

Albana Shala

Summary

A media development specialist with wide experience in the Balkans, the former Soviet Union and Central America. Areas of expertise include: design and management of media training and development projects; media and communication strategies; policy advice on social political contexts to government and non-government actors, advocacy work on media freedoms, gender equality and journalists' safety, practical knowledge of media development in unstable environments; knowledge of Muslim societies and post-communist political issues.

Highlights

- *As chair of UNESCO's IPDC (International Programme for the Development of Communication), responsible for leading the IPDC Council and Bureau work in contributing to sustainable development, democracy and good governance by strengthening independent media in the developing countries. This work is carried out by yearly assessing projects coming from all over the world and contributing to UNESCO's work in promoting freedom of expression, safety of journalists, public access to information, and meaningful communication to achieve the SDGs. I work with the Secretariat and the Bureau to define better communications strategy for IPDC; assessing the media development sector and fine-tuning the niche of the Programme.*
- *As programme coordinator for Free Press Unlimited (Amsterdam), designed and oversaw a range of projects funded by government and private donors to upgrade local media in Albania, Kosovo, Mexico, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan. Activities have included supporting local journalists in media projects to improve news provision, promote investigative and citizen journalism, develop platforms of exchange of relevant regional information, support media (self) regulatory institutions, mobilizing local and international expertise.*
- *As poet, writer of fiction and non fiction with publications in German, Dutch and Albanian. "Papa Dixhital" (The Digital Pope) first poetry collection was awarded the Migjeni prize by the Ministry of Culture of Albania.*

Career History

Assignment: Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs via Free Press Unlimited

Position: Chair of UNESCO's IPDC

Dates: 2014 - to present

IPDC is the only multilateral forum in the UN system designed to mobilize international community to discuss and promote media development in developing countries. The Programme not only provides support to media projects but also seeks an accord to secure free and pluralistic media. IPDC is the cradle of the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and Issue of Impunity.

- On behalf of the Netherlands, elected by IPDC Council to lead the work of the Council and the Bureau in between the Council's meetings. Responsible for overseeing the project approval, the allocation of funds from the Special Account, the organization of the work of the Council Session and initiating policy debates related to the safety of journalists, gender equality in and through media, migration, radicalization and media.

Employer: Free Pres Unlimited (Amsterdam)

Position: Programme Coordinator, Kososo, Moldova, Mexico, the South Caucasus

Dates: 2011 - to present

Free Press Unlimited is an international development organization that helps local journalists all over the world and often in conflict areas, to provide audiences with improved media services and reliable news and information.

- Responsible for designing and overseeing Dutch-government funded programme of media support activities in Kosovo, Moldova, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Mexico.
- Activities have included supporting the establishment of local radio and TVs (Moldova, Kosovo, the Caucasus), online news services (Kosovo, Moldova), self- regulatory institutions (Kosovo), investigative training institutions (Mexico, Moldova, Kosovo, Azerbaijan, Armenia), youth oriented media (Kosovo), platforms for exchange of productions and citizens' reporting (the Caucasus), safety training (Azerbaijan), women's magazines (Kosovo), developing successful proposal for Russian-language project to support independent media.

Employer: Press Now (Amsterdam)

Position: Programme Manager

Dates: 1998-2010 Albania, Former Yugoslavia, the South Caucasus

Press Now was a media development organization, Amsterdam based, which supported local media in the Balkans and latter throughout OSCE countries providing audiences with improved media services and reliable information.

- Responsible for the design and overseeing Dutch-government funded programmes in support of media in the Balkans and the Caucasus. Programme involved a wide range of training activities and a regional journalists' exchange, with travel around the country and the region.

Employer: SNV (Tirana)

Position: Programme Advisor

Dates: 1997

SNV is the Netherlands based organization, with a presence in many countries of the world. This international agency aims to make a lasting difference in the lives of people living in poverty. The programme in Albania aimed at strengthening local governance and local civil society sector through joint strategic planning and action.

- Advisor overseeing establishment of a network of civil society organizations which would work with local government in four main regions of Albania: preparing programmes where local civil society actors would be involved (communication, rural development, tourism), coordinating with the international experts for each activity.

Employer: United Nations Development Programme (Tirana)

Position: Programme Assistant

Dates: 1993-1994

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) began its operations in Albania in 1991. UNDP is part of a single cooperation plan of 19 UN agencies, funds and programmes with the Government of Albania to foster sustainable development, democracy and good governance and promote human rights. UNDP works with the government and people of Albanian civil society to strengthen rule of law, promote human rights and freedoms, protect the environment and support reforms for social inclusion and equitable society.

- Provided organizational support to the Programme Unit and later assisted the UN Resident Coordinator.
- Provided regular political analysis of the Albanian press (internal).

Assisted the writing and production of communications materials (reports, including the first UNDP Human Development Report).

Employer: 8 Nëntori Publishing House (Tirana)

Position: Editor

Dates: 1990-1992

8 Nëntori Publishing House was founded in 1974 and was state owned. It published mainly political works and non fiction, ending its activity in 1994.

- Editing of translated non fiction works
- Working in the Dictionaries' Section

Additional information:

- 2013 - to present: **Board member** of Foundation In den Vreemde. The Foundation provides temporary space in the Netherlands for artists, journalists and activists in exile.
- 2010: **Resident** at International Writers' Program, Iowa's Writers Workshop, The University of Iowa, USA.
- 1997 - to present: **Author** of several articles on media and society published in Albania and the Netherlands
- 1995 - to present: **Organizer** of dozens of meetings on issues related to sustainable development, human rights, the social political situation of the Balkans, the Caucasus, former Soviet Union, media independence, youth and radicalization, safety of journalists, freedom of expression and Internet; in the Netherlands, France, Albania, Kosovo, Mexico, Georgia, Ukraine.
- 1995 - to the present: **Public speaker** and **performer** at Universities, TED events, conferences, debates and literary festivals in English, Albanian, Dutch.
- 1998 - **Editor** of "Free Press in South-Eastern Europe - Why Independent Media Should be supported in Countries in Transition" publication.
- 1995 - to the present: **Participant** in training and workshops: Race and Ethnicity (Salzburg Seminar), Financial management, Context and Needs Assessment, Project Monitoring and Evaluation (MDF training and consultancy, Ede), Safety and Security (Amsterdam and Amersfoort), First Aid and Psychological First Aid (Amsterdam).
- **Author** of three books of poetry and one book of short stories (in Albanian and Dutch).

Education:

- M.A. in Politics of Development, Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, The Netherlands,(1995-97).
Concentrations: media, globalization, social movements.
Dissertation: Post-communist change in Albania, the 90s.
- Post-Graduate Diploma in International Law, Institute of Social Studies, the Hague, the Netherlands (1995)
- B.A. English language and literature, Tirana University, Tirana, Albania (1986-89) Graduated with academic awards. Dissertation: Analysis of the realist novel of John Steinbeck: Grapes of Wrath.

Personal Details:

- Citizenship: Dutch
- Languages: Albanian, English, Spanish, Italian
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