



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



WORLD LEARNING
for INTERNATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT

Fostering Religious Harmony in Albania

USAID Cooperative Agreement No. 182-A-00-04-00101-00

June 4, 2004 - March 31, 2007

FINAL REPORT

Submitted to USAID/Albania by

World Learning
1015 15th Street, NW, Suite 750
Washington, DC 20005 USA

Phone: +1 202-408-5420; Fax: +1 202-408-5397

June 30, 2007

DISCLAIMER

This report is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents are the responsibility of World Learning and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

ABBREVIATIONS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	I
-------------------------------	----------

1. COUNTRY BACKGROUND	1
------------------------------------	----------

2. PROJECT DESCRIPTION.....	3
------------------------------------	----------

3. PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS	4
--	----------

3.1 Project Start-up and Planning.....	4
---	----------

Staffing.....	4
---------------	---

Geographical Focus	4
--------------------------	---

Launching the Project.....	5
----------------------------	---

Baseline Survey	5
-----------------------	---

First Stakeholders Workshop – May 2005.....	5
---	---

Second Stakeholders Workshop – October 2006	6
---	---

3.2 Training and Exchanges	6
---	----------

Interfaith Community Development Training – September/October 2004	7
--	---

Conflict Resolution Training – November/December 2004 and February, June 2005	7
---	---

Leadership Training – October 2005	8
--	---

International Summer School on Religion and Public Life – June 2005	8
---	---

International Summer School on Religion and Public Life – August 2006.....	9
--	---

3.3 Forums for Dialogue Among Religious Leaders	9
--	----------

Interfaith Advisory Committees	9
--------------------------------------	---

South Eastern European Interfaith Conference – November 2005	9
--	---

Formation of the National Inter-religious Council.....	10
--	----

Symposium on “Harmony and Interfaith Dialogue”	10
--	----

3.4 Engaging Children and Youth	10
--	-----------

Interfaith Youth Summer Camps – July 2005 and 2006	10
--	----

Student Essay Contest on Religious Harmony – May 2006	12
---	----

Engaging Children through Art: Art Exhibit – October 2006.....	13
--	----

Interfaith Calendar.....	13
--------------------------	----

Engaging Religious Communities and Youth – Durrës, April-September 2006	13
---	----

3.5 Interfaith Community Activities.....	14
---	-----------

Interfaith Women’s Center – Shkoder.....	14
--	----

Interfaith Community Center – Elbasan	16
---	----

Interfaith Youth Program “Harmony” – Bathore.....	17
---	----

Coaching for Sustainability Consultancy – February 2007	18
---	----

Interfaith Solidarity Concert – Lezha, January 2006	18
---	----

Interfaith Harmony Week – Librazhd, May 2006.....	19
Working Toward Property Restitution – Kavaja, April - November 2006.....	19
3.6 Government Relations.....	19
Draft Agreements Between the State and Religious Communities, June 2006-March 2007	19
3.7 Media and Public Dialogue Activities	20
Documentary Films	20
Roundtable on Media Coverage of Religious Affairs – March 2006	21
Improving Reporting on Religious Affairs – April 2006	21
Research on Religious Attitudes – January 2007	22
4. SUCCESS STORIES.....	23
Religious Leaders’ Testimony in Conflict Resolution Training. November/ December 2004 and February, June 2005	23
From Participants in Interfaith Summer Camps – July 2005 and 2006.....	23
From Participants of Computer Courses at the Interfaith Women’s Center in Shkoder	25
5. RESULTS AND IMPACT.....	26
6. CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED DURING THE PROJECT	29
Challenge: Hierarchical structure of religious organizations	29
Challenge: Moving beyond management to “diplomacy”	29
Challenge: Sustainability of project activities.....	29
Challenge: “Why are you here?”	30
Challenge: Framing Training and Activities.....	31
Challenge: Non-Traditional Religious Groups.....	31
Lesson Learned: Non-traditional religious groups should be included judiciously in project activities.	31
APPENDICES.....	39
Appendix 1 Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.....	40
Appendix 2 Results of Questions Related to the Success of the RelHarmony Project from the AFCE Surveys Conducted in January 2005 and June 2006	50
Appendix 3 Participant Training Program.....	55

ABBREVIATIONS

AFCR	Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation of Disputes
ANTTARC	Albanian Training and Technical Assistance Resource Center
ECRL	European Council of Religions Leaders/Religions for Peace
ICC	Interfaith Cooperation Center in Elbasan
IOM	International Organization of Migration
IPAC	The Interfaith Project Advisory Committee
IRC	Inter Religious Council
ISSRPL	International Summer School of Religion and Public Life
IWC	Interfaith Women's Center in Shkoder
IYP "Harmony"	Interfaith Youth Program "Harmony"
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
RelHarmony	Fostering Religious Harmony in Albania
TIYT	Tirana Interfaith Youth Team
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WCRP	World Conference of Religions for Peace
WLID	World Learning for International Development

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As the world's only nation ever to have explicitly outlawed religious practice (during the Communist regime that ended in 1990), Albania is working to reintegrate religion into its national life. Through outreach to religious leaders, community development efforts, media and dialogue activities and small grants to support local initiatives, the USAID sponsored World Learning Project Fostering Religious Harmony in Albania (RelHarmony) sought to sustain religious harmony and foster better understanding within and among Albania's religious communities. The project concentrated on the four main religious communities in Albania (Catholic Christians, Orthodox Christians, Sunni Muslims and Shia Bektashi) and operated in seven cities in central and northern Albania (Shkoder, Lezha, Librazhd, Elbasan, Durrës, Kavaja and Tirana) during 2004-2007.



The leaders of Albania's four main religions confer at a RelHarmony event in 2005

The project carried out a wide variety of activities including leadership and conflict resolution training for religious leaders, interfaith summer camps for youth, a major international conference, production of two documentary films, support for three community centers serving women and poor youth and support for legal agreements to govern the state's relations with religious communities. RelHarmony directly reached over 250 religious leaders and over 1,200 believers through its activities. The project reached thousands more Albanians through national broadcast of roundtables and documentary films that addressed religious issues.

The RelHarmony project was a preventive project designed to recognize and counter extremist religious influences that might undermine the country's history of religious harmony. As such, the project addressed issues that Albanians did not consider to be "problems". Dealing with Albanians' well-founded understanding of their country as one where religious harmony has been considered strong, and not in need of outside support, was sometimes challenging. It was necessary to frequently and explicitly acknowledge that the project was designed to find ways for religious leaders and communities to work together toward common goals and not to "solve" a problem of religious tensions that was not apparent in Albanian society.

Lessons learned include the need to demonstrate great care and respect when working with religious leaders, who head large and complex organizations. Religious leaders may perceive invitations to training activities as an oversight of their standing and experience, and a lack of respect especially when conducted by an outside organization. Due to the sensitivity of religious issues the project's effectiveness was dependent on understanding the context and not only listening to what stakeholders were saying, but also the ability to "read between the lines" in the Albanian religious context.

1. COUNTRY BACKGROUND

Under communist rule from 1945 to 1990, Albania suffered greatly from political oppression and international isolation. In addition, an active campaign to discourage religious practices culminated in 1967 when Albania became the first atheist nation in the world and the only country to prohibit the practice of religion. All properties that belonged to religious groups were confiscated, many being turned into cultural centers or sports halls. A very few were spared as 'cultural monuments' but neglected. Clergy were imprisoned; some were tortured. Others were sent into internal exile and any source of religious education or information was suppressed.

Since the establishment of a post-communist multiparty system, much progress toward full democracy and freedom of religious practice has been achieved, although stagnant economic conditions have kept the country from realizing its dream of becoming a modern and prosperous part of Europe. The new constitution of Albania guarantees the human rights set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights including freedom of religion. Albanians at all levels emphasize the tradition of religious harmony in the country. They claim that any instances of religious intolerance are insignificant. Access to neighboring countries and the rest of the world is a major achievement of the new era. Many Albanians travel to wealthier European countries to find employment; others leave for educational purposes; and some join their relatives abroad to escape unemployment and poverty.

The majority of citizens are secular in orientation after decades of rigidly enforced atheism under the Communist regime, which ended in 1990. Despite such secularism, most citizens traditionally associate themselves with a religious group. Four main traditional faiths dominate the religious scene in Albania: the Sunni Muslim, Shia Bektashi, Orthodox Christian and Catholic Communities. The Albanian government conducted a census in 2001 but did not include questions about religion. The country is still considered 65-70% Muslim, 20-25% Orthodox and 10% Catholic.¹ The Muslims are further broken down into the Bektashi Community of Shiite followers and the Muslim Community of Sunni persuasion.

Since the right to practice religion was restored, Albanian religious institutions have received significant attention and support from international religious groups and churches. Albania joined the Organization of the Islamic Conference in 1992. An Arab-Albanian Islamic Bank was established in Tirana and approximately 20 Arab Islamic organizations opened branches in the country. These organizations were engaged from 1991 to 1996 in a process of Islamic education and mosque building. They managed to print and distribute many volumes of Muslim literature in Albanian and build dozens of mosques. The home offices (and therefore the Albanian branches) of many of these organizations have since closed. Other relief and sponsorship programs were also implemented by these organizations while some Arab governments offered scholarships to young Albanian Muslims.

¹ U.S. Department of State. *International Religious Freedom Report 2006*. Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor. Sept. 15, 2006

Other faiths received international support as well. The Catholic Church has been strongly backed by its counterparts abroad, especially in Italy and the Vatican. The restoration of diplomatic relations with the Vatican in 1991, Pope John Paul II's visit to Albania in 1993, the establishment of a great church centered in the heart of Tirana and the construction of modern churches in the European style, religious schools and kindergartens, children's villages and hospitals all have boosted Catholicism in Albania.

Likewise, the Orthodox community has become better established. Since 1991 the Albanian Archdiocese has been supported by the neighboring Greek and Macedonian religious institutions, has rebuilt churches from their foundations, and restored or repaired numerous monasteries and churches. Many educational and health institutions are also newly built and staffed, including the Theological Academy complex in Durrës and the Annunciation diagnostic medical center in Tirana.

As for the Bektashi community, although its worldwide headquarters is in Tirana, the institution has fewer financial resources than other faith communities. Proceeds generated from regained properties and assistance from followers in Turkey are important sources of income.

The State Committee on Cults (Komiteti Shtetëror i Kulteve), is a governmental body created in 1999 by executive order. The Committee, charged with regulating relations between the state and religious communities, falls within the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports. The Committee's official stance recognizes the equality of religious communities and respects their independence. The Committee works to protect freedom of religion and to promote inter-religious development, cooperation, and understanding.

Albania has never experienced serious violent religious conflict. The re-emergence of pluralistic religious practice appears to constitute one of the most important achievements of the emerging Albanian democracy. Despite difficult transitions after the fall of communism and the religious and societal challenges following the events of September 11, 2001, inter-religious relations in Albania have remained strong. The generally amicable relationship among religious groups has contributed to religious freedom. Albanian society is largely secular, intermarriage among members of different religions is common and religious communities take pride in the tolerance and understanding that prevail among them.

However, as the well-known Albanian writer Ismail Kadare observed, "the history of religious harmony in Albania is not an idyllic history. In its essence it has always been and remains dramatic. Nowadays, in democratic Albania, all the dangers that have been overcome are still potential. Religious harmony is as majestic an establishment as it is a fragile one. The first serious radicalism of one of the faiths is sufficient for the establishment to come down."²

² Ismail Kadare, a quote from conference paper on *Religious Harmony* in Tirana, Albania, November 2003.

2. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The main goal objective of the Fostering Religious Harmony in Albania project (RelHarmony) was to sustain religious harmony and foster better understanding within and among Albania's religious communities. The project operated in seven cities in central and northern Albania (Shkoder, Lezha, Librazhd, Elbasan, Durrës, Kavaja and Tirana). RelHarmony's goals were to:

- Provide the leadership of the four main religious communities with the skills, tools and capabilities they need to work together with other groups towards common goals;
- Provide the leadership of religious communities with the skills, tools and capabilities required to improve dialogue within their communities and to reduce marginalization, fractionalization and radicalization;
- Provide leaders of thought and media with increased ability to address extremist and intolerant views and become forces to combat them;
- Give participants a clearer understanding of the causes and potential areas of intolerance; and
- Identify and test approaches and techniques to help the different faith communities to work together to solve common problems.

