Building our own futures:

Local action for sustainable development across Europe in the 21st century

A report for ANPED, the Northern Alliance for Sustainability

March 2005

ANPED Northern Alliance for Sustainability

“No matter where you’re from, everyone’s local!”

The Saw Doctors,
‘All the Way from Tuam’

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Summary

This report is produced by ANPED, the Northern Alliance for Sustainability. ANPED links NGOs in all parts of the UNECE region. It seeks to highlight the value of local action for sustainable development, not just in its' own terms but also where it is linked to a wider political agenda.

Local action for sustainable development takes literally hundreds of different forms, and within each of those forms there may in turn be hundreds of similar projects. Much of this action was stimulated by the Local Agenda 21 (LA21) initiative: most successful LA21s owe much of that success to the active roles played by local NGOs. It is possible to identify eight broad areas within local action:

- Raising awareness
- Meeting local needs and building capacity
- Tackling local problems
- Support for national action
- Local planning and co-operation
- Project development
- Stronger local governance
- Integrated development programmes – Local Agenda 21 and beyond

ANPED members are active in all these areas of work, and the full report includes fourteen case studies (*see 'The cases in summary' on page 4*) which highlight the range of NGO activity. Local action makes important contributions to meeting local needs and can help meet national targets. To do this well local action needs to be better supported and there are currently a range of barriers to good local action on sustainable development. These were identified by ANPED in 2001 and remain very relevant today.

If governments are to meet international and national targets then they need to be more active at the local level. To achieve that level of action they need to provide more effective support structures. There are four important ways in which every national government should start to provide better support. These are:

1 A national strategy for sustainable development that supports local action

Each nation should have a national strategy for sustainable development. There should be a section within this document which specifically sets out the need for local action both by local government and by NGOs, and shows how national government will support such action.

2 Spatial planning systems that recognise and value sustainable development perspective

Each nation needs a clear and democratic planning system. This system should recognise sustainable development as an over-arching framework and should also make clear the need to protect and enhance the environment as part of the strategy for sustainable development.

3 National and local procurement strategies

National and local governments are major purchasers of goods and services. They should ensure that they have strategies for procurement that contribute to sustainable development by including clear environmental standards, and seek to buy local goods and services wherever possible and appropriate.

4 Recognition of the value of activity by non-governmental groups and support for such action

National and local government should seek to engage with those organisations active at a local level, recognise the value of their work, and provide support frameworks to ensure that such work is not hindered and is as effective as possible.

Other significant areas for action include:

Sustainable development indicators
Each nation needs to be able to measure progress towards sustainable development at national and local levels. This requires a system of indicators.

Guidance and regulation for public sector bodies
There are many public sector bodies that can make important contributions to progress towards sustainable development. These include health service bodies, education agencies, environmental protection agencies and economic development programmes. There should be guidance and regulation for each of these agencies that sets out how they will help deliver the national strategy for sustainable development.

Leading by example
The behaviour of national and local government bodies sends powerful messages to other agencies and to businesses and citizens. There should be clear high-profile examples of good practice for sustainable development from government agencies on issues such as energy, transport, land use and civic engagement.

A clear legal status for sustainable development
This should be a priority for every national government, especially any government that has signed up to Agenda 21 and other international agreements.

More relevant materials can be found on the ANPED website, www.anped.org.

The cases in summary

Fourteen cases are referred to in this report. They are written up in full in the report (on the left hand pages). This section lists them in the order in which they occur.

1 Sustainable tourism in the Kopacevo wetland (Green Osijek, Croatia)

After the war Baranja was one of the areas in Croatia that was the most effected. The economy and industry collapsed and cultural heritage was destroyed. This project has used sustainable tourism as a way to help rebuild the local economy.

2 London Sustainability Weeks (London 21, UK)

London 21 is a network linking hundreds of small projects in the city of London. It organises London Sustainability Weeks to promote and celebrate local action and encourage local people to understand more about sustainable development.

3 The Sheshory Festival in the Carpathians (Green Dossier, Ukraine)

The Ethnic Music and Land-Art Festival "Sheshory 2004" was organized to raise awareness of environmental issues in the Carpathian Mountains. It looks to build support for the international Carpathian Convention through a 'real life, real nature, real music' festival.

4 Sustainable development and indigenous communities (FSDA, Altai Republic, Russian Federation)

FSDA has set up a local planning and awareness programme on sustainable development issues. They work with local indigenous people on ecotourism, alternative energy, conservation of natural and cultural heritage, and indigenous rights.

5 Joint NGO actions on waste (MilieuKontakt, Macedonia)

MilieuKontakt works with a range of NGOs in Macedonia. For this action seven NGOs worked with trainers for four months to plan high profile events for Earth Day 2003.

6 How poor women are involved in decision-making (CPSG Luzanivka and MAMA-86, Ukraine)

Luzanivka in Odessa suffered from major environmental problems which resulted in an environmental disaster. Local women organized themselves and the rest of the community for concerted action and have solved the main problems.

7 River coalition building in the Hornad Microregion (the SOSNA civic association, Slovakia)

Hornád Micro-region is an association of 14 villages in south-eastern Slovakia, suffering from multiple pollution problems. SOSNA has worked with active local authorities and organisations since 1997 on many projects, focusing on the Hornád river.

8 Strengthening Ukrainian NGOs in struggle with industrial pollution (Youth Environmental League of Prydniprovya (MELP) Dnipropetrovsk, Ukraine)

This project focused on water pollution by industrial enterprises, and worked to raise public awareness about the level of industrial pollution and its impact on public health. Ten grass-roots organizations from the region were involved.

9 Local action against mobile phone masts (Monitoring Network Health and Environment, Netherlands)

The Monitoring Network Health and Environment received many complaints about health impacts of phone masts and about the operation of a stakeholder platform on these issues. Their legal challenge led to tighter regulations.

10 Local Agenda 21 in Berlin: Grüne Liga, Berlin

The development of the Local Agenda 21 programme in Berlin has been actively supported right from the start by the Grüne Liga NGO. They set up the 'Projektstelle Local Agenda 21' which disseminates information, promotes involvement and runs newsletters and a website.

11 European indicators in Czech Towns – the TIMUR project (IEP, Czech Republic)

Three NGOs have set up a network called "TIMUR" that supports the work of local communities on local sustainability indicators.

12 Sustainable cities and Local Agenda 21 ("For Sustainable Human Development", Armenia)

This project looked to set up pilot work on LA21 in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia with financial support from the Government of Switzerland. It has helped a range of cities develop action plans.

13 Environmental management in Dushanbe (FSCI, Tadjikistan)

The 'Program of Environmental Management' was started in Dushanbe, the capital of the Republic of Tadjikistan, in July 2004. The NGO "Foundation to support civil initiatives" has organised all the main activities on issues such as Water, Waste, Air, and Health.

14 The road to sustainability (Westden, UK)

Westden has developed out of a Local Agenda 21 programme and runs a range of integrated programmes and projects that stimulate sustainable development in an isolated rural area.

Case 1: SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION IN THE KOPACEVO WETLAND AND BARANJA: GREEN OSIJEK, CROATIA

Baranja is an area with a valuable natural heritage, including one of the biggest wetlands in Europe – Kopacevo (www.kopacki-rit.com). After the war in the former Yugoslavia ended in 1997 it was one of the most damaged areas in Croatia. Economy, industry and agriculture had collapsed, 50% of citizens were unemployed, cultural heritage was destroyed and the traditional way of life was endangered.

The critical economic situation was affecting the natural heritage. Hunters from other countries were paying tiny sums to local people for access to the area, which was already suffering a lack of animals because of the war. Hunting was damaging endangered species such as cormorants and other birds. There was also unregulated cutting of forests and wastes were being dumped in the wetlands.

