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**Experience Capitalisation of Swiss  
engagement in the area of Social Inclusion  
in Albania**

**Note on Experience Capitalisation**

Basel, 24 May 2016

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Albania

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## Abbreviations

CAPEX	Experience Capitalisation
CEFA	Alternated Education and Vocational Training Project
CHF	Swiss franc
CPU	Child Protection Unit
CPW	Child Protection Worker
DDLG	Democratisation, Decentralisation and Local Governance
EU	European Union
DaO	Delivering as One
INSTAT	Albanian Institute of Statistics
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
IT	Information Technology
NARU	Needs Assessment and Referral Unit
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NSDI	National Strategy for Development and Integration
NPF	Ndihme per Femijet
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PAR	Public Administration Reform
PwD	Persons with Disabilities
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SIPD	Social Inclusion Policy Document
SSCR	Support to Roma Social Inclusion
UN	United Nations
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children Fund
UNISSIA	Support to Social Inclusion in Albania

## Management Summary

Experience capitalisation is a process that assesses and transforms individual and institutional experience, which was developed over a longer period of time to achieve certain project and programme outcomes, into lessons learned and good practices.

This report contains experiences of three key interventions of Switzerland's social inclusion portfolio in Albania: Alternated Education and Vocational Training Project, implemented by *Ndihme per Femijet*, an Albanian non-governmental organisation; Support to Roma Social Inclusion, a four-year-programme implemented by the United Nations Children Fund; and Support to Social Inclusion in Albania, a programme of the United Nations Country Team under the UN Delivering as One modality.

The lessons learned and good practices were collected in a one-day workshop and constitute the common experiences of 24 project and programme stakeholders, the "experience holders".

The experiences that were collected by the three projects are:

- A comprehensive and standardised curriculum to train current and future social workers is instrumental to ensure that effective social services are delivered and better service outcomes are achieved. Professional training must capacitate social workers to actively and directly engage with and in the interest of their clients. It must therefore focus on the practical application of social work values, principles and techniques. (UNICEF)
- Catch-up classes are a practice to fast-track Roma children into mainstream classes in primary schools. A key learning in the implementation has been that the *transitory* separation of school children can yield positive results *if* several conditions hold true: the catch-up classes need to be officially and fully integrated into the school, merely teaching must be separated, whereas any extracurricular activities must be open for all children at the same time, and additional resources need to be invested to ensure child-specific education. (NPF)
- Evidence challenges and overcomes commonly held assumptions about poor people, especially Roma. Evidence can change policy and reverse "elite capture" especially when the political leadership has the intention to do so. Albania's social housing strategy is among the most progressive in the region thanks to its evidence base. (UNDP)

- The main learning of the *Youth Disability Forum* is that new actors and alliances of groups can unlock long-standing interest monopolies and open up space for policies that are inclusive. (UNDP)
- The use and leverage of technology, alongside assistive devices and personal assistance, is an effective way to remove certain barriers for persons with disabilities, and consequently to contribute at ensuring their independence, dignity and inclusion. (UNCT)
- *Needs Assessment and Referral Units* at the local level are the gatekeeping mechanism to ensure that appropriate preventive social care services are provided to vulnerable groups of the community. (UNICEF)

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## 1. Introduction

Over the past years Switzerland has been providing programmatic support to social inclusion, a strategic goal under the Swiss Cooperation Strategy 2014-2017.<sup>1</sup> Three of the “flagship interventions” of the current social inclusion portfolio will come to end in late 2016; at the same time Switzerland will commence planning its next cooperation programme in Albania. Against this background the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) commissioned a “*capitalisation of experiences*” to collect lessons learned and good practices that were generated in the flagship interventions, which are described in more detail below (chapter 3.3. ). The capitalisation shall create opportunities for learning and knowledge for improving effectiveness and efficiency of existing practices. It further offers leads for SDC’s future support to contribute to social inclusion.<sup>2</sup> The results of the experience capitalisation are summarised in this report, primarily in six separate experience descriptions. They were identified and drafted by the “experience holders”, namely the respective project and programme stakeholders, with facilitation services of the consultants.<sup>3</sup>

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1. Background

There are different definitions of experience capitalisation, depending on different perceptions and needs. For this report we understand capitalisation as a process that transforms and assesses individual and institutional experience (related to approaches, practices, services and tools), which was developed over a longer period of time to achieve certain project and programme outcomes, into lessons learned and good practices.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Swiss Cooperation Strategy Albania 2014-2017*, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, State Secretariat for Economic Affairs, Bern, May 2014 (SDC 2014)

<sup>2</sup> Parallel to this assignment there has been a process of identifying “entry points” for SDC’s future social inclusion interventions under the forthcoming country programme.

<sup>3</sup> We thank all persons who participated in the interviews, meetings and particularly the workshop for their engagement, commitment and valuable contributions. We specifically thank the project and programme managers for writing and revising the experience descriptions and for accepting our feedback.

<sup>4</sup> For purposes of this report we define *lesson learned* as generalised knowledge or understanding gained by experience that highlights strengths and weaknesses of design and implementation that affect performance, outcome, and impact. *Good practice* is understood as an approach, a policy, a process, method or tool that is comparatively more effective delivering a particular outcome.

Documenting these experiences and sharing them allows for continuous improvement towards efficient and effective implementation. Sharing the lessons learned and good practices with a wider audience allows others to benefit from the experiences too. Contrary to an evaluation, which concentrates on the assessment of achievements against pre-determined criteria, experience capitalisation searches for so-called “experience capital” irrespective of whether it is positive or negative, originally planned or a mere coincidental result.<sup>5</sup> The process of experience capitalisation emphasises the perception and appraisal of project and programme stakeholders; it is participatory, inclusive and deliberative.

## 2.2. Approach

Experience capitalisation can take many different forms. The results of this experience capitalisation mirror the client’s request for a relatively brief and pragmatic capitalisation. It was furthermore limited to the above referred three flagship interventions, not the entire social inclusion portfolio. In the following we briefly describe the approach that was guided by our own expertise and different resource material.<sup>6</sup>

**Document review:** We first reviewed background documents (strategies, action plans, research papers) on social inclusion as well as project and programme documents (concept notes, progress reports, studies) that were provided by SDC. The aim was to gain an understanding of the three interventions.

**Interviews:** As part of the field mission, 12+ personal interviews were carried out, including with SDC and (senior) managers of NPF, UNICEF and UNDP. The latter received a briefing note prior to the interview explaining the background, process and expected result of the experience capitalisation.<sup>7</sup> The interviews focused on the current stage of the respective intervention (results, sustainability), most significant changes and a preliminary appreciation of lessons learned and good practices. Operational issues regarding the workshop were also discussed.

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<sup>5</sup> Reference is made to *SDC’s Guide to Thematic Experience Capitalisation*, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, Bern, 2005 (SDC 2005); *Manuel pour la capitalisation des expériences*, IED Afrique, ILEIA, Dakar, 2007; *Méthodes et outils de capitalisation d’expériences dans les projets de coopération au développement*, fedevaco, Lausanne, March 2015

<sup>6</sup> See above.