The Fostering Religious Harmony project promoted training in leadership skills and conflict resolution, as well as community development projects implemented by multi-faith teams, to provide collaboration opportunities for religious leaders and activists, who in the process gained skills critical for working together to address interfaith community needs. World Learning recognized that the process of building communication by bringing leaders together through interfaith activities was as important as the end result of community projects or training. In addition to fostering religious harmony within the general public, the project partnered with media to deliver targeted messages of understanding and tolerance, as well as to initiate interfaith dialogues to resolve disputes.

RelHarmony's activities were meant to promote tolerance not only with other faiths but also within one faith. The activities were intended to raise the awareness of the population in the target areas regarding coexistence and the risks of intolerance. Consequently, constructive discussions and dialogues were initiated at many levels to reinforce community leaders' ability to address interfaith-related issues peacefully.

RelHarmony was supported through a cooperative agreement with USAID/Albania valued at \$943,539 including a cost share contribution by World Learning in the amount of \$157,122. However, some activities were conducted with additional funding and staff support from the USAID Participant Training Program, also implemented by World Learning. A summary of activities supported by the Participant Training Program can be found in Appendix 3.

3. PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

3.1 Project Start-up and Planning

Staffing

RelHarmony's first project director, Mr. Atia Moor arrived in Tirana on June 28, 2004 and oversaw the initial start-up of the project, including hiring staff and procuring office space. The staffing plan was originally designed to locate the entire project staff in Tirana, however, the project director realized the importance of a decentralized approach and the need to maintain ongoing contact with religious and community leaders in target areas. As a result, the staffing structure was redesigned to place three field coordinators in target cities.

Mrs. Moor left the project in August 2005 and Ms. Delina Fico was hired as acting project director in September 2005 and as project director in November 2005. Ms. Fico remained in the director's post until November 2006. At that time Mr. Virgil Kule, who had joined the project in its first year as a project coordinator, took over as project director until the end of the project.

Geographical Focus

While the desire to safeguard and promote religious harmony exists in many parts of Albania, World Learning concentrated project resources on seven cities where inter- or intra-faith tensions existed at the time the proposal was written. Although seven cities of focus were identified, for administrative and logistical efficiency, six of the cities were grouped into three clusters.

The districts of Elbasan and its neighbor Librazhd in central Albania, that had experienced tension between moderate and conservative Muslims as well as issues within the Orthodox Church, were treated as a cluster.

Shkoder in the northeast was showing signs of increasing tension between Muslims and Catholics. There were several Islamic foundations in Shkoder that espoused a very conservative line of Islam and were not in dialogue with the broader Muslim Community. Lezha had a large Catholic population and an active Mufti open to collaboration. Shkoder and Lezha were treated as a cluster.

Durres and Kavaja, located in west central Albania and facing issues between conservative and moderate Muslims, as well as between Muslims and Orthodox, were considered as a cluster. Tirana, with two mosques that were particularly known for activism, one very conservative, thought to be a strong prospect for effective involvement in the project, was considered the forth geographic area.

RelHarmony engaged both local and regional religious leaders in these geographic areas as well as the national leadership of each of Albania's major religions. This bottom-up and top-down approach enabled the project to reach both individual leaders and lay activities as well as to influence national level policy making and dialog.



An Orthodox leader speaks to the media at one of RelHarmony's launching ceremonies in October 2004

Launching the Project

The project hosted four introductory launching ceremonies that covered the project target areas. The events were used to introduce the RelHarmony team, objective, activities, and timeframe. An average of 70 invitees, representing religious leaders of the four main faiths, representatives of the USAID Mission, local government officials, civil society and NGOs attended each of the four events. The events received extensive newspaper and television coverage in each of the four locations.

Baseline Survey

RelHarmony cooperated with a local NGO, the *Albanian Foundation for Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation of Disputes (AFCR)*, to produce a baseline survey to measure the current state of inter-faith competition or cooperation, to gain insight into Albanians' religious attitudes (both toward their own faith and others) and to provide a tool to measure any change RelHarmony might bring about.

The survey was conducted in the project's seven target areas: Shkoder, Lezha, Elbasan, Librazhd, Durrës, Kavaja and Tirana. Some villages in each municipality were also included taking care to identify representative villages in terms of faith and tolerance. In addition, the survey included the city of Korça as a control area where no project activities would take place. AFRC interviewed 1,002 men and women of all ages and beliefs. The survey included interviews of religious leaders to identify additional leaders and activists that possess skills, ability and experience to resolve disputes, and participate in community project activities.

Results showed that respondents believed Albania enjoys religious harmony. For example, when asked to describe relations with people of other religions, 73% called them "peaceful" or "very good." When asked to evaluate relations among different religious groups in Albania, 86% listed relations as "collaborative," "harmonious" or "tolerant."

First Stakeholders Workshop – May 2005

RelHarmony conducted a one-day stakeholder workshop on May 24, 2005 in Tirana. Thirty-three religious leaders attended the event, representing the project's seven target cities as well as the four main faiths. The project staff briefed participants on successes, progress, and challenges that the project had encountered to that point, as well as future plans. Participants were asked to give feedback, make suggestions and raise questions. The main purpose of the workshop was to involve religious leaders and activists from the target areas in the project

evaluation and offer them an opportunity to comment and share their views of the project's activities during the first year.

At the end of the session, participants were asked to form four smaller groups so that more people could share their views. Some of their recommendations were:

- The project could have organized roundtable meetings involving government officials as well as religious leaders.
- The project could assist religious leaders in lobbying for laws that protect the rights of their institutions.
- A central coordinating committee could be formed to coordinate all religious related issues.
- Religious leaders and activists from targeted cities could be trained jointly.
- More emphasis ought to be put on public awareness programs.
- Written materials and newsletters that address coexistence, inter-faith cooperation and harmony could be prepared and distributed.
- Additional tours and meetings/conferences at the national and international levels could be offered.

Many of the ideas generated at the first stakeholder workshop became part of the project's work plan during later years of implementation. Development of legal framework for religious organizations, public awareness activities and materials, and a major international conference were all carried out before the end of the project.

Second Stakeholders Workshop – October 2006

RelHarmony's Second Stakeholders Workshop took place on September 28th, 2006 moderated by the *Albanian National Training and Technical Assistance Resource Center* (ANTTARC). Approximately 50 people including Muslim, Catholic, and Orthodox leaders, members of RelHarmony's Interfaith Advisory Committees in the seven project target areas, representatives of USAID, non-governmental, governmental and international partners, and project staff participated in this workshop.

The goal of this workshop was to assess the progress of the project, discuss lessons learned, and identify project strategies and components that should be further developed and supported beyond the project.

3.2 Training and Exchanges

During its first 18-month period, RelHarmony conducted several trainings to improve the skills of religious leaders and lay activists so that they would be better positioned to:

- defuse or resolve conflicts within their own or with other religious communities,
- work with other faith leaders to improve general community conditions, and

- effectively carry out their leadership roles.

RelHarmony complemented in-country training with international exchanges that introduced religious activists and opinion leaders to international experts in inter-faith tolerance and pluralism.

Interfaith Community Development Training – September/October 2004

RelHarmony's first concrete program activities were community development training workshops for participants of different faiths. The purpose of the trainings was to provide participants an opportunity to work together in small groups and to strengthen their ability to get involved in community development interventions.

The RelHarmony team, together with the religious leaders of the four main faiths in the target cities, selected participants for the trainings ensuring that all groups and viewpoints and both genders were represented. Approximately 20 people were selected from each of the four project target areas - Elbasan and Librazhd; Durrës and Kavaja; Shkoder and Lezha; and Tirana - to attend three-day training workshops. The 101 participants who attended the five training events represented each of Albania's faith communities.

The purpose of the training was to give participants skills to develop interfaith community projects and in subsequent years several participants received grants through RelHarmony to implement projects. RelHarmony field staff provided ongoing technical and mentoring assistance to these groups before and after submission of project proposals.

Conflict Resolution Training – November/December 2004 and February, June 2005

Through conflict resolution training, RelHarmony sought to provide religious leaders and activists with skills necessary to reduce interfaith tension or conflict.

Local religious institutions selected participants for the workshops based on criteria set in consultation with RelHarmony role in their community and their experience and commitment to serving the interfaith community.

AFCR selected through competitive bidding to provide training on conflict resolution and mediation, was contracted to conduct a comprehensive training in two phases of three days. Phase Two training built upon lessons and activities from Phase One.

Phase One provided participants with the basic principles and methodology of communication and mediation, including introductory discussion on the concepts of conflict resolution, negotiation, and mediation. Specific topics included: conflict and its nature, how to manage conflict, qualities of a mediator, conflict

"People always come to talk to me for various problems: family disputes, marital disagreements, property problems, blood feuds, interpersonal conflict, etc. I have always tried to do my best using the word of God... but through this training I have a new perspective. I can help to resolve conflicts using the information and knowledge that I gained in the two phases of training."

- Muslim imam, discussing conflict resolution training

resolution implementation strategies, and psychological abilities used in conflict resolution. Participants were encouraged to explore their ideas and opinions in an open forum. Participants also worked in small inter-faith groups on case study examples of conflict resolution. Ninety-two people took part in Phase I.

Phase Two improved the level of expertise on mediation to a professional level for faith-based, family, and property disputes, so that participants could act as mediators within their religious communities. Topics included: overview of the stages of mediation and the role of a mediator, the 2003 *Law on Mediation and Reconciliation of Disputes*; the Settlement Agreement and its legal power; communication in conflict situations; behavior and prejudices within groups; and the “conference with community” model of conflict resolution. Phase Two training consisted of discussions around concrete mediation situations as well as play-acting practice, where participants played the role of mediator in simulated conflicts and disputes. Seventy-eight people took part in Phase Two.

Leadership Training – October 2005

World Learning organized a leadership training program with a special focus on women and youth facilitated by ANTTARC for fifty-six religious leaders and activists. The training was held in Durrës from September 24 through October 1, 2005.

Many of the religious leaders and activists had never received formal training in leadership and management. The training provided them with skills to play a positive leadership role in the development of their community. In addition, the training provided participants the opportunity to meet and interact with leaders of other faiths to exchange points of view and foster goodwill between different religious communities.

International Summer School on Religion and Public Life – June 2005

The *International Summer School on Religion and Public Life* (ISSRPL) is an annual international, inter-religious summer school of two weeks that meets in a different country each year. It provides a framework where students, civic leaders and prominent academics from different countries can explore the issues of religion and the public sphere with the aim of developing new strategies of tolerance and pluralism while maintaining a commitment to tradition and religious identity. The program is centered on three academic courses but also includes team building and the development of working relationships across religious and ethnic identities.

RelHarmony arranged, via the USAID Participant Training Program, for three Albanian religious activists to attend the June 2005 ISSRPL. The theme of the 2005 International Summer School was “Nationalism, Religion and Fundamentalism: The Challenge of Coexistence.” It took place in Jerusalem under the auspices of the *Van Leer Jerusalem Institute* and *Yesodot – Center for Torah and Democracy*.

The three Albanian participants, nominated by leaders in their respective religious communities represented three of the four main religious traditions in Albania - Orthodox, Muslim and Catholic. The representative of the Bektashi community was unable to attend.

International Summer School on Religion and Public Life – August 2006

World Learning sent two civil society participants to attend this summer school that took place partly in Bosnia-Herzegovina and partly in the United States in August 2006. The lessons learned there focusing on inter-religious dialogue helped organize the process of the creation of the National Interfaith Committee and forming an initial strategic plan for the committee.

3.3 Forums for Dialogue Among Religious Leaders

Feedback from stakeholder workshops indicated a need for a space in which religious leaders could interact with colleagues from other faiths. While religious leaders often exchanged visits or pleasantries with their colleagues of other faiths during holidays, they did not regularly meet and discuss issues of common concern. During the second year of the project, RelHarmony initiated Interfaith Advisory Committees in several cities and later supported Albania's top religious leadership as they sought to establish a formal National Inter-Religious Council.

Interfaith Advisory Committees

World Learning created the Interfaith Advisory Committees following discussions with religious leaders and USAID/Albania. The objective was to better include religious leaders in the project's planning, implementation and evaluation. Advisory committees were established in both Durrës and Elbasan. In addition, some leaders from Librazhd participated at the Elbasan meetings. In Tirana because top religious leadership came together through the National Interreligious Committee, an advisory committee was not needed. These committees included key leaders from each of the primary religious communities in the target cities. In addition to providing the project with valuable input, these committees increased the ties between religious leaders in the target cities.