In 1998 the ecological association Green Osijek started a project "Kopacevo wetland needs help". They worked first on public awareness using posters, leaflets, and the media to highlight the problems faced in Baranja. In 2001 they started a project "Sustainable tourism and education for environment in Kopacevo wetland".

This project supported development of eco-tourism in Baranja as a sustainable long-term solution to give local people economic benefits as well as protecting the natural and cultural heritage. It was supported by the Croatian government, the British and US embassies and other agencies. Educational workshops helped local people understand how to start eco-tourism, work as well as learning about the natural and cultural values of the region. Environmental education in schools helped children to learn about these issues.

Local government supported Green Osijek's work right from the start, seeing them as a partner that could help the sustainable development of Baranja. Local municipalities worked with Green Osijek to organise festivals where local people presented their foods, handicrafts, clothes, music etc.

After four years, more than 20 local households now make a living from sustainable tourism, and many more are coming to workshops to find out how to get involved. About 1500 pupils have taken part in educational activities and there are other benefits:

- other natural sites are recognized as potential eco-tourist destinations and plans are being made for their protection;
- young people are starting to sell souvenirs and practice old handicrafts;
- two village museums have opened; and
- students from a Management School are helping with training.

Green Osijek now have a traditional house on the edge of the Kopacevo wetland to start an Eco centre Zlatna Greda (www.zlatna-greda.org), where they will develop more education and eco tourism work. In 2001. this project won the "Volunteers of the year in Croatia" award and Green Osijek have made presentations on it at the WSSD in Johannesburg 2002 and in Nepal in 2003. ●

1 Introduction

In the twelve years since the 1992 Rio Summit the idea of local sustainable development has taken root and flowered in every part of Europe. This has been inspired partly by the Local Agenda 21 process, but has also built on a long history of local action by groups working on environmental issues. That work has tackled local problems but has also consistently linked to European and global issues, looking to demystify these bigger issues and to generate effective local action in support of the changes that must be made.

This work has expanded rapidly in the last few years. A detailed survey in the UK suggested a trebling in the number of people involved in local action from 1992 – 2002; the rapid growth and development of NGOs in Eastern Europe and the NIS has also led to growing awareness of the value of local action.

Globally the picture is not so good. Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations, has commented that when it comes to sustainable development, there is a "crisis of implementation". Governments have signed up to agreements and treaties but have failed to honour their commitments by taking the nations they signed up to. The lack of adequate pressure for sanctions has made this all too easy.

However others might say that some of the targets set have been too difficult for some nations (this is by no means an excuse for richer nations). Rather than just setting long-term targets and then doing little to support those targets, government and agencies should also focus on building on success.

This focus on what works has shown that local action is essential and can certainly make a difference. Without effective local action many international and national agendas are likely to fail to achieve their aims and remain nothing more than documents and ideas: tackling this 'implementation gap' is critical if strategies for sustainable development are to deliver real change.

Local action does mean different things to different organisations. There is a tendency for many governments to assume that 'local' means local government. Yet despite the success of the Local Agenda 21 initiative in many nations, the ability (and desire) of local government bodies to tackle environmental and sustainability issues remains very limited in many parts of the region. More effective local action has often (as the cases here show) been launched and led by NGOs and voluntary sector bodies. Some of the best has emerged where NGOs have been able to work in co-operation with local government, but it is the determination and inspiration that comes from good NGOs that seems to make the difference in many cases.

The starting point for effective implementation has to be building the capacity and confidence of people to take decisions and to act in a way that favours, rather than prevents, a sustainable outcome. Those people may be in NGOs and local government but may equally be working in other agencies or simply active citizens working in their own communities. All have a role to play and all need better support.

Local action takes many forms (*as we will show in section 3*). It is by no means simply there to meet local needs nor is it just local support for national campaigning initiatives. There is a rich mix of actions, all of which have an extra benefit. Action that takes places in people's neighbourhoods shows those people that change is possible and that they

Case 2: LONDON SUSTAINABILITY WEEKS: LONDON 21 UK

London 21 promotes, supports and networks those engaged in community-based action for sustainability in the Greater London area. Currently, over one and a half thousand organisations and individuals are involved in the London 21 Sustainability Network. It provides information services including a monthly e-newsletter with London-wide news and events listings, e-mail discussion groups, a quarterly printed newsletter and a website with a directory of contacts and community-based project case-studies, and news and events listings – see www.london21.org. It also runs the London Green Map Project, an interactive London-wide website that allows people to search by postcode and add their projects. See www.london-green-map.org for more information.

The largest project to date is London Sustainability Weeks. This two-week programme celebrates local action for sustainability in Greater London, to coincide with World Environment Day on 5 June. Events are organised by local organisations and London-wide networks: there are nine supporting partner organisations, who work on issues such as food-growing, recycling, city farms, energy etc.

This was run on a small scale in 2003 (with about 50 events in one week). In 2004, London 21 received financial support for this work and expanded the event from one to two weeks. The partnership of organisations supported over 350 local events across the city. Certain days were designated theme days to focus attention on issues such as energy, working with black and minority ethnic groups, cycling etc.

The core idea is that it can be hard for small projects to get any media coverage on their own. By working together they are able to provide a much stronger story for the press and TV.

Local authorities are also now actively involved. Most of London's 32 local authorities work with local communities to organise events in their own areas and also run a major London-wide conference for secondary schools on an environmental theme.

The idea of 'local sustainability festivals' is now being taken up by other UK cities and the 2004 ANPED AGM also agreed that this was something that should be developed in other cities and regions across Europe. ●

can be actively involved in such changes. This can be a powerful tool to help change behaviour around those issues such as transport and energy use where behaviour change will be vital if we are to meet international targets.

But those organisations promoting and delivering local action face many problems. ANPED's previous report on this subject (*see section 2*) highlights those obstacles, all of which are as problematic now as they were in 2001. More and better local action will not happen until those barriers are tackled at local national and global levels.

Local action is rarely if ever independent of national and global frameworks. Good local action needs a supportive policy framework if it is to flourish and deliver. This report shows just how far local action can be effective: the case studies of work by ANPED members and others show innovation, imagination and above all commitment, but these are still good examples – they are not common practice.

Examples of good practice are essential for providing ideas and inspiration but they also need to feed into the policy frameworks. Yet at present there is little opportunity for this to happen, nor is there much evidence that most politicians at national or European levels see local action as anything more than projects to be visited for photo opportunities.

This report therefore celebrates what is being done by organisations across Europe, but it also highlights the need for better policy and support frameworks to ensure that good practice can indeed become common practice.

Case 3: THE CARPATHIAN FESTIVAL "SHESHORY-2004" – PROMOTING THE CARPATHIAN CONVENTION AND CELEBRATING LOCAL CULTURE. 'GREEN DOSSIER', UKRAINE

The Carpathian Convention (The Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians) was developed over several years and was adopted at the 5th Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe (Kiev, May 2003). It has been signed by the environmental ministries of seven states of the region (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Serbia & Montenegro and Ukraine).

The Convention was based on partly on the existing Alpine Convention but also on extensive consultation with organisations and communities throughout the Carpathian Mountains. It is expected to become a guideline for living and working in Carpathians, and proposes sustainable development principles for improving the quality of life within local economies and communities and the enhancement of both nature and local culture.

NGOs involved in this work wanted to cooperate with local communities and small businesses and involve all organisations to develop local sustainability, and to promote the Convention as widely as possible while also respecting local traditions. With this in mind the Ethnic Music and Land-Art Festival "Sheshory 2004" was organised. This raised public awareness of environmental issues through a cultural event which gathered artists, musicians and public (especially young people) from many countries in a small Carpathian village for a 'real life, real nature, real music' festival.

