

Tirana, Albania—Catawba County, North Carolina

Albania partner city: Tirana.

Population of Tirana: around 586,000 as of December 2005 (according to an estimate made by Tirana municipal officials).

U.S. partner community: Catawba County, North Carolina.

Albanian local partner organization: Institute for Development Research and Alternatives (IDRA).

Program dates: September 2005 to September 2007.

Key issues in Tirana: solid waste collection, disposal and recycling education, and construction and demolition waste management.

- ▶ **Solid Waste Collection**
- ▶ **Disposal and Recycling Education**
- ▶ **Construction and Demolition Waste Management**

A second phase of the partnership between the city of Tirana, Albania, and Catawba County, North Carolina, began in September 2005, and continued through September 2007. The 2005-2007 phase was a follow-up to the highly successful program that the Tirana-Catawba County partnership carried out from 2002 through 2004. Among the many achievements of that first phase were improved environmental conditions and maintenance of Tirana's landfill and extension of its life through better operations; improved management of Tirana's infrastructure assets; a model practice for more cost-effective contracting by the Tirana city government with private companies providing waste collection services; and improvements in the waste collection containers and encouragement of private contractors to use them.

A main focus of the second, 2005-2007 phase was to further reduce the waste spillovers from existing collection containers and to clean the increasing litter from the streets of Tirana. The activities were two-pronged: (1) streamlining the city's waste collection operations and (2) raising citizens' awareness of their role in waste disposal and of the city's waste collection schedules. Another component of the partnership was to assist Tirana in the creation of a construction and demolition waste reuse and recycling program. That would help promote a cleaner city and also reduce the burden on the local landfill. Officials from Tirana and from Catawba County participated in three exchange visits in 2007 as part of their joint efforts. In the program's final exchange, Tirana officials came to the United States to learn about U.S. practices in solid waste management, see for themselves the practices in various local government entities, and explore realistic options for Tirana.

From their U.S. visit and other program activities in 2007, the Tirana partners learned how to implement a pilot recycling campaign; manage a public awareness campaign; improve Tirana's contracts with private solid waste and recycling companies; upgrade solid waste collection; enhance Tirana's tax and tariff systems to cover the total cost of solid waste collection, disposal, and recycling; and prepare a solid waste and recycling guide for citizens and businesses.

Accomplishments in 2007

Solid Waste Collection, Disposal, and Recycling Education Program

When the first partnership phase was completed in 2004, one urgent remaining need for Tirana was to improve solid waste collection, and another was to introduce a recycling program that would incorporate increased citizen involvement. The Catawba County officials helped their Tirana counterparts to establish partnerships with private companies; gain neighborhood support; discuss issues with Roma ethnic groups, who collect recyclables and search the landfill for reusable goods; hold a model clean-up and recycling event for one neighborhood; and conduct a citizen awareness and education campaign.

Clean-up and Pilot Recycling Day Event

On Saturday, May 19th, to kick off Tirana's recycling and community cleaning program, some 30 persons gathered in the courtyard of the Jordan Misja art school, in the Television Block neighborhood of Tirana. Those volunteers came from the Tirana city government, Catawba County, the Institute for Development Research and Alternatives (IDRA), the Environmental Center for Development Education and Networking (EDEN), the Red Cross, a local university, and ICMA. Divided into four groups, the volunteers cleaned up and recycled trash in an E-shaped area, covering at least four streets within the Television Block neighborhood. Then, the streets

were washed and sanitized, and new recycling bins were distributed. The volunteers then handed out brochures that Tirana officials had developed to promote recycling by residents. The volunteers also gave out flyers to neighborhood businesses that had agreed to be part of the recycling program. In addition, the Tirana officials worked with solid waste and recycling contractors, did interviews with the news media, and interacted with the surrounding neighborhood businesses and residents to educate the community.

"We're hoping that our efforts will result in clean streets for Tirana, by improving municipal waste management and citizen awareness."

Barry Edwards, director of utilities and engineering, Catawba County

Volunteers hard at work during the May 19th clean-up and pilot recycling day in Tirana.

