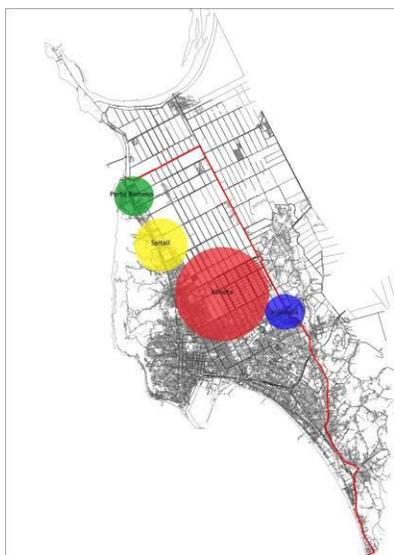


DURRËS SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY CITY NOTE

This note presents the results of a Social Sustainability Assessment carried out by the Institute for International Urban Development (www.i2ud.org) and Co-PLAN Institute for Habitat Development (www.co-plan.org). This assessment is part of the World Bank's Europe and Central Asia (ECA) Sustainable Cities Initiative and the WB-Austria Urban Partnership Program (UPP) for Strengthening Local Governments in South-Eastern-Europe, funded by the UPP and managed by the ECA Social Development and ECA Urban Development departments and the World Bank Institute. A summary of findings of the desk and field research, which included Focus Group Discussions and In-Depth Interviews, as well as a Participatory Workshop are presented below. Further details are available in the Durrës City Synthesis Report. For more information, please refer to the ECA Sustainable Cities Website: <http://bit.ly/XWFMCG> and www.seecities.eu. The analysis, results, and views expressed in this paper are those of the authors alone and do not represent the position of the World Bank or any of its member countries.



MUNICIPALITY OF DURRËS



BASIC INDICATORS

- 203, 943 inhabitants¹
- Most prominent minority groups: the Roma and Egyptians, with 1,101 inhabitants, located in the former industrial area named “NISH-Tulla”
- Young population with a high growth rate by European standards
- 9.7% unemployment²
- No official figures on current levels of poverty and extreme poverty

VULNERABLE GROUPS

1. Youth (15-25)
2. The elderly
3. The unemployed (including Roma)
4. Employed low-income
5. Employed middle-income

CHALLENGES IN SERVICE DELIVERY

Rapid urban growth, neglected infrastructure, informal interventions in existing networks, and an incomplete decentralization process (new responsibilities given to local governments without matching funding) are the major causes of the difficulties experienced in providing basic services to all citizens. Although most residents are in some way affected by the low quality of service and deficiencies, marginalized groups are the most susceptible. Importantly, due to the decentralization process still being in a *consolidation phase*, at times it is difficult to have a clear picture of where the service delivery bottlenecks exist:

- **Insufficient registration** of the population in informal areas and of the Roma population in particular (a nation-wide challenge). Without proper registration, they are ineligible for unemployment benefits and other social safety nets.

¹ Source information: Municipality of Durrës, Civil Registry office, March 2012

² Regional Employment office in the municipality of Durrës, 2011 Report

- **Informal settlements** (such as those near Spitalla, Porto Romano, and Këneta) are not integrated in the city, particularly in regards to infrastructure and such services as schools, nurseries, public transport and water supply. According to focus group participants, since the self-declaration process for land regularization was completed, no progress has been made in the legalization of these settlements and there has been insufficient communication regarding future steps.
- Unequal access to **health services** particularly, in informal settlements; there is a shortage of medical personnel while the persistent practice of bribery excludes groups unable to pay.
- The daily **water supply** is limited to 1-2 hrs/day. This figure is lower in the informal areas where most families lack access to the water supply either in their homes or in the vicinity.
- The **sewage system** poses a hazard for the citizens: the current system discharges raw sewage and rainwater into the sea without prior treatment.³
- **Education:** The inability of low-income families to pay for school supplies, transportation, and such school services as cleaning and security force many students to drop out.
- **Public transport** to school and work is prohibitively expensive. Reportedly, monthly tickets are difficult to buy officially and the black market supplies the majority with significant markups.
- Low-income families who cannot afford taxes get their **power supply** cut off.
- **Road infrastructure** is a problem; many road segments are poorly built and maintained.
- **Solid waste management** throughout the city is inefficient and creates nuisances, particularly during the hot seasons.
- There is a lack of infrastructure for **youth leisure and entertainment** activities.