<sup>7</sup> Specific attention was paid to explaining the participatory nature of the process and to ensuring that they recognise that experiences, not performance, are the focus of the assignment.

**Workshop:** On the occasion of a one-day workshop each of the three groups<sup>8</sup> managed to identify and describe at least two experiences according to a predefined matrix. Whilst the descriptions were fairly broad, the experiences emerged sufficiently well. The workshop was highly participatory; the 24 participants engaged in many discussions within the groups and gave valuable feedback following group presentations.

**Follow-up:** Post-workshop contacts to fine-tune the workshop results took place in the form of personal meetings and feedback via email and phone with the project and programme managers.

## 3. Context

### 3.1. Social exclusion in Albania

Following steady patterns of economic growth during the past two decades Albania is now a high middle-income country. Living standards have improved mostly due to a developing private sector, fuelled by strong demand in construction, trade, services and an increase in agricultural output. Indeed, Albania is reported to have made some progress in the field of fundamental rights<sup>9</sup> and the government is reported to have paid increasing attention to policies tackling poverty and social exclusion.<sup>10</sup>

However, this transition growth has not translated into increased employment. Informality, long term unemployment, precarious employment, subsistence farming are some of the features that contribute to a complex social situation in the country. Furthermore, a large segment of the population is vulnerable and lives close to the poverty line.<sup>11</sup> INSTAT, the Albanian Institute of Statistics, identifies the following main groups at risk:

- orphans or children living with a single parent, children in street situation

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<sup>8</sup> Each group consisted of 7-9 project and programme staff, beneficiaries both from central and local level institutions and other implementation partners (e.g. consultants, who were commissioned for specific tasks). This set-up helped to ensure that different observations, vantage points and opinions would lead to a “representative” description of the experiences.

<sup>9</sup> *Albania Report 2015*, European Commission, SWD(2015) 213 final, Brussels, 2015

<sup>10</sup> *Albania Country Report. Bertelsmann Transformation Index 2016*, Bertelsmann Foundation, Gütersloh, 2016

<sup>11</sup> Poverty rates dropped considerably until 2008 (from 25.4% in 2002 to 12.4% in 2008) while some 14% live on the verge of poverty in 2012 (INSTAT). Poverty nowadays has a more urban character.

- unemployed youth, young drug and alcohol users and youth with criminal records (28% of youth have a criminal record)
- divorced women, female heads of household, physically or sexually abused women
- mentally and physically disabled persons (1.4% of the overall population)
- elderly men and women living on their own, individuals who are abandoned and with minimal income, and unable to look after themselves (12.7% of the elderly)
- Roma and Egyptians<sup>12</sup>

Increased migration during the past two years (mostly towards Germany) is believed to be result of economic deprivation and social despair.<sup>13</sup>

During these transition years, despite institutional transformation, public services – health, education and social care – were constrained by limited resource allocation, inadequate structure of services, weak capacities of service providers and deficient quality of service. Social policies in Albania have had limited coverage and are considered not affordable for the government. Until recently, the main focus of the social policies has been on cash benefit programmes whereas social protection (in-kind measures), social cohesion and inclusion were only partially addressed. Internal migration into large urban centres has also increased the pressure on already limited services.

It is acknowledged that certain vulnerable groups namely Roma and Egyptian communities, people with disabilities, internal migrants living in suburb areas of big cities, returned migrants, and elderly continue to face difficult living conditions and often are subject to limited access for health care, education and other services.<sup>14</sup> In addition, the *IPA Sector Reform Programme for Employment and Skills*<sup>15</sup> maintains that social inclusion is a critical issue in Albania.

Public spending for social inclusion programmes is fairly modest with the bulk of expenditures devoted to staffing costs for monitoring of strategies and action plans,

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<sup>12</sup> Members of these groups have poor education level and limited employment opportunities in the formal market. Their poverty is multidimensional: monetary poverty, having incomes that are less than half of Albanian urban household incomes, and non-monetary poverty related to a number of unmet basic needs.

<sup>13</sup> With close to 66'000 applications Albania ranked fifth in the number of asylum seekers to the European Union in the period 2014-2015, according to Eurostat data.

<sup>14</sup> *Draft National Strategy for Development and Integration 2015-2020*, Council of Ministers, Tirana, February 2016 (in Albanian)

<sup>15</sup> *IPA 2014-2010 Albania. Sector Reform Contract for Employment and Skills*, European Commission, Brussels, undated

as well as awareness activities that primarily focus on specific topics such as gender equality and domestic violence. Social inclusion activities are, however, included in a number of other budget programmes, such as scholarships in primary education and subsidies for the price of textbooks that are difficult to aggregate in order to have a comprehensive picture

### 3.2. Strategic framework

Poverty alleviation and social cohesion have been part of the national priorities since the first national strategy (*National Strategy on Social and Economic Development, 2000*). The new *National Strategy for Development and Integration 2015-2020* (NSDI) has been drafted and will be soon approved. Its third pillar consists of human capital and social cohesion and reference is made across the document to the importance of growth, development and good governance in reaching out to all social groups. The NSDI identifies several crucial challenges in the field of human rights. Among others, it states the need to pay more attention to the protection of the rights of women, children as well as of people with disability, minorities, Roma, youth and prisoners; and that more efficient anti-discrimination measures and strengthening of institutions in charge of human rights is required.

Albania's social inclusion agenda is guided by the crosscutting *Social Inclusion Policy Document 2016-2020* (SIPD), approved in December 2015. Different than the previous *Social Inclusion Strategy 2007-2012*, which focused on specific target groups, the current SIPD proposes to establish a balanced and sustainable framework to ensure that social inclusion is measured, monitored and reported in Albania through a robust set of indicators. This in turn will improve ways in which social inclusion is linked to government policies and Albania's progress towards EU accession.<sup>16</sup> Social inclusion is a crosscutting theme in a number of policy documents, targeting social protection, skills and employability, youth, gender and LGBT, Roma and Egyptians etc. Summaries of pertinent policy documents (strategies and action documents) are annexed to this report.

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<sup>16</sup> This framework, which is in accordance with established EU conceptual frameworks and statistical standards, is based across six domains: (i) poverty reduction and social protection; (ii) employment and skills; (iii) education and training; (iv) health; (v) basic needs; and (vi) social participation and human rights.

### 3.3. SDC social inclusion portfolio

The Democratisation, Decentralisation and Local Governance (DDLG) Domain under the current Swiss Cooperation Strategy in Albania aims at achieving “*better provision of socially inclusive services through an advanced decentralisation reform and strengthened local democracy*”.<sup>17</sup> To this end Switzerland contributes, for instance, to the policy dialogue for the DDLG agenda and to the access to quality local public services, whilst a multidimensional and programme-based approach shall ensure that national reforms are socially inclusive.

The social inclusion portfolio consists of several interventions with varying thematic focus, intervention levels, targets groups, budget allocations and implementation modalities. The combined resources invested in Albania amount to nine million Swiss francs. Other interventions addressing issues such as vocational education and training and skills development do not specifically feature in the portfolio, even though they are strongly driven by the idea of social inclusion.

