



# HOW TO MOBILIZE Local Resources

:: A Guide for Non-governmental Organizations and Citizens' Initiatives ::



Academy for Educational Development



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# HOW TO MOBILIZE Local Resources

“The key challenge in mobilizing local resources is recognizing the varied sources of support that exist or can be generated in a community.”

Ivana Zanze,  
*Parents in Action (RODA),  
Zagreb*

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## :: Introduction ::

Community-based non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and local citizens' initiatives (LCIs) are important components of the neighborhoods, villages, towns and cities in which they operate. Such groups can improve the quality of life within their communities by responding to local needs, providing new solutions to problems which may be quite old. The surest indicator that such groups are truly meeting local needs is their ability to mobilize people and resources in the community. Every community, even the poorest, has resources that can be used to implement projects that respond to local needs. The role of NGOs/LCIs is to address these needs by building community awareness and implementing relevant activities while mobilizing local resources to assist in the effort.

Simply put, in this publication the term “local resources” refers to financial and non-financial contributions to community improvement projects from local sources, including individual citizens, local government, businesses, institutions or other actors. Local resources not only allow for the implementation of successful community projects, but also contribute to the long-term sustainability of initiatives conducted by NGOs and LCIs by building lasting relationships.

The objective of this booklet is to present some of the knowledge and experience regarding local resource mobilization that has been collected during the implementation of the CroNGO Small Grants Program entitled “Our Community: How Can We Improve It?” Our experience has shown that there not only are significant resources that can be tapped into locally, but that Croatian NGOs and LCIs have already developed many creative and innovative approaches to access such resources. We hope you will find this booklet to be an interesting, valuable and useful source of information on identifying and mobilizing a wide range of resources in your community.

::: WHAT DO WE MEAN BY  
“LOCAL RESOURCES”? :::



# ::: What do we mean by “local resources”? :::

**L**ocal resources are any contribution from within the local community that assists the implementation of an activity, project or program. They include a wide range of financial and non-financial contributions from local community members, including individual citizens, institutions, organizations, businesses, or government authorities. The following are examples of the types of resources that may be available locally to contribute to the successful implementation of NGO/LCI activities:

::: **Financial resources** are probably the most sought after local contribution, as they provide the ability to purchase a variety of goods and services that may not be otherwise available. Depending on the source, financial resources may be targeted to specific expenses or be used at the NGO/LCI's discretion. Financial resources can be raised from local citizens, businesses, local authorities, or others in a variety of forms and through many means, including:

- >> donations of cash
- >> grants from local authorities or other community organizations
- >> user fees for participation in various activities
- >> membership dues paid by members
- >> fundraising events
- >> sponsorship of NGOs and/or their activities by local businesses

**The Association of Disabled People** from Slavonski Brod organizes nature walks for children in cooperation with a local mountaineering association. Children donate 1 kuna for each kilometer that they walk. Although 1 kuna is a very small donation, it instills in the children a sense of responsibility and the feeling that they are supporting a worthwhile cause. Ultimately, the donations add up and provide partial funding for the Association's activities.



:: **In-kind material donations** can help reduce the costs of implementing an activity significantly. Examples of in-kind material donations include:

- > office supplies needed for the operation of an NGO/LCI
- > building materials for the reconstruction of community buildings
- > use of a car or other vehicle to transport or visit beneficiaries
- > sports and recreational equipment for playgrounds or youth programs
- > food and drink to offer to volunteers or beneficiaries

:: **In-kind intellectual services** can be an extremely valuable contribution for projects that require expensive expert and professional services such as legal, accounting, medical, psychological, engineering or architectural advice or assistance.

:: **Space**, such as the free use of a room, office, building, community center, school or playground, for regular or special events.

:: **Volunteer work** of local citizens.

The above list represents just a small fraction of those resources that may be available in your community. There are probably many other local resources that would be useful for and available to your NGO/LCI depending on your individual needs and the community's characteristics.

**Citizens Association MIGRA** from Donji Miholjac (Osječko-baranjska County) gathers support from a variety of local actors to conduct work actions such as community garbage clean-ups. For one such initiative, MIGRA took responsibility for mobilizing volunteers, while the city authorities provided lunch for the volunteers and the public works company Komunalno d.o.o provided trash barrels. By each contributing what they had available, these three partners were able to accomplish much more together than any one of them could have done alone.



