



## Concept note

### Title of the project: Youth Education for Prosperity (YEP)

#### a) Summary

While Albania has continued to establish a framework which will create a democratic society and a market economy, internal political struggles have slowed its progress. Deficiencies persist in the rule of law, and in establishing a pluralistic society. The interests of society are often secondary to party power politics. Corruption is still a huge problem blocking the way to real freedom.

Signing the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) with the European Union is the major challenge facing Albania in the near future. EU officials have stressed the importance of following their recommendations to achieve the conditions set by the agreement. These include free and fair general elections, which was accomplished in July 2013 now the challenge is for Albania to make a visible commitment to fighting corruption, and to implement substantial reforms to the country's judicial and administrative structures.

Albania's conflict-laden atmosphere has held back these reforms and still hampers the country's stability. Nepotism and bribery have infiltrated government administrative structures, the judiciary and business. Consequently, the judiciary does not act independently and fails to combat corruption. Time, human resources and the actors' sustainability and predictability are key to change in Albania. It will take several years for Albania to achieve the goals of transformation toward a market-based economy according to international standards and norms. The lack of electricity and water utilities continue to be a problem in many areas throughout the country. Poverty is high and education standards are deteriorating. The percentage of women in politics is marginal. What women have gained in civil rights, is not enjoyed by them in reality in the manner of equal rights in society. Albania's youth, who represent the largest segment of the population (15-20%), have been hit the hardest by unemployment and poor job prospects.

A society's youth plays a decisive role in moulding the identity and determining the position of each individual in their community. This can only come about through achieving high education and goals, and employment which allows the youth to reach their capacity. When this is achieved youth stand a good chance of being happy and fulfilled, paving the way for the future in Albania. According to

policymakers, youth employment is “the key” to a nation’s steady socio-economic development. Young professionals who are capable of securing decent job placements make an invaluable contribution to a nation’s total economic productivity. Beyond their role as representatives of the most vital part of the labour force, the youth also possess the ability to enhance society and to enable a nation to produce at both the technical and manual level to the highest capacity. In order to achieve high youth employment there must be close collaboration amongst all of the major stakeholders. Universities, businesses, governmental institutions, investors and especially the government itself must cooperate in order to create all the necessary provision, at the highest standard to ensure a market and youth trained for the market. Statistics reveal that Albania is currently facing a severe youth unemployment crisis. The present-day youth employment rates fell approximately 20% below the national average. Employment rates continue to drop for the age group 15-32 years old. Statistics regarding education do not fare much better as 62% of young people (ages 18-24) do not graduate from high school nor do they pursue alternative forms of education or vocational training. In an attempt to overcome occupational obstacles young people often exploit nepotistic routes by turning to their relatives or friends for employment solutions. Today there is a higher percentage of youth finishing high school and even university but these come from the city and mainly Tirana. What happens to the high percentage of youth from the small towns and villages who are still not completing high school? Whether they finish high school or not the unemployment rate continues to grow and is now as high as 60%.

## **b) Motivation**

The goal of this youth project is to create life changing opportunities for every young person. The staff will work hard to build resilience, promote inclusion and ultimately empower them to overcome disadvantage. This Youth Project will provide a broad range of services designed to enable a holistic approach to tackling social disadvantage, vulnerability to being trafficked, homelessness and drug and alcohol issues including health and education programs, community outreach and training and employment services. The Employment Service will take a holistic approach and provide personalised, tailor-made support, addressing both personal vocation and vocation issues.

The aim of the employment service is to ensure that individuals will receive the right support, education and training in order to secure an independent future through meaningful and sustainable employment. The project will also provide wrap around services for young people experiencing multiple and complex issues which create barriers to employment.

The project will promote inclusion and build safe and sustainable communities. Our program will support resilience; community connection and socially engaged individuals. We believe building capacity within local communities is vital to effecting change and tackling entrenched disadvantage. Through community engagement and collaboration, the project will be able to support individuals to re-engage and become positive community participants. Working with other community organisations, local businesses and community members, our community programs will provide a holistic and collaborative approach to initiating change and creating positive outcomes. Outreach services overcome barriers, these will be provided where necessary to support lack of transport, motivation and engagement, and enable individual young people to access support within their own environment. A number of programs will have an outreach component to give maximum opportunity for each young person. Youth will feel

included, affirmed and empowered to do the work they were born to do and to become the people they dreamed of becoming.

### **c) Analysis of needs (problem statement)**

The current system of Education and Vocational Training (VET) in Albania is weak, quantitatively and qualitatively. In general there is a lack of proper infrastructure, insufficient funding, a low level of human resources, relatively old curricula which does not meet the labour market needs.

The action has emerged as deeply relevant to this target group for several reasons:

The disadvantaged youth have a low positive school experience. The early drop-out rate could be seen as an independent choice to earn quick money at an early age because they see that there may be a chance that despite on-going education, they will still remain unemployed later. The choice is related to the high opportunity cost of being educated versus the possibility to make one's own money by entering the labour market at an earlier age, and so support the family income.

The target group of the project, due to their low education level, cannot be involved in Vocational training offered in the territory. The on the job training approach, proposed by the project will make possible a major involvement of the youth and give them real opportunities to learn by practice.