The three flagship interventions that are subject of the experience capitalisation are briefly explained in the following:

***Alternated Education and Vocational Training Project (CEFA):*** The project is implemented by *Ndihme per Femijet* (NPF), an Albanian non-governmental organisation. With close to 20 years duration, the project (currently in its seventh phase) is one of SDC’s longest engagements in the social inclusion area. It operates in the four municipalities Berat, Elbasan, Korçë and Tirana. Ever since its inception the project focuses on integrating Roma children sustainably into the education and vocation system, impacting the economic standing of Roma families, and contributing on improving capacities at local level to provide meaningful social care services for Roma.<sup>18</sup> The project operates almost exclusively on the local level but aims at providing bottom-up practical advice for consideration at central level policy making.

***Support to Roma Social Inclusion (SSCR):*** This four-year-programme is implemented by the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) in partnership with the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth, local governments, state social services, Roma NGOs and other civil society organisations. With policy interventions (such as on the law on social care services, the “social worker” profession or the definition of standard municipal social care services packages) coupled with

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<sup>17</sup> SDC 2014

<sup>18</sup> Roma refers to Roma and Egyptians for purposes of this report.

actions at the local and beneficiary level the project aims at building up functional social care services that are responsive to the needs of the most vulnerable, including Roma.

***Support to Social Inclusion in Albania (UNSSIA):*** The programme mainly emphasises “*building capacities of institutions at central and local levels and enhance participation of civil society and citizens as rights holders in the national social inclusion processes*”. The main activities are: research, vulnerability mappings, policy and strategy development for line ministries; legislation and policy reform in the area of disabilities; local level social inclusion action plans; implementation of projects that illustrate inclusive policies and programmes at community level; capacity support for targeted vulnerable groups such as Roma, women and youth with disabilities. It is implemented under the UN Delivering as One modality. This implies that UN agencies operating in Albania and the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth share implementation responsibility. Switzerland funds the programme with “soft-earmarked” funding for the realisation of two outputs (merged into one output after mid-term review) of the UN-Government of Albania Country Results Framework in the amount of 3.5 million Swiss francs.

*Table 1: Social inclusion portfolio*

<b>Intervention</b>	<b>Implementer</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Main intervention level</b>
CEFA	NPF Modality: service contract	2.25	Multidimensional social care services at local level Main target group: Roma	Micro: four municipalities Additionally: organisational support to NPF by capitalisation and dissemination
SSCR	UNICEF Modality: Contribution	3.20	Sustainable social services system Main target groups: Roma, children	Macro: national policy framework Micro: local government units and service providers
UNSSIA	UNCT Modality: Contribution to Delivering as One; “soft-earmarked” funding	3.50	Capacity building for social inclusion, civil society Main target groups: Roma, persons with disabilities, youth, women	Macro: national policy framework Micro: local government units and service providers

## 4. Experiences

In this section we present the experiences that the participants jointly identified and elaborated on the occasion of the workshop. Each subchapter first shows the *central tenet* of the experience, which is then followed with a *detailed description*. It provides contextual information and attempts to assess the experience in terms of results, sustainability, replicability and further advantages and disadvantages.

### 4.1. Professionalisation of social work

A comprehensive and standardised curriculum to train current and future social workers is instrumental to ensure that effective social services are delivered and better service outcomes are achieved. Professional training must capacitate social workers to actively and directly engage with and in the interest of their clients. It must therefore focus on the practical application of social work values, principles and techniques.<sup>19</sup>

Table 2: Professionalisation of social work

Title	Professionalisation of social work: in-service training courses for Child Protection and Child Welfare Workers
Problem / issue at stake	Most social workers hired in public institutions do not have a social work background, thus lacking proper training, experience and competences. One of the principal reasons that led to this situation was that the profession of “social work” was neither regulated nor did a system of continued education for social workers exist, even though the subject is taught at tertiary level in Albania. As a result social work often limits itself to handing out cash assistance rather than providing guidance, counselling and action to protect marginalised, socially excluded and vulnerable groups of people.
Description of experience	One of the pillars of social services reform is building up the capacity of social service providers and creating sustainable ways to develop the level of knowledge in <i>direct social service delivery</i> . Such professionalisation has been sought in regards to the Child Protection Unit (CPU), due to the need for improved and more standardised skills, knowledge and capacities of Child Protection Workers (CPW) across Albania. The in-service “ <i>Course on Child Protection Issues</i> ” is the first initiative of state and non-state agencies to develop certification criteria for CPWs and to increase the number of qualified staff. The course benefits from the expertise of a variety of actors of the public sector, the academia as well as non-governmental agencies providing social work services.

<sup>19</sup> Whilst this experience was reported by UNICEF in the context of the Social Service Reform Programme, NPF as well has been providing and advocating for such service delivery in the context of their Roma integration project for many years. The experience of NPF further suggests that “for a successful intervention in family and community, listening to the families, their stories and needs, knowing them better and being able to adapt strategies accordingly are some of the pre-conditions or rather the abilities the social workers should be equipped with to gain families trust to work with them towards change”.

Results	The development of a comprehensive and standardised curriculum for in-service training of CPWs has become one of the building blocks of the child protection system in Albania. It has set forth the minimum standards of competences for actors involved in the child protection system, including supervision of child protection services and multidisciplinary team work.
Sustainability	The course is in the process of accreditation and it will be delivered by the Faculty of Social Work of the University of Tirana in the future. With the new <i>Law on Social Work Profession</i> and the expected amendment of the new <i>Law on the Protection of Child Rights</i> (under revision) the long-term aim is for this course to become mandatory for social welfare workers. The course targets new staff and staff already working in social worker positions.
Replicability	Whilst primarily aimed at CPWs the course may also be used to support skills development of other workers concerned with child protection and child welfare, such as those working in residential institutions, service providers, NGOs, education and health. The model is replicable and partners are in the process of developing similar courses under the leadership of the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth and the Faculty of Social Work.
Strengths and Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum combines theory with interactive exercises given the emphasis on practice.</li> <li>• Transparent and participatory development process to give opportunities for engagement to various experts, practitioners and actors so as to reflect needs of service providers and clients.</li> </ul>
Weaknesses and Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change has to be reflected in several sectoral laws (e.g. new <i>Law on the Protection of Children's Rights</i>) to ensure that practitioners meet the requisite criteria and accreditation is yet to take place; both legal and administrative procedures require time.</li> </ul>

## 4.2. Catch-up classes

Catch-up classes are a practice to fast-track Roma children into mainstream classes in primary schools. A key learning in the implementation has been that the *transitory* separation of school children can yield positive results *if* several conditions hold true: the catch-up classes need to be officially and fully integrated into the school, merely teaching must be separated, whereas any extracurricular activities must be open for all children at the same time, and additional resources need to be invested to ensure child-specific education.

