SHPRESA PROGRAMME

An Interim Evaluation of the Paul Hamlyn Funded Project

December 2010

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INTRODUCTION

Shpresa (meaning hope in Albanian) was set up in 2003 to meet the needs of the community of Albanian speakers, from Albania and from Kosovo living in the area of east London, many of whom arrived around the year 2000 as refugees.

The organisation runs four main projects: a children’s project, a youth project, a women’s project and a resettlement project which works to develop the skills of volunteers and deploy them in the community. It currently has 500 paid up members, over 2000 people use its services over a year and 900 people use them every week.

The present evaluation focuses on the work carried out in the first year of funding from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation. The report outlines the organisational structure, the staffing relevant to the present project and the systems in place for supporting and monitoring the organisation’s work. The body of the report is organised around the five agreed outcomes, four of which were to be evaluated for the first year of the project.

While wishing to remain close to the agreed outcomes, the report draws on a range of evidence: visits to partner schools, observations of teaching sessions with children, women’s groups and events, analysis of children’s achievement data provided by partner schools and families, reports of focus groups with women and children, a review of the organisation’s records and policies as well as many informal discussions with women, young people and staff in the course of visits to Shpresa activities.

The way in Shpresa works with children and young people, builds partnerships with schools and develops volunteers in the community, together with its high level of professionalism, makes it a role model for other organisations and offers a strong model of good practice in developing genuine community cohesion in diverse societies. It is a credit to the work of Shpresa that its partnership with Gascoigne Primary School was selected to be promoted as an example of good practice by CILT, the National Centre for Languages (www.ourlanguages.org.uk/working/case_studies/CaseStudy137).

Throughout the evaluation there have been opportunities for both formal and informal discussions with women and children of all ages. In my role as evaluator I am grateful to all those who offered evidence for this report. However beyond the usual thanks to all involved I wish to comment on how inspired I was by the commitment, enthusiasm and dedication of the volunteers I spoke to. They talked openly about their feelings of disempowerment on arrival in England and how they coped and gradually took control of their lives. These women are ambitious for themselves as well as for their children. All expressed their gratitude to the staff of Shpresa Programme who supported them and provided role models they could aspire to. A number talked of the privilege of being able to ‘pay back’ to both their own and the wider community for the support received. The children were equally inspiring. They were confident and articulate, considering with great sensitivity the issues of identity raised by their dual heritage, the importance of their personal friendships across communities and welcoming the opportunities offered to them by Shpresa, through performing and campaigning, to become ambassadors for their community. I wish to thank them all for their patience and courtesy in facilitating my observations and answering my many questions.

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December 2010

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A) Children’s achievement
The SATs results for reading of 20 children obtained either directly from schools or from the children’s reports indicate that 92% of the girls and 100% of the boys are either at or above the national norm of Level 4. Nationally 87% of girls and 81% of boys achieved this level for reading. This indicates a remarkable result for the children given that most of them entered the school system speaking mainly Albanian.

B) Children’s cultural knowledge
100% of the 258 children who attend Shpresa classes have participated in at least one of the following: assemblies and performances in mainstream schools, performances in teachers’ centres, at TELCO events (East London Communities Organisation), Refugee Week events, local festivals and shows and major theatrical performances. Several have also represented Shpresa at the Treasury Office and the House of commons.

Most of these events involved dance, drama, poetry, video presentations in celebration of the Albanian culture and language. In focus groups both younger and older children have talked about the importance of their bilingualism and their pride in their identity. They have also described the impact of Shpresa on their everyday lives: the access to a wide range of free activities, opportunities to socialize with friends in a safe environment. They especially value having their voices heard and the opportunity to become ambassadors for their culture through public performances and campaigns.

C) Parents’ knowledge of the English Education System
Thirty-nine out of forty-four women who attended training sessions on the English Education System completed pre- and post-course questionnaires. The women report a highly statistically significant improvement in their knowledge of the system. They indicate that the course enabled them to support their children more effectively, to become involved with their children’s school and to make more informed decisions about their children’s future. Thirty of the women carried out extensive placements as volunteers in mainstream schools and 20 of these obtained NVQ TA Level 3. Several also obtained paid employment in schools.

D) Workshops for teachers
Although Shpresa entered into negotiations with their partner schools, none of them could fit a dedicated session on the topic of working with refugee pupils in their in-service training agenda for teachers. However workshops were held for teachers, teacher educators and academics at Barking Teachers’ Centre, the University of East London and Goldsmiths College. Workshops were also held for children on refugee and migrant issues at Mayfeld Secondary School in Barking.

E) Training and mentoring support (this to be carried out in 2010-2011)
This outcome target is not due to be evaluated in the first year of the programme, however considerable progress has been made. In particular, extensive work was carried out in 2009 with the Shire Foundation, a Somali organisation, to help it set up its own supplementary school.
Shpresa have developed a new partnership with the Portuguese community and are mentoring a group of parents who are in the process of setting up classes for their children in Gascoigne school in east London. A very enjoyable joint event was held with children and families from Shpresa and the new Portuguese group on 14th October at Gascoigne School. Shpresa have also started working with a Lithuanian group to help in the development of a support organisation. An account of these new developments will be included in the next evaluation report.
The Shpresa Programme Albanian School Project

The Albanian School Project (ASP) was first started in 2002 in recognition of the very high value Albanian families place on education. It organises Albanian classes and a range of dance, drama and sporting and cultural activities for children and young people aged 5 to 14 in after-school, week-end and holiday programmes. In addition it provides opportunities for young people to perform in public at cultural events to a range of audiences. It carries out these activities not only on its own premises but, significantly, in close partnership with mainstream schools. These partnerships enable schools to create, with respect to the Albanian-speaking children who attend them, two of the key conditions that are considered important to ensure the academic success of pupils from minority ethnic communities: the incorporation of their language and culture within the school and a close relationship between families, community organisations and the school. ¹

The Project aims to:

- Improve children’s language and literacy skills in Albanian
- Improve children’s attainment in their mainstream school
- Improve parent/child communication within the family
- Improve parent/teacher communication
- Raise awareness of Albanian culture in the community

The following section offers an outline of Shpresa Programme’s management structure and of the staff involved in the Albanian school Project.

1) Shpresa Programme’s management structure:

Shpresa has a Board of Trustees of 11 members with a range of expertise. This includes an accountant, housing advisers, a consultant on refugee issues, a representative of current users, a representative of the volunteers.

The full-time Director is Luljeta Nuzi who has been with the organisation since its beginning, initially as a volunteer then as a part-time development worker and since 2004 as a full time worker.

Currently the full-time Albanian School Development Worker is Flutra Shega, who set up the Albanian school project in 2002. She started working on the project in a voluntary capacity and experimented with different ways of best running the service. Since November 2004 she has been responsible for the running of the children’s project as a paid employee of Shpresa Programme. She has developed partnerships with schools and personally runs projects in Newham, Enfield, Bounds Green and Barking and Dagenham. In addition she has a cross-London role managing projects in Rebridge and Haringey as well as the above boroughs and she co-ordinated a new project in Hammersmith.

Ermir Disha took on the role of full-time Youth and Children’s Development Worker in November 2004, and works alongside Flutra Shega.

Evis Bodlli took on the role of the full time worker in 2003 as the development worker for the women and volunteer project.
2) Teaching staff

**Flutra Shega.** Albanian School Development Worker November 2004. Sets up partnerships and teaches classes. Flutra Shega completed a four year university-based primary school teacher degree in Kosovo, with additional qualifications in I.T. and taught in the country for four years before coming to the U.K.

**Vera Pulaj** is a volunteer teacher in schools in Redbridge and East Ham. She has taught in Albania, completed a teaching assistant’s course at Empowering Learning in London and is currently working as a part-time teaching assistant in a primary school.

**Ermir Disha** is a paid youth development worker. He is responsible for developing and tutoring a range of activities such as dancing, kickboxing, football and basketball and organises performances and running the dancing session.

**Saime Dushku** is a paid teacher working in Newham. She is a qualified teacher of Albanian language and literature with 20 years experience.

**Ema Krasniqi** is a volunteer teacher working in the projects schools in Finsbury Park.

**Volunteers:** the 40 volunteers currently recruited to train as classroom assistants work on a rota to assist teachers and provide support to the children’s parents.

3) Policies and management procedures

The organisation has clear management procedures and policies that are regularly evaluated and reviewed and well organised records. A comprehensive review of documentation was carried out by the evaluator in 2008 and updated in 2010. A description of policies and management procedures as well as a list of all records and files available can be found in Appendix E. This includes staff records, job descriptions, staff training and supervision, policies for Health and Safety, Safeguarding Children, Equal Opportunities, Volunteers, Vulnerable People, Complaints Procedure, Risk Assessment Procedures, Environment policy, Confidentially policy and procedure, Disciplinary procedures, Maternity policy and procedures, Financial Management and Procedures and Reserve policy.

The Shpresa Programme was presented with the Gold Award from the National Resource Centre for Supplementary Education’s Quality Framework.
The Paul Hamlyn Funded Project - Impact

The Paul Hamlyn Foundation awarded Shpresa a grant of £100,934 over a period of three years from April 2009 to support the development of the Albanian Supplementary School and to promote community cohesion. Five outcome targets have been agreed for the first year of the project:

F) Children’s achievement  
G) Children’s cultural knowledge  
H) Parents’ knowledge of the English Education System  
I) Workshops for teachers  
J) Training and mentoring support (this to be carried out in 2010-2011)

The report includes quantitative data collected in evidence as well as direct observations of events. However it has a strong focus on the voices of the children and the women who participated. As well as confirming the more formal evidence from the data collection, these voices offer the most powerful evidence of the impact of Shpresa.

A) Children’s achievement

Shpresa’s Albanian Supplementary School Project aims to provide young Albanians, aged 5 to 18 with mother tongue language classes and opportunities to use the Albanian language in order to:
- increase their skills in the Albanian language  
- increase their skills in the English language  
- increase their confidence and self esteem  
- develop their knowledge and pride in their Albanian cultural heritage and ethnic identity.

Shpresa planned to provide weekly Albanian classes, Albanian dance classes, sports sessions and a range of cultural and leisure activities for children in schools which are willing to provide their premises free for the purpose.

The following outcome target was set for children’s achievement:

50% of at least 20 KS2 children attending weekly Albanian Supplementary School sessions will achieve a greater improvement in their SATs levels in the summer of 2010 compared to those predicted by their mainstream teachers at the start of the school year, and a greater improvement on average than children from Albanian and other Eastern European cultures attending the same mainstream schools, but not attending Shpresa Supplementary School.

1) The Schools

Classes have been carried out for 258 children in the following schools from April 2009 and throughout the academic year 2009-2010. A further 100 children attend are involved in special events and rehearsals for performances.
**Gascoigne Primary** (2 hours after school on a Thursday from 5-7)  
There are 43 children attending in November 2009.

**Mayfield School** Children attend on Sundays (10am to 4pm), coming from several different schools. There are 49 children attending in November 09.

**Cleveland Junior** (after school club)  
There are 17 children attending the Albanian club, all of whom come from Cleveland School.

**Gladesmore Community School** (Saturday class 10 am to 2pm). There are 75 attending in November 2009.

**Bounds Green School** (Wednesday class)  
There are 17 children attending in November 2009.

**Churchfield Primary School** (Friday afternoon class from 3.30 to 5.30)  
There are 57 children attending in November 2009.

2) **SATs results**  
It is important to note at this point that providing data for individual children for research and evaluation purposes is a considerable additional burden on overstretched assessment co-ordinators in school. Records are kept in different formats and databases in different schools and authorities and not all schools are happy to hand over data (even with guarantees of confidentiality) to a researcher without written permission from parents. The researcher greatly appreciates the time voluntarily given by the co-ordinators but notes that it was not possible in most schools to obtain data that enables a comparison between ethnic Albanian children and other ethnic groups.

3) **Some baseline data**  
The following data on children’s achievement in their mainstream school in end-of-year tests for 2009 was collected to provide an overall picture of ethnic Albanian primary school children’s progress. These became available to the evaluator after analyses by the schools’ own assessment co-ordinators in the Autumn term 2009. The two sets of data below come from a school which has worked with Shpresa for some time and one which is new to the partnership.

