditions for sustainable improvements of services provided to community and by empowering the community.

The main principles of service evaluations in the course of community-based scorecard (regardless of the focus of the CBS) include:

- **Relevance**: does the program or service reflect the needs of the targeted group? Does it meet the standards and criteria stipulated in the law?
- **Efficiency**: Are the (human, financial, local) resources being used effectively and in a timely manner? Is the community involved in the planning of these resources?
- **Participation**: To what extent and how is community participation in planning and implementation of programs/services encouraged? What models do authorities use to encourage participation?
- **Sustainability**: longevity of programs, services. Are the annual funds increasing or are they lacking at all?
- **Results**: What changes has the program/service implementation introduced? What ways do local authorities use to measure impact?

The beneficiaries of the community-based scorecard include the community and local authorities. The **CBS process enables the community** to be informed on services provided by local authorities; voice its opinion on their quality and efficiency; monitor the accomplishment of obligations/commitments in delivering quality services; express its opinion directly to relevant authorities and demand from them to make the necessary improvements; and, interact with relevant authorities with the aim of benefiting quality and sustainable services. **CBS helps local authorities** to better know the needs and priorities of the communities in general and its vulnerable groups in particular; guide the use of available resources in conformity with the community needs and priorities; increase their capacities and transparency in governance; and improve the quality and availability of services provided to the community.

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\(^1\) Taken from A Handbook for Civil Society “Community-Based Scorecard” supported by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, Ideart Publishing House, Tirana, 2012
The community-based scorecard goes through several phases, which are: (1) evaluation of data follow-up (finding and examination of documents, materials, and strategies relative to the municipality); (2) Community evaluation of municipality’s performance (focus groups with local citizens in urban and rural areas); (3) Evaluation or self-evaluation from service providers (semi-structured interviews with local authorities); (4) Direct meetings between beneficiaries and providers (public presentation of findings and recommendations from this process); and, (5) preparation of report with the aim of institutionalizing the process, advocacy, and monitoring.
5. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The community-based scorecard undergoes some phases, which are detailed out below:

**Evaluation card**: the preparatory phase of the project is very important for determining aspects/areas to be covered and the indicators to be used by the CBS. The four selected areas were: (I) Quality and efficiency of public services; (II) Local democracy and good governance; (III) Local economic development; and, (IV) Human rights at local level. Twenty performance indicators were defined based on the selected areas. Three specific cards were prepared for the city, administrative unit, and a summary of evaluation of citizens and service providers.

The indicators used for the community-based scorecard included:

**PUBLIC SERVICES**
- Roads
- Lighting
- Cleaning
- Greenery
- Water supply and Sewerage

**LOCAL DEMOCRACY/ GOOD GOVERNANCE**
- Information and Communication
- Transparency
- Participation in decision-making

**LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**
- Strategic planning
- Budget planning
- Business promotion
- Employment promotion with particular focus in women and youth

**HUMAN RIGHTS AT LOCAL LEVEL**
- Women
- Vulnerable groups
- Roma and Egyptians
- Protection from discrimination

**Focus groups**: Four focus groups with representatives of the community and citizens of Lezha and the administrative units of Shenkoll, Shengjin, and Balldre were organized with the aim of soliciting citizens’ opinion. Among many attendees were representatives of civil society, community marginalized groups, active citizens, heads of villages, etc., who used scoring to evaluate municipality’s performance and identify citizens’ needs and priorities. A somewhat balanced gender participation was identified in the community’s evaluation of the governance process. During the focus group meetings, participants were informed on the goal and objectives of the project, territorial-administrative reform, change of local governance legislation, and on mechanisms intended for citizen participation in decision-making.
Semi-structured interviews: After the meetings with citizens, semi-structured interviews were conducted with municipality’s representatives, whereby service providers self-evaluated, by means of a scoring system, the services they provide to the community. Interviews were conducted with the deputy mayor, Information and Consultation Coordinator, the Head of Municipal Services, a member of the Lezha Municipal Council, and with the administrator of Shenkoll, Shengjin, and Balldre. The evaluation score scale employed in the community-based scorecard with both the citizens and the municipality is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No service or very poor quality service provided</td>
<td>☹️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service is provided, but its quality is poor</td>
<td>☹️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service is provided and its quality is relatively acceptable</td>
<td>😐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service is provided with good quality</td>
<td>😊</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service is provided with high quality</td>
<td>😊😊</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data analysis: Data entry and analysis obtained from focus group discussions and interviews with service providers constitute a very important moment in the community-based scorecard process. During this phase, scorecard and findings of citizens and service providers were consolidated. A key part to this work was the consultation of documents/strategies and other information that helped to display a clearer view of examined areas and indicators.