The Festival took place over three days in July and started on the eve of the Ivana Kupala holiday. It was held in the Carpathian village of Sheshory in Ukraine, surrounded by hills and meadows, and on the banks of a mountain stream and waterfall. The aim was to hold an open-air festival that brought together ethnic music and land art (a branch of art based on the relationships between the human being and the environment). There was music from many different countries – Ukraine, Poland, Russia, Czech and Ireland – and the music styles highlighted ethnic roots and their different links into contemporary music culture including ethnojazz and dub reggae.

Local sites became an open exposition of land-art, and festival visitors were able to walk around, see the land-art and talk to the creators. Over 20 groups performed for more than 3000 visitors who came from all over the Caprpathians as well as from the USA, Britain and Austria. The Festival joined the musicians and the audience; everyone became a part of the general creative process during celebrations including environmental events, master-classes on traditional music and hand-crafts and wide discussions about the relations between environment and arts, and about the future of the Carpathian Convention.

A round table meeting on the implementation of the Carpathian Convention was also held at the time of the festival in Sheshory village. This brought together 35 people from Ukraine, Poland, UK, USA, and Austria NGOs, including officials from local, regional and state administrations, tourism experts, as well as academics, artists, musicians, journalists and local community people.

A festival of this kind was a new and unique event in Ukraine, bringing together environmental issues and art. All the main Ukrainian TV companies and the most popular magazines and news-papers covered the festival events. One important outcome was that journalists who usually covered cultural topics included environmental issues in their stories. The festival was organized by the 'Green Dossier' information centre from Kyiv in cooperation with a number of environmental NGOs from the region, cultural and tourism groups, and with support from businesses and officials. ●

2 Tackling the barriers to local action on sustainable development

In 2001 ANPED launched a report on *"Overcoming the barriers to effective local action on sustainable development"* at the UN Commission on Sustainable Development in the run-up to the Johannesburg WSSD.

That report identified a range of political and institutional barriers that are preventing local sustainability programmes from achieving their full potential. It made a series of recommendations for action by national governments and international agencies that would help remove those barriers. These are still very relevant, and with the current focus on National Strategies for Sustainable Development, some are particularly important. These points from 2001 include:

- Sustainability cannot be achieved locally or nationally without the effective participation of the voluntary and community sector. **Central and local governments need to accept that NGOs and community-based organisations are essential to making sustainable development a reality and develop clear ways of working with them on planning and delivering action plans, ideally through a national forum.**

- Few national strategies provide guidance for work at a local level. **National governments should work with local authorities and NGOs to identify priorities within these plans and to agree how these can be helped by co-ordinated actions at a local level.**

- Awareness of sustainable development is still low both amongst the public and those working in national and local government. **There is a need for a new internationally-guided information and awareness initiative to promote and support local action.**

The underlying points also remain the same. National governments are failing to implement national and international agreements, and in most cases lack the capacity (and perhaps the will) to deal with local-level issues. Local government may also lack that capacity and also lack the will, often due to a complete lack of guidance from the national level.

Case 4: LOCAL AGENDA 21 – LINKING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES IN THE ALTAI REPUBLIC OF RUSSIA

FSDA is an NGO working in four indigenous districts in the high Altai Mountains, near the Russian border with Mongolia and Khazakstan. They have worked to develop a Local Agenda 21 programme as a way to work with indigenous communities. They started by developing so called "initiative groups" of indigenous leaders in four districts who became the main partners and promoters of sustainable development issues.

After three years work on LA21 they became more experienced and gathered more participants into a new indigenous community framework. There are now initiative groups on various issues including users of solar and wind energy, ethnic tourism individuals and organizations, and ethnic and nature parks indigenous managers. Four of these local initiative groups consist of activists from indigenous communities. The initiative groups have also organized three local community based tourism organizations which use alternative energy tools and cater for tourists offering their traditional houses (yurts), camels, horses, traditional foods and souvenirs in remote areas of the Altai Mountains.

There are more than 200 indigenous leaders within Altai, united through the network, and four regional indigenous NGOs within Russia. FSDA runs internship programmes on different issues for these groups and the interns become partners and drivers of sustainable development issues. This network has a web-site: www.indigenous.ru. and runs NPIR projects (Network for Promotion of Indigenous Rights in Russia).

Local government bodies have been one of the main stakeholders for the LA21 work, developing and implementing sustainable development strategies. Through LA21 they have learned more and became more concerned about the indigenous communities problems. Some local government officials are now heads of initiative groups.

FSDA is working hard to foster promotion and development of the Ethnic and Nature Parks where indigenous communities are main stakeholders and drivers of local development and conservation issues. They help with developing and implementing small projects and facilitate educational and capacity building programs (including internship programs on indigenous rights and sustainable development issues). They also provide technical and financial assistance in implementing their projects. Recently they supplied six communities with solar power modules.

As a result of all this work there are clear tangible outcomes. There are now five Ethnic and Nature Parks which are totally run by local people who have been educated and supported by FSDA. These parks combine conservation and development issues using both indigenous and scientific approaches in zoning and landscape planning of the parks' areas. Sacred sites are identified as core areas equal to biodiversity concentration spots, and in buffer zones around them local people are engaged in traditional land use and ecotourism.

There are other important results. Indigenous communities of the Altai had been fighting for several years to take back a small 2.5 hectare area by the Teletskoye Lake from a big industrial and tourist company. In June of 2006, the indigenous community "Altyn Kel" which is led by FSDA ex-interns, legally won at the regional courts and took this site back to their indigenous communities. ●

3 The flowering of local action

Local action for sustainable development takes literally hundreds of different forms, and within each of those forms there may in turn be hundreds of similar projects. It is possible to identify eight broad areas within local action:

- Raising awareness
- Meeting local needs and building capacity
- Tackling local problems
- Support for national campaigns
- Local Planning and co-operation
- Project development
- Stronger local governance
- Integrated programmes – LA21 and beyond

These issues are covered in more detail in the next sections.

3.1 Raising awareness

Perhaps the most basic work being done locally focuses on building awareness of environmental and sustainability issues. This is an issue everywhere: even the most 'environmentally-aware' nations still need more involvement from local people if they are to meet ambitious targets on climate change and other issues.

Awareness-raising and especially awareness-raising leading to involvement remains crucial. There are rightly concerns in some nations that this work has slowed, especially in terms of turning awareness into action. Work is done, ambitious national publicity programmes are planned and carried out but for all the outputs of such work the outcomes in terms of lifestyle change or action are very limited.

There is evidence to suggest that such centrally-delivered programmes are less effective and also less cost-effective than locally-delivered action which can be seen to deliver change in the places where people live. A report for the UK research body, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation concluded that:

- Although the direct impacts of most local projects on resource use and the natural environment may be limited and mostly restricted to improvements in their own localities, the collective impact of such projects on national targets can be significant.
- The socio-economic impacts of such projects are frequently more immediately apparent and quantifiable. These include capacity building, training, community development and job creation.
- Local projects have important effects beyond their immediate impacts. One of the most important is in building awareness of, and engagement with environmental issues, and supporting individual and collective environmental action.

Case 5: LOCAL ACTIONS ON WASTE IN MACEDONIA

Milieukontakt Oost Europa is a Dutch-based NGO working with NGOs across Eastern Europe. They have been working in Macedonia since 2000. Their first focus was on institutional capacity building of environmental NGOs, but as that developed so they worked with the NGOs on new approaches.