Table 3: Catch-up classes

<b>Title</b>	<b>Catch-up classes: a practice to fast-track Roma children into mainstream classes in primary schools</b>
Problem / issue at stake	Discrimination against the Roma in schools, lack of attention from teachers and extreme poverty left a considerable number of children out of the education system: Many children specifically of the Roma minorities never attended school, received poor education in school and/or dropped out from school. The lack of education is considered to be one of the main reasons

	for continued poverty.
Description of experience	<p>Catch-up classes operated during 1998-2013 in one or two classes in selected schools in the municipalities of Berat, Elbasan, Korça and Tirana. One class hosted children in grades I and III, the other children in grades II and IV. Each class had between 20-28 children. Pupils in catch-up classes were transferred gradually into the mainstream classes over a period of two to four years. All classes followed the official curriculum, were fully integrated into Albania's formal nine-year elementary education system and all children were registered in the school registry. Roma children took part in all extra-curricular school activities. The catch-up classes were specifically designed to offer quality education to children who had not received any schooling until the age of nine, dropped out soon after they were registered or after one year or two. The target group was 9-16 years old. With a few exceptions, all children in these classes belonged to Roma communities. Catch-up classes required a main teacher (salaries were taken over by the government in 2009) and a supplementary teacher, who was paid by the project. In addition, a Roma language instructor was hired for extracurricular Roma language courses.</p>
Results	<p>The project supported about 1100 minority children, of whom approximately 70 % were sustainably integrated into mainstream classes.</p> <p>Some of the key positive/intended outcomes/outputs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• About 90 % of Roma children in catch-up classes regularly attended school in the four cities;</li> <li>• Average retention rate after transfer to mainstream classes did not drop below 80 %;</li> <li>• 42 % of the Roma in catch-up classes were girls; 70 % of Roma girls attended public school beyond 5<sup>th</sup> grade;</li> <li>• Students' confidence and motivation increased; many pursued further into 8-year mainstream education and 46 went to high school;</li> <li>• More than 90 % of parents participated in monthly school meetings</li> <li>• Capacity of teachers and quality of teaching improved;</li> <li>• Overall school environment became more attractive and friendly for Roma children.</li> </ul> <p>Negative / unintended outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As the number of Roma children in the schools increased, some non-Roma parents withdrew their children from the schools. Withdrawals are estimated to have reached 3-4% across all project schools. Remedial action was taken, including meetings with non-Roma parents, teacher training and lobbying in the Regional Education Directorates.</li> </ul> <p><i>Note:</i> No project-related research regarding the performance of catch-up classes (e.g. whether students in catch-up classes fare better or worse than peers) beyond monitoring and evaluation was conducted. Research outcomes on catch-up classes are mixed.<sup>20</sup></p>
Sustainability	<p>Catch-up classes were phased out as a result of an improved school environment. The schools and communities in the four municipalities targeted by the project reached a stage of maturity in which the catch-up classes</p>

<sup>20</sup> See, for instance, *Towards Roma Inclusion: A Review of Roma Education Initiatives in Central and South-Eastern Europe*, UNICEF, Geneva, 2010; *Advancing Education of Roma in Hungary*, Roma Education Fund, 2007; *School Success for Roma Children*, OSI and Step by Step, New York, 2001; *Education: the situation of Roma in 11 EU Member States*, European Agency for Fundamental Rights, Vienna, 2014.

	would no longer have any reason to exist, exemplified by significantly voluntary 1 <sup>st</sup> grade registration rates and higher school attendance rates. Sustainability is observed in terms of change of attitude of both Roma community towards the school and of the school teachers and managers towards the Roma community.
Replicability	<p><i>Framework conditions:</i> Catch-up classes worked in very specific conditions. They were a necessity for a considerable number of Roma children, who were left out of school due to many reasons. However, some conditions had to pre-exist in the school environment in order to make the catch-up classes work: the physical space (the classrooms), but also the willingness of the school director and staff to welcome these classes, which was not always the case.</p> <p><i>Complexity:</i> Complexity arose from issues both outside the catch-up classes (unwelcoming and openly discriminatory school environment; conflicting interests of teachers, parents, community) as well as within (mix of age, background and education level of Roma children the classes; resource intensity; simultaneous requirement to learn life skills).</p> <p><i>Resources:</i> The estimated cost per annum for running a catch-up class is approximately 700 CHF per student.</p> <p><i>Other country experience:</i> Similar approaches were implemented by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (e.g. OSCE Kosovo).</p>
Strengths and Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targeted education.</li> <li>• Quick educational and life skill gains.</li> <li>• An effective approach to attract Roma parents' interest in the child education.</li> <li>• Transitory measure with clear target to achieve mainstreaming.</li> <li>• Transitory measure to allow the school environment to adapt and improve (e.g. parents of majority children, teaching staff, school directors).</li> </ul>
Weaknesses and Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Might lead to segregation and alienation and consequently exclusion.</li> <li>• Non-Roma parents might take their children from schools with catch-up classes, as they increase the percentage of Roma.</li> <li>• Resource intensive due to the need of requisite school space and additional teaching staff compared to mainstream classes.</li> <li>• Potential overlap with common "Second Chance" programmes (yet the Second Chance programme reportedly performed poorly in Albania)<sup>21</sup>.</li> </ul>

### 4.3. Evidence-based social housing strategy

Evidence challenges and overcomes commonly held assumptions about poor people, especially Roma. Evidence can change policy and reverse "elite capture" especially when the political leadership has the intention to do so. Albania's social housing strategy is among the most progressive in the region thanks to its evidence base.

<sup>21</sup> "Second Chance" is a government programme, led by the Ministry of Education and Science and launched in 2004, to assist children who as a result of their family situation have already dropped out in resuming their schooling.