South Eastern European Interfaith Conference – November 2005

The RelHarmony project joined the World Conference of Religions for Peace (WCRP) in organizing the South Eastern European Interfaith Conference “Advancing Peace through Regional Cooperation.” The conference took place in Tirana from November 16 to November 18, 2005.



*Leaders of Albania's four main faith communities:
(l-r) Catholic, Muslim, Orthodox and Bektashi
at the regional conference.*

Over 50 senior religious leaders and representatives from Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, Kosovo and Macedonia attended the Interfaith Conference, which provided a forum for participants to share experiences, learn more about the struggles of other communities and develop strategies for strengthening the role of religious communities in building peace and stability in the region. An additional 64

participants from local Albanian religious communities, representatives of local and international political institutions and international agencies, including heads of Albanian parliamentary commissions, ambassadors and representatives from local embassies and members of the European Council of Religions Leaders/Religions for Peace (ECRL) attended the conference.

The conference strengthened relationships among South East Europe religious leaders and women of faith in post-conflict and emerging societies. Participants agreed that despite their differences or historical divisions, they share fundamental values. The conference also provided an impetus for conflicting communities in Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina to renew their shared commitments for peace and security in their regions and to pledge continued dialogue.

The conference was supported by USAID, the Governments of Germany, the United Kingdom, and Greece as well as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

Formation of the National Inter-religious Council

At the South Eastern European (SEE) Inter-Religious Conference in November 2005 top religious leaders agreed to establish a National Inter-religious Council that would serve as a mechanism for Albania's top religious leaders to interact regularly, to address common problems, and serve as the highest advocacy mechanism for the religious community. World Learning supported the World Conference of Religions for Peace (WCRP) with technical assistance and funding in the formation of this group. As a first step a number of religious leaders made a study tour to the United Kingdom to familiarize themselves with the function of an existing inter-religious council.

Symposium on “Harmony and Interfaith Dialogue”

The National Inter-religious Council organized a symposium in February 2007 entitled “Harmony and Inter-faith Dialogue.” Four papers presented by representatives of the four main religious groups expounded theological approaches to religious harmony. Two hundred participants including high ranking religious leaders, clerics from throughout the country, government representatives, foreign diplomats, and USAID representatives attended.

3.4 Engaging Children and Youth

For the first time since World War II, Albanian young people are coming of age in an environment that allows open religious practice. The religious beliefs that they embrace, whether traditional Albanian pluralism or less moderate ideologies, will set the tone for Albania's future of tolerance. RelHarmony thus also sought to engage youth and children.

Interfaith Youth Summer Camps – July 2005 and 2006

For the final two years of the RelHarmony project, summer camps offered an opportunity for youth from the country's major religions Sunni Muslims, Bektashi Muslims, Orthodox,

Catholics and Protestants to share their faith, learn about the faith of their companions and have fun.

More than 200 participants (ages 18-25) attended the camps for two one-week sessions in July 2005 and 2006. Attendees participated in discussions and workshops on topics such as conflict resolution, cooperation and Albania's religious history. They visited religious sites and participated in the religious observances of the other religions. There were also many opportunities for informal sharing and learning about other faiths. Youth from different religions shared rooms and meals. They teamed up for soccer matches, prepared a barbeque together and traveled to the beach.

The leaders of each religious community selected the participants, using selection criteria of age and level of religious interest and activism. The youth were activists in their religious communities, students in theological schools or candidates to become spiritual leaders. The young people came from the seven cities where the project was being implemented: Tirana, Durrës, Kavaja, Elbasan, Librazhd, Shkoder and Lezha. Several adult religious leaders attended the activity as well.

The activities of the summer camps included:

- Discussions and workshops on topics such as conflict resolution, cooperation and Albania's religious history.
- Leisure activities including sports, music, dinners, beach trips, tourist visits, and barbeque.
- Visits to religious institutions including an Orthodox church, a Sunni mosque and a Bektashi Muslim tekke. These visits included meetings with religious leaders.
- Attendance at the religious observances and rituals of different faith groups.
- A "Ceremony Dinner" where senior representatives of religious communities honored the activity and welcomed the participants.



Students at Albania's first interfaith youth summer camp, held in July 2005 in Vlora.

"On Friday we organized our Catholic prayer and we invited everyone to come. We prepared a room like a little church and we made a very simple cross. I saw the Muslim boys who entered the room, a little unsure, but they were so respectful during the ceremony. ...I couldn't stop my tears because I really felt that we were one community with the same religion."

- Participant at interfaith summer camp.

During all activities, youth from different religious groups lived, worked and learned side by side in mixed, diverse groups.

Participants prepared project proposals for activities to follow up and build on the summer camps. One group of participants developed their idea of working with disadvantaged Tirana youth into a proposal for an interfaith youth center in Tirana's Bathore neighborhood. They received a grant and technical assistance through RelHarmony and became the youth center's board.

Student Essay Contest on Religious Harmony – May 2006

In May 2006 RelHarmony, in cooperation with the Journalism Department of the University of Tirana, organized a Student Essay Contest on Religious Harmony. This activity aimed to inspire students to learn more about religious harmony in Albania and to explore theoretical frameworks on religious interaction.

The call for essays was widely publicized among students and 30 students submitted 4-5 pages essays. The essays discussed theoretical concepts of religious interaction, analyzed the tradition and the reality of religious harmony in Albania, and explored scenarios regarding the future of religious harmony.

A jury of lecturers from the University's Journalism and History Departments and RelHarmony's Senior Program Officer assessed the essays and selected ten to be presented at an award ceremony that took place in one of the lecture halls of the Department of Journalism. Fifty students attended the event, as well as the RelHarmony project director and USAID Cognizant Technical Officer. The students presented their essays, differing sometimes on their interpretation of the reality and the roots of religious harmony. After the presenters responded to questions from the audience, the jury awarded prizes for the best three essays that were then published in "The Reporter," a weekly supplement of the daily newspaper "Korrieri."



A sample from the art exhibit

Engaging Children through Art: Art Exhibit – October 2006

In the summer of 2006 RelHarmony partnered with a group of artists and educators to organize a children's drawing contest. The organizers selected 40 children with artistic talent from schools in Tirana. The organizers then led small group brainstorming sessions with the children to introduce the theme of religious harmony and to inspire the children's ideas and creativity.

In October 2006 RelHarmony set up the exhibit of the drawings in Tirana to raise awareness of interfaith relationships. The exhibition was especially intended to convey messages of tolerance and collaboration among religions to the youngest generation.

Interfaith Calendar

RelHarmony staff selected a number of the images from the exhibit for inclusion in a 2007 interfaith calendar that was widely distributed in Albania and overseas.

Engaging Religious Communities and Youth – Durrës, April-September 2006

Based on ideas that Durrës participants conceived during group sessions at the 2005 Interfaith Youth Summer Camp, the Interfaith Project Advisory Committee (IPAC) in Durrës developed a project entitled "Engaging Religious Communities and Youth in Public Life and Community Development Efforts" that was implemented between April and September 2006. The IPAC was composed of four representatives of the three main religious communities in Durrës: the Muslim, Orthodox, and Catholic communities. High ranking religious leaders in Durrës supported the IPAC's work.

Uncontrolled migration from poorer areas to Durrës after the social and economic turmoil in the early nineties resulted in a large number of poor migrant families living in Durrës suffering from poverty, lack of adequate water and electricity supply, low levels of education, and lack of social services. Despite the fact that these families got along well and exchanged visits on the occasion of religious feasts, religious leaders in Durrës said there was little concrete cooperation. The "Engaging Religious Communities and Youth in Public Life and Community Development Efforts" project provided such an opportunity. It engaged young religious leaders and activists, as well as youth in general, in efforts to address social issues in Durrës, and in the process to foster dialogue and mutual trust among religious communities.

The project combined training in advocacy with televised public discussions, an essay contest on religious harmony, and interfaith team building activities for youth. A part-time project coordinator was hired to manage the day-to-day work of organizing the activities and

ensuring wide media coverage. RelHarmony staff provided technical assistance on project and financial management to IPAC and the project coordinator.

3.5 Interfaith Community Activities

While interfaith forums provided religious leaders an opportunity to exchange ideas with colleagues from other faiths, RelHarmony also recognized the importance of supporting joint actions by religious leaders and lay activists of different faiths. By working together to address community problems, religious leaders and activists would strengthen their bonds with colleagues of other faiths and take a more active leadership role in the lives of their own constituents. RelHarmony thus provided grants to leaders and activists to conduct inter-faith community development projects. The project laid the groundwork with community development training in year one and later provided mentoring, encouragement, and support to leaders as they conceived and designed projects. The projects proposed by local interfaith committees ranged from large interfaith centers to small music concerts but all had the advantage of bringing leadership together on concrete joint initiatives.

Interfaith Women's Center – Shkoder

In early September 2005 RelHarmony awarded a grant to the Project Advisory Committee in Shkoder to establish an Interfaith Women's Center (IWC). The IWC targeted women and girls active in their religious communities, as well as other women and girls. The IWC, overseen by an interfaith Project Advisory Committee, composed of members nominated by the leaders of Shkoder's religious communities, provided a combination of practical skills training and discussion/awareness raising about interfaith issues aiming to create a forum for relationships among women of diverse faith communities.



"I always stayed home and I didn't have the chance to go to school or to work somewhere. This center gave me the chance to think that I am capable of activity beyond housework. I felt so good with my friends and even though they had different religion from mine, we were so close to each other."

- Participant at computer skills workshop at Interfaith Women's Center in Shkodra

The center provided:

- Employment skills training in English language, computer basics, and how to write and edit office documents;
- Training in how to start a business, basic accounting and other business skills;
- Training and mentoring in life skills including negotiation, time management, raising healthy and happy children, assertiveness and leadership; and
- Discussions on issues that concern women of all faiths in Shkoder: family; marriage; relations with children, in particular with daughters; relations with the larger family; contribution to community life; religion and private life, and others).

The IWC hired a part-time manager to coordinate events and oversee activities who was supported with extensive technical help from RelHarmony throughout her tenure. The IWC held its first public activity, a facilitated discussion with women of various walks of life in Shkoder in December 2005. The meeting served to introduce IWC objectives and plans to potential beneficiaries, discuss needs of women in Shkoder and solicit suggestions and recommendations on IWC activities.

IWC offered training in the following areas:

- Four-week courses in basic and advanced computer skills;
- Three-month basic English courses;
- Four-week courses on how to start a business; and
- Three-week courses on babysitting.

The IWC also organized a roundtable on “Women’s Rights and Responsibilities” focusing on the role of women in the community from a religious and legal perspective and organized a study visit in June 2006 of women from Shkoder to Ulcinj, Montenegro.

A conference on “The Role of Religious Communities in Working Against Human Trafficking” was organized in September 2006 as a joint activity of the Interfaith Women Center in Shkoder, Interfaith Cooperation Center in Elbasan and the International Organization of Migration (IOM). The event was held in the *Peace Village* in Shkoder. The activity aimed to transmit the message that women from religious communities can be part of the initiative against human trafficking, and especially the trafficking of women and young girls. The event was attended by 70 people: religious leaders; women of the *Interfaith Cooperation Center* in Elbasan and *Interfaith Women’s Center* of Shkoder; representatives of IOM, the head of the prefecture in Shkoder, the deputy head of the Police Directory, representatives from local NGOs, and USAID/Albania’s anti-trafficking specialist. Many insights and recommendations on involvement in fighting trafficking were gathered.

Participants presented recommendations to the local government officials, to the representatives of IOM and the police. Among these recommendations were:

- Involve religious representatives in working with parents and youth to promote awareness on the risks of human trafficking.
- Call on religious activists to offer assistance in the shelters and centers that work with trafficking victims.
- Organize anti-trafficking public awareness campaigns, led by religious women activists.
- Create a network against human trafficking with the involvement of the local government, police, religious communities, local NGO's and other interested stakeholders.

Interfaith Community Center – Elbasan

In early September 2005 RelHarmony awarded a grant to the Project Advisory Committee in Elbasan to establish an Interfaith Cooperation Center (ICC). The ICC targeted religious activists, in particular youth, as well as people of lesser economic and social means. The ICC was overseen by the Elbasan Project Advisory Committee and provided a combination of practical skills training and discussion/awareness raising about interfaith issues aimed at creating a forum for relationships between members of diverse faith communities. The ICC's opening ceremony that took place on December 14, 2005.