The second project in Macedonia looked to go one step further in the development of the environmental movement. They planned to initiate and stimulate activism in environmental NGOs by implementing joint campaigns. The topic for these campaigns was selected during the first project, and it was the biggest environmental problem in Macedonia – solid waste. During the first period, the Macedonian environmental organizations had worked together to take action on the trash problem and to support solutions such as the separation and reprocessing of trash. The difference between this new approach and previous actions was the activist approach of the NGOs involved.

Seven NGOs from different parts of Macedonia worked on a four month counseling programme to plan and develop these local actions. Each NGO had a trainer provided by Milieukontakt to help the NGO to develop and implement the Activity. All the different activities were coordinated by the Milieukontakt Macedonia Office and the team of trainers. High profile events were planned as a way to attract public attention. All the events were planned to happen on the same day: April 22nd 2003, widely known as 'Earth Day'.

The actions focused on the illegal dumping of trash. They included symbolical cleaning of river banks, streets and parks. These were supported by protests, carnivals, street drawings, and street theatre performances – all unusual for Macedonia. Some well-known TV comedians came to help out and local citizens and school children all joined in. The small town on Pehcevo has just 3000 inhabitants, and 300 local people – 10% – joined the action. Most of the national and local TV channels and the national daily newspapers gave the actions excellent coverage.

This was not the first time environmental NGOs had worked together in Macedonia, but it was a big step forward. The new approach and careful planning led to activities that attracted a much higher level of interest from the public and media. It was a new starting point and way to work. It is hoped that more joint efforts by the environmental NGOs will help make this kind of activism a standard tool for them to achieve their common goals. ●

While such local action may be effective in its own terms it needs co-ordination and support. Integrated action by local voluntary organisations or NGOs, often working with local government, can take a message to a wide range of audiences and offer an opportunity for co-ordinated initiatives. National 'environment weeks', the EU's Green Days and global actions such as Earth Day all link and indeed depend on local initiatives for their success.

In two of the case studies these have been further developed – London Sustainability Weeks (**case 2**) linked over 350 projects in that city, while NGOs in Macedonia (**case 5**) used Earth Day for the first national co-ordinated action on waste issues. The Sheshory festival in Ukraine (**case 3**) went one step further, in organising a music and cultural event that directly linked to work on sustainable development in the Carpathian Mountains.

3.2 Meeting local needs and building capacity

Sustainable Development, at the most basic level, is about meeting environmental, social and economic needs now and in the future. There are still many places in the European UNECE region where those basic needs are not being met, and where governments appear to signally lack the capacity to deliver adequate services or develop the economy in ways that help local people earn their livelihood.

NGOs are helping meet people meet their needs in some unlikely ways and places, and are successfully integrating this work with environmental improvements. Work with indigenous people in the remote Altai region of Russia by CDFSA (**case 4**) is one example, while the 'Green Osijek' project (**case 1**) shows how environmental action can help restore a local economy wrecked by war.

Central to meeting local needs is building the capacity of the local people to meet those needs for themselves. This requires a focus on the local community that is not always easy for policy-centred environmental NGOs, but there is a growing awareness of the need for such work and of the challenges and opportunities around it.

The work done to tackle serious sewage and industrial pollution problems by the women's organisations in Odessa (now linked to the NGO 'Mama 86') (**case 6**), is one example, while the long-term work done by 'SOSNA' in the villages of the Hornad micro-region near Kosice in Slovakia (**case 7**) is playing an important part in building their combined capacity.

3.3 Tackling local problems

Perhaps the most 'traditional' form of local activity is local people getting together to tackle local problems. Environmental problems vary enormously across Europe and governments are often slow or unprepared to act.

Many major NGO campaigns, such as those on Acid Rain in the 1980s, or nuclear power or clean beaches, started in a few local areas, where a problem had become most urgent and where a few individuals mobilised and organised. Within a few years many such local initiatives grew into international campaigns.

Local action on problems such as pollution therefore often has significance and impact beyond the immediate issues, by highlighting a problem, by raising media and political interest, and in some cases directly confronting or negotiating with those who are causing the problem.

Case 6: INVOLVING POOR WOMEN IN DECISION-MAKING: THE COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC SELF GOVERNMENT LUZANIVKA AND MAMA-86, UKRAINE

Luzanivka is a district of Odessa in Ukraine. For many years it suffered from two major environmental problems. Due to a lack of necessary sewage-pumping capacity in the district, residential houses were often affected by sewage spills. The more serious problem facing residents was the nearby chemical plant that ran a facility for cleaning railway oil tanks in the open air. This problem led finally to a severe environmental disaster in 1996, when 6 people died.

This led to much activity in the community and a group of poor women organized themselves and the rest of the community for concerted action. They initially focused their activities at the grass-roots level, working with local people who were most severely affected by the environmental crisis. They approached their local authority several times, but were told that there were no funds to address the sewage and air pollution problems.

They responded by working harder and built up their own expertise. They started to measure the level of air pollution in the residential area. The women worked with other residents to document the full extent and impact of the environmental problems. Then, with the help of a lawyer, they got 80 residents to sue the local authority for failure to act on air and sewerage problems. To back this up they collected signatures for a petition, ran community meetings and information events, and organised a telephone blockade of the City Council.

Working with the NGO Mama-86 they looked for international support and got it. 102 NGOs from more than 33 countries wrote to the city mayor with requests to close down the dangerous chemical plant. They also looked to international legislation: they printed their own copies of the UNECE Aarhus Convention on access to information and justice and distributed these to all the members of the City Council.

This political campaign, which was directed at local and national politicians, was eventually successful. The national government, despite the difficulties facing the Ukrainian economy, agreed to give money from state budget for construction of the sewage pump facility.

The local authority also allocated funds for environmental works in the district.

It was a new experience for people in Ukraine to get organized for protection of their rights and to engage politicians in this manner. The women have led the way in creating a participatory culture. While they started with protests, they are now working in co-operation with the state government and local authority. Luzanivka may still be a poor community but the sewage facility has been built, the hazardous waste facility was destroyed and the wetlands polluted by the oil have been cleaned up. Now the women from the 'Committee of Public self government Luzanivka' are working together with MAMA-86 to develop work on environmentally-safe housing. ●

Local action is crucially important here. The NGOs involved may be in the front line of a much bigger and longer struggle. As such they need support from larger organisations, and a recognition of the value of independent local action. The work on pollution by the Youth Environmental League of Prydniprovya (MELP) in Dnipropetrovsk, Ukraine (**case 8**) shows what can be achieved in difficult circumstances, while work by a small Dutch NGO, the Monitoring Network on Health and Environment (**case 9**) has led to national action on the issue of mobile phone masts. Westden (**case 14**) started out working on specific local issues and have now linked many of these into an integrated programme (*see 3.8*).

3.4 Support for national campaigns

For some organisations this is what local action is all about. National NGOs set an agenda and local action supports it through lobbying, awareness-raising or other appropriate action. This is the central focus of well-established and supported local networks, especially in western European nations, of bodies such as Friends of the Earth. This can lead to networks of well-informed politically active organisations.

However for many local organisations this is only a small part of their work and there is often a lack of connection between those local organisations that do work in this way and the wider community and voluntary sector. This is perhaps unfortunate: many voluntary sector organisations would happily support political campaigns (if the information is presented to them clearly) but they do not want to be seen as subsidiary to national organisations which they may not understand or trust.

There is a need for better communication and planning if the real potential of strong local support for national issues is to be realised.

3.5 Local planning and co-operation

Traditionally much local action has been critical of local authorities, but in the last decade that critical spirit has been supplemented by an understanding of how co-operation and joint working is also possible. This new phase of co-operation with local government has come out of the Local Agenda 21 / Local Action 21 (LA21) movement.

LA21 is an idea referred to just once in one of the 40 chapters in the groundbreaking Agenda 21 global action plan. But this seed of an idea has flowered in thousands of different ways: over 6000 LA21 processes have been reported world-wide and many other linked processes are taking the same idea without using the name.