Table 4: Evidence-based social housing strategy

Title	<b>Using evidence to reverse “elite capture”: Albania’s social housing strategy</b>
Problem / issue at stake	Social housing allocation decisions are based on assumptions or political interest in Albania. For instance, one of the commonly held assumptions is that Roma and Egyptians are transient and therefore do not want or need stable housing, stable jobs and income. This assumption has a strong implication for the social housing sector. Their “unique life style” is presented as justification for not directing social housing programmes to this group. Studies on the living conditions and housing needs of Roma and Egyptians challenge this assumption.
Description of experience	In 2014, UNDP supported the Department of Urban Services and Housing at the Ministry of Urban Development to conduct two studies that were used to inform the social housing strategy. The first study analysed the situation of the social housing sector in the country and the second study assessed the needs of socially excluded groups for social housing. The purpose was to develop a strategy that had a strong foundation on evidence. Several methods, such as surveys, interviews, and case studies, have been prepared in collaboration with government officials and members of the academia and applied to assess the <i>status quo</i> and the needs for social housing. Consultations were held on why research findings are important and how they can change the ways we think about our work and the population we serve.
Results	The result is an evidence-based Social Housing Strategy that is implemented by the Department of Urban Services and Housing. It is arguably the most progressive of its kind in the region. A system was established so that local governments collect and update housing data in each local government. Combined with the greater territorial coverage of Albania’s new 61 municipalities, this evidence at local government level allows municipalities to co-design and participate in social housing programmes (of the Ministry) and address differentiated needs of the local communities (for the poorest of the poor; for first time home owners; for young professionals etc.). Poorest of the poor (Roma and orphans) are now included in the beneficiary pool of social housing programmes. Evidence was also at the centre of recent waves of accountability calls from the civil society to the government, especially on use of government budgets. Evidence produced by a UNDP study in 2015 formed the basis of the SOROS Foundation <i>infographic on social housing</i> [click for website] in Albania that exposed elite capture in government social spending.
Sustainability	Contrary to common assumption, use of evidence is an intensely political choice. Sustainability of evidence use in Albania depends largely on the political intent to do so. In the experience described here, the UNDP enjoyed the keen and genuine political commitment of national leaders to progressive use of evidence. In other words, the political leadership was willing, open and committed to reversing the middle income bracket bias of social housing policy and used evidence to do so. Of course, tools and instruments are also important: Evidence should not be prohibitively difficult to gather nor analyse. UNDP worked with government and developed and tested research instruments that are now in use. Even easier to achieve was to get partners to actually analyse data that has already been collected. For example, the Ministry had a large dataset with information on the number of individuals who have applied and benefited from social housing programmes. This data set was never used nor analysed. Sustainability of use of existing data/evidence depends a lot on institutional set up where by the responsible government unit is actually tasked to review, analyse and use existing information. Most Albanian institutions are still not doing this as practice. In the context of Albania’s public administration reform

	(PAR), there is greater emphasis by EU and other partners to consolidate functions of administration, establish clear job descriptions, and apply civil service conditions. Only through the maturation of such PAR will the use of evidence become more institutionalised.
Replicability	A successful replication of this experience requires that several preconditions are met, such as the political intent to change policy towards inclusiveness (then evidence becomes ammunition for the policy maker) and managerial direction (tasking officials in policy departments to use existing data to demonstrate policy gaps). The conditions under which evidence-based practices are replicated require additional examination. Research from other countries suggests that the implementation of evidence-based practices in the public sector is influenced by numerous factors, such as legislative support, state funding, advocacy efforts, access to inter-organisational networks, organisational culture and climate, and leadership support. These factors should be examined in the context of Albania. Furthermore, a political economy analysis is needed for successful advocacy and policy dialogue. Advancing an agenda on evidence-based policymaking in the context of Albania requires that several interventions are undertaken on many fronts.
Strengths and Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence is political: showing housing needs and deprivations is a political call to action.</li> <li>• Evidence is strong “ammunition” for social groups, who have less voice in rendering account from political leadership.</li> <li>• The political leadership of social housing policy had political intent to reverse “elite capture” and was therefore open to use of evidence, grass roots movements, needs etc. (critical strength).</li> <li>• The openness of the political leadership to engage with civil society on the basis of evidence – building trust in a process.</li> </ul>
Weaknesses and Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social policy is complex and rarely linear: simply presenting evidence to policy-makers and expecting them to act upon does not suffice.</li> <li>• Evidence is necessary for the policy maker to prioritise competing needs of citizens but evidence alone does not make the best policy. Accountability of elected officials to citizens’ is also a potent yardstick of whether policy is working to meet citizen needs.</li> <li>• Current capacities, in terms of quality and quantity of human resources and budget at the national level.</li> <li>• Even if government officials agree upon the idea that policies should be based on analysis this is not reflected in the midterm budget. To achieve such a reflection, there needs to be lobbying to change the setting of priorities for the allocation of funds, and, if realistic, to increase the budget over time.</li> <li>• Local government officials should take decisions within a short period of time, whilst it takes a long time to produce high-quality research and translate research findings into policy action. They often perceive data collection as a burden because of the lack of financial resources and because they do not understand why analyses are important.</li> </ul>

#### 4.4. Youth Disability Forum

The main learning of the *Youth Disability Forum* is that new actors and alliances of groups can unlock long-standing interest monopolies and open up space for policies that are inclusive.

Table 5: “Non-traditional” actors and alliances of groups unlock interest monopolies

Title	<b>Youth disability forum: from one constituency to many</b>
Problem / issue at stake	Traditional single disability associations often opt for passive cash payments and policies for their constituency rather than asking for inclusive policies and services for citizens irrespective of their particular disability. The “representativeness monopoly” leads to a situation that perpetuates power concentration and patronage with risks of corruptive practice eroding trust among groups representing different types of disability and drowning new voices and demands from the persons with disabilities (PwD) community.
Description of experience	The project identified “new and young” actors of the PwD community and empowered them to come up with solutions for needs of different disability groups as opposed to working for narrow constituencies for cash benefits. Cross-disability alliances and youth forums, which also included non-disabled persons, were set up in 12 regions. They identified common needs and actions for social inclusion. The local elections provided visible entry points for cross-disability fora to demand accessibility of the voting procedure and election administration infrastructure.
Results	The project is the only experience in Albania that works for disability rights going beyond single, narrow constituency demands for cash assistance. Volunteering platforms were created and diversely able young people built skills, knowledge and confidence in becoming active citizens and promoting the real youth voice to policy makers. The main effects induced by the experience were the networking among disability groups. The initiative focused primarily on fighting isolation and motivating youth to lobby/fight for their integration in all aspects of their life. Informal local networks of youth with disabilities have become visible and active at local municipalities eager to get involved.
Sustainability	It is too soon to measure sustainability of cross disability fora – they are new and they challenge the patronage basis of the cash assistance focused “single disability” associations. Sustainability of such fora is ultimately linked to broader changes in social inclusion in labour market, in education and other services – reducing their dependency on cash assistance. The practices and policies for the participation of PwD in elections on the other hand are sustainable – the Electoral Commission issued standing guidelines and practice recommendations. These are enduring and will be precedent for upcoming elections.
Replicability	Replicating this new approach requires champions who have trust that services can improve their lives; i.e. champions who expect more than cash benefits from the state, but also services. Youth fora and PwDs with privileged education backgrounds have to date been the advocates. To expand this advocacy base requires both advocates and building trust in social inclusion promoting services for different disabilities. Ongoing work with municipalities to provide space and services for education and integration of children and youth are important starting points for replication across the country.
Strengths and Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National and international context currently encourages the participation of citizens and groups of interest in consultation and decision-making processes.</li> <li>• New generation of parents of children with disabilities are asking for rights/services and inclusion for their children rather than for passive measures/cash benefits.</li> <li>• Territorial and administrative reform presents opportunities for municipalities to provide enabling and social inclusion oriented services.</li> </ul>

Weaknesses and Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Champions and participants of the youth fora enjoy family support and some education, in other words they are already vested and active members of society – their leadership risks alienation from those in poor and remote areas.</li> <li>• Despite their relative privilege, the lack of enabling environment (innovation grants, funding for initiatives, partnerships with local authorities etc.) for self-starter activism is a threat for the sustainability of such fora (see above, sustainability).</li> <li>• The approach is very dependent on the activism and the commitment etc. of its members – the momentum can quickly be lost.</li> <li>• Activists of the fora may not see the results of their advocacy and lobbying efforts in a short term, hence there is risk to loose connections and enthusiasm among forum members.</li> <li>• Adverse reaction of traditional NGOs may discourage this new constituency (the forum).</li> </ul>
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#### 4.5. Technology to meet needs of persons with disabilities

The use and leverage of technology, alongside assistive devices and personal assistance, is an effective way to remove certain barriers for persons with disabilities, and consequently contributing to ensuring their independence, dignity and inclusion.