**Gascoigne Primary School in the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham**  
The school have been in partnership with Shpresa since 2007 and has made available detailed statistics on children’s attainment throughout the primary phase.

There are 84 ethnic Albanian children in the school and test data for reading in English were made available for 77 of these, for each year group. The data below is recorded in Average Point Score (APS) format to enable statistical analyses. The national norm of 27 for Year 6 represents a Level of 4B.
The number of Albanian pupils in Gascoigne school is substantial and the data available detailed, making it possible to compare the scores of ethnic Albanian children who attend the classes with those who do not. Of the 77 children for whom data are available, 29 attend Shpresa classes. The table above indicates that Albanian children as a whole are performing just under the national norms, except in Y3 when they exceed it. Given that the vast majority of the children are new to English when they start school, this is a very positive achievement and an indicator of future success in school. Comparing the children who attend Shpresa classes with those who do not, the younger attenders perform less well than those who do not, however this is significantly reversed for all year groups from 3 to 6. In these groups the attenders not only have higher scores than the non-attenders, but they also reach or exceed the national norms.

Year 6 data (in bold on the graph) represents children’s score on the SAT test. The score for attenders exceeds both the school mean of 26.67 and the national norm of 27, however this is not significant as there was only one child in this group.

Churchfield Primary School in the London Borough of Enfield

The school is a full primary with a nursery and classes from Years 1 to 6. It has very recently started working in partnership with Shpresa. There are 28 Albanian children in the school, 15 of which attend the Shpresa classes which take place immediately after school on Friday afternoons. The children have a 2 hour session split between literacy teaching and dancing. A further 20 children from other schools attend these classes. A few children also attend weekend classes in Barking.

The data made available from the school was limited to the reading and writing scores of Albanian children only (with written parental permission) and did not include the children who had been in their final year when they sat the tests. It has therefore not been possible to make comparisons with children from other ethnic groups. The data for all years show an unusual closeness between scores for reading and writing. Scores for children in Year 2, based on their end of KS1 assessment at the end of Year 2 are, at 16, above the national norm of 15, but these data are based on two children only. In all other years the children are a little below national norms, although the group of 5 children in Year 3 come very close in both reading and writing with a score of 20.5 against a norm of 21. There is little difference between the children who attend Shpresa classes and those who do not and small numbers in each year group mean a detailed analysis is not appropriate.
4) Test results for 2009/2010
The present report was considerably by the difficulty of obtaining the data from schools. The data in the following table have been obtained directly from only two schools. Children attending other mainstream schools made their end-of-year reports available. This method of data collection does not allow comparison with other groups of children within each school. However as numbers of Albanian children at Year 6 in most schools is low, such comparisons would not have been appropriate. To enable comparison the children’s level for reading has been chosen as the best measure of their achievement in English. The norm expected of children nationally is Level 4b. Several schools do not offer the sub-scores but indicate in the reports that the children at Level 4 have achieved the national norm.

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<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Boys</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Churchfield</td>
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<td>Gascoigne</td>
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<td>Cleveland</td>
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<td>St Edwards</td>
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<td>4a +</td>
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<td>Goodmayes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manford</td>
<td>5 +</td>
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<td>St Vincent</td>
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<td>Becontree</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parkway</td>
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<td>Edmonton</td>
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<td>Ripple</td>
<td>4 =</td>
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</tbody>
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Children’s reading levels at the end of Year 6 in 2009/2010
The table above indicates children who are at the norm, below it or above it. This indicates that 92% of the girls and 100% of the boys are either at or above the national norm. Nationally 87% of girls and 81% of boys achieved level 4 for Reading. This indicates a remarkable result for the children given that most of them entered the school system speaking mainly Albanian.

5) The GCSE campaign
Shpresa Programme has led a high profile campaign to obtain a GCSE qualification in Albanian language. In spite of the young people’s direct involvement and organisation and presentation of a petition which gathered signatures nationwide, it has not proved possible to arrange for this qualification. There is still, at present, no formal qualification in Albanian in the UK.

In addition to the quantitative data above the present report includes observational data from the evaluator’s visits to Mayfield School and Gascoigne School. This provides a flavour of the teaching environment, the teaching style and children’s responses in the Albanian literacy classes. This can be found in the Qualitative Data Section A.
2) Children’s cultural knowledge and involvement in cultural events

The opportunity to take part in public performances is very popular indeed with all the young people who attend Shpresa. All of the 358 children who take part in the classes have taken part in events: school assemblies, performances in schools and public venues. Additionally children who do not regularly attend classes commonly participate in rehearsals and performances.

The following outline target was set:

100% of at least 220 pupils attending weekly Albanian Supplementary School sessions will take part in one mainstream school assembly or showcasing event during the year and will develop greater knowledge and understanding of their culture compared to baseline testing by an independent evaluator at the start of the year.

1) Public events and performances

The following public events and performances by children and young people took place in 2009:

- 9th April 2009 - Gascoigne School assembly (29 children)
- 2nd May 2009 – Performances at Cleveland School (17 children)
- 4th May Performance at a TELCO (East London Communities Organisation) assembly (20 children)
- 25th June 2009 – Performance at Churchfield School (45 children)
- 30th June 2009 – Performance at Credon Centre in Newham (20 children)
- Refugee week 2009 festival at Little Ilford Youth Centre (75 children)
- June 2009 “Too busy to be in trouble” at Eastbury School in barking (140 children)
- 3rd July 2009 Dance Around the World at Cleveland School (13 children)
- 4th July 2009 at Mayfield School Refugee event (15 children)
- 8th July 2009 – TELCO event (7 children)
- 11th July 2009 – Newham Mayor’s Show in Central Park (11 children)
- 8th October 2009 – Young mentors’ presentation (2 children)
- 26th November at Treasury Office and House of Commons – Shpresa 7th Anniversary (17 children).
- 28th November 2009 – Flag Day celebration at Eastbury School.
- 29th November 2009 - Flag Day celebration at Bounds Green School.
- 20th December 2009 – Children’s Congress (see report below).
- 20th February 2010 – Our Dreams Show at Stratford Circus. 125 children presented to an audience of 300 parents and guests.

In addition to the above the children were involved in the following public events: on 29th November one young mentor represented Shpresa Programme at an event organised for Flag Day by an Albanian magazine. An article was written which highlighted the interpretation of a poem by the mentor and the impact it had on the audience. On 6th December 15 young people took part in a consultation event organised by the Children’s Services in the London Borough of Redbridge held at Mayfield...
School. Twelve of them were elected as members on the panel of Redbridge Children’s and Young People’s Trust. On 17th December 4 young people presented the End Child Detention campaign at 10 Downing Street.

2) Children’s voices

Baseline and repeat testing did not seem to be the most effective way of obtaining a measure of children’s understanding of and involvement in their culture. Visits to schools and formal and informal opportunities to talk to children offered the most compelling evidence of the impact of Shpresa’s educational programme for young people on their everyday lives.

Children’s voices: focus groups

On the morning of Sunday 28th March, at the end of the first year of the Paul Hamlyn funded project, I met with two groups of 13 children who attend the Albanian classes, a group of younger and a group of older children. A deaf child in the younger group was supported by her older sister who interpreted for her using Sign Language. The groups were somewhat larger than expected, but all children joined in and expressed their opinions on all questions. They were asked five basic questions as starting points for discussion. The aim was to explore their feelings about the classes, their own sense of identity, their relationship to their culture and specifically to ask them to evaluate the programme. The following report is based on a 9,000 word full transcript of the two sessions which lasted approximately 45 minutes each. It is organised by topic and group.
1. Why do you think children come to the Albanian classes? Why do you think some Albanian children don’t come to them?
The younger children are keen to respond and all hands shoot up when a question is asked. All children responded to this question and referred to learning Albanian and the activities offered by Shpresa as their main motivation. They also mentioned learning about Albania and Kosovo and about their history: *I think the Albanian classes are fun because you get to learn your language and you get to learn about your history and you get to have lots of fun, and all the activities that the teachers plan.* This response was typical of many. The importance of the Albanian language cropped up in almost every question. Children talked about the importance of being able to communicate with family in Albania and how attending Shpresa had improved their language use.

Some children referred to being bored at home on a Sunday before they discovered Shpresa. All refer to the activities they enjoy: learning to dance so that they can take their place at family weddings and perform in public, kick-boxing, karate. They appreciate their teachers’ work in preparing activities and several refer to the high quality of teaching as a reason for their attendance; lessons are fun, never boring: *I like the classes where Miss Vera teaches us because she tells us nicely what we are doing and she explains it properly.*

When asked about why some children do not attend, several suggestions are made: they are not interested in speaking their language and don’t care where they come from, they know all about Albania already, they want a day off, they might be embarrassed to wear traditional costume in performances.

The importance of making new friends was a high priority for the group of older children if we didn’t come here, none of us would know each other. They talked enthusiastically about the wide range of activities, the dancing, the drama workshops, the camping, the trips, the performances and the shows in which they were involved. Like the younger children they come to avoid boredom at home. They raise two important. The first is the importance of activities being free as it enables them to sample and pursue a wide range of options that their families could not afford to pay for. The other is that they spontaneously raised the issue of safety: *we feel safe in this environment because all around us there are people that we know*
and our parents know. If we went somewhere else they would be worried about us, like, constantly, because they think what are we doing, what are we about. They are concerned that, because their parents are protective, they would not be allowed the same freedom to meet friends without the support of Shpresa.

The older children also value the opportunity to learn Albanian, to learn about their culture and traditions: when I go to Albania my grandparents always like looking at me dancing and they like to see me knowing the actual culture of Albania.

Very significant for the older children is the opportunity to be part of campaigns. They talked with great pride of visiting Parliament and speaking in front of MPs, of visiting Birmingham, of having their video shown in public, of going to Oxford: I’m thankful for that opportunity that I get from Shpresa. I want to be someone. I want to be known. When we were in Oxford, we were really known. People were asking questions.

2. Do you think knowing two languages makes a difference to your life?
The younger children came back to the topic of the importance of knowing their family language. They are in no doubt that, even though it is not their strongest language, it is the most important one. They feel the language is a bond between generations and several talk about their intention to teach it to their own children. A girl notes that, in that context, it would be best to use entirely Albanian in her home to counteract the considerable influence of English in the environment and she regrets that her own mother did not enforce this policy. One of the girls attending was deaf and had no speech. She was supported by her sister who interpreted for her. She explained, through her sister, that she knew BSL, but was also learning Albanian Sign Language so she could communicate with family in Albania.

One of the older girls commented: before we started Albanian classes here, most of us couldn’t talk Albanian properly. She talks of the embarrassment of going to Albania and not being able to communicate with grandparents. The main benefit of being bilingual for this group was the advantage it gave them in learning other languages. Several were learning both Spanish and French. They noted the relationship between the languages they knew and how cognates helped them to learn new words. They were well aware of the advantages that languages offered them in the labour market and one also noted the cognitive benefit: the more languages you know the more active your brain is.

Later in the discussion several children mention how languages are used within the family and how parents encourage them and some even insist on the use of Albanian in the home. This leads one girl to explain how, while her mother helps her to learn Albanian, she is able to help her mother with her English studies at college. This leads to a brief discussion of home-work issues, and how some parents try to help, but the methods they use are very different from those used in English schools: I tried to tell my mum and my dad that the method that I use in England is different from Albania. So they don’t actually know it, so I go to my teacher to help.

3. How is feeling Albanian different from feeling British?
One of the younger girls: I think it’s all about your heritage and culture. Even though maybe you are born here, your heritage is from Albania or Kosovo, you can say I’m British, I was born here, Albanian as well, British-Albanian. They return to the theme of language being transmitted through generations. They express the same feeling about identity and culture
because our parents are Albanian, we are Albanian too. They are proud of their identity and comfortable with both cultures.