LA21 has been analysed on a few occasions: ANPED was involved in the major 12 nation European report, published as ‘Sustainable Communities in Europe’ (Earthscan 2001). While all analyses have pointed out the value of public and NGO involvement there has been little assessment of the importance of NGO activity both in getting this work moving and sustaining it in the longer term.

What evaluation there is suggests that some remarkable work has emerged from LA21, often based around a few champions who have had the support and resources to turn some complex ideas into good work on the ground. What started out as a consultation exercise has in the best cases developed into ‘an ongoing conversation’, and one conducted between a range of groups, many of them hard at work even as they debate.

The huge diversity of work done under the LA21 banner is illustrated in this report. The work by Grüne Liga in Berlin (**case 10**) is a good example of a progressive process

Case 7: RIVER COALITION BUILDING IN THE HORNÁD WATERSHED: SOSNA CIVIC ASSOCIATION, SLOVAKIA

The Hornád Microregion links 14 villages in south-eastern Slovakia near the big city of Kosice. Part of this region is polluted by industrial sources, as well as by small local sources, but other parts include well preserved wetlands, oxbow lakes and other natural features. SOSNA is an NGO based in Kosice and since 1997 they have co-operated with active local authorities and other organisations in the area. They have developed various projects focused on the Hornád river and its environment including a voluntary river watch scheme and Local Agenda 21 plans for some of the villages.

A review of this work showed that there were two important problems that had an influence on the quality of river and its life:

- lack of co-operation among local and regional subjects and stakeholders
- lack of public participation on water pollution reducing activities

SOSNA worked with their local partners on ways to find solutions for these problems.
The ideas they arrived at are:

- development of a cross sectoral partnership within the Hornád watershed aiming to cut levels of river pollution
- organising specific activities in the river basin in order to improve its quality and life
- changing the environmental policy of organisations that cause pollution within the watershed

To develop their partnership they decided to use the principles of the 'River Coalition' and 'River Contract'. These processes are used successfully around the world, but are almost unknown in central European countries.

In 2002 SOSNA organised a number of round tables and meetings with local stakeholders and potential members of the River Coalition. From these meetings they created the 'founders group' which is made up of nineteen organisations including local governments, schools, businesses, the river management company, and farmers. These founders were ready to organise activities for the river using their own resources. This founder group signed the River Contract and in November 2002 founded the Hornád River Coalition. The Coalition now has quarterly meetings to over see the fulfilling of agreed projects.

As a result of this work a range of projects are now under way for 2004:

- a cross-border bike route along the river
- tree-planting program in the region done by most villages
- design and creation of public parks in 3 villages
- revitalisation of one oxbow lake
- work to revitalise small wetlands
- prevention of erosion in streams by using small wooden dikes
- a clean-up of waste along river
- building a shelter for tourists
- building of two public composting toilets with cleaning pond (a pilot solution to the problem of a lack of central sanitation in rural areas)
- a public composting campaign and public composters in 4 villages
- development of an effective communication and information system in the region.

The River Contract, which has now been signed by 23 members, is the most important outcome, and it contains clear duties and inputs for all the members. ●

linking environmental and social issues in an urban context. On the other hand the work in the Altai republic in Siberia (**case 4**) is based on rural capacity-building and work with indigenous people. LA21 is all these things and more (*see 3.7*) and is leading to new initiatives. Work by London 21 (a network of groups working in and around LA21 programmes) (**case 2**) on 'local sustainability weeks', Green Mapping and environmental justice is taking sustainability in new directions.

With these new programmes has come the need to understand how they are making a difference. The last few years has seen a great deal of work on the use of local indicators and NGOs have played an important part in this work.

In 2000, at the Third European Conference on Sustainable Cities and Towns, Margot Wallstrom (then European Commissioner for the Environment) launched an initiative called "Towards a Local Sustainability Profile – European Common Indicators" (ECI). The aim was to put forward set of ten integrated indicators of local sustainability for adoption by local authorities across Europe. The set was prepared by a Working Group of the Expert Group on the Urban Environment working closely with a Group of Local Authorities. Since then, over 150 European cities and towns have been involved in testing and using ECI. In the Czech Republic three Czech NGOs set up the TIMUR project to promote the use of these indicators and was able to get both the national government and two cities to support this project (**case 11**).

3.6 Project development

Implementation needs action: such action needs practical work on the ground that turns plans and talk into clear improvements in quality of life. Project focused work is essential for many NGOs who cannot depend for their income on public support. Projects that offer clear outputs are for more appealing to funders than work on advocacy or the development of longer-term outcomes.

While there is an issue as to how far local project-based work may distract NGOs from more political work there is no doubt that many people and organisations find it satisfying and fulfilling. The ability to create a new project or centre where nothing existed before, to restore spaces or buildings that have fallen into decay, or to provide a service where none existed before is a valuable skill and one that should be recognised and supported.

In many cases such work is also more readily understood by people who are new to voluntary activity and can form the a base for longer-term capacity-building and community development. A survey in the UK before the Johannesburg Summit showed how the number of people involved in such action had increased three-fold over the ten years since 1992. During that time isolated projects had also started to network and develop: a flourishing community recycling network includes a range of successful social enterprises delivering waste recycling services to local councils.

But there is the issue of how such projects can and should engage on political issues. It is clearly important: there is little point in a village working to protect and improve local green spaces if a national development strategy then chooses those sites for a new road or new housing scheme and local people have not engaged with the development of that plan.

There is a need for better mutual understanding. Policy-focused groups need to understand the potential for building support that can comes from engaging with project-based groups, and the way in which such projects can demonstrate innovative

Case 8: "STRENGTHENING UKRAINIAN NGOS IN THEIR STRUGGLE AGAINST INDUSTRIAL POLLUTION" YOUTH ENVIRONMENTAL LEAGUE OF PRYDNIPROVYA (MELP), DNIPROPETROVSK, UKRAINE

This successful project had two aims. The first was to address the issue of water pollution by industrial enterprises and to raise public awareness concerning levels of industrial pollution in the region and the impact this has been having on public health. The second was to build the skills and capacity of the NGOs involved in these actions.

The project was developed and led by MELP, while another 10 grass-roots organizations from the region were involved in making the project happen.

The first step was data gathering. MELP organized an independent analysis of surface water contamination. Samples were taken for laboratory analysis and two reports were produced. Along with this MEKP organised an opinion poll to find out what local people thought about the environmental situation, the damage to people's health from industrial enterprises and the measures which should be taken. More than 1000 respondents from the city of Dnipropetrovsk took part in the survey.

A seminar was organised to launch these reports. Representatives of local authorities (both city and regional administrations) attended. From this further discussions developed. Local government and representatives of the relevant industrial enterprises were involved in developing a strategy to minimise the impact of these industries on the environment and on public health.

As a result discharges from the metallurgical plant and coke factory in Dnipropetrovsk that exceeded legal limits were stopped. There was also a long-term benefit. A new intersectoral organisation, the Nature Protection Collegium, was established with the City Council. This body is now consulted on all decisions on environmental matters which affect Dnipropetrovsk.

MELP staff and volunteers planned and coordinated all aspects of this project. Volunteers played important roles in project implementation and MELP worked to ensure wide involvement of representatives of local authorities, industrial enterprises and local communities. ●

ideas in practice. Project-based groups also need to engage with (and often be helped to engage with) political discussions which shape the context within which they work.

Most of the cases that are described here have some project work. Some, such as the work in Osijek (**case 5**) are very project focused; others such as the Macedonia training work (**case 1**) are helping create better projects and encouraging the people doing those to engage with national issues. Many of the LA21 programmes, which started off as consultation exercises are now generating a wide range of activities as can be seen in the UK (**cases 2 and 14**) and Siberia (**case 4**).

