

## Citizen Participation: Solid Waste Improvements in Albania

Under the ICMA CityLinks program, Catawba County, North Carolina, and Tirana, Albania, began working together in 2001 to improve environmental conditions at the landfill, expand waste collection services, and strengthen management of Tirana's infrastructure. The partnership, funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development, successfully connected the county's public works expertise with Tirana's new mayor, who was committed to improving local government services after years of neglect.

### **Engaging the Community: Task Force, Volunteers, and Youth Involvement**

Beginning in 2005, the CityLinks team focused on improving solid waste collection management and infrastructure through a revised zone system, new collection contracts, and increased citizen awareness and involvement. To jumpstart the citizen participation component, a volunteer task force was created in the "Television Block" neighborhood. The task force, made up of Tirana city staff, government health department representatives, private contractors, university students, and representatives of a paper mill and a paper recycling company, conducted a door-to-door campaign to raise awareness, assess attitudes toward recycling, and measure expected volume of waste and recyclables. In a community with a history of no citizen participation, creation of the task force alone was a significant success factor in beginning to build a new the partnership between the city government and neighborhood residents.

More than 30 volunteers kicked off Tirana's recycling and community cleaning program in May 2007. The volunteers worked in four teams to collect debris in the streets, recycle trash, wash and sanitize the streets, distribute recycling bins, and hand out brochures to residents and businesses to encourage recycling. With support from the CityLinks team, the volunteers covered four neighborhood streets, generated media coverage, and talked with residents about the importance of getting involved.

To broaden the volunteer commitment and spread the message, the CityLinks team held a poster competition for elementary, middle, and high school students. Winners were recognized during the clean-up day. The poster contest added to the successful outcomes of the CityLinks effort by getting young people involved and increasing neighborhood pride.

### **A Cleaner Future**

The CityLinks program successfully raised awareness of the environmental benefits of proper waste management, laid a foundation for citizen commitment to neighborhood cleanliness and recycling, encouraged schools to become more involved in recycling, and provided a model for similar clean-up days in seven additional neighborhoods. The CityLinks team also developed an English language recycling handbook, which was then translated into Albanian to guide future municipal efforts.

### **ABOUT ICMA**

ICMA (International City/County Management Association) is the premier local government leadership and management organization worldwide. Its mission is to create excellence in local governance by developing and advancing the professional management of local government. ICMA has been doing this since 1914 by providing technical and management assistance, training, and information resources to its members and the local government community. ICMA International was created in 1989 to further the ICMA mission worldwide. Since then it has successfully designed, implemented, and evaluated hundreds of international projects, establishing a solid reputation for its practical, hands-on approach to meeting global challenges.