Focus Group Discussions

³ World Bank Report, 2000

INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

National Strategy for Development and Integration (2007)

The Social Inclusion Strategy (2008)

Municipal priorities⁴ concerning vulnerable groups are: (1) Poverty reduction; (2) Reduction in homelessness; (3) Expanding the spectrum of public services available to vulnerable groups; and (4) Increased employment prospects for vulnerable groups. At the city level, the development of tourism and infrastructure improvements are two main priorities for the municipality. The city is in the process of reviewing its strategy for the period starting in 2014. The Municipality has been actively involved in this assessment and is committed to including social accountability provisions.

LOCAL GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES TO BE CONSIDERED

- The Albanian political system does not offer any specific provisions for the representation of vulnerable groups in the City Council.
- Frequent delays or cancellations of municipal council meetings and development decisions have resulted from the friction between political parties. Political disputes reportedly brought to a halt the activity of the Territorial Planning Council, resulting in reduced municipal revenues.
- Some issues relevant to vulnerable groups such as social aid, education, and health, are dealt with at the national level.

EXISTING SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY PRACTICES IMPLEMENTED BY THE MUNICIPALITY

- ✓ Municipal council meetings are open to the general public and the media.
 - *Although focus group participants reported being unable to actively participate for a number of reasons, including lack of information.*
- ✓ The meetings of the Municipal Council are monitored and can be viewed as video online.
- ✓ All municipal council decisions taken since 2007 are electronically available by the externally funded Center for Public Information Issues, and its local Office of Civic Transparency.
- ✓ In addition, the municipality publishes important data concerning municipal services, citizens, and business opportunities in its annual publication *Buletini*; it is available for download from the municipal website www.durres.gov.al. Outdated versions are a regular occurrence.
 - Focus Group Participants were unaware of this publication.
- ✓ The Municipality introduced two Info-point e-kiosks in easily accessible public places.
 - Most Focus Group Participants were unaware of such instruments or their intended purpose; those that had seen them reported no added value or facilitation of any kind vis-à-vis service provision or communication with the institution.
- ✓ Monitoring and performance measurement of municipal service provision is not a regular practice; rather it is an *ad hoc*, project-based process. Occasionally the municipality will conduct project-based surveys, which are then used to formulate the annual budget.
- ✓ The municipality of Durrës has been running a One-Stop-Shop since 2004. This unit operates full-time, five days a week, and provides citizens with information on municipal services, business services, application forms and procedures, and complaints.
- ✓ The e-government platform entails digitalizing and archiving documents among municipal institutions. An indirect benefit, from a public service provision perspective, is the improved management of citizen complaint procedures.
- ✓ The Municipality is also planning, as part of the e-government platform, to build a web-center portal for the integration of GIS and to open a call center.

⁴ House of Europe Study, 2012: 42

- ✓ The Municipality has established a weekly reception day, when citizens can meet the Mayor and report their problems
 - *Focus Group Participants reported having limited access to these open-door days.*
- ✓ There are legislative provisions⁵ clearly establishing the procedures for the right to information and the right to receive an official response⁶ from government authorities and institutions.
 - *FGDs said municipal authorities delay responses to official requests for information.*

WHY PROMOTE SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY IN DURRËS?

There is a vicious cycle of neglect of complaints and inputs filed with the Municipality through official channels and of growing citizen apathy. Citizens regard the municipality as “distant” and “detached”.

There is a sense that neither public employees nor the authorities are motivated to assist citizens. Eliciting action requires informal channels, fueling a lack of trust and increased perceptions of corruption.

Local Administrative Units are not fulfilling their role as the level of government closest to people. Citizens and members of vulnerable groups feel their interests are under-represented in city decisions and that there is a lack of NGOs and CBOs to voice and address their needs.

Despite feelings of widespread *institutional neglect, lack of dialogue, discontent at service quality, and skepticism vis-à-vis the municipal planning and spending practices*, citizens are willing to communicate with the municipality, and they respond to incentives for active participation and information exchange.