3.7 Stronger local governance

Where local government (and national) support for SD is weak, then NGOs lead the way: local and national government support for sustainable development is essential. NGOs have an important role to play in encouraging commitment and transparency within governments. This linking of participative democracy (from NGOs and communities) with representative democracy (from local government) is a process going on in different ways in every nation and some are much more advanced than others.

In Berlin Grüne Liga (**case 10**) are promoting local action through the parliamentary process, while in London London 21 are hosting a project which is seeking to evaluate how far new forms of local government set up as a result of central government directives are actually helping deliver sustainable development. In nations where this process is less advanced, NGOs are also playing a key role. The case studies from Armenia (**case 12**) and Tadjikistan (**case13**) show how small initiatives can help get local sustainability programmes under way, and in doing so can help build local democracy.

3.8 Integrated programmes – LA21 and beyond

The best local action programmes are perhaps those that are delivering sustainable development through a range of linked programmes, focusing on specific issues that are relevant to the area where they are working but also linking to national and international targets. At best sustainable development is emerging from a mixing of community development, environmental action and socio-economic development plans.

Organisations such as the Environmental Partnership are pioneering this approach in parts of central Europe, while two of the cases here – Westden in England (**case 14**) and SOSNA's work in the Hornad micro-region in Slovakia (**case 7**) – are long-term programmes that show that well-planned and supported work that consciously seeks to deliver sustainable development can and does work. Westden are now being seen as a good example for rural development by the UK Countryside Agency.

Case 9: LOCAL ACTION AGAINST MOBILE PHONE MASTS: MONITORING NETWORK HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT, THE NETHERLANDS

As mobile phone use rose to unprecedented levels, the Monitoring Network Health and Environment (MNGM) started to receive many complaints about health impacts of the masts and base stations. Alerted by MNGM, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and the Ministry of Transport and Water decided to research health effects by exposing healthy and susceptible subjects to GSM and UMTS frequencies under strict laboratory conditions.

The responsible ministries also recognized that there were a great many local protests against the placing of new masts and stations, and that these were being treated differently in different parts of the Netherlands. They thought it would be desirable to have one central guideline for new masts and base stations. They organized a stakeholder platform (the Antenna Platform) with providers, local authorities and NGOs. This resulted in a Covenant, a 'gentlemans' agreement' between all parties providing for consultation not only with the owners of the relevant land or buildings but also with the people living near proposed sites for masts and base stations.

MNGM then received many complaints about the interpretation and implementation of this Covenant. Together with an organization of environmental lawyers, the MNGM researched and then drew up a detailed report on the way this Covenant works in practice. The report was based on materials provided by local groups. As a result, the Ministry of Environment has organized a meeting with parties to the Covenant and members of civil groups, in order to sharpen directives on the Covenant.

This research into health effects resulted in the disquieting notion that susceptible as well as healthy subjects are affected even by short duration exposures, and there has been quite regular media attention to mobile phone issues. The movement against the proliferation of masts and base stations is gaining momentum, and information about successful local actions is rapidly shared. ●

4 Networking and co-operation: NGOs working together

One of the problems of local action is simply that it is local. It works in an area, and usually focuses firstly on local needs. This means that good work is often done with little recognition from elsewhere; more significantly there is a lack of dissemination of good replicable practice.

There is a need for more effective co-operation and networking that can make local to local links. This can not only promote what has been done but can also act as a way to improve overall practice and to show smaller projects how they relate to national and global objectives. There are also benefits for information-sharing and for the development of smaller co-operating groups within the network.

Many NGOs, including of course ANPED, work as or with networks. These may be:

- Area-based (regional) such as ANPED, which covers the whole UNECE region. Some, like ANPED, are open to any NGO that supports the aims, while others, such as Friends of the Earth, limit participation to one group per country.
- Area-based (smaller regions) such as the Carpathian network or coalitions around major watersheds such as the Danube
- Area-based (national) – several CEE countries now have effective national networks and open annual meetings
- Area-based (sub-national) – these vary from large networks such as London 21 to smaller networks such as the River Hornad coalition developed by SOSNA or the work in the Altai region of Russia
- Issue-based international networks, such as Bankwatch or the International Rivers Network
- Issue-based national networks of which there are many everywhere.

All such networks tend to face a common problem. Their outputs are often hard to define, since their main aim and outcome may be to increase the capacity and effectiveness of network members. This is not always easily evaluated and to do such evaluation takes time and money. While members consistently put a high value on the networks they find useful, funders are often sceptical due to the lack of clear short-term outputs.

If NGOs are to work together effectively in the long term, then properly supported networks will be essential. This in turn suggests that the networks will need to develop clearer evaluation processes to show the benefits that they deliver.

Local networking can also have benefits, especially for smaller projects. London Sustainability Weeks (**case 2**) mean that 350 smaller programmes can share in the publicity that a large event receives; on a smaller scale the work by Macedonian NGOs (**case 5**) showed how joint planning for a concerted campaign can provide lasting benefit.

Case 10: LOCAL AGENDA 21 IN BERLIN: GRÜNE LIGA, GERMANY

Local Agenda 21 has worked at two levels in Berlin – within each borough and across the whole city. The district of Köpenick started work in 1993, and eventually had the first LA21 document agreed by the district parliament and district council. Other boroughs followed their lead and from this came the call to develop a Local Agenda 21 for the whole of Berlin.

Grüne Liga and other NGOs were the initial drivers of this movement. It took three years work to encourage the Berlin city-wide administration to start to do anything about LA21. The first step was to found the 'Öffentlicher Arbeitskreis LA21' – an open meeting for all interested people. This aims to accelerate the exchange of experience between stakeholders across the city by effective teamwork, to co-ordinate the activities of the local communities and to improve communication between NGOs and the administration.

It was launched in autumn 1995 by environmental organisations, development initiatives, churches and other agencies. This open meeting supports the dissemination of successful LA21-linked projects across the city. These include the use of 'fair trade' coffee in canteens, energy-saving projects in schools, supplying children with organic food without additional costs in day-care centres, and work to encourage cycling.

In 1997 'Projektstelle Local Agenda 21' was founded by Grüne Liga. This programme disseminates information about the aims, contents and structure of the agenda process, about the best ways to participate and about current examples of sustainable development in Berlin to interested people and associations. The office runs an extensive library for the public and produces a bimonthly magazine "BERLINER BRIEFE" with news about LA21and an electronic newsletter. It runs the website www.agenda21berlin.de, which informs about important boards, contacts and meetings regarding LA21.

In the same year the "Round table for sustainable development in Berlin and Brandenburg", a network for sustainable innovations, was set up and a range of stake-holders were asked to participate. In 2000 it became the "Agenda Forum". 40 representatives of stakeholders including business, unions, NGOs, science and politics cooperate via this forum to build sustainable development for the region.

Both have been supported by the City Government (Senat von Berlin) 'Agendabureau', an office within its Department of Urban Development that coordinates the activities of local authorities, stimulates the content-related discussion concerning the future development and encourages activities in the districts of the city. Furthermore, this Agenda-Office coordinates the working group of representatives for the Local Agenda 21, which consists of at least one person from each Senate Department.

In November 2002 the Forum completed the first draft of the Berlin Agenda 21. It covers a wide range of issues:

- Sustainable city
- Transport / Mobility
- Climate Protection
- Social Urban Development
- Participation
- Promoting Innovations, Securing Employment,
- The Future of labour: Sustainable Regional Patterns for Development
- Structural Changes to Information Society
- Education for Sustainable Development
- Berlin in 'One World'
- Global Aspects of Local Agenda 21
- Implementing Gender Mainstreaming is a cross-sectional Task for all issues.