They live in an environment of generations of unemployment and the proposed interdisciplinary approach constitutes for the beneficiaries, a fundamental opportunity to be employed and enhance their social and human development. This will in turn, enable them to become actors in their own human capacity building within their local context.

Moreover, for the beneficiaries of the intervention, the proposed social-educational activity will constitute a way of becoming more conscious about the proper situation of social marginality, and lead them to become the protagonist in making mature decisions for change.

The possibility to grow in a human and well based economic context, will be fundamental to acquire and re-visit those intrinsic values on which a solid and democratically based community is grounded.

The problems to be addressed are:

- Unemployment
- Lack of education possibilities for youth to participate in professional courses because of their low level education ability.
- The increase of youth deviance.

The proposed questionnaire and film will enable the young people to speak their truth about all of these issues before future plans are made. They will be the protagonists of their own change.

### **d) Goals and Objectives**

**Goal:**

To empower young people to function fully in their own communities, and develop skills for work and become freed for citizenship and the need for change in Albania.

**Objectives:**

1. To conduct a professional social analysis of 500 young people in order to understand their needs and to include them as partners in the development of this project in year two.
2. To begin the work of awareness raising against trafficking in partnership with URAT and Different and Equal, in the villages and informal regions of Albania. (See concept Note of URAT attached)
3. To make a film highlighting the needs of young people and their potential and giving them an opportunity to raise their voices for justice.
4. To launch the project in March, 2015, at a formal gathering of stakeholders and beneficiaries, showing the film, disseminating the research project and listening to the voices of others who will help us formulate a clear direction for the work of this project.

**e) Beneficiaries**

**Direct beneficiaries:** at least 500 Young people aged 15-25 years old living in rural and informal areas of Albania.

**Indirect beneficiaries:**

- Local communities;
- Local institutions, competent social service departments will be constantly informed regarding the activities carried out and they will be involved in the formation actions.
- Final beneficiaries are the civil society and the Albanian public, who will be offered formative and awareness raising opportunities regarding the conditions of youth in Albania.

**f) Methodology and action****The DOCUMENTARY FILM**

In the project all young people supported from our organization are going to work together to create a documentary. The creation process can be divided into five parts:

1. The research /The discernment of the youth
2. Footages / interviews
3. Script
4. Production
5. Presentation

The duration of the making of the film will be 6 months.

For two months every local group of youth will have thought about some specific subjects which are important to them. What they think is important and this will dictate the framework of the documentary and the future project. The project coordinator will facilitate them through this process.

The second phase is the footages and interviews. The more immediate project often needs the content first - until you have the interviews and the footage there is no project, just an idea. The footage leads to the writing of the script.

In the third phase, once we have analysed the results of the questionnaires/interviews and footages, we will write a script for the documentary. We need to think about how we can show the feelings and opinions of youth as they are in dialogue in the film.

In the fourth phase the documentary film will be produced and one month after this time will be given for editing the film with all stakeholders involved in this work.

The fifth phase consists in presenting the film at the Project's launching event and from then on there will be presentation evenings in every village organized by the local group. This film documentary is going to be shown also at an international level by the production company **Artfilm P&D**, who are a consistent and a very potential partner of Mary Ward Loreto over the few last few years.

## **The LAUNCHING EVENT**

In the framework of the "Youth Project", Mary Ward Loreto will organize a conference related to Youth Education and their Employment Situation, highlighting the best practice and difficulties of Youth in Albania, and also as a tool for launching of the project's direction into the future.

Youth will be invited to this event from all the areas where the project's first phase has been implemented. Those invited to this event will include the youth themselves, stakeholders and beneficiaries such as NGO's who work with youth, specialists on youth employment issues, competent social service departments, institutions, local authorities, key persons, youth leaders, and media organisms.

This event will focus on the inspiration of young people to build their own capacities to function fully within their own communities, and to develop skills for work and become freed for citizenship in Albania. The hope is that the young people will be seen to have the ability to contribute to the building up and development of our country, through sharing the success and transformation desired as told in their stories, showing the film, sharing the results of the study, encouragement in words, best alternative practice and the experiences which life teaches. It will conclude with an open discussion and an opportunity for all to share further comments and to ask questions from an invited panel.

## **g) Sustainability**

The project will be sustained through careful planning, and fund raising from the inception of the project in year one.

#### **h) Expected results**

- 500 young people will have been contacted and will have filled in a questionnaire which will highlight their needs, issues, challenges and the way forward for this project.
- Awareness raising against trafficking and social animation for youth development will have taken place in five regions of Albania
- A research analysis will have been published of the situation of youth in Albania and their needs and challenges.
- A documentary film will have been made illustrating the needs of the young people, enabling young people to raise their voices and to show the environment and the reality of young people in Albania
- A launching of the project will have taken place in which stakeholders and beneficiaries will be present to see the film, receive the report and have an opportunity to make further comments and to raise questions which will enable the staff of this project to move forward with their future plan of action.

#### **i) Organization of the project**

Mary Ward Loreto will manage this youth project which will employ key staff members including Project coordinator, social/employment worker.

#### **j) Budget (Year One 40,000 EUR / Year two 50,000 EUR)**