The center provided:

- Employment skills training in English language, computer basics, how to write and edit documents on a computer, etc.;
- Training in how to start a business, basic accounting and other business skills;
- Training and mentoring in life skills including negotiation, time management, raising healthy and happy children, assertiveness and leadership; and
- Discussions on interfaith dialogue and cooperation.

In addition to training activities, the ICC also organized:

- A panel discussion on *TV Egnatia* with the participation of religious leaders to raise awareness about the tradition and practice of religious harmony in the Elbasan region, as well as to better inform the public about ICC goals, activities, and plans.
- A screening and facilitated discussion about the RelHarmony documentary film "Living Together" attended by Religious leaders, activists, as well as students at *Aleksander Xhuvani University* in Elbasan.

- A discussion titled “Let’s Talk to the Youth” aimed at informing young religious activists about the following important issues: religions’ basic beliefs, interfaith harmony as a key element for progressive development, the role of youth religious communities, and the need for greater engagement in interfaith initiatives that promote peace and tolerance. Sixty-two people attended the event. The activity served to promote the idea that religious communities share basic beliefs on the role of religion in a democratic society and the role of youth in promoting tolerance.
- A forum with 32 women religious activists representing the Moslem, Catholic, Orthodox, Bektashi, and Protestant communities gathered in the ICC premises to get more information on ICC services and plans, as well as to discuss ideas on enhancing the role of women within religious communities.
- A creative writing contest entitled “How Beautiful is the Albanian Language!” organized by Project Advisory Committee members in cooperation with the Writers’ League of Elbasan and the Regional Education Department. Sixty-one high school students submitted their poems and stories and participated in an award ceremony that commemorated the 160th birthday of the famous Albanian writer, Naim Frasheri, a devoted Bektashi.
- An event to support orphan children organized by ICC staff and Project Advisory Committee members in cooperation with the Association of Biological and Social Orphans with the participation of 27 orphans from Elbasan. Religious leaders welcomed the children and gave brief presentations on programs implemented by their respective communities that support orphans. They also gave books and other presents to the children. The event was organized on Albania’s Children’s Day holiday.

Interfaith Youth Program “Harmony” – Bathore

Bathore, the most marginalized and poverty-stricken suburb of Tirana, has many problems. In addition to long-term problems, such as unemployment and social exclusion, they are faced with basic challenges such as lack of stable living conditions and educational services. The main religious groups in Bathore are Muslims and Catholics; there are few Bektashi, Orthodox or Protestants. Until recently, there was no cooperation between the Catholic Church and the mosque in Bathore.

The Tirana Interfaith Youth Team (TIYT) was formed at the 2005 *Interfaith Summer Camps*. The group was comprised of youth from the different religious communities in Tirana. With help from RelHarmony staff, they moved from being young religious activists to being managers of a useful network for their community, the Interfaith Youth Program “Harmony” (IYP “Harmony”).

IYP “Harmony” is housed in Bathore’s existing Community Center Building and includes an “information corner” where students can learn about computers and use the Internet. IYP “Harmony” also offers skills training, peer group discussions, a presentation series and cultural activities. According to TIYT, the project is based on the belief that better-informed youth, youth with better life skills, youth that are open-minded and understand and respect

diversity, and youth that participate in joint efforts to benefit themselves and the community, are more likely to maintain and strengthen the existing interfaith harmony in Bathore.

With assistance from RelHarmony, TIYT planned and executed a series of training, educational and recreational events for Bathore's youth. Youth learned computer skills, resume preparation and participated in cultural activities such as poetry contests and film screenings.

As of the conclusion of RelHarmony, TIYT was pursuing follow-on funding for IYP "Harmony."

Coaching for Sustainability Consultancy – February 2007

As in all projects with relatively short timeframes, ensuring sustainability for activities, especially for the three community centers, was a concern. To help the centers prepare for the end of USAID funding, in the fall of 2006, World Learning arranged for ANTTARC to provide center representatives with an introduction to sustainability and proposal-writing. As a result of this consultancy each center submitted one request for funding. It was hoped that based on the ANTTAR experience that centers would submit additional proposals for funding. When this did not occur, project staff concluded that the ANTTARC training had not been sufficiently in depth to ready the centers to pursue independent funding, and arranged for an additional sustainability consultancy.

In February 2007 two consultants from Partners-Albania met with representatives at all three community centers and coached them to draft, review and/or improve their sustainability plans. The purpose of this consultancy was to maximize the chances of the three centers for future sustainability. Partners-Albania consultants conducted on-site introduction meetings with the three center coordinators in which they were briefed on the state of the organizations, project ideas, pre-prepared projects, main activities and the expectation for the future activities/ sustainability.

Partners-Albania consultants then compiled a list of donors in Albania with interest in finding activities in the area of interfaith harmony, youth and women's projects. Focusing on donors such as the World Bank, British Embassy, and Norwegian Embassy, SOROS Foundation, Regional Environment Center and some cultural interfaith foundations, Partners-Albania consultants scheduled face-to-face meetings with the mentioned donors.

Interfaith Solidarity Concert – Lezha, January 2006

RelHarmony supported an *Interfaith Solidarity Concert* in Lezha on January 9, 2006, the eve of the Moslem holiday of Bajram. This concert was supported with a small grant from the Muftini (Muslim leadership) of Lezha. The concert, the first of its kind in Lezha, took place at the *Palace of Culture* with Moslem, Catholic, and Orthodox artistic groups presenting songs from the three faiths. More than 800 people attended, including the Catholic Vice-Bishop of Lezha, the Mayor of Lezha, a member of the Albanian Parliament, and the Dean and the Rector of Shkoder University.

Interfaith Harmony Week – Librazhd, May 2006

RelHarmony supported *Librazhd's Interfaith Harmony Week* (May 22-26, 2006) through a small grant to the Mufti of Librazhd in cooperation with the representatives of the Orthodox Church, the Baha'i Community, the Municipality of Librazhd and the high school "Ibrahim Muca".

The Interfaith Harmony Week aimed to promote greater and more effective participation of religious leaders and activists in initiatives that raise public awareness on harmony, tolerance, equal rights and justice. Activities included a screening of the RelHarmony documentary film "Living Together," an essay and poetry competition, a women's day on the theme of the role of religious values in good parenting and a football match between the local soccer team and the team of Librazhd's high school (complete with "youth for peace and tolerance" printed on the players' uniforms).

Working Toward Property Restitution – Kavaja, April - November 2006

Concerned that many religious communities lack proper documentation to demonstrate their ownership of properties expropriated from them by Albania's Communist government, members of Kavaja's Interfaith Project Committee initiated the idea of holding an interfaith, informational session on property issues. The program was organized by the Moslem community in April 2006 and supported by a grant from RelHarmony.

The Project Committee carried out a pilot project that contributed to the process of restoring the properties of religious communities in Kavaja. Religious leaders and employees from the Muslim and Orthodox communities worked together to prepare the proper documentation for their properties in Kavaja.

The project aims at offering opportunities for religious leaders and young activists to work together on an important issue such as religious communities' properties and support interfaith efforts that benefit the community.

3.6 Government Relations

RelHarmony worked with the Government of Albania, religious communities, and experts to better the legal environment in which religious communities operate.

Draft Agreements Between the State and Religious Communities, June 2006-March 2007

In June 2006 RelHarmony provided a small grant to *Albania's State Committee on Cults* (the official translation of the name of the central government office that has oversight of religious affairs) to support work of the *Inter-Ministerial Working Group* established by order of the Prime Minister dated April 25, 2006. The grant supported a participatory process aimed at developing agreements between the State and religious communities. The purpose of such agreements is to guide state-religious community relations in the fields of culture, education, property, taxes, customs, religious matters, and other key issues.

Such agreements are required under Albania's 1998 Constitution. However at the time the grant was awarded, the Government of Albania had ratified an agreement with only the Catholic Church, and this under the guise of a State-State agreement with the Vatican. Albania also had no law regulating the relationship between religious communities and the state.

The process was broadly participatory, with input from international bodies including the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), Albanian legal and religious experts. RelHarmony engaged outside expertise (e.g. legal experts) and to support outreach activities that enabled a more transparent drafting process. Initially the State planned to develop and sign separate agreements with the Muslim, Bektashi, and Orthodox communities and use these as a basis for a template agreement that could be used with other religious communities. The State later revised its plans to create a template agreement available to all religious communities, that could then be adapted for specific agreements with each community. As of this writing, the template agreement is awaiting approval from the Prime Minister.

3.7 Media and Public Dialogue Activities

Albania remains a largely secular environment. For media members, opinion leaders, and much of the general public, religion and religious institutions are poorly understood. Through public and media outreach, RelHarmony sought to increase general understanding of religion and Albania's tradition of religious tolerance.

Documentary Films

RelHarmony produced two documentary films. The first film, titled "Living Together," produced in April 2006, discusses Albania's religious history and relations between the country's diverse religious communities today. The film conveys messages of peaceful co-existence and inter-religious dialogue, emphasizing the need to preserve Albania's historic tradition of harmonious interfaith relations in the face of tensions. "Living Together" introduces viewers to the country's four major religious communities (Sunni Muslim, Bektashi, Orthodox Christian, and Catholic), describes repression they and other faith groups faced as religion was first discouraged and then constitutionally banned by the country's totalitarian regime. Finally the film covers the "renaissance" of spiritual belief that Albania has experienced since the early 1990s. The film shows that Albanian national identity is based on interfaith harmony and the common values of all faiths merge together in shaping the spiritual dimension of the Albanian nation. "Living Together" was directed by Sajmir Kumbaro. The film of approximately 30 minutes is in Albanian with English subtitles.

The film was distributed to 40 interested organizations with help from the USAID-funded media program. It was broadcast through a network of 25 local TV stations, on public television, and on a leading private TV channel; screenings, followed by facilitated discussions on challenges to religious harmony were organized in each region

The second film, titled “What Do I Believe,” told the story of four young believers in their own words. Due to the sensitivity of the content in this film, USAID decided not to distribute it.

Roundtable on Media Coverage of Religious Affairs – March 2006

The roundtable titled “Media Coverage of Religious Affairs” took place at the Tirana International Hotel on March 6, 2006. The Project and the Journalism Department of Tirana University jointly organized the activity. It assembled approximately 80 participants including representatives of religious communities, journalists from print and electronic media, professors and students of the Journalism Department, and other experts on religion in the field. Distinguished guests included members of Parliament, the USAID Mission Director, other USAID officials, the Chairman of the Governmental Committee on Religious Affairs, and a representative of the World Conference of Religions for Peace (WCRP).

There are opportunities to build more sustainable dialogue between religious communities and the media, but mutual reservations and misgivings still exist and misunderstandings can occur in the groups’ joint pursuit of truth. The common pursuit of the truth by religions and the media constituted the foundations of this amiable, constructive and friendly discussion.

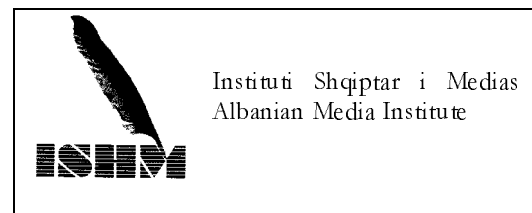
The need for greater mutual transparency from religious communities and the media was highlighted. Participants agreed that, in a market economy, the media can and should play a role in establishing positive attitudes about religious issues.

Representatives of religious communities and the media exhibited great intellectual maturity and profound social accountability, underlining the need to further extend their collaboration to foster religious harmony in Albania. The participants affirmed that religious communities and the media must collaborate to minimize any sparks of religious or social conflict, foreign or domestic religious extremism and unwarranted involvement of politics in religious affairs.

Improving Reporting on Religious Affairs – April 2006

In partnership with RelHarmony, the Albanian Media Institute hosted a training seminar on April 19-20, 2006 on the topic of improving religious reporting in the Albanian media.

The seminar’s objective was to increase journalists’ awareness of special considerations when reporting on religious issues and, consequently, to improve reporting on religion. By providing journalists with a fuller understanding of religious communities’ problems and prospects, as well as religion’s role in society, RelHarmony hoped to contribute to the creation of a more educated public in this area.



In the course of two days, 35 journalists, from both private and electronic media, from the capital and the main districts in the country, took part in training exercises. Participants included representatives of the most influential media from the capital as well as individuals

from smaller outlets in communities that are home to Albania's most sensitive religious issues (Shkoder, Elbasan, Korça, Gjirokastra, etc).