One of the four volunteer teams that participated in the May 19th clean-up and pilot recycling day in the Television Block neighborhood of Tirana.



“Our goal is to reduce the amount of garbage that’s generated, by increasing recycling and reuse and by introducing and implementing street-cleaning campaigns that serve as an inspiration to the people and businesses there [in Tirana].”

Barry Edwards, director of utilities and engineering, Catawba County

In order to involve youth and other community members in the recycling campaign, the Tirana and Catawba officials, IDRA, and ICMA held a competition for the elementary, middle, and high school students at the Jordan Misja art school to create a poster with the theme of “I recycle for Tirana’s future.” One of the goals of the contest was to raise the local residents’ awareness of the importance of street cleanliness and the longer-term environmental benefits of proper waste disposal, as well as their pride in their neighborhood.

The city of Tirana’s recycling program was officially begun with the May 19th clean-up and pilot recycling day in the Television Block area. For a full week after that Saturday event, the city government held activities focusing on environmental concerns. Additional sections of the Television Block area have been targeted for similar clean-up and recycling efforts.

In a collaboration among Tirana officials, IDRA, and ICMA, an English-language recycling handbook was produced to aid in the city’s recycling efforts, and then translated into Albanian so that local officials could utilize and update the resource tool.



Construction and Demolition Waste Management

In Tirana, rapid construction and demolition—and the problem of managing the resulting waste materials—has been a major concern in recent years. To help deal with that situation, the Catawba County team drafted a series of construction and demolition (C&D) documents that provided information, guidelines, and recommendations to the Tirana offi-



New recycling bins ready for distribution in the Television Block neighborhood of Tirana on the clean-up and pilot recycling day on May 19th (top left).

Contractors wash a street at the end of the clean-up and pilot recycling day (right).

Winners of the student art competition to create a poster based on the theme of “I recycle for Tirana’s future” were named on May 19th.

cial. In order to discuss and promote these materials, the Catawba team met with various Tirana city officials, national ministry officials, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The Catawba officials sought to gain understanding, buy-in, and cooperation from the local and national levels of government and from NGOs so that plans for a C&D waste management facility could be drafted, approved, and put out for bid by the Tirana city government.

The Catawba team recommended that Tirana officials apply a design-build-operate-transfer (DBOT) approach with the waste management facility. Depending on the final decision made by Tirana officials and their negotiations with private enterprises, a private sector entity could finance the facility and handle all the DBOT stages, with ownership of the facility being transferred to the municipality at an agreed-upon time in the future. This option could be attractive for Tirana since the city would not have to make an initial capital investment for the facility's construction.

The meetings with the national ministries also included discussions regarding each ministry's role in the selection of a new landfill site and in the building of the C&D waste management facility. Their involvement would vary, depending on the location of the site, number of local governments involved, and size of the site. The ministries wanted both to support the Tirana officials in their efforts and to develop countrywide policies and standards for these kinds of processes.

Looking Forward

In the future the Tirana officials hope to continue on their own with some of the CityLinks activities. These include replicating the city's clean-up and pilot recycling day event in seven other neighborhoods; encouraging schools to become more involved in recycling; improving public-private relations for recycling campaigns; drafting a plan for fees and taxes to promote recycling; drafting an outline of the concept and steps that Tirana could follow in establishing a C&D waste management facility; and designing a plan for the current landfill and finding a location for a new landfill.

It is expected that the new recycling handbook will be used by Tirana officials and revised as needed in the future. The handbook will provide the officials with a good guide for implementing and sustaining a successful recycling program. The text also includes a section that school teachers can use to build their students' awareness of the importance of recycling.

"Clean-up Day and the recycling programs it's launching are models that could be replicated in other neighborhoods throughout the city [Tirana], as well as elsewhere in Albania."

**Auron Pasha, executive director,
Institute for Development
Research and Alternatives**



Tirana officials and their U.S. colleagues inspect a landfill in Catawba County during a partnership exchange that brought the Albanians to North Carolina (top).

Catawba County Manager Tom Lundy (on right, in shorts) greets Tirana Mayor Edi Rama at the clean-up and pilot recycling day in Tirana on May 19th.

