

Revised Plan 2011



Albania

Executive summary



Albania is a lower middle income country with a gross domestic income per person of USD 3,740 in 2008. The country has made significant progress since its transition from a communist regime towards a market-based economy and has pursued major structural and economic reforms that resulted in the establishment of democratic institutions. With the exception of the pyramid crisis of 1997, it has achieved and sustained strong economic growth, while containing inflation in almost every year. The economic structure has shifted from agriculture and industry to services and construction. Meanwhile, large scale migration has fuelled high workers' remittances, which make up around 13 percent of GDP.

Despite significant economic results and increased living standards the poverty in the rural and mountain areas compare to other areas continue to be significantly high and disproportionate. According to the Albanian Institute of Statistics (AIS) the poverty in central areas of the country has decreased to 10.7 per cent compared to 21.2 per cent in 2005 and in coastal areas from 16.2 per cent to 13.0 per cent for the same period. Unlike the central and coastal areas, the mountain areas have lagged behind, widening the distance with the other areas. The percentage of poor in these areas has experienced a negligible change from 25.6 per cent in 2005 to 26.6 per cent in 2008. Within the mountain areas, the problem appears to be a rural one, as the region's rural poverty rate was 67 per cent higher than the national rural rate in 2002, and only 14 per cent higher in 2005, it is 114.5 per cent higher in 2008¹.

Infant mortality remains high by EU standards, but is decreasing steadily. The same is true for child (under 5) mortality rate, while maternal mortality remains a concern and doesn't show clear trends of decreasing. Infant mortality shows significant differences among districts. It ranges from under 5/1000 to more than 35/1000².

Albania is a disaster prone country and has been affected by a range of crises over the last decade. Floods are common and it lies in an earthquake zone. People are especially vulnerable to these disasters due to the low living standards and the poor housing, particularly in rural and mountain areas.

The focus of this plan is based on the priorities of the Albanian Red Cross in assisting the most vulnerable people with focus on health and care, disaster management and organizational development. All programmes of the Albanian Red Cross are aligned with the *Albanian Red Cross Strategy, Global Agenda Goals* as well as with the *Framework for Action's ten areas for improvements, Key Actions 2006-2010*. Another cycle of strategic planning for the coming period is

¹ Albanian Institute of Statistics – Living Standards Measurement Survey – Trends in Poverty, 2002-2008

² Ministry of Health - Overview of health and care system in Albania, 2009

underway, to revise the mid-term priorities as well as to ensure compliance with the refreshed focus of the Red Cross/ Red Crescent movement and the Federation.

The total 2010 and 2011 budget is CHF 0.1 Million of which CHF 0.05 Million for 2011

[Click here to go directly to the summary budget of the plan.](#)

Country context

Albania has a population of approximately 3.1 million people³. Economic difficulties, widespread social change and the ongoing instability in the Balkans have all had an effect in recent years. The country continues to remain one of the poorest in Europe with a gross domestic product per capita of USD 2,935 and a high level of unemployment. Faced with this economic insecurity, many Albanians are migrating to more developed areas of the country or going abroad.

Development Indicators		ALBANIA	
<i>Population, geography and environment</i>		<i>Economy and labour</i>	
Total population (millions)	3,3	GDP per capita (PPP in USD) (2008 est.)	6,859
Surface area (square km)	28,748	GDP real growth (%) (2008)	6.0
		Unemployment total (% of labour force)	30.1
<i>Social indicators</i>		<i>Health indicators</i>	
Adult literacy rate (% aged 15 and older)	99.1	Infant mortality rate (per 100,000)	19,2
Population below USD 2,4 per day (%)	25.1	Life expectancy at birth (female/male)	74.3/80
<i>Age structure</i>		HIV prevalence (% aged 15-49)	N/A
0-14 years (% of total population)	23.1	Health spending as % of GDP	N/A
15-64 years (% of total population)	67.1	Sources: World Health Organization; World Bank; Economic Intelligence Unit; UN Population Division; Albanian Institute of Statistics	
65 years and more (% of total population)	9.8		

Table 1: Selected development indicators for Albania

Despite these challenges, Albania has made progress since its transition from a communist regime towards a market-based economy. It has pursued major structural and economic reforms and pushed ahead with the establishment of democratic institutions. Agriculture, which accounts for more than one-fifth of GDP, is held back because of a dearth of modern equipment, unclear property rights, and the prevalence of small, inefficient plots of land. Energy shortages, coupled with antiquated and inadequate infrastructure contribute to Albania's poor business environment, making it difficult to attract and sustain foreign investment.