The agenda of the program was an intensive one and included lecturers from civil society, experienced journalists and columnists, representatives of the Muslim, Orthodox, Catholic, and Bektashi communities in Albania.

Research on Religious Attitudes – January 2007

During 2006, RelHarmony contracted with the Albanian Foundation for Conflict Resolution to conduct a follow-on survey to its 2004 baseline survey. AFCR surveyed 1002 people in nine cities regarding their religious beliefs and their opinions on religion in Albania. The researchers used questionnaires, focus groups and interviews with believers and leaders of local religious communities in RelHarmony's seven target cities plus Korça and Gjirokastra.

A separate sub grant to AFCR supported a series of forums, featuring debates and deliberations on interfaith coexistence and dialogue.

4. SUCCESS STORIES

Religious Leaders' Testimony in Conflict Resolution Training. November/December 2004 and February, June 2005

Muslim imam: "I have always been working in conflict resolution in my religious community, but I never knew that I was serving as a mediator. This training helped me to really understand my position and to improve my skills in mediating and reconciliation [...] I really appreciate this."

Catholic priest: "During my service in the church, people always come to talk to me for various problems: family disputes, couple's disagreements, propriety problems, blood feuds, interpersonal conflict etc. I have always tried to do my best using Bible's lessons and the word of God [...] but through this training I added to my work a new perspective. Now I can use the gained skills in a certain professional way. I can try to resolve conflicts using the information and knowledge that I took in the two level of training [...] but the most important thing is that now I know how and where to address the cases through legal way or professional conflict resolution centers."

Orthodox participant: "The most amazing thing is the fact that we all had the chance to meet together, to work together and to collaborate for common issues. We have met before in other meetings organized by RelHarmony, but this training gave us information and knowledge closely related to our daily work. It was interesting to see the religious leaders and activists from different faiths, working together in joint groups. The role plays made us become parts in a conflict, mediators, supervisors or spectators and also made us feel part of a UNIT."

Bektashi participant: "Each religious promotes tolerance, harmony and love and we should protect these values. The training helped me understand that in spite of the spiritual ways of dealing with the conflicts, there are also professional ones. I know now that mediation service is very important and this training provided me information and knowledge on it. Personally I feel I gained a lot and I will use it in my daily work [...]"

From Participants in Interfaith Summer Camps – July 2005 and 2006

RelHarmony's summer camps offered an opportunity for youth from the country's major religions to share their faith, learn about the faith of their companions and have a great time. Attendees participated in discussions and workshops on topics such as conflict resolution, cooperation and Albania's religious history. They also visited the religious sites of various faiths and participated in the religious observances of the other religions. Youth from different religions shared rooms and meals. They teamed up for soccer matches, prepared a barbeque together and took a very enjoyable trip to the beach.

Stories from participants:

Esmeralda, 19 years old, Catholic Christian: “On Friday we organized our Catholic service and we invited everyone to come. We prepared a simple room, like a little church, and we made a very simple cross. It was so beautiful, emotional and important.

Many Muslim boys attended the service. When they entered the room, they were a little shy and surprised, but they were very respectful and attentive during the entire ceremony.

It was a really special and emotional experience to be in the middle of so many wonderful people who, in spite of the religious differences, were gathered for the same goal. In those moments I understood that Christ possessed my heart and I couldn't stop my tears because I really felt that we were one community with the same religion.

We created such a strong relationship between us that it was so hard to say goodbye to each other. The strength of our new friendship was reflected in two meetings we had after the summer camp. Some of the participants from Durrës came to Tirana and we met in a cafe. We all remembered the wonderful week we spent together and the religious harmony reflected in each activity that we conducted.”

Daniela, 20 years old, Bektashi Muslim: “A wonderful moment for me was when all the youth of the summer camp went to visit the “KUS BABA” Bektashi *tekee* [Bektashi mosque], which is an important place for my religion. I was so happy that my friends had the chance to see how it looked inside and to hear about its history from the local Bektashi leader. That was a moment that I will not forget and my new friends said the same thing.

Finally I would like to thank the American people for their contribution to make a better world that is dominated by harmony. Because of this altruism we had the chance to organize this great activity, but I am thankful not only for this. I really appreciate the long-term vision: promotion and support of religious harmony in Albania. Religious harmony has always existed in my country, but we have to make it stable, to promote it to the entire world and maintain its harmonious framework.

A happy life is experienced if there is harmony, not only a personal one but also a community one. In our daily life we share our hours with people from different cultures, gender, ethnicity and religion so we can't have positive communication if we don't respect their perspectives even though they are different from ours.”

Ervisi, 21 years old, Sunni Muslim Imam: “The first Interfaith Youth Summer Camp in Albania gave me a wonderful feeling of being part of a very important initiative. I am a young Imam who is looking forward to developing and progressing in my level of knowledge of Allah's words and teachings. I speak about harmony and tolerance everyday with my brothers and sisters in Allah in my mosque but I never had the chance to share my thoughts in a wide, multi-faith group of young believers. The summer camp, thank Allah, gave me the wonderful opportunity to speak to other young believers of different faith about my viewpoints and to hear theirs.

Of course we have core differences in our religions but we must try to understand each other. As we learn about our own faith traditions and communities, we should also learn about others. “Understanding others changes us.” By understanding, we learn the areas of commonalities as well as differences. We can learn the nature and extent of differences. We must see what kind of dialogues could be of value and what issues are most in need of respectful dialogue in these times. Which concerns for the well being of others should drive our efforts to reach common ground for action? Each group must encourage and facilitate shared responsibility to create a more sensitive and welcoming environment for our diverse groups.

Islam and Muslims, unfortunately, are still the target of stereotyping and misrepresentations. But we, the young believers, should try hard to change this stigma and show the world that we can make a positive and progressive difference. We have to be the model of the right believer who is guided by Allah’s word: who is tolerant, loving, caring, devoted and just.

All the blessings of Allah.”

Jani, Theological Student, Orthodox Christian: “The First Interfaith Summer Camp in Albania gave me the most special feeling I have ever experienced [...]”

From Participants of Computer Courses at the Interfaith Women’s Center in Shkoder

“This experience/training will serve my daily work so much. It really helped me a lot.”

“We have gained a lot of knowledge on computers. We now can write a document and save it. We now have an e-mail address and we can also send an e-mail.”

“I will use the knowledge I earned to help my husband in his business and later on I am thinking to open my personal business.”

“I always stayed home and I didn’t have the chance to go to school or to work somewhere. This center gave me the chance to think that I am capable of activity beyond housework. I felt so good with my friends and even though they had different religion from mine, we were so close to each other.”

5. RESULTS AND IMPACT

The RelHarmony project was a highly unusual development project working in an area with few precedents and many sensitivities. It should be considered a success both in terms of the many interfaith activities realized and in establishing a model of future similar projects.

Full quantitative results are captured in the monitoring and evaluation framework, attached here as Appendix 1. Here we summarize some of the most important project results. In its second survey the Albanian Foundation for Conflict Resolution included five questions related to the success and impact of the project. Results are summarized in the following table.

Questions	Response	
	% Yes	% No
39. Have you noticed any interfaith activities in your city?	10	90
40. Have you heard of the RelHarmony Project that has worked with religious leaders to form inter-faith councils, carry out community development projects, and develop the ability to resolve conflict between religions and people in the community?	20	80
41. Have you or any other member of your family participated in any interfaith activity such as, summer camps, public workshops, and different discussions?	9	91
42. Do you think these activities promote religious harmony and understanding among members of different religions?	67	8
43. Do you think that a more frequent cooperation in interfaith activities, where different religious communities work together, is a good thing?	73	5

Twenty per cent of those surveyed had heard of the project, 9% indicated that either they or a family member had participated in an activity, 63% felt the activities promoted harmony and understanding and 73% believed that more frequent interfaith activities are a good thing. These are very positive numbers for a relatively small and short-term project.

Sixty-seven religious leaders became involved in local-level interfaith advisory committees. RelHarmony staff members are optimistic that these groups will continue to meet and pursue activities and respond to issues that are of mutual interest. Conflict resolution training reached 170 religious leaders, who reported using their new skills and knowledge to help mediate 72 disputes in their communities.

Approximately 1,000 people participated in one or more community development activities organized by the RelHarmony project or its grantees. Add to this number the 210 youth who participated in the two summer camps and 43 children who were involved in the youth art contest and RelHarmony's results, especially related to the youngest generation, come into sharper focus. Work with youth is essential for a project whose intended impact is long-term changes in values and tolerance. Eight separate groups received small grant support from the RelHarmony project to support concerts, roundtable discussions and community centers across the country.

A total of 80 participants, 35 of whom were journalists, took part in an activity to help them learn more about issues related to reporting on religious issues. A large majority of both the journalists and the religious leaders who attended this event said it was very useful. Participants reported learning a great deal about the challenges that confront one another. Other media-related activities also reached a large number of beneficiaries. RelHarmony's first documentary film aired 45 times on national television channels and many of the projects events and activities were covered in the local and national media.

The establishment of the *National Inter-religious Committee* is a result of particular significance. This committee will provide an ongoing mechanism for exchange among the top leaders of Albania's main religions and an advocacy group for the protection of religious rights in Albania.

Impact is difficult to gauge in a project such as RelHarmony, where the changes do not come in the form of roads built or test scores improved. Especially only a few months after the end of activities, it is difficult to quantify the impact of the project. The goals of the project were to strengthen a tradition of interfaith harmony and cooperation that had not been marred by outright conflict. RelHarmony sought an impact in the hearts and imaginations of Albanians. We have anecdotal evidence in the form of participant testimonials and success stories, that the project accomplished its goals of fostering stronger interfaith relations through concrete projects and joint efforts. Women of diverse faiths in the northern city of Shkoder expressed satisfaction with training activities at the Interfaith Women's Center there not only because they learned computer skills that would help them find jobs but also because they were grateful for the opportunity to work with women of different faiths. In the words of one participant, "I felt so good with my friends and even though they had different religion from mine, we were so close to each other." This is the impact of the RelHarmony project. Beyond the documentary films, international conferences and legal agreements between religious communities and the state, RelHarmony has made connections between people in the seven cities where it worked.

We believe that the project has left behind not only a legacy of interfaith committees, a youth organization and enduring legal agreements between the state and religious communities, but also a change in the hearts of some of the country's citizens. Religion has been a frequent flashpoint for conflict in the Balkans and around the world. Albania is fortunate to have a strong foundation of interfaith tolerance. We hope that the RelHarmony project has made a small contribution to extending and strengthening this tolerance into a proactive and durable spirit of interfaith cooperation.

After 30 months of project implementation, World Learned has developed a model for fostering interfaith harmony that can be replicated in other countries.

6. CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED DURING THE PROJECT

Challenge: Hierarchical structure of religious organizations

Lesson Learned: Communicating with senior religious leaders early and often in project planning and implementation is essential.

In most religious communities in Albania upper-level leaders authorize and oversee the actions of lower-level leaders. As a result, organizing events and cooperation at the community level required a great deal of groundwork and relationship building with senior leaders. When (and if) these senior leaders were convinced of the merit of RelHarmony's activities, they gave their blessing for the participation at the city- and community-level.

Religious leaders are accomplished and highly respected in their communities. Outside development workers must be sure to communicate with senior religious leaders early and often in project planning and implementation. Without such consultation, implementers run the risk of being perceived as having "gone over the head" of religious leaders.

Religious leaders also served essentially as "gate-keepers" through which the project needed to pass in order to engage members at the grassroots levels. When holding a training or recruiting youth participants for interfaith camps, RelHarmony approached top religious leaders in each target community and asked them to identify a select number of participants for each event. Once top leaders gave their approval, it freed lower level priests or imams and lay activists to fully participate in the project.

Challenge: Moving beyond management to "diplomacy"

Lesson Learned: Listening, reading between the lines and appreciating the sensitivity of religious issues increased RelHarmony's effectiveness.

Strengthening religious harmony is different than many other development efforts. Religion is often politicized, divisive, sensitive and deeply personal. For outside actors who presume to enter a community's or country's religious milieu and create positive change, it is essential that project leaders demonstrate the qualities that make diplomats successful. These qualities include a good ear, for listening not only to what stakeholders are saying, but also the ability to "read between the lines" and get at unspoken priorities that are nonetheless very important. This talent is greatly enhanced by the ability to speak and understand the local language.