Table 6: Information technology

Title	<b>Challenging disability: technology as an effective away to overcome barriers</b>
Problem / issue at stake	<p>Persons with disabilities in Albania have difficulties to access spaces, information, communication, goods and services. Disability activists including those who have expertise on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and experience from more developed countries, believe that persons with disabilities could greatly benefit from the technologies to overcome various barriers. On the other hand, disability-related technologies have not been introduced in Albania partly because they are perceived as costly and partly because e-governance systems are not well institutionalised. There is very little recognition of e-government services for PwD as all state policy focuses on cash benefit programmes. Assistive technologies are very limited and often not accessible to many PwD.</p>
Description of experience	<p>The programme has demonstrated through the following interventions that technology can meet special needs of persons with disabilities and help tackling different barriers they are faced with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The National Agency of Information Society is supported to setting a standard to make <i>government websites</i> accessible for blind and dyslexic people and providing assistance to line ministries in implementing the standards.</li> <li>• A <i>studio to create Daisy (digital audio input system) books</i> and a <i>brail printing labs</i> were established within the National Blind Students Institute. The action includes building assistive technology in Albanian language and aims at supporting the Ministry of Education in implementing inclusive education policies. A wide range of blind and visually impaired children aged 6 to 15 years old will have the choice to attend mainstream schools and avoid institutionalisation in the special school for blind.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Alternative/Augmentative communication devices (iPad)</i> were promoted among social service providers as a tool to improve communication skills of people with disabilities, mainly, children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders. Caretakers identify and select for these children, who are often non-verbal persons, communication modalities enabling them to express their basic wants/needs, pain/discomfort, and need for help/attention. In this context, iPad applications revealed helpful for developing the communication skills of children with disabilities.</li> <li>• <i>Youth Disability Forum</i> was supported with IT equipment when conducting networking activities in the country. The Forum members, relying on IT equipment designed for universal use, managed to make all logistic arrangements by themselves. This experience showed that persons with disabilities can function independently if assisted with the appropriate technology.</li> </ul>
Results	The use of technology and assistive technology alongside assistive devices and personal assistance promises to remove certain barriers for persons with disabilities, and consequently to contribute at ensuring independence, dignity and inclusion.
Sustainability	<p>A wide range of national legislation underpins the strategy for using technologies for ensuring access to rights by persons with disabilities, as well as for other vulnerable groups. However, in the long run, sustainability of actions in this regard calls for additional steps from the government that go beyond short-term interventions supported by partners. Sustainability would depend on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making sure that tech-solutions respond to real needs of the PWD and engaging them in the design of the tech-solutions instead of making assumptions about their needs;</li> <li>• Citizen orientation of services delivery in general, going forward;</li> <li>• Tech-solutions already identified as an instrument for services delivery.</li> </ul>
Replicability	The use of (information) technology and assistive technology can be promoted and replicated in various areas of life and for different (all) categories of persons with disabilities (visual, hearing, intellectual and physical impairments). Priority areas include education, employment, health, culture (digital audio guides in museum), (public) transport, etc. Research for identifying the appropriate technologies, adaptation of soft and hardware language into Albanian, preparation of design, implementation and maintenance expertise are pre-conditions for a successful replicability.
Strengths and Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rapid technology advancement: this ensures that specific needs of persons with disabilities are increasingly met; the more the technology advances the more the chances for removing barriers for persons with disabilities augment.</li> <li>• National legislation underpins the use of technology for removing barriers and accessing rights.</li> <li>• Bilateral and multilateral development programmes encourage and support the transfer of technology.</li> <li>• Ongoing Public Administration Reform represents an entry point to integrate “additionalities” in public services delivery innovations targeting PwD.</li> </ul>
Weaknesses and Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are no intrinsic threats of the approach (technologies) itself. In some countries, the risks are over-reliance on IT tools for social interaction and resulting social alienation. In Albania, where social networks are close, this is not a threat.</li> <li>• There are challenges to implementing the approach on the other hand: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Soft- and hardware is often not available in Albanian;</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Difficulties to scale up due to the need of expertise, hard and software;</li> <li>○ Perception of technological solutions as luxury;</li> <li>○ Lack of services providers;</li> <li>○ Rapid change in technology requires upgrading of outdated technology, hence additional funding and competencies.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Financial constraints in both state provision of tech based solutions for services and at individual level for assistive technologies.</li> </ul>
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#### 4.6. Needs Assessment and Referral Units

Needs Assessment and Referral Units at the local level are the gatekeeping mechanism to ensure that appropriate preventive social care services are provided to vulnerable groups of the community.

Table 7: Needs assessment and referral units

<b>Title</b>	Needs assessment and referral units: supporting social care services planning and delivery at the local level
Problem / issue at stake	Albania does not have a system of integrated and efficient social care <i>services</i> for vulnerable groups, although by law they are part of the social protection program and budget. Most expenditure by local government units for this sector (>95 %) occurs for cash assistance and disability benefits. <sup>22</sup> Responsibility to manage social care services was devolved to the local government level in 2005. However, clear roles, functions and accountability levels were missing. Guidelines, procedures or tools to ensure that local governments establish the appropriate units of planning and delivering social care to families and children were not in place.
Description of experience	<p>The programme helped to design so-called <i>Needs Assessment and Referral Units</i>, a separate unit in a local government administration as the key entry point enabling a prompt needs assessment and case referral. Social workers/case managers assess the needs of the client, develop a suitable service plan, facilitate access to services, monitor, evaluate, and advocate for a package of multiple services to meet the client's complex needs.</p> <p>The establishment of NARUs went through a comprehensive, well designed step by step approach which included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● a comprehensive analysis of the institutional and policy framework at regional and local government level, which were used to develop feasibility scenarios and costings;</li> <li>● the development of instruments that helped the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth negotiate with other key stakeholders on costing and structures and the revision of the local government law and the new strategy for decentralisation (particularly relevant in the view of territorial and administrative reform);</li> </ul>