Public presentation: Public presentation of the scorecard evaluation process was the final phase of the CBS in the Municipality of Lezha. It was held as a public forum with the citizens of this local government unit. In addition to the Deputy Mayor and his staff, other attendees of this event included members of the Citizens’ Advisory Panel, representatives of civil society organizations operating in Lezha, marginalized groups, active citizens, Municipal Council members—part of focus group discussions. Findings from this process were presented and recommendations produced from meetings with citizens were also discussed in this event. The Deputy Mayor considered the process to be a good opportunity to solicit citizens’ opinion and a useful way to enhance cooperation and communication with them in the future. These recommendations will be considered in the course of preparing the next year budget and will become part of the territorial planning strategy, which is in the development phase.
6. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

As already explained earlier in this report, the community-based scorecard process involved citizens of administrative units of Lezha center and the administrative units of Shenkoll, Shengjin, and Balldre. Municipal staff/service providers were also interviewed during this process. The issues under monitoring and evaluation were similar to those discussed in focus group with the community in order to obtain data on these issues from the community as the service beneficiary and from the municipality as the service provider. Below are the results produced and analyzed from this evaluation.

a) **Quality and efficiency of public services** - roads/ sidewalks, lighting, city cleaning, greenery, water supply and sewerage, irrigation and drainage canals, and forests and pastureland.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUALITY AND EFFICIENCY OF PUBLIC SERVICES</th>
<th>Score</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizens</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service providers</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative unit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizens</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service providers</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b) **Local democracy/ good governance** – Information and communication, transparency, participation in decision-making

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LOCAL DEMOCRACY/ GOOD GOVERNANCE</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizens</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service providers</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative unit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizens</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service providers</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

c) **Local economic development** - Strategic planning, budget planning, business promotion, employment promotion with particular focus in women and youth
d) **Human rights at local level** - women, marginalized groups, Roma and Egyptians, protection from discrimination

In addition to a scoring system, participants had the opportunity to give their feedback and suggestions/recommendations. Below are some of the main findings and recommendations that the citizens and services providers gave for the Municipality of Lezha.
7. MAIN FINDINGS

7.1 FINDINGS IN THE CITY

7.1.1 Quality and efficiency of public services

Road Infrastructure

Findings

The citizens of Lezha have high consideration of infrastructure investments undertaken by the municipality. The town’s main square where major local institutions are located and the promenade along the Drini River have been reconstructed. According to interviewed citizens of the town of Lezha, this service is very deficient, because most city roads are damaged. The road signage and traffic lights have been removed due to works being undertaken in the roads. The investment made in the town entry section is very welcomed, even though the road segments in the suburban areas lack public lighting. Various utilities, such as water, communication, etc., do not coordinate their interventions with the municipality and carry out works, leaving many road canals and potholes open and failing to fix them in due time and with the required quality.

Recommendations
- Infrastructure works should be well planned and coordinated without hindering traffic and commute.
- Once interventions/improvements are complete, it is necessary to plan and take actions road maintenance, public lighting, expansion and improvement of sidewalks and signage.
- New sidewalks should be sufficiently wide and with ramps. The existing sidewalks should be cleared of any objects placed illegally by local businesses. Protective barriers should be placed where missing.
- In terms of road signage, citizens recommend painting white lines on the roads, regular maintenance of the existing signage, and installation of traffic lights in the crossroads that have no roundabouts.

Public lighting

Findings

Survey respondents are very unpleased with the quality of public lighting, particularly in suburban neighborhoods. In some of these areas, the public lighting is installed but not operational. Some respondents pointed out that over the last few years the town has never had public lighting during nighttime.