Challenge: Sustainability of project activities

Lesson Learned: Supporting existing groups or organizations rather than creating new institutions would likely have created more sustainable impact.

When the project ended in March 2007, both USAID and World Learning staff wondered if the community centers would be able to sustain their activities. In support of continuation, center representatives were given fundraising training and technical assistance. However, additional factors in project history will also affect the question of sustainability.

RelHarmony's original design assumed that grant making for community based interfaith projects would be substantially underway by the end of year one. Once implementation began however, it became clear that religious leaders and activists lacked community development, project design and proposal preparation experience. While World Learning had to some degree anticipated this and included community development training in year one to pave the way for sub-grants, the project found that leaders and activists needed more coaching and encouragement than anticipated. In addition, religious leaders often had a number of demands on their time and thus applying for sub-grants was often not a high priority.

The delay in grant-making put the project behind schedule early in its implementation and created pressure to demonstrate results. To move activities forward more quickly, the project supported very strongly the creation of several interfaith centers, in Shkoder, Elbasan and Durrës.

As part of the push to speed up activities the project decided to pay members of the advisory councils a stipend to cover their expenses. The stipend clearly improved advisory council participation, but its effect on members' willingness to continue working once the stipend ended was probably negative and it was controversial among project staff. Some thought that paying people for what was essentially community service was a major challenge to sustainability after the end of external project funding. Others considered that no organization could become sustainable in one year.

Challenge: "Why are you here?"

Lesson Learned: Emphasizing issues of common interest and concern proved to be the most effective way of convincing participants of RelHarmony's utility.

Albania has no history of significant religious or ethnic conflict. This is a marked contrast from many of its neighbors and a distinct point of pride for many of its citizens. As a result, many religious leaders, believers and community members were initially skeptical of an USAID-supported project to strengthen (we learned the term "foster" does not translate well into Albanian) religious harmony. While it is true that there has never been a shooting war over religion in Albania, there were challenges to religious harmony.

Relations between many religious groups were free from conflict because they rarely interacted with one another. Leaders would pay courtesy calls on their colleagues' holy days, for example, but few religious communities sought out issues of common concern and worked cooperatively to address them. After discussions with RelHarmony staff, many of these stakeholders came to see several such areas where all religious communities could the benefits of religious cooperation.

Challenge: Framing Training and Activities

Lesson Learned: Training was best presented as an opportunity for leaders to learn from one another, not as an exercise to give them skills and knowledge they lacked.

Religious leaders in Albania are (or at least see themselves as) accomplished leaders. Depending on the presentation and tone of training exercises, especially early in the project, some religious leaders got the impression that the project was seeking to correct their shortcomings. “Training” sounded to them like an activity for people who didn’t have experience or needed handholding in order to be effective leaders. Needless to say, this was not the project’s purpose or intent. We learned that it was important to frame training activities as an opportunity to learn from other leaders and share knowledge and experiences. When training activities were presented in this way, the impression of outsiders imparting knowledge from the top down was greatly reduced. Most participants in later training exercises reported them to be useful and relevant.

The project could have avoided this misunderstanding by focusing on building rapport with religious leaders through interfaith advisory committees and designing training to respond to needs they identified. RelHarmony did not encounter this same sensitivity among youth or lay activists.

Challenge: Non-Traditional Religious Groups

Lesson Learned: Non-traditional religious groups should be included judiciously in project activities.

While Albania’s religious resurgence after 1990 brought many Albanians back to their family’s traditional Sunni Muslim, Bektashi, Orthodox Christian, or Catholic faith, it also opened the way for new religious organizations to establish communities in the country. These include, but are not limited to, evangelical protestant churches, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and Baha’i.

Including members of these non-traditional religions within the project raised two challenges. First, because there are many non-traditional groups with relatively small memberships, including even one representative from each in a training or activity would have given their group representation disproportionate to their overall population. Second, as leaders of Albania’s traditional religious groups struggle to attract members back to the church, mosque, or tekke, the presence of these newer, and often better-funded religious groups may be unwelcome.

Religious leaders from Albania’s four traditional religious groups were, with few exceptions, supportive of interfaith initiatives, which included all traditional religions, however their views differed on the question of including members of non-traditional religious groups in RelHarmony activities. Elbasan’s Project Advisory Committee, for example, supported an inclusive approach and even hired a member of a non-traditional religious group to manage the Interfaith Community Center. However some leaders in other cities did not support this

inclusive approach, raising the prospect that they and their followers would not participate in activities that included members from non-traditional religious communities.

Promoting the project's commitment to true religious pluralism as well as the need to maintain productive relationships with traditional religious leaders in all geographic areas was an ongoing concern that required diplomacy and many behind the scenes discussions to address. RelHarmony activities, including but not limited to, trainings, youth camps, and interfaith centers, did include several adherents of non-traditional religions.

World Learning and the staff of the RelHarmony project are grateful to have had the opportunity to work closely with Albania's faith communities over the past three years

APPENDICES

- Appendix 1 Monitoring and Evaluation Framework
- Appendix 2 Results of Questions Related to the Success of the
RelHarmony Project from the APCR Surveys Conducted in
January 2005 and June 2006
- Appendix 3 Participant Training Program

Appendix 1 Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

Strategic Objective: Religious harmony and tolerance within and among the different religious communities in target areas in Albania improved

Indicator: Percentage of people who perceive that harmony and tolerance within and among the different religious communities in target areas has improved.

Question: How do you evaluate the relation between different religions in Albania? (Question # 34 in the 2005 survey and question # 19 in 2006 survey)						
	Baseline Survey (2005)		Combined Responses (2005)	Follow-up survey (2006)		Combined Responses (2006)
	No.	%		No.	%	
Harmonious/Tolerant	731	73	86% positive	586	54	77% positive
Collaborative	128	13		254	23	
Poor	95	9	10% negative	151	14	19% negative
Conflicted	14	1		56	5	
Non-existent	16	2		38	4	
No answer	18	2		-	-	
Total	1002	100%		1085	100%	

Survey respondents saw inter- religious relations as *less* harmonious in the second survey than in the first one. Possibly, this difference could be related to instances of inter-religious conflict that immediately preceded the surveys or to a generally heightened awareness of the issue. A systematic examination of events immediately prior to the surveys might shed some light on the discrepancy. Such as this may not have been the best way to designate the SO indicators.

IR 1: Religious leaders and activists use the skills, tools and capabilities to work together with other groups towards goals they have in common

1.1 The number of religious leaders regularly attending the inter-faith advisory committee meetings: 67.

1.2. The number of meetings held: 210 Local Meetings with religious leaders and activists were held in the target areas by the Field Coordinators and the Center Managers.

1.3 The number of success stories submitted to USAID where a religious leader describes the benefits of the inter-faith advisory committee meetings: 5 Success Stories

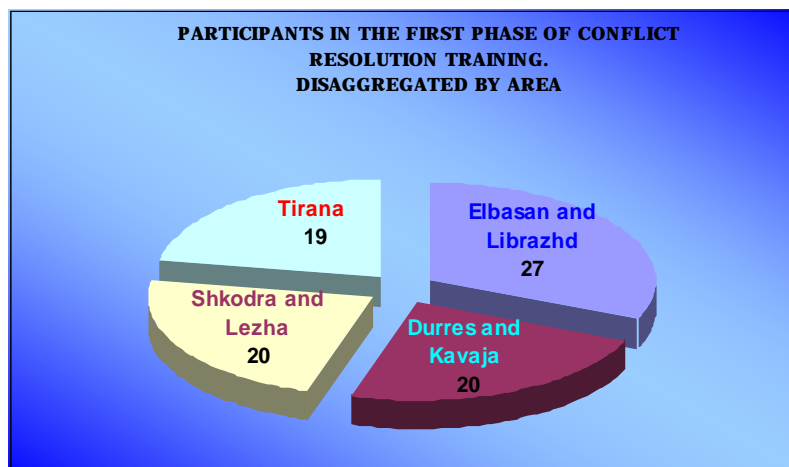
1.4 Number of meetings held by the Forum on Religious Harmony: 5 meetings

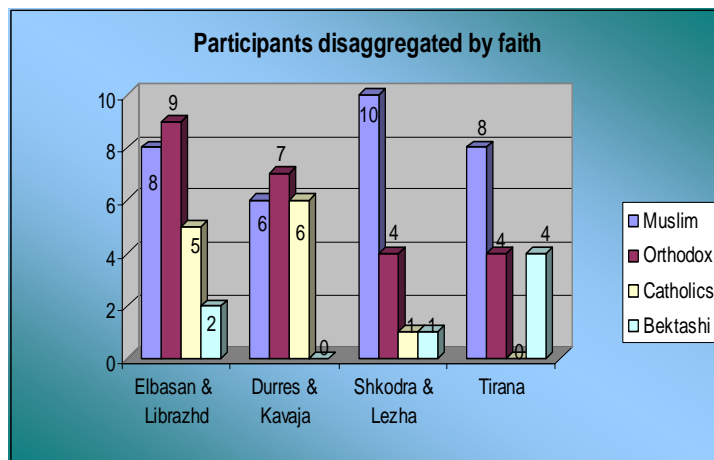
1.5 Number of active members regularly attending the meetings of the Forum on Religious Harmony: 10 experts

1.6 Number of issues addressed/ or publications/ papers/ articles produced by the Forum on Religious Harmony: 10 papers were produced

Sub-IR 1.1: Religious leaders and activist skills in participatory community development improved

1.1.1 The number of religious leaders attending the workshop, disaggregated by target area and faith: 86 Religious Leaders and Activists

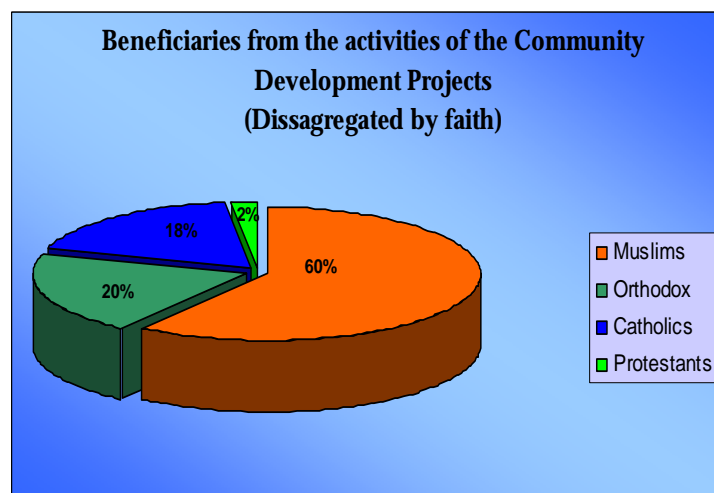


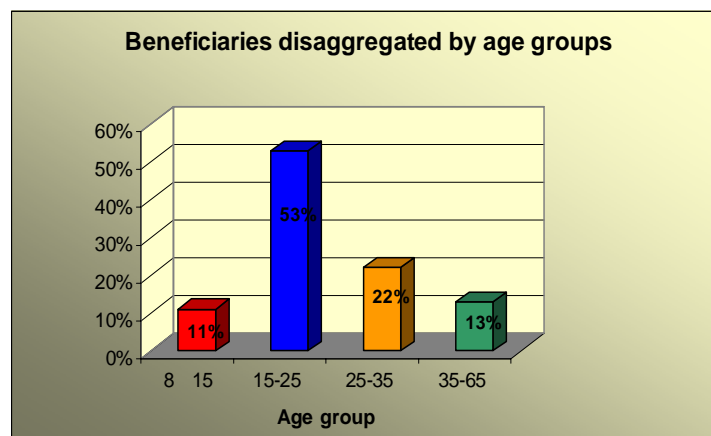
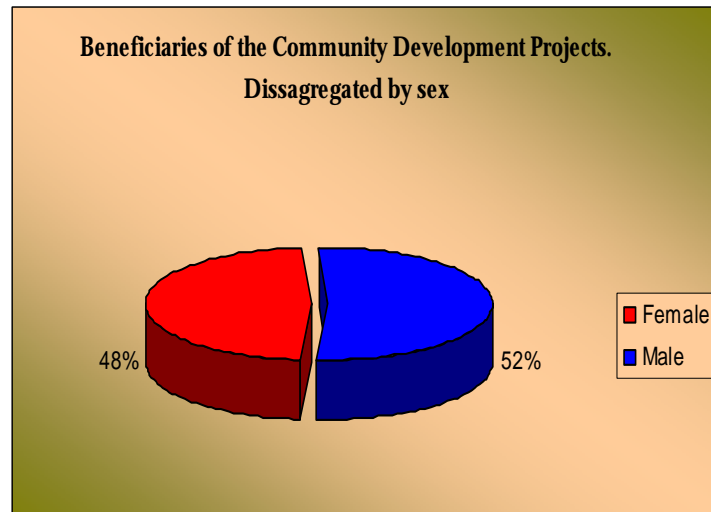


1.1.2 The percentage of the attendees who evaluated the training as useful, relevant and appropriate (rating the majority of evaluated factors in the top two quartiles on an evaluation survey): 73.7% of attendees evaluated the training as useful, relevant and appropriate.