<sup>22</sup> Bigger municipalities, often top up the social assistance budgets to nearly 3%, yet there is no comprehensive data available. In addition, non-governmental organisations also provide a range of services that are mainly funded by development partners; such expenditure has also been difficult to capture and estimate.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• advocacy and lobbying so that the concept of NARU is integrated into several (planned) policy and legal documents to institutionalise the proposed concept and instruments.</li> </ul> <p>NARUs are defined as core public service delivered by qualified social workers and case managers. They are first-level service points with the functions of case identification, initial needs and risk assessment, information and basic counselling, care and support planning, support coordination and referral (to social care service providers) as well as case follow-up, monitoring and evaluation.</p> <p>Anchoring NARUs at the local level and establishing a national complaint mechanism shall contribute to improved accountability.</p>
Results	<p>There is consensus on the establishment of NARU as a milestone to build a system of successful planning and delivery of social care services. Local governments are integrating NARUs in their new structures; they have a unit that is responsible for appropriate and efficient planning, budgeting and monitoring mechanisms for social protection policies in general and specifically for social care service delivery. As such, this experience will contribute that all vulnerable groups in Albania receive pertinent social care services.</p>
Sustainability	<p>The success of this approach and instruments need more time to be assessed. The new municipalities are still in the process of finalising their structures therefore implementation is at an early stage. Several factors should contribute to sustainability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• integration of the approach and instruments in the national policies;</li> <li>• reflection of guiding principles that are successfully used in many (South-East) European countries;</li> <li>• central institutions that lead the reform (e.g. Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth) are strengthened to provide support to the new local government units during implementation.</li> </ul> <p>Financial resources are instrumental to sustain NARUs will have to be borne by local governments, despite planned mechanisms to adequately finance social care services from national budgets.</p>
Replicability	<p>Not only the approach but the entire process leading the conceptualisation, consensus building and integration to national policies can be replicated in different policy interventions for ensuring policy coherence and sustainability. The instruments designed to support NARU and standard services such as vulnerability mapping; package and costing methodology designed at national level can be now replicated for each municipality.</p>
Strengths and opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff working at the local level have direct experience of the local situation and the problems faced by clients; they are uniquely positioned to work in partnership with local stakeholders to shape services to better fit the needs of their community.</li> <li>• Strong alignment with territorial and administrative reform and decentralisation framework.</li> <li>• NARUs address governance and accountability issues.</li> <li>• Extending implementation of the civil service reform at local level will support the sustainability of NARUs and guide standard recruitment and performance measurement procedures (less prone to political influences).</li> <li>• Opportunity for achieving economies of scale at a larger territory with stronger structure.</li> <li>• Work on case management as well as professionalisation of services that happened in the framework of SDC's projects and programme will</li> </ul>

	<p>provide additional support to NARU.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong CSO community with accumulated experience in service delivery to support the implementation.</li> </ul>
Weaknesses and threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited resources to provide support and mentoring to the newly established local government units.</li> <li>• Local governments might be overwhelmed with the multitude of issues they have to deal with in the wake of territorial reform.</li> <li>• Staff who were well informed about and identified with the reform process are no longer active in local government units, as a result of merging communes to bigger municipalities and elections.</li> <li>• Implementation of reform, any reform, means also more regulation which might be faced with resistance from the elected officials.</li> </ul>

## 5. Conclusions

### 5.1. Interpretation of process and results

Several of our interlocutors and workshop participants stated that they were pleased with the experience capitalisation since it offered an opportunity to reflect upon past work from a different perspective: from the perspective of experience rather than performance.

Despite the comparatively little time that could be invested and considering that many participants had been going through such a process for the first time some pertinent lessons learned and good practices were identified that could be reflected in the design of future support. Nonetheless, in light of the longstanding implementation experience of all the participants, the experiences that were collected merely reflect a fraction of the experience potential.

It is very likely that in a future similar type exercise the participants would feel even more comfortable of deliberating about experiences, successes and failures, intended and unintended outcomes. Such deliberations may also include management issues, inter-agency collaboration or collaboration with the government – subjects that did not surface this time.

### 5.2. Recommendations

The following recommendations are formulated for consideration of SDC and the programme and project partners:

This document provides leads for future social inclusion initiatives, specifically regarding social care reform and social care services delivery at local level. In these areas SDC's current portfolio registers several achievements, which can be further

enhanced and expanded upon. This is the case for the professionalisation of social workers or the work that has been done for disabled persons, to mention but a few. Likewise, sustainability challenges were identified that merit additional support; a case in point are the needs assessment and referral units.

The experiences and lessons learned that were collected should be considered as a resource for the planning of future social inclusion initiatives. They can provide a resource, for instance, for the identification of success factors such as the use of evidence for policy making. At the same time the sections on weaknesses and threats can be beneficial for the analysis of risks that are associated with planned activities.

It is furthermore recommended to consider updating the respective project and programme factsheets that are available on SDC's website with a section on experiences, formulated as lessons learned or good practices.

Finally, it should be considered planning (short, informal) retreats for experience capitalisation in the future. They can take the form of one-day workshops that are facilitated by a team member or a member of SDC; the resources of this exercise (presentations, workshop programmes, briefing notes etc.) can guide the process. Such retreats could bring together stakeholders (partners, experts, beneficiaries etc.) of interventions under different domains; this could serve towards common knowledge, understanding and learning across domains.

## **Annex 1: Strategic Framework**

The Albanian government and in particular the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth, which has a lead role in social inclusion, have prepared and are implementing of a series of policy and strategic orientation documents relevant to this area. All these documents are an integral part of the government's programme under the *National Strategy for Development and Integration 2015-2020*. Some of the most relevant policy documents are:

*Social Inclusion Policy Document (2015-2020)*: The overall objective of the SIPD is to establish a balanced and sustainable framework for ensuring that social inclusion is measured, monitored and reported in Albania through a robust set of indicators thereby improving ways in which social inclusion is linked to improving government policies and Albania's progress towards EU accession.

*National Action Plan on Persons with Disabilities (2016-2020)*: Through its implementation, the Albanian government aims to improve accessibility of public information and services, facilitate inclusive education, introduce disability assessment based on the bio-psycho-social model, and expand community-based social services, rehabilitation services and employment promotion measures.

*Social Protection Strategy (2015-2020)*: The objective is to create a system of social protection composed of policies and mechanisms to protect all those excluded or in need for protection through preventative and social reintegration programmes at local and national level.

*National Strategy for Employment and Skills (2014-2020)*: It aims to integrate economic, education, vocational and entrepreneurship policies together through an action plan that boosts employment in the country. A specific feature is that the document unifies employment and vocational education and training in an attempt to match labour market demands.

*National Action Plan on Youth (2014-2020)*: The focus is on nurturing creativity and innovation capacities of young people by encouraging personal development for better employment opportunities in the future. Furthermore, related to employment, particular reference is made to the promotion of entrepreneurship whereas in terms of education emphasis is being placed on equal access to youth in all levels of education together with the recognition of non-formal learning.

*National Strategy for Social Housing (2015-2025)*: The main goal of the strategy has been set as: *"To provide low and middle income households who cannot afford a house in the open market, and in particular, to vulnerable households resulting*

*in housing exclusion, with available, accessible, affordable and quality housing solutions”.*

*National Action Plan for Roma and Egyptians (2015-2020):* The main strategic objectives targeting these communities focus at facilitating opportunities for the equal use of civil registration services and justice; improve eligibility to full access and inclusion in qualitative education; provide equal opportunities for formal employment; ensure accessible, affordable and equitable healthcare; improve housing conditions and increase access to social protection programmes for them.