Several of the older children refer to the way in which they feel different depending on which country they are in: when I’m in Albania I represent England when I’m in England I try to represent Albania to my friends or anyone. The closest any of them come to discussing really personal feelings is the girl who says I am proud that I am Albanian and my home is in England but my heart is in Albania. None of the pupils mention a lack of belonging and, in the context of this question, they focus on their Albanian identity. Many talk about the pride they take in advertising it: I am proud that I am Albanian and my home is in England but my heart is in Albania. Another boasts: The whole college, they know about me. I make sure that, I’m not one to be, like, embarrassed about being Albanian. I am proud and I even wear a necklace to show it. Later in the discussion he comments: We used to think, ah, since we are not in Albania, we should start, we should know more about the English culture. And now that we come here, we’re more leaning to the Albanian side. Another talks about how, although she was born in Britain, and has a British passport, she feels more Albanian.

4. How do you think the classes could be improved? What other activities would you like to have after school?
The younger group deal with this question very briefly. While two children indicate they would like more Albanian language taught (more Albanian, because then you learn more) others are adamant that the balance of activities is just right: I don’t think so, everything’s perfect already! - Things are perfect, you don’t have to change anything, even in the classroom. - It should never change ‘cos it’s really good.

This issue led to some debate about possible additional activities, although none were specifically named, but a consensus was rapidly reached that the range of activities was wide and satisfactory and that any additional activities would make the day too long. A few participants indicated that they would like to be able to bring a friend from mainstream school. One specifically mentioned his Somali friend who envied him his sporting activities: he don’t have that chance. We have a great chance here to have something like this.

5. How safe do you feel in this environment?
In response to this question the younger children indicated how important the issue was for them: you won’t have fun if you don’t feel safe, and explained how staff watched over them on the school site, which is used by other organisations, ensuring they were accompanied as they move round the building. They expressed great confidence in the adults who supervise them and one commented they are like our second parents. The discussion on safety led several children to talk about the experience of being bullied in their mainstream school. One girl explained how Shpresa had intervened to support her in her mainstream school.

The issue of safety had been covered spontaneously by the older children in the discussion concerning their reasons for attending Shpresa activities.

When I asked the children at the end of the session whether they had any questions to ask me I was slightly surprised that they wanted to know about my own background, where I had been to school and how I felt about my own personal identity. When I explained that I had travelled a lot and gone to 13 schools, they asked how I had coped with losing my friends so frequently.
Children’s voices: Shpresa Children’s Congress – 20th December 2009

One of the most telling pieces of evidence on the impact of Shpresa is the importance to all young people of the Children’s Congress. Informal conversations before the event indicated how much the young people were looking forward to meeting each other, to sharing experiences of events, achievements and campaigns in which they had been involved. The turn out alone in appalling weather was an indication of the value young people placed on the opportunity to celebrate the Albanian part of their identity together.

The first Children’s Congress was held in 2008. It brought together all the children who participate in Shpresa’s activities for young people and provided an opportunity for them to meet each other, evaluate their projects and offer suggestions for future development. Like its predecessor, this congress was held at Mayfield High School in Barking. The congress was timed to follow the Shpresa AGM, starting at 11.30.

The day before the Congress there had been a heavy snow fall which had frozen. On the day it was very cold, the roads were icy and travelling conditions were atrocious. Nevertheless the school hall was packed with children and their parents when proceedings started at 11.45.

The full report and evaluation of the Children’s Congress is to be found in the Qualitative Data Section B.

C) Parents’ knowledge of the English Education System

The third aim of the Paul Hamlyn funded Shpresa project was to integrate Albanian families in the local community by developing a structured volunteering programme which would enable Albanian speaking parents to gain knowledge of the English education system and experience of working in mainstream schools. The programme developed enabled volunteers to work initially at Albanian Supplementary Schools and then, once they had gained confidence and experience, to volunteer in mainstream schools through-out the week.

Training sessions covered the English Education System, Being a Healthy Parent, Good Enough Parenting and Volunteering.

The following outcome target was set:

38 out of at least 50 parents attending a training session on the English education system will develop greater knowledge about their children’s schooling after the session, compared to a baseline testing before the session takes place; and 10 out of at least 20 parents who attend a more structured
volunteer training programme will be accepted onto a volunteer placement in a mainstream school.

1) The programme and number of attendees.

40 women attended the English Education System session, the Being a Healthy Parent course, the Good Enough Parenting session and an intensive 5-day training as volunteers and Teaching Assistants. 18 of these women obtained the NVQ TA Level 2. Thirty five of the women volunteered in Shpresa classes. Thirty of them carried out extensive placements as volunteers in mainstream schools and 20 of these obtained NVQ TA Level 3.

The women have been in the country between 7 and 12 years. They all have children and these are aged between 5 and 18 years. The women attended the course in two centres: in Ilford and in Barking. All of these women completed a baseline questionnaire.

A further 26 women, all of whom have children who attend Shpresa classes, attended training that included the English education system and an introduction to working as a Teaching Assistant. Six of the women obtained NVQ TA Level 2 and 2 obtained Level 3. Eighteen of the women had work experience placements in either Shpresa classes or mainstream schools.

2) The English Education system baseline testing

A baseline questionnaire was completed by all 40 women who attended the English Education course, half of them at the Little Ilford Centre and half at Mayfield School in Barking, to establish how much they knew about this prior to starting the course. The questionnaire covered their knowledge of how to support their own children, their relationship with their children’s school, the different stages of education, the curriculum, activities beyond school and options beyond compulsory education. The final questionnaire was completed at the end of the course by 39 of the same women as well as an additional 3 women. A statistical analysis was carried out for the 39 cases for which both sets of data were available.

The questionnaire was divided into 5 sections and most questions offered a Likert Scale with the following 5 options:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I do not know anything about this</th>
<th>I know a little about this</th>
<th>I have essential information about this</th>
<th>I know quite a lot about this</th>
<th>I am very well informed about this</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 blue</td>
<td>2 green</td>
<td>3 beige</td>
<td>4 purple</td>
<td>5 yellow</td>
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</tbody>
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At the end of each section women were invited to make comments and elaborate on their responses, which a number did, in either Albanian or English. The following presents a summary of findings section by section. The full data is presented visually in coloured pie charts for ease of interpretation in the section on Quantitative Data at the end of this report.

Section A on supporting children’s learning

The responses to this section of the baseline questionnaire indicate that, while almost half the women feel they have essential information about their children’s progress, when it comes to knowing how their child is taught reading and maths and how to help their child to learn, the great majority of women report that they know nothing, or very little, on this issue. Women who had children with special needs had essential information about how to help their child obtained from their child’s school or from Shpresa.
The final questionnaire in this section shows that the women report that they “know a lot” or are “very well informed” about the issues. They reported being particularly knowledgeable about their child’s progress at school. The greatest impact was on women’s knowledge of how mathematics is taught in school and how to help a child with special needs at home.

Section B on women’s relationship with their children’s school
In the baseline questionnaire only one woman has never attended the school’s open evenings, a third report that they always attend and the others attend ‘sometimes’. Only one woman reports often helping with special events in school, the majority never do. Fewer than half the women report feeling confident to speak to their child’s teacher or the headteacher. Comments clearly indicate that language and culture constitute the main barrier between women and the school.

In the final questionnaire all women report attending open evenings, the great majority always doing so and almost all women feel confident in raising issues with teachers. The majority of women get involved in school activities; those who do not explain that employment makes this difficult.

In the baseline questionnaire very few women express confidence about seeking help from the school if their child is bullied, or they are worried about his/her progress, or know how to get educational advice or make a complaint about the school. The women made a number of comments on the problems caused by the language barrier and by the differences between the education systems. Several mentioned the help obtained from Shpresa teachers or an Albanian speaking support worker employed by the school.

The data from the final questionnaire indicate that the barriers have been considerably reduced and that the great majority of women feel well or very well informed and confident about seeking help.

Section C on the stages of education in England
In the baseline questionnaire the majority of women felt they knew little or nothing about how English education is organised, but seven felt well informed and mentioned help from neighbours and advice organisations (left hand chart). The pie charts below show that three quarters of the women report feeling very well informed in the final questionnaire.

Do you know how English education is organised: when children start school, types of school, how to choose a school, how to apply for a place?

Section D on Early Years and Primary Education
In the baseline questionnaire the great majority of women felt they knew little or nothing about the Early Years and the National curriculum, the assessment of children at different
stages, the records kept by schools and after school and holiday services. The final questionnaire indicates that all women are well or very well informed in this area.

**Section E on Secondary Education and beyond**

The baseline questionnaire indicated that the women knew little or nothing about the transition to Secondary School, the Secondary curriculum, the choices children can make and the qualifications available, how to obtain future study or careers advice or financial support for education beyond school. As for the Primary Section the final questionnaire indicates that all women are well or very well informed in this area.

**Free comments** at the end of the baseline questionnaire indicate that the women were anxious for information and advice on all of these issues, especially those pertaining to secondary education where they felt least informed. The women are keen to support their children effectively and build good relations with their children’s teachers and schools. Several women still felt the need for interpreters or English speaking friends to accompany them to school events.

The comments made at the end of the course reflect how much women feel they have learned about the education system and how this has helped them both to support their own children but also to continue into further training and discover opportunities for volunteering and for careers for themselves. Many women speak of the confidence they have acquired, how they have developed good relations with their children’s school and got involved practically. They express thanks to Shpresa for the course, for helping with interpreters when they need them in school and for helping them to integrate into London society. A selection of the comments are included with the section on Quantitative Data at the end of this report.

A number of participants failed to respond to the 6th question Section D in the final questionnaire. For all other questions the improvement in the women’s knowledge was statistically significant at the 0.005 level, the standard used in Social Science research.

**3) Women’s voices**

Like the children’s voices, the voices of the women interviewed provided very rich accounts of their experiences as newcomers to the UK. Four groups of women were interviewed at the end of the first year of the project: a group of three mothers’ of children who attend Shpresa classes, a group of new volunteers currently training with Shpresa to work with children, a group of established volunteers and a group of women who had been volunteers and moved on.

There is no tradition of volunteering in Albania, so the concept was new. The women have strong and individual responses to the questions about why they volunteer and the benefit they get from it. For many, volunteering has been the passport to a new social life, a way out of depression and isolation, to develop existing skills in English and to learn new ones. Many had qualifications not recognised in this country and felt deskilled when they arrived but rose to the challenge: *we knew what we were capable of back there, so we wanted to prove ourselves. It can make you strong inside.* Volunteering enables them to integrate into local society, improves their English and provides experience and references that can lead to paid employment. They also talk about how volunteering in a multicultural society has broadened their horizons and their minds: *you become so open minded for everything because you learn about different backgrounds and cultures and festivals and think, I didn’t know nothing! It’s*
not just my little world I live in, there is a wider range of things around me that I didn’t know. Another comments: You learn not to judge the person by their appearance from all these people from different parts of the world.

To volunteer comes from your heart. You’re going to have a result. Volunteering makes you happy. It’s a very good experience, you can learn, and you can give something. The women talk with enthusiasm about the pleasure they derive from their work and many mention the opportunity to “pay back”: to Shpresa for opening up new opportunities, and to mainstream society for welcoming them. Those who volunteer in schools learn how to support their own children as well as other people’s. Many are ambitious for the future: now I want to find a job and take my education higher and higher, because you are never completed with teaching... as long as we live we are going to learn.

They are grateful for the support offered by Shpresa, and aspire to emulate the workers and experienced volunteers who offer them role models. They appreciate the opportunity to help others as they have been helped and also to act as ambassadors for their culture in public events and in the course of campaigning for refugee and educational causes.

The women’s own voices are a powerful witness to their experience and it is inspiring to talk to them. Substantial extracts from the interviews are included in Appendix C.

The findings of the questionnaire survey are confirmed by an interview with three women whose children attend Shpresa classes but who have had little experience of volunteering: one has just started experimenting, another suffers from severe depression which seems to greatly restrict her life opportunities and she talks to me through an interpreter. The women are all very keen for their children to be fluent speakers of Albanian and focus on the benefit to their children of attending Shpresa classes and activities. The woman who suffers from depression attends regularly as she feels supported in the Shpresa environment. She has been greatly helped by Shpresa’s mental health support programme and is always accompanied by a Shpresa worker when attending hospital.

However it is discussing their children’s education in English that women’s anxieties emerge. They know little about the education system and are very dependent on Flutra and Evis providing information and advice. N. has started helping at her son’s school and found this has made a difference. Like the respondents to the questionnaire, they find their efforts to help their children at home bedevilled by the differences in the education system. N. describes her experience: I explain one method and my daughter says ‘no, mama, don’t do like that. Mama I don’t like to learn like this, I need to learn like in school’.