After more participation an improved version was agreed by Agenda Forum in March 2004. The Senate passed it on to the Parliament with an accompanying commentary in autumn 2004 and the document is now to be widely discussed in its different commissions, hopefully to emerge as a "Sustainability Plan" with a check-list for all parliamentary decisions. Linked to the document are 32 model projects representing some of the proposals of the of the agenda forum. These projects are very important, because they make LA21 real and visible. Agenda Forum has now developed in to a non-profit association 'BERLIN 21', still working with Grüne Liga, to take this work forward with new energy and commitment. ●

5 Towards an international local policy agenda

Effective local action makes important contributions to meeting local needs and can help meet national targets. To do this well local action needs to be better supported. That support needs to come from local and national government and international agencies.

This sets an agenda for action for ANPED. As an Alliance we need to *help and support* members develop their skills to work locally and to engage with local government and NGOs, but also to work nationally to put pressure on national governments. But we also need to *work with* members to put the pressure on international agencies and processes and engage with these bodies (including UNEP, the CSD and the various Convention processes and also local government international networks such as the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI)).

Those agencies need to commit to providing genuine and lasting support for local-level working, not just because that work may deliver some national agenda, but also because it is the most effective way to identify and meet local needs.

Our goals: an international policy agenda that supports local action

There are important issues that will help create an environment within which local action can flourish. Some nations in the region are working on all these matters: others are less advanced but we see these issues as essential for everyone in the longer term. There are four key points for every government:

1 A national strategy for sustainable development that supports local action

Each nation should have a national strategy for sustainable development. It was agreed at the 2002 WSSD that these should be developed now and that implementation should start by 2005. There should be a section within each document which specifically sets out the need for local action both by local government and by NGOs (and for co-operation between the two), and that outlines how national government will support this. The national strategy should also support local action for sustainable development based around the LA21 programme. The goals in the strategy should be measurable through use of sustainable development indicators at national and local levels.

2 Spatial planning systems that recognise and value sustainable development perspectives

Each nation needs a clear and democratic planning system. The framework for this system should recognise sustainable development as an over-arching framework and should also make clear the need to protect and enhance the environment (both natural and built) as part of the strategy for sustainable development.

Case 11: EUROPEAN INDICATORS IN CZECH TOWNS – THE TIMUR PROJECT

In 2002, following the launch of the "European Common Indicators" (ECI) three Czech NGOs (Institute for Environmental Policy, Regional Environmental Center for CEE, Czech Republic Office, and Koniklec Agency), all of whom had worked local sustainability for some time, set up TIMUR ('Team Initiative for Local Sustainable Development' – in Czech Tymova iniciativa pro mistni udrzitelny rozvoj). TIMUR´s mission is to support sustainable development of municipalities and their networks through implementation of local sustainability indicators. In 2002 – 2003 period, TIMUR coordinated a pilot project in two Czech cities – Vsetin and Hradec Králové. This phase was financially supported by the Czech Ministry of the Environment and by the towns themselves.

While TIMUR is an NGO initiative, local authorities can became its official partners, with the approval of local politicians – both city council and local government. TIMUR serves as external coordinator of the process and provides the cities with methodological support for each indicator, with surveys, training of civil servants and other stakeholders, data evaluation and interpretation and much more. TIMUR also runs a web page (www.timur.cz), where the results of all the indicators are presented.

TIMUR also works to involve citizens in partner towns in the selection of specific indicators. A range of different methods have been used (advertisements, leaflets, posters, questionnaire cards – distributed by students) to encourage citizens to vote for "their issue" – out of ten pre-selected by the local NGOs, municipality and TIMUR. Results were presented online on a special web page (www.tema2005.timur.cz) and in the cities. This was followed by public hearings and media work. In the town of Svitavy 611 people voted in the first phase and some 3-5000 were directly addressed by the actions (out of 18,000 inhabitants).

The involvement of local authorities is voluntary and goes well beyond their normal esponsibilities. They would also not have been able to support this work without the extra funds that TIMUR brought in. Without the support of the TIMUR NGOs, there would be no Czech town implementing ECI and no public involvement on these issues.

TIMUR has now extended its activities, with international support through a Czech-Flemish co-operation project and also by cooperation with other domestic partners including the Czech Republic Healthy Cities Network. More then Czech 10 towns and cities and one microregion have started (or are starting) to use sustainability indicators in their daily work. The results of indicators are now used to support project proposals for EU Structural Funds. They also support and inform spatial planning, provide arguments for improvement of safety of citizens and children travelling to schools, support development of public transport and bicycle paths and much more. ●

3 National and local procurement strategies

National and local government are major purchasers of goods and services. They should ensure that procurement contributes to sustainable development by including clear environmental standards and seeking to buy local goods and services wherever possible and appropriate.

4 Recognition of the value of activity by non-governmental groups and support for such action

National and local governments should seek to engage with organisations active at a local level, recognise the value of their work, and provide support frameworks to ensure that such work is as effective as possible.

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There are also other issues where work is needed. Some of these may be a long way off in some countries in the region but they should all be long-term targets for any NGO or other agency looking to see sustainable development become a reality.

5 A clear legal status for sustainable development

This should be a priority for every national government, especially any government that has signed up to Agenda 21 and other international agreements. There needs to be a clear statement, agreed at a national level, that commits the government to supporting work on sustainable development nationally and locally.

6 Sustainable development indicators

Each nation needs to be able to measure progress towards sustainable development at national and local levels. This requires a system of indicators. Such indicators should be clearly understandable and measurable locally and there should be an obligation on every local government to measure certain key indicators annually.

7 Guidance and regulation for public sector bodies

There are many public sector bodies that can make important contributions to progress towards sustainable development. These include health service bodies, education agencies, environmental protection agencies and economic development programmes, as well as local government. There should be guidance and regulation for each of these agencies that sets out how they will help deliver the national strategy for sustainable development. These regulatory frameworks should emphasise the need for transparency and freedom of information in line with the Aarhus Convention.

8 Leading by example

The behaviour of national and local government bodies sends powerful messages to other agencies and to businesses and citizens. There should be clear high-profile examples of good practice for sustainable development from government agencies on issues such as energy, transport, land use and civic engagement.

Case 12: DEVELOPING LOCAL AGENDA 21 IN THE CAUCASUS REGION: THE ASSOCIATION "FOR SUSTAINABLE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT", ARMENIA

The countries of Southern Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia) have signed up to practically all the decisions of UN World Conferences on aspects of sustainable development from the 1992 Rio Summit to the Johannesburg World Summit in 2002, including the Habitat global forums dedicated to the sustainable development of cities. There is some work at a national level towards developing policies and practice for sustainable development.

But until recently there was a complete lack of work by cities and local communities in relation to development and implementation of Local Agenda 21 programmes. Local organisations were completely unaware of the decisions made at the world summits and the responsibilities that the governments had signed up to.

In January 2003 a new project was implemented in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia (with financial support from the Swiss Government. The NGO-project leader was the Association "For Sustainable Human Development" in Armenia, which worked with the "Society for the Study of Local Lore" from Azerbaijan and the "Ecology of Labour" Association from Georgia.

The aim was to familiarize representatives of both local government and civil society with international experience on Local Agenda 21 and the development of specific recommendations for LA 21 for the chosen cities. Two towns in each country were invited to take part: Hrazdan and Charentsavan in Armenia, Cuba and Buzowna in Azerbaijan, and Poti and Akhalkalaki in Georgia.

The project started by carrying out opinion polls in the cities, asking citizens for their concerns about the existing situation, the most important problems and possible ways of their solution in the context of sustainable development. Planning for these polls was based both on international experience and the specific socio-economic and ecological situations in the cities.