Recommendations
Citizens recommend that more work be done to maintain and provide this service not only in the main streets of the municipality but also in the town neighborhoods, particularly in the suburban areas.

Cleaning Service

Findings
Both the municipality and citizens think that the cleaning service in the urban areas is good, but this service is problematic in suburban areas where waste bins are not cleaned and waste is not regularly collected in remote areas, especially in the seaside areas and beaches. While this service is outsourced to a private company contracted on tender basis for both urban and rural areas, the town is “covered” by urban waste, particularly in suburban areas, where waste is dumped for several days in waste bins and their surroundings. Waste is not collected for several days producing a stink in the surrounding premises. Respondents say that the municipality introduced separated collection of urban waste few years ago; yet, citizens do not comply with this differentiated waste collection at all. Similar problem applies to neighborhoods located in the town center.

The municipality says it has finished the Integrated Waste Management Plan, which will provide a sustainable solution to the cleaning service. In certain cases, awareness campaigns have been conducted with the communities, especially with the school children on recycling, as recycling plays a very important role in conservation and management of both environment and the investment made to it. The municipality has employed mechanisms to measure the quality of this service, including direct information from community polls, media, social networks (web, Facebook, etc.). Civil society is giving its contribution in this direction.

Recommendations
• Improve town cleaning service by installing more waste bins, especially in the neighborhoods and suburban areas;
• The municipality should work more with local businesses so that the latter manage their waste;
• Undertake awareness campaigns with citizens;
• Apply recycling methods in the town, particularly during the summertime.

Greenery Service

Findings
Given the area size and population, greenery in urban areas is very poor. In terms of green areas, the town of Lezha has a total of 57,100 sq. meters of green spaces, whereas the other two administrative units have not stated to have green areas in their jurisdiction. Survey respondents indicate that the newly improved roads have no green vegetation at all. On the other hand, the municipality declares that its green areas have expanded with some 10,000 sq meters as it has liberated occupied territory in the town center and transformed them into green space. Citizens state that neighborhoods have no green areas for people to relax and enjoy during afternoons.
Recommendations
• Expand green spaces in the town, build recreational parks focused in the youth and the elderly;
• Promote planting of characteristic vegetation in Lezha, and integrate them with the newly improved road infrastructure

Water Supply and Sewage Service

Findings
The official data show that the Municipality of Lezha provides water supply service to about 95% of the population. Regardless of considerable improvements in the water supply service, the citizens of Lezha reported problems on this service. They admitted that the municipality is investing and hoped that positive results are delivered in the short run. They pointed out problems with the scheduled supply and lack of operation of the new water supply system. Citizens emphasized the problem of the quality of water supply. The service is provided intermittently, sometimes for one hour and a half per day. The water quality is very bad, the water is dirty and stinky. Citizens declare that the water is not only undrinkable but it cannot be used for other purposes either. One local resident stated that some apartment buildings may collapse from the weight of the many water tanks placed on building roofs. Water supply pipes are outdated. Survey respondents are unable to tell whether the problem rests with the water reservoir in the town assuming that unclean water comes from the water depot. Some residents say that a KfW-funded German project has started its implementation with the hope of improving water supply service delivery. They have no information on how long the project implementation will last, even though the project initiated a long time ago and is taking too much time to finish. In terms of sewage, the municipality declared that quality of sewerage service is improving to comply with the standards and other investments are planned to improve this service.

Recommendations
• Improve water supply in several neighborhoods and in suburban areas, particularly in villages
• Intervene in the sewage system, particularly in the suburban zones

7.1.2 Local Democracy and Good Governance

Information and Communication

Findings
Focus group participants said that the municipality is open and citizens can obtain information at any time and quite easily. The information provided is understandable; in case this information is unclear, citizens turn to municipal officials to clarify. Information is obtained from the staff and information office in the first floor of the municipality building. Citizens say that local officials are willing and available to help solve their problems. The Municipality of Lezha collaborates with a
local TV station to inform citizens on municipality’s policies and decisions. TV Lezha posts up articles and chronicles on the municipality’s work in its website. Some articles include concerns on lack of horizontal road signage in the city roads. The media’s role is important not only for raising awareness among citizens, but also as a form of pressure to local governance for better performance.