:: WHY SHOULD YOU SEEK  
LOCAL RESOURCES? ::





# :: Why should you seek local resources? ::

Obviously, without certain human, material, technical and financial resources, it is impossible for NGO/LCIs to implement activities and projects in their communities. In many cases, it seems easier to get these resources from prominent donors outside of their communities, including foreign governments and foundations, representatives of multinational companies, and national government offices. While it may take more work at the outset, community contributions are a valuable way to strengthen your NGO/LCI in a way that outside contributions cannot. In addition to providing the skills and materials needed to conduct community improvement projects, mobilizing local resources also helps an NGO/LCI to build long-term relationships with important individuals and institutions in their community.

By mobilizing local resources to support projects, both your NGO/LCI and your local contributors benefit in a number of ways:

- **Sense of ownership** — By contributing their time and resources, citizens, institutions, businesses, and others can assume greater ownership of activities that directly contribute to the positive development of their communities. The sense of “ownership” comes from the pride and accomplishment of knowing that they have done their share to make their community a better place to live.
- **Building social capital** — Social capital refers to the value of social networks and the increased willingness of individuals and organizations to help one another as a result of these relationships. By seeking local support, NGOs and LCIs are more likely to build long-term relationships with other institutions and organizations. These relationships contribute to the social capital within the community and provide a better base for future work.



- :> **Sustainability**<sup>1</sup> — Mobilizing local resources increases the sustainability of community initiatives. As relationships and communication between NGO/LCIs and supporters develop, future support is more likely. As members of the community with long-term interests in community projects, local supporters are more likely to continue supporting initiatives than external donors.
- :> **Independence** — Raising resources locally also gives an NGO/LCI more independence and flexibility to implement activities targeting needs that a community finds important. Additionally, local support means that an NGO/LCI does not have to adjust their programs to meet the needs and interests of external donors.

**Association TERRA** from Rijeka (Primorsko-goranska County) educates young people and other citizens about drug addiction, HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases. In their MEMO AIDS project, Terra focuses on educating high school students about AIDS and its prevention. These activities are enhanced by the lectures and services that local doctors, medical nurses, teachers, psychologists and social workers provide to students in Rijeka, Opatija and Delnice free-of-charge. Why are these professionals willing to donate their valuable time to this effort? They are active community members interested in supporting young people and see the MEMO AIDS project as a good opportunity to further these efforts.



<sup>1</sup> Sustainability refers to the long-term positive effects or implementation of a particular action or initiative.

:: WHAT DO YOU NEED TO DO  
BEFORE YOU START MOBILIZING  
LOCAL RESOURCES? ::



# ::: What do you need to do before you start mobilizing local resources? :::

**I**t is critical to prepare adequately before beginning to mobilize local resources. By taking the time to assess the local situation and plan your approach, you will ultimately save time by knowing where to focus your energy. Some of the steps in preparing to mobilize local resources are described below.

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- **What do you need to achieve your objectives?** Identify and prioritize the resources you will need to implement a particular activity or project.
- **What is available in your local community?** Identify local actors that have access to these resources by conducting a local resources assessment.
- **From whom can you expect assistance?** Choose the people/institutions that have the resources you need and are most likely to be interested in helping you conduct your work and approach them first.
- **How will you approach them?** Develop a strategy for approaching these individuals or institutions. You will always need to explain the goals of your organization and the expected results of your activities and projects. But in most cases, you will need to develop different approaches for different potential supporters. Be sure to develop an approach that focuses on the priorities of your targets. What is their interest in supporting your efforts?