*Plan of Measures for Non-discrimination on the Basis of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (2012-2014):* The plan has a multi-dimensional approach and starts by looking into the improvement of Albanian legislation to prevent discrimination in accordance with the Law on Protection from Discrimination, international laws as well as the EU’s *acquis communautaire*. The new plan has not been drafted yet.

*First National Strategy on Gender Equality and Elimination of Domestic Violence (2007-2010):* The strategy maintained that gender will be mainstreamed in all sectoral policies ensuring equal participation and opportunities for women and girls, and men and boys in the social, economic, and political life of the country. In addition, it set the objective of improving the protection of victims of domestic violence with particular emphasis to prevention. The new strategy has not been drafted yet.

The new *Support to Territorial and Administrative Reform 2* project aims at ensuring functionality of the newly established local governments through strengthening their institutional and administrative capacities;<sup>23</sup> providing support for effective delivery of local public services as well as increasing democratic governance and participation at the local level. The project will look intensively at public administration reform and implementation of the Civil Service Law and the Labour Code. Support to selected public services will also be provided at the national level for one-stop-shop service model and service benchmarking.

The government has committed to the development of a *regional development policy* as the *spatial dimension* of national development policy. It concentrates on development initiatives conceived and implemented by sub-national levels: the regions, qarks and municipalities. Long-term objectives include promoting a balanced development of regions and addressing regional disparities in terms of living conditions; economic and social development and infrastructure; as well as ensur-

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<sup>23</sup> Interventions for the improvement of administrative capacities are expected to include, *inter alia*, functional reviews, leadership support and support for budgeting and financial management. Support to selected public services will also be provided at the national level for one-stop-shop service model and service benchmarking.

ing equitable social and economic opportunities for all citizens. The main instrument to deliver regional development policy will be the *Regional Development Operational Programme*, which concentrates on areas of development that are currently in the responsibility of local governments, including local infrastructure and public services; welfare services; culture and sports, environmental protection; and local economic development. The operational programme will be developed based on a partnership approach by local and national level stakeholders. Responsibility for its implementation will be retained by the Regional Development Agencies, which were established in November 2015 and are governed by a management board composed of both municipalities and national government representatives.

## **Annex 2: Workshop Programme**

### **Date and time**

Thursday, 3 March (09:00-16:30 hours; +30 minute buffer time until 17:00 hours)

### **Venue**

Xheko Imperial Hotel, Tirana

### **Participants**

- Projects: +/- 9 participants per project (*note*: in the process of finalising participants list; selected participants will be informed on 26.02. and receive briefing info on 01.03.2016)
- Facilitators/rapporteurs: Elira Jorgoni, Harald Meier
- SDC: to be determined

### **Approach**

The participants jointly identify and describe and assess 6-9 experiences (approaches, processes or tools to improve aspects of social inclusion) according to a predefined structure. The collected experiences will then be reviewed together.

The participants will share their respective work on several occasions with each other so as to ensure an active exchange beyond project borders as well as mutual enrichment / completion of the contributions. The experience capital will be documented by the facilitators.

The documentation constitutes a basis for future programme planning and will also be presented to a wider audience on the occasion of a forthcoming SDC-sponsored regional event on social inclusion

### **Assumptions**

All participants have read the briefing note. The participants are aware of the purpose of the experience capitalisation and are proactive in bringing in their views and ideas. The project / programme managers act as facilities in the groups. Working language (for presentations and facilitation) is English; group internal work can be Albanian.

### **Equipment/materials required**

Projector; min 3 flip charts; min 3 pin boards (or white-boards); sticky notes; refreshments

### **Documentation**

- 6-9 documented, assessed and categorised experiences
- Summary report of the workshop, including photos of workshop outputs

## Schedule

Time	Agenda Item	Comment	Facilitation
09:00	<b>Welcome</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduction to Experience Capitalisation</li> <li>Introduction to part 1</li> </ul>	Projector, Flipchart	Harald
09:20	<b>Group work 1: Identification of experience capital</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capital is identified, classified (approach / process / tools) and selected (top 4).</li> <li>Brainstorming, discussion within the three project teams</li> </ul>	Flipchart, pin-board <i>Note: pre-workshop work by participants required.</i>	
10:00	<b>Presentation to plenary</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Selection of experience capital for further description</li> </ul>	Presentation of each 5 minutes	Elira Harald
10:20	<i>Break</i>		
10:40	<b>Group work 2: Description of experience capital</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 – 3 experiences per group</li> <li>Topics: What? How? Who? When? Where?</li> <li>Results (positive / negative and intended / unintended)</li> </ul>	Flipchart, pin-board <i>Note: if some experiences are common to 2 or 3 of the projects, there are three options: i) experiences will be described in groups and their description complemented in plenary session; ii) a group with members from several project teams is formed, iii) experiences will be discussed in plenary (before group work).</i>	
11:50	<b>Presentation to plenary</b>	Presentation of each 10 minutes, followed by Q&A	Elira Harald
12:30	<i>Lunch break</i>		
14:00	<b>Introduction to part 2</b>		Harald
14:10	<b>Group work 3: Assessment of experience capital</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats)</li> <li>Likelihood of sustainability and replicability</li> </ul>	Flipchart, pin-board <i>Note: Questions regarding sustainability are: Capital still in use? Likely to be in use? Questions regarding replicability are: Framework conditions? Complexity? Resources?</i>	
15:10	<b>Presentation to plenary</b>	Presentation of each 10 minutes, followed by reviewing exercise	Elira Harald
16:10	<b>Wrap-up</b>		Harald
16:20	<b>Closing</b>		Elira

## Background Information

### ***What is experience capitalisation?***

A review of literature reveals that there are different definitions of experience capitalisation, depending on different perceptions and needs. We define capitalisation as a process that transforms both positive and negative experiences that were made over a longer period of time during the life cycle of a project or programme into lessons learned and good practices.

The term “experience” is broadly understood to encompass approaches, activities, methods, processes, techniques or tools. Experience capitalisation aims to find answers to questions such as:

- what has been done,
- why it has been done,
- what has changed,
- what has been left behind,
- what is available for further use, and
- can the experience be replicated in different contexts?

Identifying, describing, valuing and documenting the experiences, often also referred to as *experience capital*, serves different purposes: it allows for continuous improvement within a project or programme; it provides input into the design of subsequent and new projects and programmes; and if shared with a wider audience it allows others to benefit from the experiences too.

### ***Who takes part in experience capitalisation?***

Experience capitalisation is driven and owned by those holding the experiences, namely the persons or organisations directly involved in the project or programme. All of them generate experiences. External persons such as thematic experts or consultants merely support the process by moderating, validating or documenting the experience capital.

### ***How does experience capitalisation differ from an evaluation?***

In an evaluation the focus is placed on the assessment of achievements against pre-determined criteria (“what was achieved”). In contrast, experience capitalisation searches for *experience capital* irrespective of whether it was originally planned outputs and outcomes or a mere coincidental result. It focuses on understanding what does and does not work and identifying factors which contribute to successes and failures (“how and why was something achieved or not achieved”).

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