At the same time the project managers held a series of familiarization meetings of the project implementers with relevant local government bodies. There were also a series of initial environmental activities within the cities including tree planting, clean-ups and land improvement work.

The project staff then developed a "Guideline on Local Agenda 21" for the involved countries, based on the results of opinion polls, linking with existing socio-economic plans, and using other documents such as the Aalborg Charter for sustainable cities. The draft of the "Guideline" also included a set of 'Indicators for LA 21' which were discussed in each country and at regional meetings in Tbilisi.

Following this work round table meetings were held in each participating city with the project managers and the local administration joined by representatives of the local community. They discussed the results of the opinion polls, the "Guideline" document and developed specific proposals for a Local Agenda 21 for each city. It was agreed to set up a Sustainable Development Local Councils to work with the local administration on development of the LA 21 framework. Although the project has been completed, work continues in the cities – and the city of Hrazdan has joined ICLEI, the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives. ●

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Links to the case studies can be found on the ANPED website, www.anped.org

More material on Local Agenda 21 in Europe can be found on the ICLEI website, www.iclei-europe.org

Case 13: DUSHANBE CITY: THE PROGRAM OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT, "FOUNDATION TO SUPPORT CIVIL INITIATIVES", TADJIKISTAN

Dushanbe, the capital of the Republic of Tajikistan, suffers from a range of environmental problems. The NGO "Foundation to support civil initiatives" (FSCI) launched an initiative in July 2004 that seeks to take a strategic approach to dealing with these problems.

The project is focusing on a range of important issues. These include:

- Water supply and sewage treatment,
- Waste management,
- Air pollution,
- Transport issues,
- Environmental awareness,
- Planting of greenery, and
- Health and Sanitation matters.

FSCI has run a series of introductory meetings on these issues with independent experts and has helped set up and develop the Dushanbe Coordination Council. This body brings together about twenty people from local government, NGOs and the other agencies that are responsible for tackling these issues. There have also been a range of articles on these issues in the local media.

The project is seeking to deliver three main outputs:

a) the first Environmental Management programme for Dushanbe will be developed and accepted by the local government and civil community

b) the setting up of the permanent Dushanbe Coordination Council to manage the implementation of the Dushanbe Environmental Management Plan (EMP)

c) the Dushanbe EMP will then be the basis for the development of a Dushanbe Local Agenda Plan.

The whole programme is being managed by FSCI. It is being carried out with the funding assistance of the Regional Ecological Center of Central Asia (REC CA, based in Almaty in Khazakstan). ●

ANPED – THE NORTHERN ALLIANCE FOR SUSTAINABILITY

ANPED is a democratic alliance and network of over 100 local and national NGOs, national NGO networks, and other environment and development groups in the Northern hemisphere. We work to empower Northern Civil Society in creating and protecting sustainable communities and societies world-wide.

The alliance was set up in 1991 before the UN Earth Summit in recognition of the fact that northern NGOs have special responsibilities with regard to the impact of the richer northern nations on the poorer south. This relates especially to issues of sustainable consumption and production. Since 1992 ANPED has developed a second major role: it offers a way for NGOs in the eastern and western parts of the northern hemisphere to work together. A majority of our members are now from nations in Eastern Europe and from nations that were formerly part of the USSR. As well as linking Europe and North America we also have strong links with southern NGO networks.

ANPED Thinks and Acts...

... GLOBALLY, in co-operation with our partners to ensure our goals are rooted firmly in the global need for sustainable development.

... LOCALLY, through our members we co-operate with local communities to ensure that their needs and concerns are taken into account and to ensure that they are able to take action.

ANPED unites over 100 groups of which 25 are national or regional networks, bringing the number of NGOs linked to the Alliance to approximately 2500. ANPED is unique among NGO networks in that it is open to any NGO working on issues related to sustainable development. ANPED receives funding from the European Union and other donors. It has a permanent Secretariat based in Amsterdam.

Working Groups

ANPED runs several issue-related working groups which enable members to co-operate. The current working groups are:

- Agriculture and Biodiversity
- Health and Environment
- Human Rights and Sustainable Development
- Local Action for Sustainable Development
- Nuclear Issues
- Sustainable Production and Consumption
- Water, Pollution and Health.

ANPED is engaged in a range of political processes including the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), the OECD, UNEP, European Union and 'Environment for Europe (EfE) and endeavours to build the capacity of individual NGOs to have a voice in these processes.

Joining ANPED

ANPED members benefit from the working groups and other activities, and receive invitations for the Annual General Meeting and other skill-shares organised by ANPED. They are also subscribed to the ANPED Members list-server and ANPED's *Northern Lights* newsletter.

Non-Governmental Organisations from North America, Western and Southern, Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia (the region formerly known as the NIS) and Japan can apply for membership. All applications have to be approved by the existing members at the ANPED Annual General Meeting. For more information please contact the ANPED International Secretariat (see below for contact details) or visit the website www.anped.org

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Case 14: THE ROAD TO SUSTAINABILITY: WESTDEN, UK

Westden (formerly West Devon Environmental Network) was launched in 1994 with a focus on traditional 'green' issues. However it soon became obvious that the outcomes of the 1992 UN Earth Summit could not be ignored. Environmental issues could not be tackled in isolation from social and economic factors and, if anything was to be done about global problems such as climate change and poverty, the place to start was at a local level. As they consulted on a way forward for Westden it was apparent that their objectives and Agenda 21 were inseparable.

The local authority, West Devon Borough Council, agreed that Westden should take a lead on Local Agenda 21 and they, as an authority, would do their best to respond to issues raised. It also made good economic sense for a community group to facilitate the process since Westden could attract funding that was not available to the public sector for any resulting projects. The Council was also aware of the importance of involving the community.

The consultation process that led to Westden's set of 'Sustainability Principles' was not out of any textbook. After trying the usual methods which failed to create enthusiasm, they developed an approach that included presentations to the elderly at a tea dance, theatre in schools and workshops with scouts and guides – as well as meetings over kitchen tables. Sometimes these worked, sometimes they did not, but over 3,500 of the Borough's population of 48,000 were directly involved in achieving a consensus on the issues that people felt were important to sustainability.

Westden considered that practical projects would be the best way of demonstrating what sustainability meant in practice. By 1998 over 20 projects had either taken place or were under development. Some of these attracted funding, others took place without finance, while others waited until resources could be found. One of these issues was the need for appropriate jobs for no 'the' young people who were leaving the area in search of employment and housing. From this came the 'Ley of the Land' project that has been providing training and other support for over 100 young people every year for the last 6 years.

They also wanted to measure whether West Devon was becoming more or less sustainable and, with the help of the University of Plymouth, evolved a system of indicators which are widely recognised as good practice. Each 'sustainability principle' had one or more indicator which ranged from the amount of locally-produced food eaten by local people, to the number of ethical investment policies taken out in the Borough. There have been four bi-annual indicators reports covering progress.

It became clear in 2002 that Local Agenda 21 was no longer very popular with central or local government in the UK. Many local authorities were not even pretending to use the LA21 strategies that they had developed. Ironically it was a local government submission to the Johannesburg Summit that suggested that Local Agenda 21 ought to be revitalised under the name Local Action 21. LA21 in West Devon has now been retitled in this way. Westden's current projects include:

- training and retraining for young and older people affected by the downturn in small-scale farming; loan of motor scooters for young people handicapped by access to transport;
- a team of Community Animateurs helping to build capacity in rural communities;
- support for the production, sale and consumption of healthy local food; and
- projects with partners in Europe and India to promote local sustainability and to build community capacity. ●

“We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.”

T.S. Eliot

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