Compared to the women who are working as volunteers, they are far less fluent in English. They explain that their opportunities for mixing with English people are more limited. Na. explains how she practises through helping an elderly English neighbour with shopping: my neighbour says every morning ‘you come and drink coffee’ and sometimes I stay at her home, sometimes I give her a cup of tea, and this helps me’.

The women who participated in these group interviews had a great deal to say about their situation and experiences. The full transcript of these has been included in Qualitative Data – Section C.
D) Workshops for teachers
An important part of Shpresa’s mission is to develop in teachers in mainstream schools an understanding of the needs and experiences of refugee children and their parents.

The following outcome target was set:

*Workshops on working with refugee children and families will be delivered for at least 12 teachers from mainstream schools and 8 to 10 of those attending will report an increased understanding of the needs and experiences of refugee children and their parents when assessed by an independent evaluator six weeks after the training has taken place.*

Although Shpresa entered into negotiations with their partner schools, none of them could fit a dedicated session on the topic of working with refugee pupils in their in-service training agenda for teachers. The following workshops were presented by Luljeta Nuzi:

12th March 2009 – University of East London Docklands Campus. First ESRC seminar on Complementary Schools. Developing community cohesion and community relations.” to an audience of 40 researchers, academics an teacher educators.


14th October 2010 – Barking. Mayfield School: two workshops held for children on refugee and migrant issues.

The seminars and workshops offered opportunities for questions, discussion and networking. However formal evaluations of the content of Shpresa’s presentations were not available.

E) Training and mentoring support (this to be carried out in 2010-2011)

The following outcome target was set:

*Training and mentoring support will be provided by Shpresa to at least 12 members of the Somali community, 10 of whom will develop their skills, knowledge and confidence in relation to setting up and running a supplementary school, at least one mainstream school will have signed a contract to host a new Somali Supplementary School, supported by Shpresa in 2010/2011.*

This outcome target is not due to be evaluated in the first year of the programme, however considerable progress has been made. In particular extensive work was carried out with the Shire Foundation, a Somali organisation, to help them set up their own supplementary school.
In an hour-long interview with the evaluator on 26th October 2009, Samia Shire provided details of the considerable help she had received in setting up her own community organisation: sample policies, support in developing a constitution, obtaining CRB checks for herself and her volunteers, help with making applications for funding, networking etc. A summary of the interview has been included under Qualitative Data D. Samia Shire eventually focused her organisation on providing information and support for families in north London rather than setting up a supplementary school.

Shpresa have developed a new partnership with the Portuguese community and are mentoring a group of parents who are in the process of setting up classes for their children in Gascoigne school in east London. A very enjoyable joint event was held with children and families from Shpresa and the new Portuguese group on 14th October at Gascoigne School. An account of this new development will be included in the next evaluation report.
CONCLUSION

The present report has sought to draw on a range of evidence. The visits, observations and interviews, the many formal and informal interactions, have offered the evaluator a rich sense of the impact of the Shpresa School Project. The evidence suggests that the Shpresa Project has been very successful. By working closely with both parents and mainstream schools Shpresa has created a supportive framework in which young people can achieve academic success and become confident and proud of their identity.

Particular strengths of the Shpresa Project are to be found in the quality of teaching for both children and young people and volunteers, the range of stimulating opportunities for young people to develop their skills and their civic responsibility and engagement. Another strength is the extent to which Shpresa involve young people in the evaluation and planning of their programme and ensure that they take an active role in the organisation. These strengths are underpinned by a well managed organisation that networks effectively. Networking enables Shpresa to make their work known, take advantage of opportunities and offer support to similar organisations. The latter process is currently under development and will be reported in a future evaluation.

Where issues have been fully within Shpresa’s control, the programme has gone according to plan and targets have been met and, in some cases, exceeded. Where Shpresa are dependent on mainstream schools, whether for data or for opportunities to address staff in INSET sessions, this has presented challenges.

Some points for consideration:

A rare feature of the Shpresa partnership is the willingness of several headteachers to make their premises available free. As sessions are open to children who attend other mainstream schools, it is important that Shpresa activities remain well attended by children from the host school to ensure the continuing support of headteachers.

Shpresa need to consider the format in which they offer support workshops and materials to schools. It is possible that headteachers of partner schools may no longer feel such a need for a formal input from Shpresa given that they have so many Albanian volunteers deployed in their schools. When workshops are organised as part of other events Shpresa need to ensure that they have their own evaluation forms for audience feedback.

If children’s achievement in mainstream school tests is to remain as an indicator of Shpresa’s success, a more effective way of obtaining these data needs to be negotiated with schools and/or with families. The tracking of children’s data would also be made easier for the evaluator if the attendance registers for Shpresa classes recorded which mainstream schools children attend.
QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE DATA

QUALITATIVE DATA - A Classroom Observations

While the data provided by schools records children’s achievement in English and suggests that they are progressing very well from being new learners of English when they start school to performing close to or above national norms by the end of primary school, it is the observations in the schools that bring the whole project to life. I paid extended visits to Mayfield School and Gascoigne School and was able to observe at first hand the enthusiasm of children for their classes, the warm relationship they had with the Shpresa staff and volunteers, the high quality of teaching, of teaching support and of the learning environment. In all of these schools I had opportunities to talk to children and their mothers, both formally in focus groups and informally.

1) Observational visit to Mayfield School on 9th May 2010. The class of 22 older children is being taught by Vera Pulaj with the assistance of two volunteers who are training for their NVQ level 2 as teaching assistants. Other activities available on the premises: Drama, karate, football, traditional dancing, singing, games.

Overall learning environment
Shpresa’s Programme for young people is delivered in a large single-story modern school on Sundays from 10 a.m. till 4p.m. A gym and a large hall are available, a toilet block, several classrooms and a staff room which offers a teaching and meeting space with computers and kitchen facilities. There is extensive outdoor space available. A church runs services and activities in another part of the building with a separate entrance. Many of the children’s mothers and volunteers attend a training course to become teaching assistants. On arrival the children are allocated to the adults who are running the
particular activities which they have chosen. They are lined up and accompanied to the appropriate hall, gym or classroom. Children do not move unattended around the building.

The classroom used for teaching Albanian is spacious, light and spotlessly clean with paired desks deployed in a horseshoe formation facing the blackboard. There is room for moving furniture around and sufficient floor space to accommodate different activities in the classroom. There is storage available for the children’s books and folders and other teaching resources. At the front of the class is a white board, an IWB, a computer with an internet connection and a CD and tape player. The furniture is in good condition and of the right size.

**Teaching, learning and resources**

There are two Albanian classes, both lasting one hour, for younger and for older children. I observed the class for older children. There were 22 children in the class, the majority are girls. They settle quickly when they enter the classroom and Ms Pulaj introduces the lesson and the learning objectives in English and then switches to Albanian for the rest of the lesson. She has provided me with her register, her scheme of work, copies of hand-outs and a hand-written English version of her lesson.

The lesson starts with Verona showing a clip on the IWB from the award-winning Power Point presentation in Albanian language that she and her friends put together for a competition about introducing visitors to London when they attend the Olympics. She introduces it in English and is congratulated and cheered by the class.

The lesson is a reading comprehension exercise based on the text Më një klasë. Children take turns at reading the text, answering questions which they are encouraged to do in full sentences. They work in groups of three to identify grammatical features and discuss complex words that occur in the text. They then answer questions in their books. The last activity is differentiated from basic sound/letter and vocabulary work, to sophisticated grammatical analysis.

Ms Pulaj has a very lively manner, with expressive body language and keeps the children engaged and the lesson moving at a good pace. The children are praised and encouraged. She delivers part of the lesson from the front of the class using the white board then circulates among the children, offering explanations and checking work. The two volunteers circulate the whole time, supporting individual children and engaging groups in discussion. English is only used occasionally in instances where children fail to understand a new word.
As I walk around the classroom I notice that all children are fully engaged with the lesson. When a question is asked, many hands wave in the air. The lesson becomes very interactive with children moving up to the whiteboard to demonstrate a point or provide an example. Questions are reworded in different ways, quieter children are encouraged, the teacher encourages the use of mime to support understanding. Groups of children are using cards and word games, supported by the volunteers and offering suggestions to the whole class. Several refer to material they have found earlier on the internet. Two thirds of the way through the lesson the children get out their folders. They all have books and work-books. Ms Pulaj calls out individual names and sets writing tasks. As the volunteers circulate, she supports two new arrivals. The lesson ends with a brief plenary in which several children are invited to share with the class what they feel they have learned during the lesson.

The register of attendance includes an individual assessment of children’s engagement and performance in the lesson. The teacher’s scheme of work is an adaptation of the ABETARE materials, a comprehensive literacy programme published in Albania which includes extensive materials for activities including audio resources. Ms Pulaj supplements the materials with resources she prepares herself to meet the needs of individual children.

The class ended with the teacher reviewing with the children what had been learned and reminding them about what they needed for the next session. The children put away the materials tidied their space, pushed in their chairs and then moved on to their other activities for the day as the next group arrived.

2) Observation visit to Gascoigne Primary School on 4th March 2010 from 4.45 to 7p.m. On the premises of Gascoigne Primary school in Barking. Present were 40 children, 15 of the children’s mothers, Luljeta Nuzi the Shpresa Director, Flutra Shega, the Schools’ Coordinator and Saine Dushku and Ermir Disha, teachers. I spoke to the co-ordinator and the director, 13 of the women and two groups children, aged 7 to 10 and 1 teacher. I observed Ms Dushku’s Albanian language class and Mr Disha’s traditional dancing class.

The learning environment: Introduction

I arrived early at Gascoigne School, just before families and their children started to arrive. As five o’clock approached families started arriving at the same time as the two teachers, the
volunteer, the Director and the Schools’ Co-ordinator. Children and their mothers were ushered into the school where the headteacher and the EMA co-ordinator who were still working on the premises, talked to them for a few minutes. When the last of the children had arrived, the doors were secured.

Twenty-five younger children went to the Albanian Language classroom with Saime Dushku. A volunteer who is training for her NVQ level 2 took the 5 youngest of the group into a communicating side room and worked with them on oral activities. Eleven older children followed Ermir Disha into the gym for their traditional dance class.

A group of fifteen women sat on benches in the school hall with Flutra Shega. She was informing them about the government scheme to provide free laptops for school children from more economically challenged homes. This was a lively and informative session (Luljeta explained the content to me) with many questions asked and answered. The application process was explained to the women and they were urged to apply immediately as the scheme operates on a first-come-first-served basis. Flutra went on to talk to the mothers about the importance of reading regularly at home with their children, making at least ten minutes of quality time available, even where children were able to read for themselves. She urged them to make use of the school and the public library.

I was introduced to the group and it was explained that I would be asking them some questions about their use of Shpresa services and the classes for children in particular. I had the opportunity to meet with two women individually but the remainder expressed the wish that I talk to them as a group. We moved to the comfort of the staff room for this purpose.

Talking to the mothers
The women took turns at talking about their children’s motivation for attending the class: all mentioned the importance of learning their language, but in particular they reported that the children enjoyed the opportunity to mix with each other and to socialise in the context of cultural activities. Several mentioned that the children were proud to be connected to their culture, that they enjoyed the traditional dancing, but also that they loved the opportunity to take part in the large public events organised by Shpresa which enabled them perform poetry, drama and dance on stage and gave them a great deal of personal confidence and pride. Several mothers also mentioned that being bilingual helped the children to learn other languages, such a French, more easily in school.

Several mothers mentioned that the children valued their “second school” and the opportunity to learn to read, write and recite poetry in Albanian.

The mother of a seven year old explained how her daughter spoke no English when she started school, but that she was now fluent in English and Albanian, enjoyed performing in public, and was confident both in her mainstream school and with family and friends when she went to Albania on holiday. Her mother is proud that she keeps up the cultural traditions.