**Recommendations**
- Citizens should be guided where to obtain the information they need
- The local administration needs to identify ways and effective instruments to improve communication with the citizens.

**Transparency in Decision-Making:**

**Findings**
The Municipality of Lezha makes extensive use of the social and local media. It has established a website (www.lezha.gov.al) and a Facebook page, which is updated regularly. Regular notices and information are provided to local media; relationship with local media is very good and the municipality is open to them at any time. An information stand is installed at the municipality. According to interviewed citizens, there is no transparency, even though the municipality has established a website with updated information. Citizens admit there is an information stand in which information is published, but it needs to be improved. The public is informed of the Municipal Council meetings and their decisions through the information office and the website of the municipality. Citizens are informed of public meetings and hearing through the information stand, Facebook postings, official website and local media.

**Recommendations**
- Update regularly the municipality’s website; it should be refreshed with updated information needed by citizens since social media (commonly used by the municipality) does not offer categorized and easily accessible information for the citizens.
- The stand of notifications should have updated information.
- Citizens need to locate easily the information on decisions of the Municipal Council and the municipality, transparency program, transparency register, the application form for information and where to submit the application form.
- The municipality should use other instruments to inform those citizens that have no access to internet.

**Participation in Decision-Making**

**Findings**
Citizens of Lezha point out that they are informed of public meetings; yet, there is a group of citizens that are more active and engaged than others taking part in all meetings, trainings, public conventions held by the municipality or other public institutions and NGOs. According to them,
the municipality works to inform the public, but the local residents are passive and are not that interested in the municipal works. They say they are aware that the meetings are open, because they read local media briefs and they are interested in attending them. Citizens say that they have attended meetings, but have not been involved in them. The Municipality of Lezha has been preparing its budget through a participatory method for quite some years, but the citizens’ interest is low. Community participation is high only in certain cases, when the topic under consideration is specific and affects a certain group of interest.

Recommendations

- The municipality should promote participation of citizens in decision-making and enforce the Law on Public Consultation in all its operations.
- The Municipal Council should inform citizens and improve its work. It should be pointed out that Municipal Council meetings are open to citizens.
- Establish community structures and liaison, as foreseen in the law.

7.1.3 Local Economic Development

Strategic Planning

Findings
The Municipality of Lezha has completed its strategic plan and General Local Territorial Plan, which ensures a harmonized treatment of both urban and rural areas. This plan was consulted with stakeholders and interest groups. Citizens are aware of the existence of a development plan, but they are not informed of the components of this plan. Some assume that there must be a plan, because a municipality with developed tourism, such as Lezha, would not make sense without a strategic plan. One of the participants said to have attended the meetings held to discuss the strategic plan intended for approval. He stated that this plan was the best the municipality had in the last 25 years. According to him, the plan reflected at best the needs and priorities of the area and considered the municipality assets and resources.

Recommendations

- The municipality should produce informational leaflets with the aim of raising community awareness and increase civic participation in consultative meetings and public hearings;
- Undertake a complete post-adoption information campaign to citizens who will benefit from the strategic public lighting.

Promotion of Business

Findings
Participants say they are unaware of this issue. Citizens have heard that some cut-and-sew businesses have recently been opened in the town. Recently, a footwear business opened and hired women and young girls, which had previously applied for work at the labor office. Participants do not know how many private businesses there are in the city or the advantages
provided for them, but they say they have heard that the municipality offers facilities such as: removing local taxes for a certain period of time, but they do not know whether or not the application has already started. In their knowledge, some call centers have opened in the town, but focus group participants are unable to say whether the municipality has provided fiscal facilities for them. According to official data, there are 4,079 businesses operating in the Municipality of Lezha. Their biggest concentration is in Lezha where 2,909 businesses are established. The number of farms across the territory of Lezha municipality is zero, although the agricultural land area is some 15,199 m².