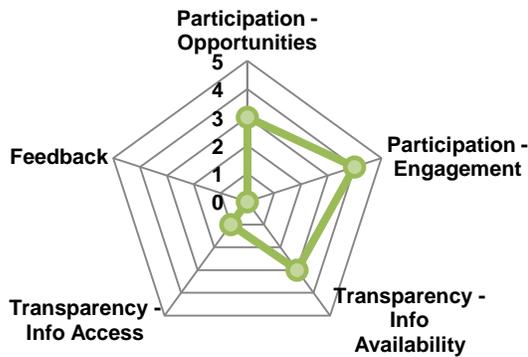
Public authorities at various levels acknowledge that the intent and actions of strategies, legislation, and policies have at times failed to materialize. Attributable factors include insufficient communication, irregularly provided information, lack of a communication strategy, and lack of monitoring to evaluate performance. This was recognized as an opportunity for improvement.

⁵ Law no. 8503 date 30.06.1999 ‘On the right to being informed’, and the Code of Administrative Procedures in the Republic of Albania.

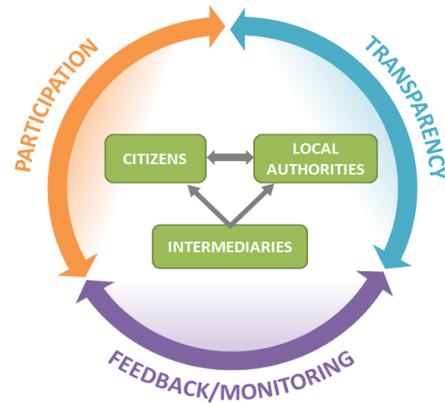
⁶ The Code of Administrative Procedures of the Republic of Albania.

SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY INDEX

In order to gauge existing levels of social accountability in each city in a comparable way, this Assessment developed a Social Accountability Index around 5 categories, related to the framework of Participation, Transparency and Feedback/Monitoring. The index is a simplified measure of the effectiveness of existing practices and identifies areas that can benefit from improvement.



Index results for Durrës⁷



Social Accountability Framework

STAKEHOLDER OWNERSHIP

Whilst the Municipality is responsible for implementing a number of the suggested interventions, the intermediaries and the community alike need to play an active part and take *ownership* of the interventions and actions directly affecting the community and vulnerable groups. Details about each component and the identified responsible parties are available as part the Durrës City Synthesis Report. Stakeholders pursuing these initiatives should meet quarterly to report on their efforts and consult in a continuing inclusive process.



Participatory Scenario Development Workshop

⁷ Please refer to the City Synthesis Report Annex for a full description of the index and its categories.

PROPOSAL #1: MAKE SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY A KEY COMPONENT OF THE CITY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The FGDs revealed that citizens do not feel appropriately and sufficiently informed about the city, available services and budget decisions, about their rights, and about how their local government functions. At the same time, there is insufficient data at the community level, and much of the insights and knowledge of communities does not make its way up to the local authorities. As Durrës revises its City Development Strategy, there is an opportunity to incorporate participatory elements within the Strategy specifically aiming to inform, learn from and respond to the needs and concerns of vulnerable groups.

Overall goal: Align city development action plans with increased communication channels and methods tailored for all target groups.

Vision

- ✓ Clear, aligned, coherent development plan.
- ✓ Transparency and participation through consultation meetings and improved representation of the citizens/intermediaries.
- ✓ Ownership of such activities, given that the City Development Strategy is a binding commitment at a local government level.
- ✓ Strengthened role of NGOs and CBOs as representatives of vulnerable groups' interests and increased interaction between the two groups.
- ✓ Reliable, current, and accessible sources of information about the city's activities and functions including service providers and delivery situation.
- ✓ Promotion of these tools through diverse media and increased use among vulnerable groups.