The mother of a girl aged 9 was delighted to find that her daughter was reading and writing in Albanian within a year of joining the class, being able both to speak on the phone confidently and to write to family in Albania. She enjoyed writing stories in English and translating them into Albanian.
An older sister recounted her own experiences of arriving in the UK at the age of 14 and the help she received from teachers to pass her GCSEs. Her younger brother joined the Albanian class aged only 4 and is now very fluent and literate in Albanian.

There were also some concerns. The mother of two children aged 8 and 10 was a little disappointed at the children’s slow progress. While they were happy in school and enjoyed both classes, their learning was slow both in mainstream and in the Albanian class. However she felt the Albanian teacher was very good and kept her closely informed on the children’s progress. She would have liked there to be two teachers so that the children could be taught in smaller groups. Another mother of children aged 7 and 9 who have been attending for 2 years was also disappointed at the children’s progress, especially at the fact that although her children understand her perfectly when she speaks to them in Albanian, they generally respond in English (a very common issue within linguistic minority families). However she notes that, although her daughter’s progress in reading has been slow, she has learnt all the poems by heart is proud to recite them, and that she loves the dancing.

Mothers discussed the importance for them to be able to meet when they bring their children and to socialise at Shpresa events. They also greatly appreciated the information and advice provided in sessions such as the one I witnessed earlier in the evening.

Recurring themes have been children being able to communicate with family in Albania, the love of dancing and performing, the children’s personal confidence and pride in their heritage, and the appreciation that mothers have for the quality of the teaching of both literacy and dancing. All women, even those who are a little disappointed in their children’s progress praise the literacy teacher’s professionalism and the detailed reports that they receive on their children’s progress twice a year. Several of them mentioned that they would like more time for the children to learn.

**Talking to the children**

I had the opportunity to speak to 20 of the younger children (not the very youngest) as a group at the end of their literacy class. The children explained that they enjoyed coming to the class because they learnt more Albanian, got a chance to meet their friends, learned poems, played games and learned the traditional dancing. Two of the children explained in great detail how they were learning about the letter M, how to blend it with other letters to make words and poems associated with the letter. They all chipped in when asked to explain the school rules. The children were not very inspired when asked what could make their classes better and one suggested snacks, which seemed a popular idea with the other children.

I spoke to the group of 11 older children at the beginning of their literacy lesson. Their responses were similar to those of the younger children in terms of their reasons for attending and what they liked about the school. They stressed the importance to them of poetry and drama and particularly appreciated the opportunity to perform in public which they felt made them very confident. They also knew the school rules and stressed the importance of respect for each other and not using bad language. They had a lot of ideas on how to enrich their learning: more drama, include art classes in the sessions and one child would like to be taught curriculum subjects through Albanian. However all of these suggestions would require a longer teaching time.
The learning environment:
Gascoigne School was built in the 1970s. The majority of the classes are on the ground floor, they are fairly spacious and light. There are attractive displays of the children’s work on the walls. Shpresa’s classes have the use of the hall, the large gym, toilets, one classroom and a side room attached to it and can use the staffroom with adult sized furniture for meetings. There is also access to secure outdoor space should it be needed. The space is fully accessible and offers a safe and secure environment for children. Children and parents are admitted personally and doors are kept secure. At home time-time, all children are assembled and kept supervised in the hall until collected by their parents.

In the teaching classroom the tables and chairs are suitable for most children, though they are a little low for the oldest. The teacher has the use of a whiteboard, a flip-chart, a tape recorder and some storage space. There is enough space to alternate work at tables and group work on the carpet and to vary the lay-out of the furniture. There is no EWB in the room. The room is orderly and clean and the children leave it as they find it, picking up stray papers and pushing in chairs as they leave at 7p.m. The teacher brings her own resources, which are extensive: pictures, maps, games, artefacts, card games etc. She has a large storage box in which she keeps stationary, books, and individual clear plastic folders for each child’s work which include the children’s work books with their individual plans.

The hall and the gym have benches on which parents and children can sit. The dance teacher has a large CD player for use with dancing classes.

It was obvious from the relationships at the beginning and end of the day and in the sessions observed that there was a very good relationship between pupils and teachers. The children appear to be very keen on their classes and I did not see any time-wasting behaviour. They are well behaved in class, responding rapidly to teacher instruction in the dance class and raising their hands and waiting in the language class.

The children, when asked, knew the rules of the school. They could tell me about being friendly and kind to others, about not using language that upset others, about not running in corridors and keeping their work and the classrooms tidy. In the course of a two hour observation I noted that the children did move sensibly from one room to another and when a whole class moved children were lined up and accompanied by a teacher. The children responded to the adults’ expectations of good behaviour.

Teaching, learning and resources
I observed part of the lesson with the 20 younger children. The end of the session was very interactive. The children were learning a poem and were enjoying performing it in a group. There was a lively and enthusiastic atmosphere at the end of the session. A range of visual resources was being put away, children tidied their files and affairs and lined up to move on to their dance class.

There are 11 children in the older group (3 boys and 8 girls). The teachers’ file included a substantial scheme of work, very detailed plans for her lessons. and targets for individual children. The lesson was based on the history of education in Albania and the story of the very first Albanian language school. It was delivered entirely in Albanian. Visual material included a large map on the board and individual handouts with illustrations for each child. The teacher has a clear and authoritative voice and expressive body language and uses the visual material well, so that it is possible for even a non-Albanian speaker like myself to
follow the gist of the lesson. The lesson involved an extensive discussion of and guided reading of the handout. Children were then asked to underline unfamiliar words which were discussed and explained. While the activity was the same for the whole group, the teacher responded to individuals with varied explanations. All children were clearly on task and interested in this part of the lesson.

The teacher keeps a register of attendance which also includes an individual assessment of children’s engagement and performance in the lesson. There are folders, text and work books for each child. These form part of the ABETARE scheme of work, a comprehensive literacy programme published in Albania which includes extensive materials for activities including audio resources. The teacher supplements, updates and adapts her resources to the needs of individual children with material that she makes herself.

I observed the last 20 minutes of the dancing lesson. All the younger children (25 in all) were positioned in the gym in dance formation. Ermir Disha was modelling the steps of a dance, counting the rhythm and instructing the children. They were totally intent on following the instructions. Some of the younger ones had difficulty maintaining their personal space and the teacher moved over to assist them. As the children found the pace and the rhythm, they practised the steps without guidance, the teacher only maintaining a clapping rhythm. The children, even the very youngest, were totally intent on performing the moves correctly and in unison.

At 7 p.m. the children helped the teachers to pack away their equipment and moved into the main hall where their parents were waiting. The teachers checked that all children were safely with family members before they left.

QUALITATIVE DATA – B SHPRESA CHILDREN’S CONGRESS
20th December 2009

Context
The first Children’s Congress was held in 2008. It brought together all the children who participate in Shpresa’s activities for young people and provided an opportunity for them to meet each other, evaluate their projects and offer suggestions for future development. Like its predecessor, this congress was held at Mayfield High School in Barking. The congress was timed to follow the Shpresa AGM, starting at 11.30.

The day before the Congress there had been a heavy snow fall which had frozen. On the day it was very cold, the roads were icy and travelling conditions were atrocious. Nevertheless the school hall was packed with children and their parents when proceedings started at 11.45.
The congress

In the main school hall tables have been assembled to create large areas around which children sit, some with their parents, in their project group. There are chairs round the sides where more parents sit with small children in push-chairs. At the front is a large bank of audio visual equipment and a projector and screen.

Flutra Shega is the organiser and she introduces procedures and presents the agenda for the day. Two of the main themes to be addressed in the Congress are the issue of the detention of children and cyber bullying both of which have been the focus of research and action by groups of older pupils.

Flutra introduces two groups of young people who take the microphone and speak with remarkable confidence about the campaigns and the events that they have organised.

At 12 noon, in spite of the freezing temperature all parents and children file out into the playground in the snow and ice for a candle vigil in protest at the imprisoning of children in detention camps.

The children have organised an “End Child Detention Now” campaign within the Albanian community and have handed in a petition to Downing Street.

Back in the warmth of the hall Flutra Shega again addresses the audience. She thanks the children for their achievement, for keeping their language and traditions alive. She celebrates successful new activities such as new sports, like Karate, the Kosovan anniversary concert, the “Too busy to be in trouble” show, the Seventh Anniversary event at the House of Commons.
She thanks all the children involved in petitioning at the Treasury for an Albanian GCSE, at Downing Street against child detention; the teachers, the volunteers, the Jack Petchey Foundation, the older children who support the younger ones. She revisits the highlights of the 2009 children’s programme on a Power Point presentation and appeals for more volunteers to come forward so that more children’s clubs can be opened to meet the demand from the community.

A succession of children and young people take to the microphone to talk about the highlights of the year, the projects they have been involved with and the impact Shpresa has had on their lives.

A Youth worker raises the issue of cyber bullying with a Power Point presentation, and involves the audience with questions and role play.

A student who had been regularly in trouble with the police explains how Shpresa helped him to change his ways and put his life back on track.

A recorded story is played told by a small child about the impact that Shpresa has had on her life.

All of Flutra’s introductions and presentations are in Albanian and all the children’s are in English.

Two groups of students present Power Points on how to attract Albanian speaking visitors to London for the Olympics. These have been entered into a competition with a prize to be
awarded by the University of East London. These have been produced in Albanian and are practical, imaginative and technically accomplished.

For the evaluation activity each table has two facilitators, a large poster with an image of a tree whose branches depict areas for evaluation and suggestions. The children are given post-its and pens. Younger children are supported by their parents or by the facilitator to write their ideas. Apples are handed out to the children while they are working.

The children stick their suggestions on the poster and a child is chosen from each table to present the findings to the audience. There is some discussion between Luljeta and Flutra about the presentation of the feedback, and not all groups feedback to the whole audience.

At 2.35 Luljeta Nuzi offers a comment on the feedback and focuses in particular on the issue that not all children can be involved in all campaigning activities as for some events, numbers are strictly limited (such as a visit to Downing Street).

At this point the younger children are becoming restive. Many of the parents have moved to the gym and the children have been in the hall with their teachers and volunteers since 11.30. Although they have been told lunch will be available, no refreshments other than apples have been offered up to this point. A few children have snacks in their bags and have been eating them during the proceedings.

A large quantity of high quality presents have been made available to Shpresa by the London Business Alliance for distribution to the children. These are...
unpacked and piled up at the front of the hall. The procedure is explained to the children: they are to complete an evaluation form, in exchange for which they will be given a numbered ticket which entitles them to a Christmas present. The evaluation forms are handed out and facilitators asked to help younger children. The forms only require a tick with optional comment, but they seem more relevant to adult users of Shpresa than children. The children have some difficulty with these and some younger children tick all the boxes. They form a long line in the middle of the hall and hand in their evaluation in exchange for a ticket.

Children are then sent back to their seats. The presents are in two piles: one for boys and one for girls and each has a number. Ticket numbers are called individually and children again line up to collect their present. This takes up till 3.30 at which time children and parents are invited to move to the gym where a hot lunch is served.

Children and parents are back in the hall at 3.50 and are entertained by a large group of traditional dancing.

After the dancing Flutra organises the election of the Chair of the Children’s Forum. Four children, aged between 9 and 11 come to the microphone and set out their pitch. Two of the speeches in particular are very well structured and all are confidently presented.

While they are talking, ballot papers are handed out to all children. At the end of the presentations children are invited to hand their papers to one of four teachers, each of which represents a candidate. The newly elected chair of the forum is a 14 year-old boy.
The Congress ends with the presentation of certificates. All those who have attained the yellow belt in Karate get a certificate and attendance certificates are awarded to all children who attend classes. Group photographs are taken and then the disco starts.

The Children’s Congress – an assessment

Strengths
The impact of Shpresa is evident from the sheer numbers of children and their families who have turned up in challenging weather conditions, some of them having travelled considerable distances from north and east London. It is clear from the atmosphere that the occasion provides a welcome opportunity for networking and socialising within the Albanian/Kosovan community. Parents less directly involved in the proceedings are alternatively talking in groups and circulating among friends in the hall and in the neighbouring gym.

The reports from Flutra and the children and young people themselves outline an impressive and wide-ranging programme of activities throughout the year: from language classes to karate through campaigning on issues that directly affect the refugee community. However it is not only what was said at the Congress that was impressive, but the manner of presentation.