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Administrative units</th>
<th>Number of businesses</th>
<th>Total no. of farms</th>
<th>Area size of arable land (in m²)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Small business</td>
<td>Large business</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baldre</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dajc</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blinisht</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ungrej</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kallmet</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kolsh</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lezhe</td>
<td>2909</td>
<td></td>
<td>2909</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shengjin</td>
<td>545</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>695</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zejmen</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shenkoll</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3854</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>4079</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Recommendations**
- Open a tourist information office at the municipality for promoting tourist attraction sites in the entire territory of the municipality
- The municipality should place more efforts in promoting private businesses and encouraging them to create jobs
- The municipality should create an enabling fiscal, legal, and social environment for local businesses by providing fiscal facilities or small grants to help create new businesses or social businesses.
- The municipality create programs/incentives to support local business.

**Promotion of Employment**

**Findings**
Citizens think that the group most affected by unemployment are the youth and the poor. Young people spend most of their time in coffee bars. One of the participants said that this is also the fault of the youth, because they do not want to work for the private companies, but rather want to work for the government as it provides more facilities. From their perception, this is a vicious
circle, because the evil lies in the policies that the central government has implemented. According to them, the idea is that if one seeks to have a safe future, one will have to go to university and then get a good job. There are very few are those who pursue vocational secondary education and get a profession. The participants are unaware of any municipality’s efforts or any cooperation with the central government to encourage employment. They think that the municipality needs to do more in terms of employment, especially for young people who need to engage in different cultural activities and events.

**Recommendations**
- The municipality should have more productive collaborations to promote employment of the young people and women.
- The municipality negotiate and make deals with the local businesses for employment of women and youth.
- The municipality initiate programs on vocational education and increase of qualification of people under the economic aid scheme with the purpose of their quick employment.
- Encourage youth to those vocations and professions related with tourism.

**Collection of Revenues and Budgetary Planning**

**Findings**
There is no difference between the urban and rural areas in terms of tax rates. Citizens say that taxes are included in the water bill and that they pay it, even though the tax is not broken down in the water bill. Residents of suburban neighborhoods and villages say they are paying taxes for services that they do not receive adequately, including the cleaning and greening service. The municipality states that in pursuance of the situations created, it undertakes awareness campaigns on tax collection. Information is provided in public and individual meetings by local tax inspectors.

Participants claim that they have information on their local obligations and that they pay them regularly. They deem that the taxes and fees are not proportional to the service the municipality offers. They do not know of any awareness campaigns to pay taxes and fees, since residents are aware of their obligations. Residents state that public meetings are held regularly, not only for the budget but also for other issues. One of the participants says that the last time a public meeting was organized at the “Vace Zela” Theatre Hall, the room was crowded and the discussion was very lively and active.

**Recommendations**
- Citizens should be better informed of their obligation to pay local taxes and fees by becoming part of the budgetary planning process.
- Citizens should be informed regularly how their taxes are used and should be engaged in the budget planning process;
• The municipality increase transparency on collected revenues and their use.

7.1.4 Human Rights at Local Level

Women

Findings
The municipality has a coordinator assigned to deal with cases of gender-based and domestic violence. During 2016, the Municipality of Lezha has had few cases of protection orders that have been referred to the office of gender equality and domestic violence. Low or minimal reporting of cases of domestic violence is an indicator of low level of awareness on this phenomenon. Citizens do not know that the municipality has anti-violence programs. One of the participants working at the Public Health Directorate of Lezha said the promotion office at this directorate often organizes campaigns on domestic and gender-based violence. Participants think that the municipality is mostly engaged in the political decision-making and declare that those women who are in politics are very active. They do not know how many women members the municipal council may have but think the ratio could be as much as 50%. There are 106 employees working in the municipality administration, out of which 74 are women. The Municipal Council has an unequal gender balance. Out of 41 members of the municipal council, 12 are women and 29 are men. Suggestions and recommendations from local organizations are seen as a priority when designing projects and budgeting. Participants say they do not have much information if there are such organizations in the city of Lezha. They are unaware of local projects related to women.