Sub-IR 1.2: Inter-faith community development projects completed.

1.2.1 The number of beneficiaries of Community Development projects, disaggregated by gender, faith (when possible) and age-set: 1000 people (approximately) attended the activities implemented by the community development projects.





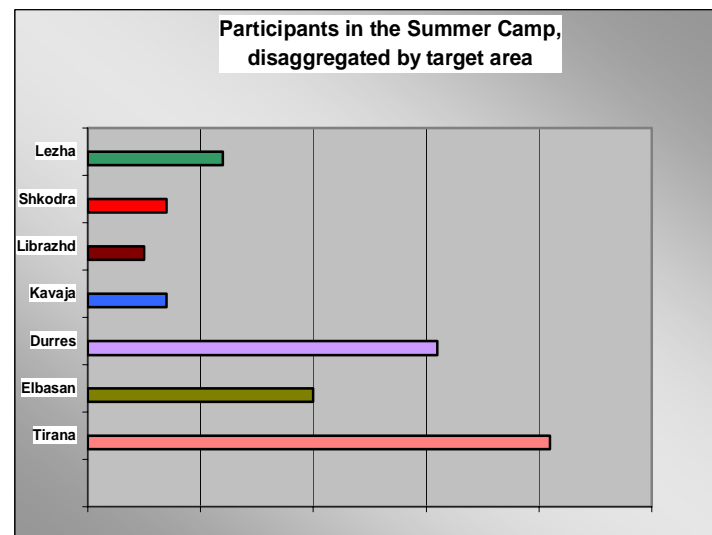
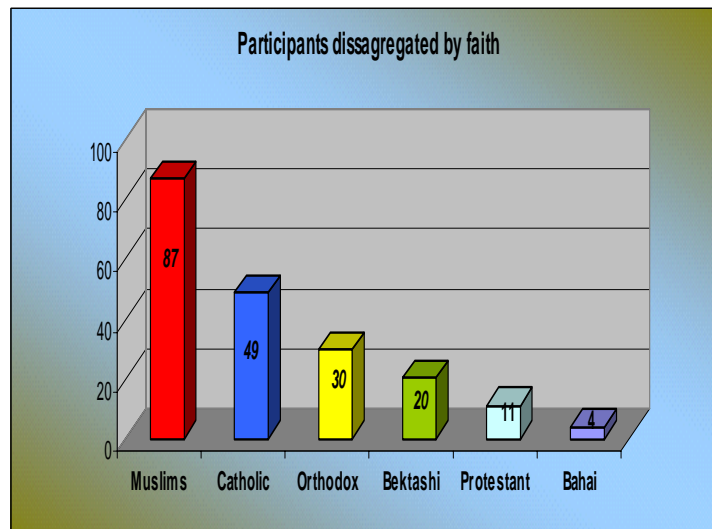
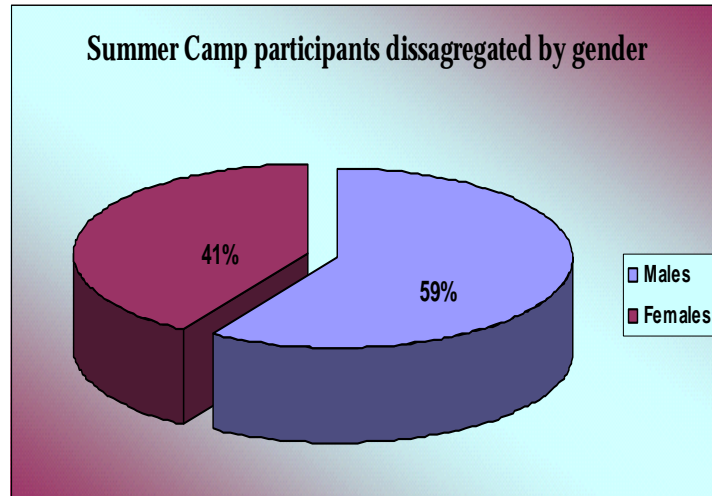
1.2.2 The number of projects completed (reached stated objectives, wrote final narrative report and reconciled funds): 8 projects completed and their final reports delivered.

1.2.3 The number of project proposals developed and submitted by Interfaith Committees/working groups: 17 project proposals submitted, approved and implemented within the project implementation.

1.2.4 The number of success stories submitted to USAID from beneficiaries of the community development projects: 1 success story submitted

Sub-IR 1.3: Through attendance in inter-faith dialogue activities, understanding and tolerance improved

1.3.1 The number of youth attending Summer Camp, disaggregated by gender, faith and target area: 210 young people, representatives of different religious communities by the 7 target cities, attended the First and Second Interfaith Youth Summer Camp in Albania.

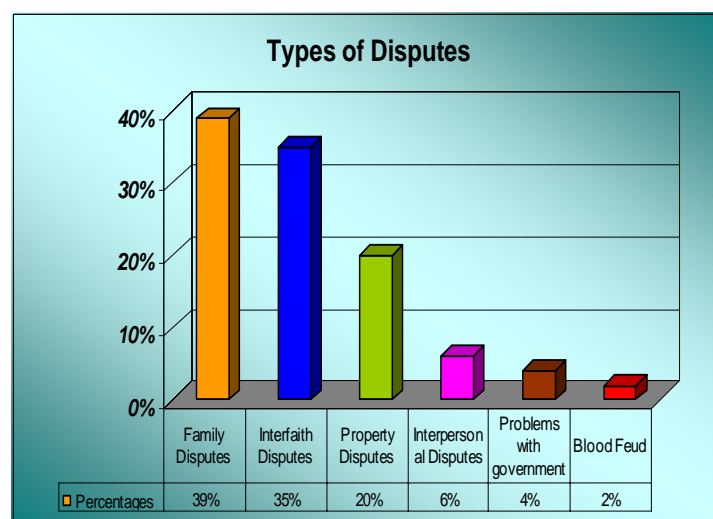
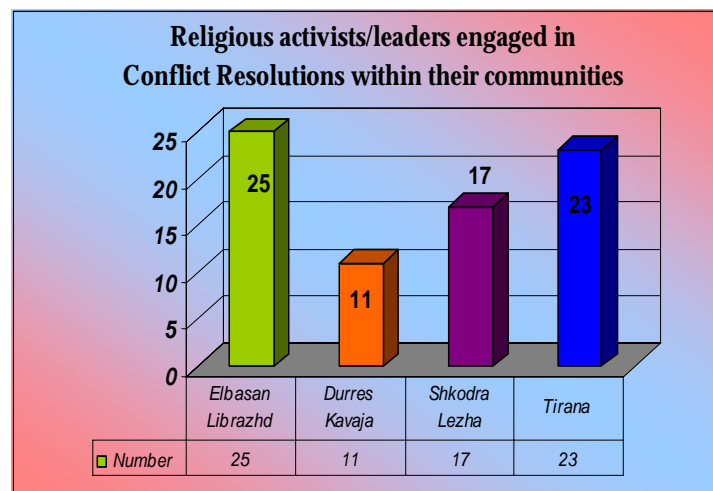


1.3.2 The percentage of camp attendees who implemented tolerance-oriented activities in the community centers: 20 percent of camp attendees implemented tolerance-oriented activities in the community centers.

1.3.3 The number of success stories submitted to USAID from attendees of the Interfaith Youth Summer Camp describing the benefits they received as a result of the activity: 7 success stories

IR 2: Religious leaders and activists use the skills, tools and capabilities to improve dialogue within their communities towards reducing conflicts, including marginalization, fractionalization and radicalization

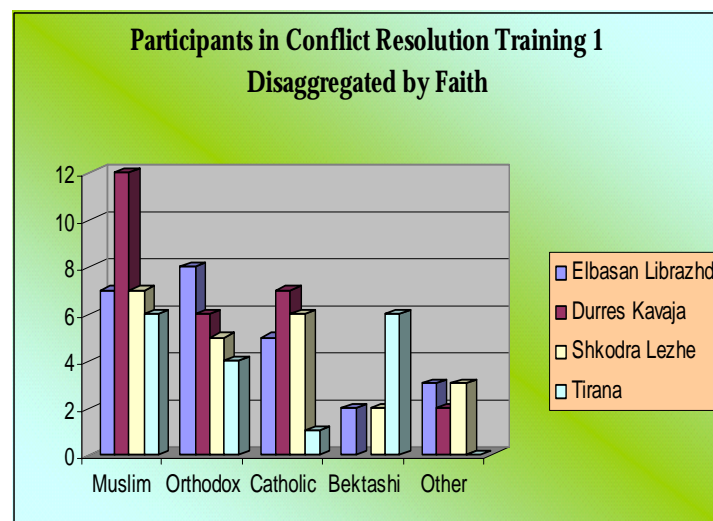
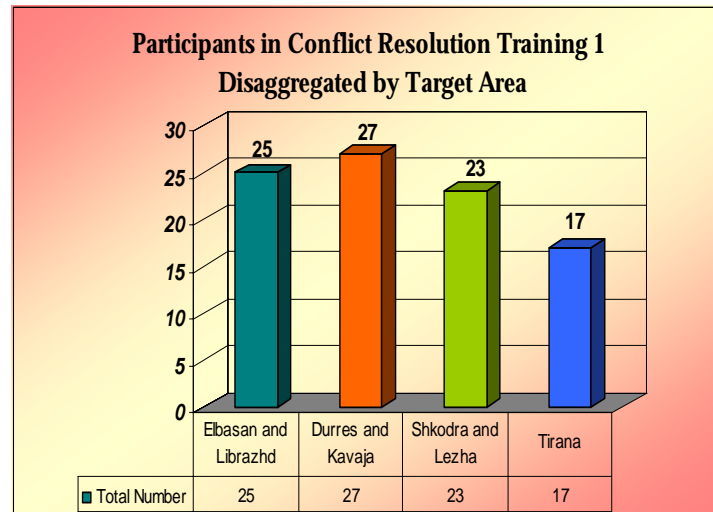
2.1 The number of cases of conflict/dispute engaged by the trained religious leadership, disaggregated by target area, faith, and type of dispute: 72 cases of conflicts or disputes were solved by the trained religious leaders



Sub-IR 2.1: Religious leaders' and activists' skills in conflict resolution improved

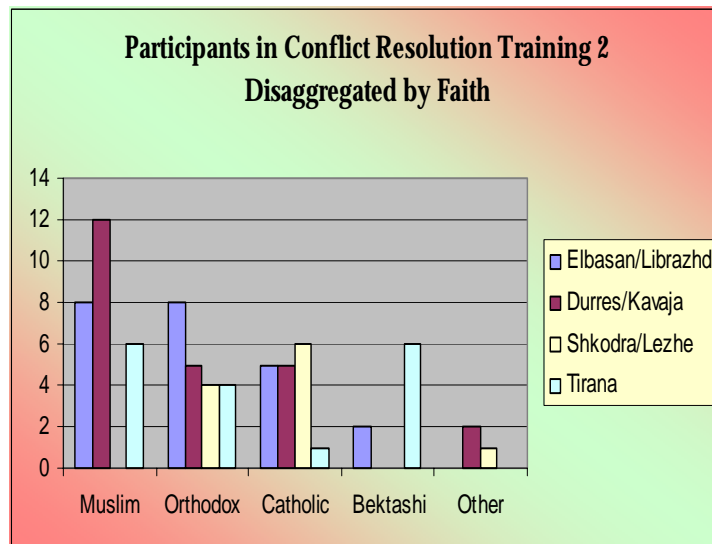
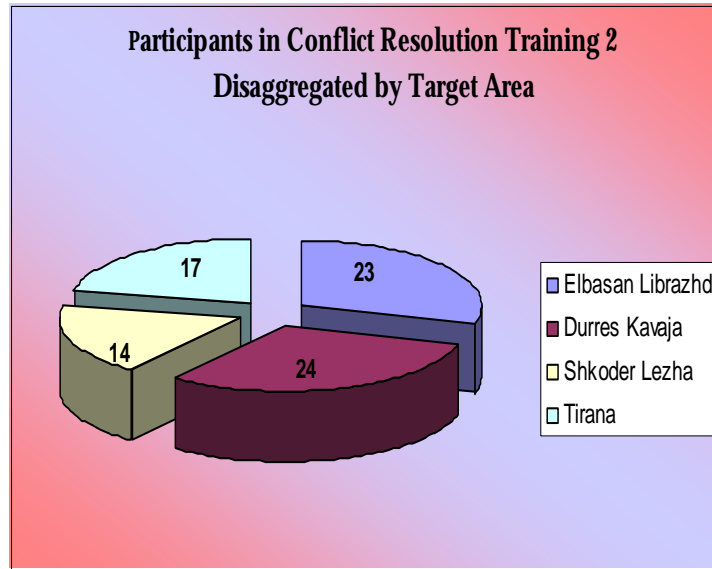
2.1.1 (Round 1) The percentage of attendees who rates the training good to very good for usefulness, relevance and appropriates (rating the training in the top two quartiles) : 68% of attendees evaluate the training as useful, relevant and appropriate

2.2.2 (Round 1) The number of religious leaders and activists who have attended conflict resolution training, disaggregated by target area and faith: 92 religious leaders attended the first phase of Conflict Resolution Training.