There is a great deal of evidence that children’s voice is at the heart of the programme for young people. Most of the reporting on the year’s events came from young people themselves. The many opportunities they have for performing and speaking in public have ensured that even the youngest speak to a large audience with considerable confidence. They have also received the support needed to enable them to produce presentation materials on Power Point to a very high standard. There is evidence from the children’s reports of very active engagement in the planning and delivery of services and it is greatly to Shpresa’s credit that children are not afraid to question decisions.

A particular strength of the programme is the way in which it encourages the active involvement of young people in the democratic process through the organisation of campaigns on issues that affect them and educate them to become effective British citizens.

There is evidence that Shpresa’s aim to support young people’s developing identity through the provision of cultural activities that both values their Albanian heritage and provides
opportunities for effective participation in mainstream British society, has a positive impact on their identity and citizenship. It is noticeable that, in the course of the event, all speeches and most instructions given by Flutra were in Albanian, while young people addressed the audience mainly in English. The young people have become dominant in English and need the opportunities offered by Shpresa to meet socially and attend language classes to ensure their continuing bilingualism.

There have been enormous organisational skills involved in the planning and delivery of such a very well attended and successful event. Especially in view of weather conditions that must have raised the possibility with organisers of considering cancellation. The range and variety of presentations and the high level of engagement from participants throughout ensured children’s involvement and attention, for the first half of the programme.

**Issues for consideration**

Two issues impacted somewhat negatively on some children in the second half of the programme:

- Children had been in the hall from 11.30 in the morning. Some had been there longer if their parents were involved in the AGM which started at 10 a.m. By 2 p.m. they were hungry and had been sitting at their tables for some considerable time. While it was wonderfully comforting to be offered well prepared and tasty hot food, the meal came far too late in the proceedings, at 3.30 in the afternoon, given that most children would not have had any food or drink since breakfast time.
- It was an excellent idea to link the evaluation of the event to the offer of presents to the children. However the procedure for handing out the presents, while ensuring fairness, involved the children waiting twice: once to queue to hand in their form and get their ticket, and then to wait in their groups till their number was called to come out to the front and receive their gift. Given the large numbers of children present, this took a very long time.

**Recommendations:**

- It is recommended that a break for refreshments be scheduled much earlier in the proceedings
- That a more rapid procedure be devised for handing out presents to children.
- That an evaluation form be designed that is more relevant to the children and young people’s involvement in the Shpresa Programme and that is more readily understood by the children. This may require two forms, one for younger and one for older children.

With congratulations to Flutra Shega and the Shpresa team for a successful and very productive event.

Raymonde Sneddon 8th January 2009
QUALITATIVE DATA – C – Group interviews with women volunteers

Interview 1
3 mothers: Na., H., N.(interpreting as well as participating)

Interview 2
6 current volunteers (also mothers): M, A., E., L., Ai., D.

Interview 1.
How important do you feel it is to be able to help your children with their education?

N. who came from Kosovo has four young children. She focuses on the importance of literacy and the singing and dancing that Shpresa provide. With advice from Shpresa she helps her children with speaking and writing in Albanian at home. She reads stories to them at home. He finds a few dual language books in the Ilford library but borrows English books to read to her children. A friend brings books from Kosovo. I need help for my children for everything, so I come to Shpresa Programme. They help me with lots of things.

H. Replies in Albanian, translated by N. Before Shpresa I tried to help my children at home and I brought some books from Kosovo. After that we found Shpresa Programme and they helped us a lot.

Do you find when you try and help your children with English homework that things are very different?

I explain one method and my daughter says ‘no, mama, don’t do like that. Mama I don’t like to learn like this I need to learn like in school’. All women have found it a problem that their children learn in a different way from the way they did.

N. I’m helping in my son’s school and now I can understand everything. I see the teacher explain to the children in that way and now I understand and it’s easy for me now to help my children.

H. explains that because of problems with her health she has not been able to learn English.

How much do you know about the education system in England?

H. is seriously hampered by her lack of skill in English. She has understood that her child is doing ‘very good’ but was not able to get more detailed information.

Has Shpresa helped with this?
H brought the school report to Luljeta and had it explained.
Na. She is now helping in school and has had help from Shpresa and is beginning to understand the structure of schooling.
(There is much discussion in Albanian which is not translated for me)
M. explains that Flutra provides leaflets and provides a lot of explanation and information about education.

H. Explains that she attends Shpresa every week. She suffers from depression and finds that meeting friendly people she can talk to helps her a lot. Shpresa has helped to dispel the negative view of depression in the Albanian community ('she’s mad'). Shpresa (Evis) provide support for her on hospital visits and with writing letters.
Na explains how she develops her English through helping elderly English neighbours with things such as shopping. My neighbour says every morning ‘you come and drink coffee’ and sometimes I stay at her home, sometimes I give her a cup of tea, and this helps me’. 

What effect do you think coming to Shpresa has on your children?
N. They say ‘mum, I need to go to meet my friends’. They can learn something new, they can go to karate, they feel very confident. For my children, it is very good.
(Albanian) is a little bit hard for them because they speak a lot of English. We try to teach our language first, but they go to school and they learn English and it is a little bit difficult for children, but they learn to speak and read. Writing is more difficult.

Na. Explains that her daughter is doing well with literacy in Albanian. Her children join in everything and have made a lot of friends and her son especially has greatly improved his Albanian. Time is an issue for women trying to help their children at home.

H. Explains that all her children attend as many activities as possible and she is very happy with the many opportunities offered.

Na explains that it is very important to the families that the activities are free.

**Do your children feel British, Albanian or both? How do they feel about their culture?**

Na explains her eldest son feels more Kosovan and her youngest more British. But the children generally feel both and visiting Kosovo reinforces their dual culture.

**What could Shpresa do better or more?**

Women explain that there is a lot of consultation so they always get a chance to talk about the services and they are very good.

N. I don’t know what to ask because they have everything!

Na. If you need something and you go to Shpresa programme, they can help you.

**Interview 2**

**Why do you volunteer?**

This group of current volunteers are all helping at Shpresa as well as in mainstream schools. The women are inspiring to talk to! They all speak very good English.

A I volunteer because I really like what I do. I like working with children. It is a good opportunity to learn more and to put all your knowledge into practice. It is a plus in your CV and your career. It helps you to know children with different backgrounds and different abilities. I’m so glad in myself that I able to give my contribution to this community.

E. Explains that she doesn’t mind not being paid because she can learn and help people. *We can give something of ourselves and our skills.*

M. *It makes me more confident.* She starts talking about the benefit to her children of coming to Shpresa and how it has greatly improved their oral Albanian and their confidence in singing it with family and friends.

X It gives you a lot of opportunities. For example for me it gave me the opportunity to organise a show and that made me very confident. At mainstream school the teacher is the boss. At Shpresa she feels women can make suggestions, try out new activities and gain confidence. *You can use your initiative.*

M. You get told you ‘have done a wonderful job’ and that feels so good!

A. We are committed to this community and the job, because we love what we are doing. I am determined. If I set goals for myself I will achieve them, no matter what.

**What kind of training do you receive for your volunteering?**

E. is being trained as a teaching assistant and gets on well with the course. She was a teacher in Albania but her qualifications are not recognised, so this offers experience of the English education system and a route to eventually gain Qualified Teacher Status.

Several women comment on how effective this training is to understanding the English education system. One woman asks to talk to me privately afterwards in my role as a former teacher trainer. The women explain that Shpresa consult widely about time and venues to make sure no one who wants to follow the course is excluded. They are now starting their NVQ level 3 and are starting placements arranged by Shpresa.
What are your personal aims?
The women would like to eventually be paid to work, preferably in schools.
Ai. I’ve had this goal since the first day I came here. Back home I was quite a good student. When I came here I didn’t speak a word. I went to Newham College: it was a nightmare, I was crying all the time. .. My husband supported me all the way.... My first target was to learn to speak English... then I wanted to do this course. Now I want to find a job and take my education higher and higher, because you are never completed with teaching... as long as we live we are going to learn.

All the women agree with this aim. They also agree that volunteering in schools offers excellent opportunities and motivation to improve their English.
Ai describes the embarrassment at first of not known the names of the toys young children in school were playing with. She went round asking “can you tell me, darling, what you are playing with?”

Did you feel deskilled when you arrived?
All agreed this was a very serious problem, but that it also provided strong motivation: we knew what we were capable of back there, so we wanted to prove ourselves. It can make you strong inside.
M. Describes the difficulty of trying to find a first job with no UK experience. She had learned some English from books before she came, but couldn’t understand anyone in the market because of speed and different accents. Did I come to England or am I in China?
The women discuss the very multicultural nature of local college classes and the need to tune in to different voices. You become so open minded for everything because you learn about different backgrounds and cultures and festivals and think, I didn’t know nothing! It’s not just my little world I live in there is a wider range of things around me that I didn’t know.
E. talks about racist conflicts between black and white in the area in which she first arrived. She explains that her experiences at college helped her overcome the culture shock.
M. You learn not to judge the person by their appearance from all these people from different parts of the world.
D. joins the group five minutes before the end. She is very new to Shpresa, has joined the class. Her English is not so good as the others and they talk in Albanian.

New volunteers:

Why do you volunteer?
The new volunteers all have children attending at Mayfield and they are volunteering in the project. E.is also volunteering in her child’s mainstream school.

1. “To volunteer comes from your heart. You’re going to have a result. Volunteering makes you happy. It’s a very good experience, you can learn, and you can give something.”
2. “Doing voluntary work is a good experience for us.” Giving back to her community and to Shpresa Programme for the help she received. She explains all of the volunteers have their own children in the programme and it helps with their language development as they meet with other Albanian children. They learn more about their background. Although she speaks Albanian at home, the children are in an English environment at school all day. Children are forgetting and always asking parents for word meanings. It is difficult for them to
communicate with family when they go to Albania. Volunteering also helps with finding a paid job.

F. Has 3 children under 8 attending Shpresa. “I really like them to know their background and where they come from”.

3. “I learn more skills and I have more to give”. She learns more about how her children are educated and is more confident to help them.

E. “I became passionate about volunteering two years ago”. She has 2 daughters, the eldest has special needs. The mainstream school asked her to help her daughter “if I go to the school, I can learn from teachers how they work and I can do at home with my daughter. I was invited into a school and that’s how I started.” Volunteered for 8 months. “I found it really lovely to learn more about the kids and how to help mine at home, how the kids at school get on”. “I want to go back and learn more about helping kids and about myself”. She is hoping to train as a teaching assistant and eventually as a teacher. “I just want to give back something. This country has given so much to us”. “You’re so happy when you feel you are helping someone. You make someone’s future change in a good way.”

What kind of volunteering are you doing here?

1 was a music teacher in her country. She teaches folk music here to children with special needs. “it helps you to keep in touch with your language and with your feelings.”

2 is helping as a general teaching assistant with all the activities in the school.

3 is also providing general classroom help in the Albanian classes.

I talks of the benefit of the classes for socialising the children and given them a lot of confidence. The women feel a responsibility for all the children when they are here.

What kind of training or help does Shpresa offer when you start volunteering?

3. “Because it’s Albanian, we know how to work with them, you help them what you need”. Teachers offer general advice and practical help.

1. When we came here to Shpresa Programme, everybody had background experience in working with children, because we’ve got our own children.” She explains that she training and experience from Albania but needs to learn about policy and how things work in this country. Shpresa explain the differences “you have to be very kindly. Because in our country, when we were children, it was quite different. The teacher has to be very strict and you have to listen. But here they are more polite.” She feels she now knows the different expectations of behaviour around children. “We can treat all the kids as our kids, if you don’t do that, they just leave”.

X. Albanian qualifications are not accepted in the UK. “We have to start from scratch. It’s quite difficult”

F.: “I finished in my country for industrial chemistry.” Since she arrived in the UK she has had small children and not tried to pursue a career.

B. studied in the army. She explains you train at university to be an army officer unlike this country where you work up from being a soldier. “We’re not without any qualifications, we have quite high qualifications.”

1. “When you find people like Luljeta and Flutra who have been working with our community from a long time ago, they give us … I met them one year ago and I was completely surprised at how they work with children, what they are giving to our community.”