Though improvements in living standards are discernable, there are three sources of inequities which still remain; these are income levels, rural/urban spread and gender inequalities. In transforming from a centralized economy in a rigid communist state to a free market economy in a democratic republic, Albania's people, and particularly its poor people, have paid a price. Despite the economy's growth in recent years, almost 24 per cent⁴ of the population lives below the poverty level of USD 2 a day. The poorest of the poor, who comprise about 5 per cent of the population, struggle to put adequate food on the table each day.

Interestingly, however, is the fact that the income gap in the country is relatively small. As incomes and employment rates are low across the board, most people's average income hovers close to the poverty line. This leads to the situation found in Albania today, with many people vulnerable to

³ INSTAT – Institute of Statistics of Republic of Albania

⁴ CIA World Factbook - Albania

the effects of downturns in the economy. On the other side, it also means that well-directed pro-poor policies can potentially benefit large numbers of people.

As in many countries, the incidence of poverty is highest in rural areas, where an estimated 57 per cent of people live and where most depend on agriculture for their livelihoods. Poverty is 66 per cent higher in rural areas than in Tirana, the capital, and 50 per cent higher in rural areas than in other urban centres. The agricultural labour force experience heavy underemployment with around half of all farm labourers thought to work only part-time. Both internal and international migration has been massive with over 20 percent of adults moving internally and 55 per cent of this figure being people originating from rural areas. This means that some 450,000 individuals currently reside in a place different from where they were in 1990⁵.

The application of the market economy has brought positive effects but also negative ones. The unemployment figures are high and creating social problems such as commercial sex, trafficking in human beings, school drop out, child labour and emigration of heads of families often leading to female-headed families. Figures also show that 40 per cent of pensioners are living under the minimum standard of living.

Due to a largely uncontrolled building boom in the past 15 years and no respect for building regulations, there are large concerns that these buildings will not withstand a major earthquake. Every year the fertile and low lying northern part of Albania experiences flooding and landslides, compounded by dysfunctional pumping stations and dike-systems.

National Society priorities and current work with partners

The Albanian Red Cross is the largest humanitarian organization in the country, guided by its rules and its legal basis. It is committed to implementing projects and programmes to the benefit of vulnerable people. An increase in professionalism and its functioning capacities have contributed to the Albanian government recognizing the important role of the National Society as a humanitarian actor. This was demonstrated during the arm depot explosion in March 2008 where the Albanian Red Cross participated as a full member of the crisis committee, and was the only humanitarian organization to have access to the site in supporting those affected by the explosion. The National Society has worked intensively to create and develop its material and human capacities to fulfil its humanitarian mission, building upon the society's development plan and strategy for 2005 to 2010, which is based on the International Federation's Strategy 2010.

At its General Assembly in 2009, the International Federation adopted Strategy 2020 to guide its work and that of National Societies both domestically and globally. Focussing on "saving lives and changing minds", S2020 calls on national societies, as effective auxiliaries to the public authorities in the humanitarian field, to provide high quality services within the core mandates of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, to influence behaviours, promote changes in attitudes and mindsets, and for the Red Cross and Red Crescent to play a lead role in advocating for meeting the humanitarian needs of vulnerable people and communities." The Albanian Red Cross is currently working on incorporating the main elements of Strategy 2020 into its strategic as well as operational framework.

The priorities for the National Society in 2010-2011 are to strengthen its capacity to implement health and care projects, building on local community needs. Also in disaster prone areas, strong disaster preparedness and response are essential focusing on training of key staff and volunteers and public awareness at community level.

Working with partners is important for the National Society and the relationship with the Spanish Red Cross as a bilateral partner has been beneficial both in terms of programme content and organisational development. With Spanish Red Cross announcing its withdrawal from the region, the Albanian Red Cross is looking into possibilities of forging new partnerships to continue

⁵ World Bank Poverty Assessment Albania - 2007

successful programme implementation as well as development. Ongoing discussions with the Italian Red Cross regarding their potential role in the Albanian Red Cross programmes are to be concluded in the coming months.

Disaster preparedness and response remains the priority area of the National Society. The work focuses on implementing its disaster preparedness and response plan at local level in line with the national disaster management plan. Moreover, increasing awareness of the public at large, of the government and non-governmental institutions to disaster preparedness and risk reduction make this another important element of the National Society programming, using vulnerability and capacity assessment (VCA) exercises. All activities are to further improve the operational capacities of the Albanian Red Cross to effectively respond to cases of disaster.

The work in health and care is focused on two main elements. Firstly, to increase the knowledge on mother and baby health care, especially against a variety of diseases, promote hygiene in the community; and secondly to increase awareness on voluntary blood donation. In the social area the National Society will contribute to alleviating the socio-economic situation of some of the most vulnerable groups like children in difficulties, elderly people living alone, single female-headed households and other marginalized groups in community. The participatory community development (PCD) approach will be an important element in working with marginalized groups aiming to achieve participation of all stakeholders in the implementation of activities.