*Volunteers of the ecological association "Green Osijek" meet to plan future activities*



:: WHY DO LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS CONTRIBUTE  
TO COMMUNITY PROJECTS? ::



# ::: Why do local stakeholders contribute to community projects? :::

**M**uch research has been done around the world to assess and evaluate the reasons why people, companies, and others provide assistance to different kinds of activities and projects. While similar research has not yet been done in Croatia, our experience indicates that the motivations to donate are the same as elsewhere in the world. Some of the reasons generally cited for donating are listed below:

- :> Simply being asked to donate
- :> Interest in the issue or type of work
- :> Trust in the organization or the person requesting the donation; trusting that the money will end up in the “right hands”
- :> Personally knowing one of the members of the NGO/LCI
- :> Friends, neighbors, or other companies provided a donation as well, providing a stamp of approval
- :> Receiving a direct or indirect benefit from the donation; for example, by making a donation to the school, the donor’s children will get a better education
- :> Having an economic interest in the community
- :> Receiving tax benefits for donations or sponsorships provided<sup>2</sup>
- :> Public recognition

<sup>2</sup> To learn more about tax benefits in Croatia, please visit [www.ri-centar.hr/publikacije.htm](http://www.ri-centar.hr/publikacije.htm)



:: WHAT APPROACHES CAN YOU USE TO  
MOBILIZE LOCAL RESOURCES? ::



# :: What approaches can you use to mobilize local resources? ::

**E**ffectively mobilizing local resources requires creativity, persistence and flexibility. Among the many techniques you may want to employ in your efforts are:

- **Regular communication** — By holding regular meetings with representatives of local government, businesses, institutions, other NGOs, media and other social leaders or by attending their meetings, you can inform them about your activities and objectives. It is important to send regular project updates to these stakeholders and invite them to visit your office, project site, events, website, etc. to see the impact of your work. The more familiar they are with your work, the more likely they are to support your efforts when asked.
- **NGO/LCI committees** — One way to involve respected individuals in your work is to establish a committee to supervise or provide advice on the implementation of a particular project or aspect of your work. In addition to tapping into the knowledge and expertise of various community members, committees can help inform the community about the impact of your work. Committee members may also be prominent individuals from the community who can contribute their own resources or who have connections to other sources of resources.

**HEKI Citizens' Association** from Istria received CroNGO support to convert an old community school into a community center. HEKI used the media, both radio and newspapers, to announce their efforts to the public. These announcements met with immediate success. After hearing about the project on the radio, several citizens called to offer their assistance in reconstructing the school. Additionally, a local business offered their expertise and services in installing a water system in the community center. By using the media to share their plans for improving the community, HEKI attracted local resources that they had not even thought of before, demonstrating the value of community outreach efforts.





:> **Media coverage** — Media coverage is one of the most effective ways to raise public awareness of your organization and its goals. It is therefore critical to get media coverage to effectively raise local resources. There are, of course, a variety of ways to accomplish this. For example, you may want to invite journalists or other media representatives to become members of your board or to serve on a committee. Press conferences, press releases, and other meetings are also important. Keeping the media aware of and involved in your work will also increase the likelihood that they will support your work in other ways, such as airing a public announcement for free. (See AED's publication "How to Communicate with Local Media: A Guide for NGOs and Citizen Initiatives" for additional information on working with the media.)

:> **Events and actions** — By using your creativity, you can organize various events and actions that both raise financial resources and increase public interest in your work. For example, you can use a popular local singer's interest in your organization's work to organize a fundraising concert. Ticket sales can raise funds for your work, and the event can also be used to educate concert-goers about your cause.

:> **Awards** — Local annual awards have proven to be an effective method to mobilize local resources. Well-publicized awards for the best volunteer, individual donor or socially responsible business<sup>3</sup> not only provide public recognition to your key partners, but inspire others to become involved.

3 A socially responsible business is one that contributes to community development by supporting their employees and citizens and by respecting community values and natural and cultural heritage.



:: WHO ARE THE POTENTIAL SOURCES OF  
LOCAL RESOURCES? ::



# :: Who are the potential sources of local resources? ::

**Key individuals** — The support of well-known and respected individuals is extremely valuable to mobilizing support within your community. When identifying individuals with influence in your local community, be sure to think not only about those with direct access to needed resources, but also individuals connected to them.