E.: “I work in an English school and we have such a very very good, very professional headteacher. I could say, like Luljeta”. “I really appreciate it, she is working very hard for us.
The women discuss how good Luljeta is at networking, bringing people together. “She is so organised. She works with passion”.

Where are you hoping to be in ten years’ time?
E.: Is currently not in paid employment. Is studying to be a teaching assistant on the Shpresa TA programme and hopes to train as a teacher.
F.: It is easier to study once the children are at school full-time. It is a good time to be preparing for the future.
I: Learning to be a teacher assistant, which will take 2 years. She is in a local school. “I want to improve my work, be more helpful in both sides, with English children and here with Albanian children.” She explains how she takes “bits from here and bits from there” from both cultures. Being a teacher is a hard job but rewarding.

E.: “When you work with kids, they are from all over the world, so you learn about their background, different cultures, different religions and that. You learn and you get something back, so it’s good for us.”

The women discuss the many different cultures in English schools and what they can learn from them.
F.: “I want to push myself hard because I really enjoy working with kids.” Her children are in the same school as Mindela’s. “I am going to start there, two days’ voluntary work. When I have finished the course I am going to ask for a teaching assistant’s position and I am thinking of teaching later”. She discusses how much information she gets from reading for her course.

X. “When you read it, it looks fun” she wants to carry on and explore education further.

Is there anything more Shpresa should be trying to do?
The women agree “Just continue”. One woman has come all the way from Hammersmith to be at Shpresa on Sundays. She would love to have an organisation like Shpresa in west London. She has started and is opening an Albanian class in her school next week. “We are very grateful Shpresa programme gave us this chance and we hope to continue with this very good job for our community.”

Anything you want to ask me?
“It was a pleasure to talk to you”.

Volunteers who have all moved on.
Why did you volunteer and what benefit did you get from that (or not)?
H. She was helped by Shpresa to get benefits and when she was studying to become a benefits adviser she started volunteering with Shpresa. I made friends, I didn’t have any one here, apart from my mum and dad I had no friends, I volunteered for 4 years. She left 2 years ago and is now working for Community Links as volunteer co-ordinator for the advice team. I was volunteering there as well, I was in 2 places. The experience of working with customers as a volunteer gave her the confidence to apply for a paid job. When she was a volunteer at Shpresa a lot of people were needing help with getting leave to remain and I was very busy and working under pressure.
V. She teaches the Albanian language classes at Mayfield. She volunteered in 2005. Her sister told her about Shpresa running programmes for children born in the UK. She met Flutra and told her she had been a teacher back home and had taught for 7 years. It’s a challenge working with the children who are born here. I taught every subject in Albania, but here it is just English and Albanian. She worked for 2 years as a volunteer, then Luljeta referred her to an agency to do the Overseas Trained Teacher programme (at Empowering Learning). All the time Shpresa were pushing her to do more teaching. I learned how to prepare and organise lesson plans, because it is so much different. I learn not to make it boring for children, to make a good connection, with games and include other subjects. The hardest part is translating between English and Albanian. She had a second job translating. She is now working as a teaching assistant and has recently completed the HLTA. She is now teaching mainly in English and developing new teaching and learning skills. I feel tired because I am working full time in the mainstream school, but I can’t give up the Albanian children because I enjoy them. She talks about the inspiration from Shpresa and the happiness of working for them. I speak to children from different communities. She also recommends the Shpresa programme to Albanian children she encounters.

E. Shpresa offers an opportunity to children born in the UK to learn Albanian. In the beginning E. was a user, in 2005, and needed help to get a British passport. A lot of her friends were volunteering at Shpresa. I thought this was a good opportunity for me as well. I was on my own with my family, I didn’t know any friends, I thought, if I volunteer at Shpresa I’ll get to know more people and I get more confidence as well. I was a bit shy in the beginning. I have got more friends now. She helped three different classes a week for 3 years. E. did a business administration course which was very helpful. Then she continued to study Advice and Guidance. She is now volunteering with benefits advice for another organisation in Stratford. She is hoping to be offered a job but will always help at Shpresa if she is needed.

Ha. She started off getting help from Shpresa, then, supported by Evis, started helping others to fill in forms. I was very good at writing at that time, but not speaking a lot, I could help people get confidence in writing and get benefits or go to the doctor, lots of small things. I can say I filled in forms for 30 families. Joining with Shpresa was a huge privilege and a chance to learn and work for them. I increased my confidence. When I came here it was not 0, it was under 0. I used to be very confident in my country: top job and university and everything and when I came here, they don’t count my diploma, I couldn’t speak English, everything was upside down. I felt so isolated. Working with Shpresa, I got the confidence to go back to education, back to employment. I worked one year for a paid job, but then there was a funding problem. I have lots of friends now and I am very happy. My children get so much confidence with different projects. She appreciates the programmes run for the whole family who look forward to coming to Shpresa. She has also worked on an accountancy project and Shpresa are finding her work with other charities. I want to say thank you to Shpresa, anytime they need me they can call me, they are so much a part of my life and my kids’ life. It is a privilege working with Shpresa. My life is completely different from 5 years ago. She talks about the many opportunities for training, such as leadership, health and safety, taxation courses etc. Shpresa enables people to move on into British society, they work to put people in employment and education. She has worked in other voluntary organisations in Redbridge and with Helping Hand in Newham, but she is very impressed with Shpresa.

E. Back home I just finished school, I got married, I had my family I came here with nothing, no qualifications, no experience, like a fish without water. I am here now and I can’t believe that I have progressed so much. Shpresa push women to do a range of courses for their own
benefit. If she weren’t pushed she would just watch TV. Shpresa give us so much network. I find myself being proud of who I am and where I come from.

X. An MP said what I know about Albanian people is they do prostitution or they do the car wash, and I was completely wrong. She explains the MP’s views were changed by meeting Shpresa and Luljeta, especially.

Ha. talks about the strength of Shpresa compared to similar organisations. We have been lucky to have a good role model in Luljeta.

Emma points out that people in Shpresa come from very different backgrounds but SH. Has changed mentalities, especially the men’s. People are encouraged to move on and get education and a proper job. It is very helpful to isolated women with low self-esteem. There are issues of domestic violence in the community and Shpresa has been working with the women’s therapy centre. The women are very conscious that they have rights and this gives them confidence in domestic violence situations. The women talk across each other about how women used to suffer “in the dark” but they can now get help. We used to keep our feelings inside in our country, now it has changed a lot. We are open to speak to each other, to give opinions, to share experience. Shpresa has changed us a lot. Now I can say ‘I have this problem in my life’. They mention women being alone at home with nothing to do and suffering from depression.

Volunteering is a benefit, but it’s generosity from you because you need money. Does it help you economically?

Yes, because it is leading us to paid work. You don’t think about the money when you think about what it might be in the future. They explain that they will volunteer even if the organisation can’t afford to pay lunch or fares. I come for my own benefit, not for £5 a day, I’m here to learn. When you go for a job they ask ‘what experience have you got?’

X. commented that when she was a college she was criticised by two fellow Albanian mothers for putting her 9 month old baby in the college nursery. She points out many children in Albania were brought up in nurseries. When my son’s grown up, he will say to me ‘what have you done? Why you haven’t moved on?’ He won’t remember how long he stayed in the nursery. She felt women were ignorant and criticising her. She retorted: You’re completely wrong, when my son’s grown up he doesn’t care where he’s been. He cares what I am giving to him. The woman who criticised her is still at home doing nothing on benefits. Esmeralda: with unpaid work you learn how to work with colleagues, and many transferable skills. When they worked for Shpresa as volunteers they were treated as staff and had the same opportunities for training and support. They reckon when they have worked for Shpresa they can work in most jobs. Shpresa gave us huge opportunities. They gave us strong foundations to move on. They mention a friend now earning £36,000 a year after volunteering for 2 years and others who have moved on successfully.

QUALITATIVE DATA – D

Interview with Samia Shire carried out on 26th October 2009.

Q1 In your experience, what worked well for taking forward some of the issues in education, especially under-achievement and limited parental involvement?
Samia feels there are no quick fixes for the Somali community: schools need to take a holistic approach and have a range of strategies such as employing bilingual assistants, mentors, and developing after school study support clubs. They need to use several approaches systematically, over a period of time.

A lot of Somali children attend complementary schools for study support in the key subjects, especially at KS3. Parents are very committed and will pay. Mainstream schools put Somali pupils in a foundation class, in the lower set and that’s already putting their aspirations down. Barriers: Somali parents do not expect to be involved in school. They feel it would be disrespectful.

Q2 Can you tell me a bit about how and why you got involved with Shpresa, with Luljeta Nuzi?

“I’m at the stage where she was back then, so she could and share her experience and show us a way forward in terms of paperwork, policies, the constitution, accounting. She helped me with the constitution, how to apply to Companies’ House, the Charity Commission, you know, she went through it with me.”

Luljeta shared her network and introduced Samia to key contacts. She organised CRB checks for Samia and her volunteers, helped to get the organisation off the ground and worked hard to support funding applications. Samia has been shocked at how difficult this has proved to be. Luljeta even offered space in the Shpresa office. The embryo organisation is being sustained by private funding from Samia’s father.

Issues: Samia feels distance is a major difficulty. Samia is in North London, Shpresa in the East. “we live in North London and she lives in East London and we’re having a logistical problem in getting there. If we were more closer we could get everything off the ground”. Samia is not keen on working with Gascoigne as originally arranged. She agreed because she wanted to support Luljeta who had been so helpful to her. She would prefer to work at Gladesmore which is in her area where she knows the community and could build trust quickly.

Samia would like to run workshops for parents. She feels families are very weak at getting the right information. Incorrect and unhelpful information often circulates by word of mouth in the community. Somalis are very scared of governments. They are a Nomadic people and do not feel settled in the UK.

“Parents and children want extra support in English and in maths and they want to catch up with the others, with their peers. So that’s where the Somali community is at the moment. And that is the cure and we will run classes in maths and English and then we can start on other issues like Somali language” This is very different from the Shpresa model as currently practised. However the finance is a real problem as qualified teachers expect to be paid at least £20 an hour and experienced volunteers are hard to find.

Samia greatly appreciates all the help she received in setting up her charity but feels that a closer partnership with Shpresa is not practical in the long term because of the distance.

**QUANTITATIVE DATA - E**

Shpresa Programme – Knowledge about Children’s Education

Comparing responses to a baseline questionnaire taken before the course with a final one taken at the end.

Respondents: 40 women completed a baseline questionnaire at the start of their course. 39 of the same women completed the final questionnaire as well as an additional 3. The following
charts illustrate the difference between the baseline and the final questionnaires for the 39 women for whom both sets of data were available. The baseline data are represented on the pie chart on the left and the final data on the pie chart on the right.

The following responses were available for each question:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I do not know anything about this</th>
<th>I know a little about this</th>
<th>I have essential information about this</th>
<th>I know quite a lot about this</th>
<th>I am very well informed about this</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 blue</td>
<td>2 green</td>
<td>3 beige</td>
<td>4 purple</td>
<td>5 yellow</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Section A – Supporting children’s learning**

Do you know how your child is progressing at school?

Do you know how children are taught to read in school?

Do you know how children are taught maths at school?

Do you know how to help your child to learn?
If your child has a special need do you know how to give help at home?

Section B 1 – Relationship with children’s school
Do you know how to get help at school if your child is bullied, or has behaviour or attendance problems?

Do you know how to get help at school if you are worried about your child’s progress in school?

Do you know how to make a complaint about the school?

Section C – The Stages of Children’s education in England
Do you know how English education is organised: when children start school, types of school, how to choose a school, how to apply for a place?
Section D – Early Years and Primary Education
Do you know about Early Years education choices: nurseries, playgroups, reception classes, Sure Start Children’s Centres?

Do you know about the Areas of Learning and Development and how children are taught in the Early Years Foundation Stage?

Do you know how children are assessed in the early years?

Do you know about the National Curriculum in primary schools?
Do you know how children are assessed in KS1 and KS2, by the teacher and through tests?

Do you know what records the school keeps about your child?

Do you know what how children are assessed for Special Educational Needs and what support is available? Who to contact if you think your child has a special need?