Recommendations
• The municipality add a page on its official website to include the legislation on prevention of domestic violence in its Legislation submenu item
• The office of gender equality and domestic violence be more active in public awareness and encourage reporting of cases of violence
• In addition to the good work done for involvement of women in decision-making, mainly in leadership positions, the municipality should place more efforts for their employment and promotion of women-led/run businesses

Marginalized Groups

Findings
Participants say that the municipality in cooperation with USAID recently inaugurated a day center for children with disabilities. Also, they say the municipality has rented a facility for the elderly, where free coffee is offered to the elderly and where they can spend a few hours playing and reading. In addition, participants also mention social housing allowances, free food aid for orphans, etc. Participants state that they are unaware of any cooperation with civil society organizations.
Citizens think that given its possibilities the municipality is doing a good job in this direction. They appreciate the work done for some of the most marginalized and special needs groups, even though the community needs are numerous. The Social Service Sector of the Municipality provides economic aid to 1,558 households. There are 1,621 disabled people in the municipality; they are entitled to economic aid and 514 caretakers.

**Recommendations**
- The municipality should work harder to protect and guarantee the rights and social inclusion of the groups with special needs.
- Citizens demand that abandoned elderly are identified and have the social service help this category.
- Divorced women/widows should receive psychological support as well as help for employment.
- Action plans must be carried out for marginalized groups and households in need for social assistance should be identified.

**Roma and Egyptians**

**Findings**
Focus group participants say they are aware of programs for the category of Roma and Egyptians, among which the most important is the rehabilitation of the Roma block of settlements in the Saver Neighborhood, which is a necessary investment for this category. In terms of the protection and guarantee of the rights of Roma and Egyptians, they think the municipality has done a good job as it focuses in the assistance provided to this category. One of the participants says that Lezha has an association of Roma and Egyptians and its chairman is very active and participates in meetings, public events, etc., and cooperates with the municipality. Normally, they think that more needs to be done for this social category.

**Recommendations**
- Create employment opportunities for the Roma, especially for at least one representative of this community in the municipality
- Continue housing program for the Roma (through social housing programs)

**Protection from Discrimination**

**Findings**
Interviewed citizens were aware of the Law on Protection from Discrimination and did not know of any arrogant or discriminating conduct identified in the community. In addition, they did not have information on a program of the municipality for this specific issue. The municipality, on the other hand, reported to have no specific structure or program to address this issue, but stated that protection from discrimination is an issue on which the municipality should work harder.
Recommendations

- It is recommended that administrative units enforce the Law on Protection from Discrimination and work in pursuance of this law when delivering services to citizens.
- It is recommended that the municipality undertake awareness campaigns in order to ensure social-cultural interaction and break discriminatory barriers.
- The municipality add a page on its official website to include the legislation on protection from discrimination in its Legislation submenu item.

7.2 FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT

7.2.1 QUALITY AND EFFICIENCY OF PUBLIC SERVICES

Roads

Findings
Insufficiency of funds remains a challenge for the municipality. Focus group participants think that the quality of this service is very poor. According to them the road to the village of Balldre is generally bad. The road to the village of Torovica is miserable. The municipality declared that it had won a project from the Regional Development Fund to reconstruct the road to Torovica and that reconstruction work was about to start soon. In addition, some roads of this administrative unit are out of order. The road signage is almost absent. Participants think that this service is not satisfactory. Some residents say that the roads of the village of Shengjin are bad with the exception of the main promenade, which was reconstructed in the last four years. According to them, some areas of Shengjin are in dire conditions. Roads to the villages of this administrative unit are also in bad conditions. Road signage is also deficient. Some major investments to be mentioned include the road to Hidrovor, Tale 1 and Tale 2 roads.

Recommendations
- Repair the roads to the villages of administrative units
- Upgrade existing sidewalks to modern parameters and improve public lighting

Public Transport

Findings
Public transport is inexistent. Administrative units’ residents say that they travel by private vans, and sometimes have to walk or hire a taxi in cases of emergency. They demand that a public transport system be in place with fixed time table so that residents can manage their day and do not have to wait for long hours for the arrival of vans from Lezha or other places.