2.2.3 (Round 2) The percentage of attendees who rates the training good to very good for usefulness, relevance and appropriates (rating the training in the top two quartiles): 86 % of attendees evaluate the training as useful, relevant and appropriate

2.2.4 (Round 2) The number of religious leaders and activists who have attended conflict resolution training, disaggregated by target area and faith: 78 religious leaders attended the first phase of Conflict Resolution Training.



2.2.5 The number of religious leaders provided with follow up mentoring on conflict resolution: 32 religious leaders and activists (from Kavaja, Durrës and Shkodra)

2.2.6 The number of success stories submitted to USAID from religious leaders on successes in conflict resolution as a result of the training they received: 1 Success Story

Sub-IR 2.2: Religious leaders gain additional conflict resolution and peace skills through the International Summer School of Religion and Public Life (ISSRPL) camp

2.2.1 The number of religious activists attending the ISSRPL 2006: 12 representatives attended

2.2.2 The number of religious leaders who, in turn, are briefed on ISSRPL 2005: 50 religious leaders and other interested stakeholder were briefed on ISSRP by the participants who attended the ISSRPL 2006 in UK.

IR 3: Open and public dialogue and awareness on religious tolerance increased.

3.1 The number of media products developed that can be used to continue to stimulate discussion on religious tolerance: 4 Media products developed: 10

Sub-IR 3.1: Availability of broadcast segments on inter-faith relations increased

Televised debates /roundtables

3.1.1 Number of audience members attending the taping activity: 50 persons attended the televised debate as audience, in the studio of Top Channel TV

3.1.2 Number of airings of the taped events: 2 times aired by Top Channel TV: 23.00 o'clock and 10.00 the next day.

3.1.3 Number of documentaries produced: 2 documentaries produced in Albanian and translated in English.

3.1.4 Number of airings of the documentary: 45 airings (reported only for the national TV channels)

3.1.5 Number of attendees at the workshop, disaggregated by participant type: 80 participants attended the activity on “ Media Reporting on Religious Issues”

3.1.6 Number of airings of the workshop or news summary: 5 TV presentations were broadcasted in the national TV stations; 4 newspapers wrote articles and supplements on the event.

Sub-IR 3.2: Skills and attitudes of journalists to produce items related to inter-faith relations improved

3.2.1 Number of journalists attending training workshop, disaggregated by media type.: 5 journalists were trained on religious issues.

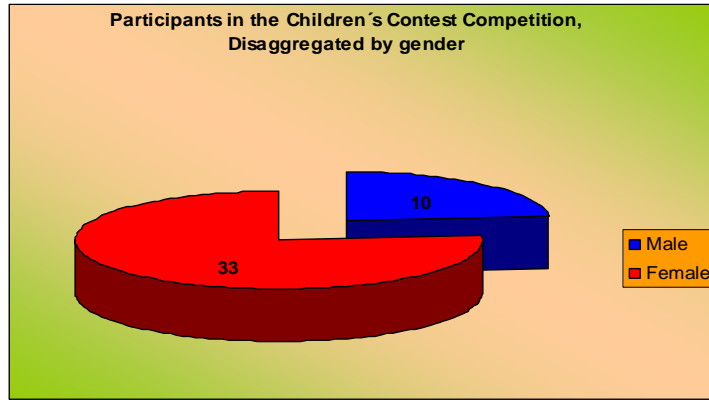
3.2.2 Percentage of journalists trained who rate the training as useful, relevant and appropriate (top two quartiles): 80% of the journalists rated the training as very useful according to the final evaluation forms distributed at the end of the training sessions.

3.2.3 Number of items on inter-faith understanding from trainees that are published (in newspaper, magazine, segment on radio or television): 32 essays were submitted for the Students Contest on Religious Harmony.

10 of them were selected by the selection commission to be presented at the award ceremony and 3 were awarded with the special prizes.

Sub-IR 3.3: New items related to inter-faith harmony produced.

3.3.1 The number of children involved in the competition for Children's Design Contest on Religious Harmony, disaggregated by age and gender: 43 children were involved in the Children's Design Contest. (age 7-14 years old)



3.3.2 The number of designs presented in the competition process: 43 designs presented by the end of June 2006.

Number of religious specialists involved in the process of preparing the Interfaith Calendar for 2007: 4 religious representatives and art design specialist

3.3.4 Number of copies of the Interfaith Calendar for 2007 produced and distributed: 1000 copies were produced and distributed

Appendix 2 Results of Questions Related to the Success of the RelHarmony Project from the AFCR Surveys Conducted in January 2005 and June 2006

In both surveys AFCR asked about Albanians' reaction to religion and their evaluation of the relations between different religions. In the first round of the survey, in both of these questions, multiple, confusingly similar, responses were used. Trying to improve the survey in the second round, the authors "improved" the question responses so that they were not directly comparable. Therefore in reporting the results below, responses have been combined to make the results more comprehensible.

Question: Albanians' reaction to religion? (Question # 31 in 2005 and question # 15 in 2006)						
	2005			2006		
Answers	Number	%	Combined responses	Number	%	Combined responses
Tolerant	370	39	70% positive	571	52.	82 % positive
Peaceful	315	31		321	29.	
Indifferent	131	13	20% negative	175	16	18% negative
Aggressive	16	2		27	3	
Neglectful	56	5				
Confusing	59	6				
I do not know	38	4				
Total	985	100%		1094	100 %	

Responses to this question indicate that, over the course of the project, Albanians' reaction to religion became more positive by almost 12 percentage points, however the second, related question indicates that this more positive attitude toward religion in general did not translate into a perception of more harmonious relations between specific religious groups. Respondents judged relations between religions to be more positive (by almost 9 percentage points) at the beginning of the project than at the end. However, due to changes in the question responses from the first to the second survey, these conclusions cannot be drawn with a high degree of confidence.

Question: How do you evaluate the relation between different religions in Albania?(Question # 34 in 2005 and question # 19 in 2006)						
	Baseline Survey (2005)		Combined Responses (2005)	Follow-up survey (2006)		Combined Responses (2006)
	No.	%		No.	%	
Harmonious/Tolerant	731	73	86% positive	586	54	77% positive
Collaborative	128	13		254	23	
Poor	95	9	10% negative	151	14	19% negative
Conflicted	14	1		56	5	
Non-existent	16	2		38	4	
No answer	18	2		-	-	
Total	1002	100%		1085	100%	

It is envious that survey respondents would report a *more* positive attitude toward religion in general, yet see inter- religious relations as *less* harmonious. Possibly, this difference could be related to instances of inter-religious conflict that immediately preceded the surveys. A systematic examination of events immediately prior to the surveys might shed some light on the discrepancy. Five questions added to the second survey better demonstrate successful impact of the RelHarmony project than the two questions that are comparable in the two surveys.

Questions directly related to the results of the RelHarmony project from the follow-up survey in June 2006 were:

Question #39: Have you noticed any interfaith activities in your city?		
Answer	Number	%
Yes	78	10
No	726	90
Total	804	100

Question # 40: Have you heard of the RelHarmony Project that has worked with religious leaders to form inter-faith councils, carry out community development projects, and develop the ability to resolve conflict between religions and people in the community?		
Answer	Number	%
Yes	179	20
No	701	80
Total	880	100

Question # 41: Have you or any other member of your family participated in any interfaith activity such as; summer camps, public workshops, and different discussions?		
Answer	Number	%
Yes	74	9
No	769	91
Total	843	100

The following question was asked of individuals who responded positively to question # 40.

Question # 42: Do you think these activities promote religious harmony and understanding among members of different religions?		
Answer	Number	%
Yes	108	67
No	13	8
I don't know	26	16
There is no effect	15	9
Total	162	100

Question # 43: Do you think that a more frequent cooperation in interfaith activities, where different religious communities work together, is a good thing? To which of the following statement do you agree?		
Answer	Number	%
It is a good thing, there will be less conflicts among religious communities	468	49
It is a good thing, it will make family relations more harmonic	160	17
It is a good thing, it will prevent competition among religions	63	7
It is not a good thing, it will weaken my religion making it similar to others	15	2
It is not a good thing, leaders of different religions could not work together	9	1
It is not a good thing, religions should be separate from one another	19	2
It will not effect	59	6
I do not know	169	17
Total	962	100

When asked about inter-faith activities generally (question #39), 10% of those surveyed indicated they had noticed inter-faith activities in their cities, whereas, when asked specifically about the Religious Harmony project 20% replied that they were aware that

religious leaders were forming inter-faith councils, carrying out community development projects, and learning to resolve conflicts between religions. Of those who indicated awareness of project activities, 67% believed that the activities promoted religious harmony and understanding. Ten percent of those surveyed indicated that they or a family member had participated in some of these activities. Seventy-three per cent of those surveyed considered interfaith activities positive, as a way of reducing community religious conflict, preventing competition among religions, or fostering more harmonic family relations.

Appendix 3 Participant Training Program

Venue/Program Name	Start date	End Date	Gender	Total participants	Training Location	Final cost
Community Development Training	01-Sept-04	01-Aug-05	29M/72W	101	Albania	13,852
Launching Ceremony	09-Sept-04	26-Sept-04			Albania	1,550
Conflict Resolution	22-Nov-04	30-Jun-05	165M/48W	213	Albania	25,639
Media activities I	01-Mar-05	01-Sep-05			Albania	7,970
Inter-Faith Summer Camps for Youth	10-Jul-05	23-Jul-05	86M/34W	120	Vlora, Albania	39,112
Inter-Faith Community Training Center in Elbasan	08-Aug-05	30-Dec-05			Elbasan, Albania	6,079
Inter-Faith Women Training Center in Shkodra	08-Aug-05	30-Dec-05			Shkodra, Albania	7,555
Media activity II	01-Sept-05	30-Dec-05			Albania	5,325
Follow up Team Building Activity to the Inter-Faith Summer Camps for Youth	17-Sept-05	19-Sept-05	93M/37W	130	Tirana, Albania	2,872
Inter-Faith Leadership Training	22-Sept-05	01-Oct-05	42M/13W	55	Durres, Albania	12,185
South East Europe Interfaith Conference	16-Nov-05	18-Nov-05	63M/37W	100	Tirana, Albania	25,454
The second Interfaith Youth Summer Camp	16-Jul-06	29-Jul-06	38M/42W	80	Vlore, Albania	40,412
Summer School on Religion and Public Life II	01-Aug-06	18-Aug-06	1M/1W	2	Solac, BIH & Boston, USA	11,928
Venue/Program Name	Start date	End Date	Gender	Total participants	Training	Final

				pants	Location	cost
Inter-Faith Community Training Center in Elbasan II	15-Sept-06	15-Dec-06			Elbasan, Albania	8,152
Inter-Faith Women Training Center in Shkodra II	15-Sept-06	15-Dec-06			Shkoder, Albania	7,314
						215,401