Section E – Secondary Education and beyond
Do you know how the transition to secondary school is organised: how to choose a school and when?
Do you know about the National Curriculum at Secondary school: what subjects are compulsory, which children can choose?

Do you know what choices your child can make in Year 9, what qualifications are available?

Do you know how to get advice about careers and the qualifications that lead to them?

Do you know about study options after school (sixth form, further education college, apprenticeship, university) and how to apply?
Do you know how to get financial support for education (EMA, grants and loans)?

Section B 2 – Relationship with children’s school
Do you attend parents’ evenings and events?
This question had 3 possible responses: never=blue; sometimes=green; always= beige

Do you feel confident about talking to your child’s teacher or headteacher?
This question had 2 possible responses: yes = blue; no = green

Do you get involved in school activities, helping for special events or outings?
This question had 3 responses: never=blue; sometimes=green; often= beige
APPENDIX

Policies, Management and Procedures

Albanian School Project

Mission
To develop the confidence and self-esteem of refugee children from Albanian backgrounds, enabling them to reach their full potential speaking people to learn their mother tongue, history and about their heritage.

Ethos
• Enable children and parents to reach their full potential
• Work proactively
• Working with the Albanian speaking community
• Accepting Albanian speaking women and men of all faiths, cultures and races

Core Values
• Be well-informed about the Albanian language, history and heritage.
• Ensure everyone in contact with us feels valued and respected.
• Improve the quality of life of families and individuals who are in contact with us.
• Be responsible for running the project and developing services.
• Develop skills and training of volunteers and staff users.

Values of the Project
• Provide a welcoming and dignified environment
• Be flexible and proactive in the way we work
• Work collectively and be accessible and open.
• Be flexible and supportive in the way we work.
• Partnership work with other agencies.
• Ensure anti-discrimination practice.

1. To provide opportunities and teaching to enable refugee children to learn their mother tongue, history and understand their cultural heritage.
2. To develop appropriate services that meet the need of the Albanian-speaking community to learn about their history, language and heritage.
3. To develop trusting links between teachers and parents and improve communication between teachers and refugee parents.
4. To increase the capacity of the project through developing a team of well-trained paid staff and volunteers.
5. To ensure the sustainability of the project through developing a diverse funding base.
Staff records
There is a file for each teacher than includes their job specification, job description, CV, the interview schedule and notes from the interview, a time sheet and signed record of hours worked with invoices (for paid staff). It also includes Home Office evidence of immigration status. Supervision notes are held in a separate file. CRB checks are carried out on all staff and volunteers and are currently renewed annually. There is a probationary period of three months for all paid staff and volunteers.

Job descriptions.
Job specifications and descriptions outline the teacher’s role. There is a separate Person Specification for volunteers with an application form that clearly outlines the responsibilities of the school project and the volunteer workers. Paid staff received £15 per hour for sessions that last a minimum of two hours. Volunteers are paid travel expenses for the cheapest fare and are provided with lunch if they work for longer than four hours. The responsibilities of teachers include Albanian language teaching, cultural activities, management of and practical and emotional support to young refugee children, meetings, supervision, school holiday activities and care of school premises.

The job description of the Education Development Worker involves a major responsibility with respect to children’s parents: to support them to access relevant family services and to encourage positive parenting and support parental involvement in children’s education in mainstream schools as well. She is responsible for the smooth running of the project. She is currently paid £25,555 per annum for a formal 36 hour week.

Staff training and supervision
All teachers, paid staff and volunteers undertake an induction course which covers the organisation’s policies and procedures, in particular the child protection, health and safety and volunteer policies, the curriculum, the information they are required to keep about children, monitoring and evaluation procedures as well as tasks intended to make the new teacher familiar with the children they will be working with and their families and the school with which they are in partnership. All staff have a confidential induction file which includes abbreviated copies of relevant policies and basic information about the organisation and “what to do … where to find…” its aims and objectives, a synopsis of the business plan, the structure of the organisation, and the roles and responsibilities of all staff. Procedures for accident and first aid, an extensive section on safeguarding children.

Flutra Shega and Evis Boddli have attended the “Step by Step” education programme and Community Education training offered by the Borough of Newham, for which they attend refresher courses every six months. Staff are also trained in the Safeguarding Children procedures. These programmes inform the training they offer to all Shpresa staff and volunteers. An experienced teacher from Albania trains all staff in the ABETARE programme and organises a scheme of work for all schools which is then adapted by individual teachers to meet the needs of their pupils.

All teachers, both paid and voluntary, attend a termly supervision session with Flutra Shega, who is in turn supervised by the director. The session reviews progress, addresses any concerns or difficulties, identifies training needs and opportunities and appropriate targets are agreed.
Staff meetings are held termly in two teams, based in north and in east London. A range of issues are considered. One issue that emerges is the fact that, for many children born in the UK, English is the main language. Unless parents support and develop the use of the language it is not possible for children to become fluent in Albanian on the basis of a weekly lesson. This is an issue that the project shares with most mother tongue teaching schools in the U.K. Attendance and care of teaching resources are other issues such classes have concern about. The Shpresa teachers keep a register and analyse absence data. The level of attendance at classes is generally high. The teachers contact families in cases of unexplained absence. Teachers also act to ensure that children take care of teaching materials and bring them regularly to sessions. A Home-Project agreement outlines the responsibilities of the Albanian School, of parents and of children and sets down clear expectations for the partnership.

The following records and files are available

**Monitoring file:**

On the monitoring file are records of

- No of users and volunteers (based on projects) using regularly Shpresa Programme services dating form 2003-2004.
- Data Base with contact details of registered members
- Clients using advice surgeries with a chart illustration of age and gender break down
- List of users of the projects, including number of sessions and list of workshops provided and activities organised
- Monitoring of sessional staff (names) including list of schools worked and no of sessions and working hours
- Activities and performances attended and list of users
- Time table of staff working days and hours

**Evaluation file:**

There are a number of documents in the evaluation file organized in years from 2003

- Internal evaluation records in the forms of questionnaires, tables of end results, group evaluation records and minutes of focus groups are recorded on this folder.
- Photo albums with users’ comments
- External evaluation: youth project, education project, women.
- Local magazines, evaluation letters by partners, evaluations done by funders, accreditation report, external evaluations carried out by different researchers
on all the projects during the lifetime of Shpresa Programme by Communities of Health Newham NHS and report by Child Poverty Champions, thank you notes, postcards, letters form users, partners and other agencies.

**Membership file:**

- There is a membership form that users complete which has questions needed for monitoring purposes such as Name/surname, DOB, gender, address, telephone and email, date of arrival in UK, status, education, employment, disability and service used. All paid and unpaid memberships are held on this file and then the information recorded on database.

- There is a file with emergency contacts and consent forms for using photos and films taken during Shpresa’s activities to be used for different reports, press releases, website, presentation at different events

- Membership of Shpresa Programme of other agencies and organisations are displayed in the office.

**Awards file:**

Shpresa Programme has received awards from different bodies (Queens award, communities of health, best organisation working with children in Newham, Prime Minister, Child Poverty champions, National resource centre on supplementary school).

The award letters are held in the file and evidence displayed in the building. On this file there are also records of Jack Petchey award winners (staff and users)

Bronze Award for Albanian language supplementary school and work evidence are included in a separate folder.

**Press release:**

There is great wealth of our work on presented on local Albanian newspaper and some local press. On this folder are records of magazines that include articles and press releases on the work of Shpresa Programme mainly by The Albanian magazine, the Albanian Mail and UK Albanian networks, Newham Recorder, Newham magazine etc

**Campaign file:**

Shpresa Programme has worked on different campaigns:

- Travel documents
- opening bank accounts and driving license for users without passport,
- making Albanian language GCSE,
- how to vote,
- Domestic violence
• End Child Detention now.

We have been involved in the different campaigns run by TELCO;
• Strangers into citizens
• City safe

**Reports file:**
All reports prepared from 2003 on all the projects are recorded on the file. Reports include aims and achievements of the projects with clear and specific targets, development of volunteers and users with training and qualification received, children’s level of achievements, monitoring records, partners and work done with other organisations, difficulties faced and how they were overcome, strength and weaknesses, project income and expenditure, exit strategies and everything else based on funding received and targets for each project.

**Personal files:**
We have personal files for staff and volunteers.

At staff Personnel files there a number of documents;
• Job application
• passport
• NI number,
• contract of employment,
• training attending,
• support and supervision notes,
• holiday and off sick,
• Yearly appraisals
• staff development and future training plans and work to be done.
• CRB checks
• . Staff salaries are recorded on one of the finance files.

At Volunteer files there a number of documents;

• Complete initially an application form
• The registration and agreement form.
• Their induction
• CRB check clearance,
• Development plan,
• Support and supervision,
• training records and volunteer expenses with working hours. Referrals for work placements and any other work done are recorded on this file.

**Finances:**
All income and expenditure of Shpresa Programme is recorded on different files divided into: Invoices; Purchase Invoices; Payment vouchers; Bank receipts; bank
statements and reconciliation; Payroll and salaries; Journal vouchers and Direct Debits.
We have a petty cash book where we record petty cash expenditure and evidence. All cheques stubs and payment books are saved for reference. As well as paper files and evidence we process the finance on Sage Line 50 and produce management accounts on Excel. We work based on Finance Policies and procedures,

We have a depreciation and reserves policy which is reflected on the accounts. Each year we undertake an audited account and keep back up of sage and work done for each year.

**Partners file:**

We hold records of work done with partners, activities performances and meeting attended, partnership work on different projects. Evidence of partnership work if is a joint work on a project is also recorded in the project file and has more detailed evidence on targets and achievements.

**Policies file:**

Policies are revised yearly by the management board and the updated policies are recorded in a file. There are also displayed on the wall for easy reference for staff, volunteers, users and any one else.

Shpresa has adopted these policies

- Health and safety
- Risk assessment procedures as well as offsite risk assessment
- Equal opportunities policy
- Safeguarding children policy
- Vulnerable people policy
- Financial procedure
- Volunteering policy
- Environment policy
- Confidentially policy and procedure
- Disciplinary procedures
- Complain procedures
- Maternity policy and procedures
- Reserve policy

On this file there are as well
- Role description for board of trustees
- Copy of the insurance including employers liability and public liability
- Copy of the business plan

**Volunteer expenses file:**
Reimbursements of volunteers are agreed by the management board. They are reimbursed for their travel and lunch (if working 4 hours or more). In some cases they are also reimbursed for telephone and childcare. In order for the expenses to be reimbursed volunteers complete a volunteer expenses form where they record their name, project worked on, date, working hours and details of expenditure (travel, lunch, telephone, childcare). Evidence is attached to the form and volunteers are mostly paid by cheque. For small amounts they are reimbursed by petty cash.

**In house training file:**

We run a 5 day in house training for all volunteers. The focus is on:

- History of SHPRESA, mission, strategic aims, values, structure
- policies,
- understanding volunteers role and why is important,
- do’s and don’ts in volunteering,
- task description and opportunities
- what to expect and what is expected. Ice breaking exercises, case studies and role plays are included to make training friendlier.

**Events, activities and external meetings file:**

Shpresa Programme is invited to take part to events, activities and external meetings. These are recorded on a date order in a file with evidence such as letters, emails, photos and list of people attending, presentation and feedback.

**Policies**

All are written in clear language. Dates when policies have been agreed and reviewed are included.

- **Health and Safety:** covers all essential issues including staff wellbeing and sets out clear lines of responsibility.
- **Child Protection:** policy and procedures and information for the child protection co-ordinator.
- **Equal opportunities:** covers issues as a service provider, as an employer, and as an organisation.
- **Volunteer Policies:** the encouragement and support of volunteering is a key element in the Shpresa Programme. Rights and responsibilities are clearly spelt out.
- **Vulnerable people policy:** the nominated person is the project director.
- **Complaints procedure:** clearly set out.

**Financial management and procedures:** these are outlined in dedicated document that covers the detail of the financial management of the organisation which is operated by a qualified administrator/accountant. The day-to-day financial management is carried out by the accountant, following the budgets prepared for funding applications. Flutura Shega has the responsibility, jointly with the administrator to check time sheets and expenses.