Recommendations
- Improve public transportation service from administrative units to Tirana and Lezha.
Cleaning

Findings
This service is deemed to be average in the administrative unit of Shenkoll, inexistent in Shengjin, and poor in Balldre. According to focus group participants, waste bins are lacking and waste is dumped in the drainage canals or burned by the residents. Plans are to expand the service coverage area by the contracted company to include the new roads and install additional waste bins in suburban areas. The contracted cleaning company was dismissed and a new one was hired in the administrative unit of Shenkoll. Local residents hope that the service will improve.

Recommendations
• Increase the number of waste bins, and expand the waste collection services to remote villages
• Increase the frequency of cleaning, particularly during summertime
• Prevent waste burning close to residential areas and by riversides

Water Supply and Sewage

Findings
In the administrative unit of Balldre, the residents say that potable water is now provided to all households, even though most of them get water from the wells in their own premises. Residents are aware that the municipality is working to construct a new modern water supply system. No work is being carried out for the sewer, however. Water is supplied on a schedule to the residents of Shengjin. This water is acceptable for washing and irrigation but not for drinking, as it is not very clean. Water supply is problematic during summertime, by which time restrictions are more frequent. Shenkoll does not have a water supply system. Thus, households get water from wells dug in their yards.

Recommendations
• Improve the situation of drinkable water
• Undertake information and awareness campaigns with the citizens to prevent misuse of drinkable water
• Coordinate work with donors to better administer their funds
• Undertake information and awareness campaigns to inform citizens to pay the water utility bill
• Interventions should be made upon a specific order to ensure effectiveness of investments (sewerage-cable-road) so that rework in roads is avoided.

Forests and Pastureland

Findings
Some citizens declared that they do not know of this service. Indeed, some say that there are no forest and pastureland in their municipality.
Drainage and Irrigation Canals

Findings
The drainage canals in the rural administrative units of the Municipality of Lezha have not been cleaned and maintained due to the lack of funding and commitments on this issue during the past. Lack of maintenance has led to frequent flooding in Lezha. Some of the canals have been damaged by the residents themselves, who have built their settlements in an unplanned and chaotic manner.

Recommendations
• Investments for cleaning the drainage and irrigation canals are more than necessary and the community should be aware of the importance to maintain the existing irrigation and drainage canals.

7.2.2 LOCAL DEMOCRACY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE

Transparency in Decision-making

Findings
Citizens say that the situation is positive in terms of this issue with their administrative units. They say that in case they need information, officials are available to provide timely information. On the other hand, many of decision-making competencies rest with the municipality leaving the administrative units with little issues to decide on. Information is provided by authorized officers or from the municipality. Residents are explained about the services they receive and administrative units’ administrators are willing to meet them. They say that they cope with no problem when obtaining various documents or information on where to apply for a certain public service. The conduct of the municipal administration is generally good with the residents of the administrative units.

Information and Communication

Findings
Citizens report that there is no information office, whereas the municipality declared that it is in the process of completing the one-stop-shop not only in the town but also in the administrative units. There is only one stand where notices are posted up, but the information in this stand is not updated. No person is assigned for information (there is one in the Municipality of Lezha, albeit). Focus group participants said that the officers of the administrative units are polite and available to help. They reported no problem in obtaining documents or certificates from the administrative unit. There is no information stand in the administrative unit, but notifications are posted up in electrical poles.
Recommendations
- Establish and operate the information office in administrative units
- Rural administrative units should address the community problems of their residents and villages of in real times and report them to the central administrative unit (the municipality).

Participation in Decision-making

Findings
According to citizens, no public meetings are held and the forms of notifications should improve. The forms of public information are not efficient and citizens are oftentimes not notified. Citizens state that their feedback and needs are never taken into consideration. The municipality, on the other hand, declares that public meetings on land issues and problems are held with the locals even though no solution is identified. Three public meetings have been held on draft budget. Community suggested the improvement of a 200 m road and the Municipal Council determined to fix the road. The citizens are aware of the role of the village head, even though the unit does not have one. The administrative unit is committed, communicates well, but needs to identify new forms to involve the community in decision-making.

Recommendations
- Enforce the Law on Public Notifications and Consultations
- The municipality should conduct more frequent public meetings with interest groups when drafting the budget or hold consultations on various studies and projects.