Efforts within organizational development focus on strengthening the volunteer base by updating the volunteer management system including the earlier developed training system.

Secretariat supported programmes in 2010-2011

Disaster Management

a) The purpose and components of the programme

Programme purpose:
Reduce the number of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.

The disaster management programme budget covering period 2010 and 2011 is CHF 30,759.

Programme component 1: Organisational preparedness
Outcome: Strengthened human capacities both at central and branch level for more effective disaster management.

In early 2008, the Albanian Red Cross switched to a new structure following the administrative division of the country to 39 branches. This component will aim to strengthen the capacities of national disaster response teams through new and updated trainings for better and effective response at the community level. In addition, support will be provided to develop and/or update contingency and response plans at branch and national level.

Programme component 2: Community preparedness
Outcome: Improved self-resilience of individuals and communities reducing their vulnerabilities to public health and emergencies

In the framework of partnership with UNDP and the Ministry of Local Government, the Albanian Red Cross has conducted a vulnerability and capacity assessment (VCA) focusing on local perceptions of disasters at community level. Based on the assessment results and recommendations this component focuses on training and education at community level and advocacy to local authorities. It further seeks to increase the awareness of high-risk communities to undertake risk reduction measures and respond to local disasters.

Health and Care

a) The purpose and components of the programme

The characteristics of the population's health are slightly different from those of other countries in the region. Despite satisfactory life span indicators, indicators such as the death rate amongst young mothers, infant mortality rate and indicators of infectious diseases are the highest compared to the EU indicators. This health situation is a consequence of limited access to public health services, demography, economy and lifestyles particularly in rural and mountain areas.

All three health programme components focus on improving health and social conditions of targeted groups having direct impact on communities. The components are a continuation of activities implemented by the National Society which will result in increased capacity of branches to implement effectively health activities based on community needs and increased number of volunteers involved in health and social activities.

Programme purpose:

To reduce deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies.

The health and care programme budget covering period 2010 and 2011 is CHF 36,717.

Programme component 1: Voluntary non-remunerated blood donation
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Outcome: Increased public awareness on non-remunerated blood donation through development of youth club 25.
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Programme component 2: Maternal, newborn and child health
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Outcome: Improved knowledge of the targeted groups on reproductive health, mother and child care and personal hygiene through health education courses.
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Programme component 3: Social support for children and elderly people
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Outcome: Improved health and social conditions among vulnerable children and elderly people with no family support.
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b) Potential risks and challenges

No major challenges are foreseen. However, both the National Society and the International Federation will be identifying possible risks and will update the programme components accordingly.

Organisational Development/Capacity Building

a) The purpose and components of the programme

In 2000, the Albanian Red Cross carried out a branch assessment on knowledge of volunteer management and motivational methods that was crucial for developing guidelines on the volunteer management system. In 2001, the volunteer management programme was established with responsibility of recruitment, training and motivation of volunteers. The policy on volunteer management was developed together with the training system and the role and responsibilities of volunteers.

The component within the organizational development aims to support the Albanian Red Cross in updating the volunteer management system and volunteer policy in light of the new National Society strategy that is in the process of being developed. In addition, updated trainings for volunteers will be provided based on the updated training system with a purpose of promoting awareness and understanding of the Fundamental Principles and ideals of the Movement.

Programme purpose

To increase local community, civil society and Albanian Red Cross capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability.
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The organisational development/capacity building programme budget covering period 2010 and 2011 is CHF 32,523.

Programme component: National Society volunteering development

Outcome: Improved volunteer management system at branch level and the involvement of youth volunteers in decision making is increased

Role of the secretariat

The International Federation through its Europe Zone office will provide technical and advisory support to the Albanian Red Cross. For this purpose the International Federation has developed a practice of utilizing the best practices and experience available in the region through its human resource roster mechanism. This is a pool of expertise from all the regional National Societies and from the International Federation’s offices in the region who have competence and experience in various fields and are available to assist National Societies in need. Such experience will be used to support the Albanian Red Cross and will be based in the form of regular visits and discussions with the management and programme coordinators as well as monitoring visits in the field.

This practice will be further developed in the coming years since the International Federation is well positioned and experienced in creating platforms for sharing, joint planning and for promoting the latest standards, procedures and best practices. This will be done by further developing and maintaining the regional human resource roster and by providing opportunities for regional meetings, training sessions as well as during regular country visits and daily communication.

How we work

The IFRC’s vision is to:

Inspire, encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities by National Societies, with a view to preventing and alleviating human suffering, and thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world.

The IFRC’s work is guided by Strategy 2020 which puts forward three strategic aims:

1. Save lives, protect livelihoods, and strengthen recovery from disaster and crises.
2. Enable healthy and safe living.
3. Promote social inclusion and a culture of non-violence and peace.

Contact information

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