Specific Action

WHAT	A revised City Development Strategy (CDS) 2013-2020 that integrates concepts of social accountability and a City Communication Plan. The document is binding at an institutional level and ensures a high participation rate of consultation groups and a coherent reflection and alignment of the citizens, NGOs, and of the municipality.
HOW	As part of the CDS revision process, the municipality will engage in numerous consultations with all interest groups in the city. During the consultative meetings, the municipality will evaluate ⁸ the current infrastructure and resources it can allocate to improving information exchange and communication with its citizens and intermediaries (NGOs, CBOs). Similar to the approach of this <i>Social Sustainability Assessment</i> , the municipality ought to also identify its target groups and match the most suitable channels, methods and messages of communication. Depending on the consultation processes and the evaluation of current resources, the municipality can shape the CDS document, in collaboration with experienced NGOs in the field.
WHO	The Municipality of Durrës, the University of Durrës – Aleksandër Mojsiu, NGOs, Information Technology experts, students, consultative groups.
WHEN	1-2 years
INDICATORS	The CDS document itself and its exposure and visibility; the number of consultative meetings; the number of actors involved; the rate of accomplishment on a yearly basis; the number of communication channels used; etc.
HOW MUCH	The cost of expertise required for preparing the Strategy: developing templates for newsletter; technical intervention for website adjustment, maintenance, and regular updating; promotional costs; etc. Estimate: 10,000–15,000 USD.

⁸ All PSD workshop scenarios will be made available to the municipality

PROPOSAL #2: INVOLVE CONSULTATIVE GROUPS IN PARTICIPATORY BUDGET FORMULATION

The comparison of FGDs and IDIs highlighted that the city's social accountability efforts can work for some groups while not for others. Whether because of technological constraints, inconvenient office hours, time-consuming processes or a language barrier, FG participants – all belonging to at least one marginalized group – reported very low levels of civic engagement. Participatory budget formulation can offer opportunities for citizen groups to engage the Municipality, which would serve to assess performance to date. Planning and budgeting for the upcoming year could reflect citizen priorities.

Overall goal: Share information and insights through participation

Vision

- ✓ Strengthen participatory budget planning/formulation through increased citizen participation.
- ✓ Assess citizen and other interest groups priorities and feedback.
- ✓ Increase dialogue and representation of vulnerable groups.
- ✓ Increase transparency and accountability in how funds are allocated and how decisions are made.

Specific Action

WHAT	Participatory Budget Formulation by engaging consultative groups.
HOW	The Municipality will ensure that the formulation of the participatory budget is an inclusive, highly representative process. It will do so by holding meetings with consultative groups in order to gauge perception on performance to date, and to identify priorities for different groups. This will result in an improved fund allocation in various sectors. In this way, the municipality ensures increased participation and transparency, hence improved social accountability.
WHO	Municipality, Local Government Institutions, Consultation Groups, NGOs.
WHEN	Period to set up and become functional: 1-2 years
INDICATORS	Highly representative budget; performance assessment by consultation groups, number of meetings held, number of people involved.
HOW MUCH	As this is an institutional process, the Municipality could cover this through its own funds and seek assistance for any minor parts it cannot cover itself. Tentative estimate: At least 30,000 USD.

PROPOSAL #3: MAKE CITIZEN FEEDBACK AN INTEGRAL PART OF LOCAL GOVERNANCE THROUGH AN INTERACTIVE WEBSITE

Currently, citizens do not have an effective way of raising a concern with their local authorities or service providers. The existing mechanisms often fail to elicit a change or action. There is a general sense of unaccountability due to this unresponsiveness and absence of monitoring tied to incentives for responsible performance. To promote collaborative governance, there should be a working system of communication among all actors, starting with a functional, interactive city website.

Overall goal: Direct engagement through two-way communication.

Vision

- ✓ Regular, fast, and coherent online communication ensures the message has been conveyed to citizens and vice-versa.
- ✓ Various communication and monitoring ICT tools.
- ✓ Interactive information request mechanisms on the website and highly accessible media (SMS, local print media, radio, etc).
- ✓ An interactive database for forms and administrative processes that can be submitted and tracked online, with the added value of saved time to both citizens and the administration.
- ✓ Monitoring mechanisms tailored for different processes, applied on a regular basis.

Specific Action

WHAT	A new City Website to act not only as a source of timely, accurate, relevant information, but also as a medium for interaction between all stakeholders.
HOW	The site should include effective content organization; a question and answer section; e-form and tracking capabilities; calendar of events; weekly/monthly newsletters; service maps and provider contact information; contact information of community groups; online complaint and redress system with SMS integration.
WHO	Municipality, University of Durrës students and experts
WHEN	1-2 years
INDICATORS	Active site and content online; the response by citizens to the site and its efficiency advantages (based on online user survey)
HOW MUCH	The cost and maintenance of a new template /technical intervention for adjustment; maintenance and regular updating of the site; promotional costs. Estimate: 10,000 USD