7.2.3 LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Findings
Citizens of administrative units declared that they had heard of a local plan, but did not know what this plan is all about. Most businesses are located in the administrative unit of Shengjin (695 units) followed by the administrative unit of Shenkoll with 141 businesses. This is explained with the fact that Shengjin houses the best tourist attraction site, the coast of Shengjin, Rana e Hedhun Beach, etc. It should be pointed out that the Municipality of Lezha has a great tourist potential that that tourism should be considered with the greatest attention as a major source of revenues. Local residents say that they know they should pay the taxes, which are too high for them, but they do pay regularly. Some residents say that they are denied of local services unless they have paid the taxes.

Recommendations
- Establish a center for collecting and trading of agricultural crops and livestock products of the Balldre area.
7.2.4 HUMAN RIGHTS AT LOCAL LEVEL

Women

Findings
The municipality is committed to fight the phenomenon of violence and to employ women in the local administration, but no other initiatives are in place. Most women in Shenkoll and Balldre are unemployed. The nursery schools are in place and this prevents employment of women in these areas and in the vicinities of the Municipality of Lezha. Respondents say that there is no violence, thus, they are unable to tell whether there any programs for this purpose. They are not aware of any of these issues, because, according to them, they have no direct interest in these issues. Participants were had no information on local programs on gender equality and increase of women participation in decision-making.

Recommendations
- Undertaken awareness campaigns in the administrative unit as well
- Increase employment opportunities of women in the municipality

Marginalized Groups

Findings
There are support programs, including economic aid. Several charity organizations operate in the area, including Red Cross and Caritas Albania. Caritas has established a day care center for disabled people. The Administrative Unit of Shenkoll manages a center with a capacity of 30-40 people for the elderly community.

Recommendations
- The municipality should work harder to protect and guarantee the rights of the groups with special needs and ensure their social inclusion.
- Open a nursery school
- Reconstruct kindergartens and schools

Roma and Egyptians

Findings
Focus group participants have no information on programs for the protection and guarantee of Roma and Egyptian community rights. They said that there are 3-4 Roma households in their community. These families have integrated well due to the equal treatment given by the locals. Participants were not informed of any civil society organizations cooperating with the municipality on Roma and Egyptian rights. There is no such community in the administrative unit of Shenkoll.
Protection from Discrimination

Findings
Focus group participants declared that they had heard of the law on protection from discrimination. Both the municipality and citizens confirm that there is no specific program on discrimination. An analysis of the data obtained from focus groups reveals that most residents have no information on the meaning of the “protection from discrimination” concept. During their discourse, residents said that they respect one another in any situation and circumstance.
ABOUT GENDER ALLIANCE FOR DEVELOPMENT CENTER

Established in 1994, the Gender Alliance for Development Center (GADC) is a non-profit non-political organization with over 20 years of experience in research work, public education, assistance in capacity building, monitoring, and advocacy. GADC promotes democratic development and good governance with particular focus in the issues of gender equality and social inclusion. It is a leader organization in Albania and the region, well known for its role in the presentation of important issues relative to women’s rights, such as gender-based violence and trafficking of human beings.

GADC is experiences in developing various methodologies on empowerment through economic development of vulnerable groups, advocacy for key legal and policy issues, such as the Law “On Violence in Family Relations” or the Law “On Protection from Discrimination”, gender equality, or women’s representation in politics and decision-making. Presentation of issues on gender budget at local and central level as well as involvement of citizens in decision-making are two issues for which GADC has developed and applied special methodologies that triggered important changes to address disparities and social inclusion of vulnerable groups in Albania.

GADC has, since its birth, implemented many projects that have affected the lives of hundreds of participants involved in activities it has conducted across the country.

GADC has a track record of successful cooperation with various actors, including a great number of Albanian organizations, public institutions at local and central level, regional and international organizations, private sector, media, academia, etc. Some key partners of GADC include UN Women, UNDP, EU, US Embassy, USAID, OSCE, Chamber of Commerce, Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth, various municipalities, etc.

GADC is empowered in its work by a wide network of national and international collaborators, experts, and trainers with rich academic background. It works to spread as much information and become a platform for sharing experiences and knowledge with any and all throughout the country.