**Local citizens** — Local citizens should be a key part of any strategy to mobilize local resources. You should already be monitoring community needs to ensure that your activities respond to local priorities. If citizens believe that you are providing a worthwhile service in the community, they will be more willing to support your activities and help you fulfill your mission. As discussed above, it is also important that citizens are informed about the work you do. Even if you are providing a valuable service, it will be hard to attract local resources if no one knows about it. However, if informed properly, citizens can be your best and most loyal promoters and supporters.

**The Imotski Region Humanitarian Women's Association for Mammography** has successfully used community support to improve general health care services and breast cancer prevention and treatment for women from the Imotski region. After organizing several public events to promote their work and raise community awareness about women's health issues, the group began to seek local assistance from a variety of sources. To date, they have successfully involved a number of citizens and local organizations in their work. Local authorities donated a space for the work of a counseling center. Citizens donated money to help women afford mammograms. Over 40 volunteers have assisted with clinic activities. Businesses have also joined in to help. Croatian Telecom (HT) donated a phone line free of charge for use as an SOS hotline; ZAG donated computer equipment; and several local businesses made other smaller in-kind donations.

:: CroNGO Program ::



Citizens can provide support in many different ways. Volunteering their time is one important source of support. (Please see AED's publication "*Activating Communities: How to Engage Citizens in Local Level Projects*" for information and advice on this topic.) While most individual citizens do not have large sums of money available, smaller individual donations from many community members can add up to significant amounts. Smaller donations can be collected directly or through public collection points (such as a box at the grocery store). Citizens may also be able and willing to donate goods, such as food and refreshments for volunteers or project participants.

Be sure to remember the values of the community you are working with and the issues and problems that are most important to local people. Understanding local values and needs, and linking these to your own programs, will help you to gain the community's support and commitment.

**Local government** — Local governments can be a valuable source of financial and non-financial support for your activities. In addition to direct funding, countless NGOs/LCIs work with their local governments to receive free office and activity space, coverage of their utility bills, technical and expert advice, support in obtaining permits for reconstruction projects, and use of vehicles and equipment.

**Private sector** — Businesses are a great, yet underused, source of NGO/LCI support. Generally speaking, businesses want to support projects that are visible in the communities where they operate, that are supported by the community or by "important" individuals, or that are linked to local economic development. Smaller business owners often give to projects in which they have a personal interest, for example, a sports fan might support a youth soccer club. Some businesses require that an activity that they sponsor use their name, logo or products.

Businesses can offer many valuable resources — sponsorships and cash gifts, material support and services, technical expertise, equipment and facilities. They may also offer their products or services to you at a reduced rate, or allow or encourage their employees to volunteer with you. (For additional information about corporate social responsibility, please see AED's "*An Overview of Corporate Social Responsibility in Croatia*", available at [www.aed.hr](http://www.aed.hr).)



Every year, **Association MI** in Split works with other NGOs to organize a series of events for International Volunteers' Day. Last year, MI used a creative approach to get local business support for the event. MI convinced local restaurants to donate five big pots of fish stew to sell on Split's Riva. MI sold the fish stew under the slogan "Spicing up fish stew through volunteerism", and successfully converted this in-kind donation into 1,200 kuna.



:: WHY SHOULD THE VALUE OF NON-MONETARY  
LOCAL RESOURCES BE CALCULATED? ::



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# :: Why should the value of non-monetary local resources be calculated? ::

**T**he value of non-monetary local resources is often overlooked and attempts are rarely made to calculate their worth. As a result, even when organizations or projects have received considerable local support, this support may not be reflected in reports to donors and others. By quantifying the value of the local support received, you can more accurately show the extent of community support, demonstrate the full cost of your program, and measure your progress toward sustainability. Presenting the value of all contributions, even non-monetary, will help show that your program and work is stable, encouraging local givers to provide continued support and additional assistance.

During implementation of the CroNGO Small Grants Program, supported projects were obliged to cover 10% of the approved project costs through local means. The most common contributions were provided in the form of work done by local volunteers, the donation of office space and/or direct financial support from local governments, as well as in-kind donations from local businesses such as equipment or manpower. Actual community contributions turned out to be much greater than CroNGO's requirements. At the time of publication, a total of 12 million kuna had been distributed through the CroNGO Small Grants program. Community contributions for supported projects are as follows:

- >> volunteer work: 2 mil kuna
- >> government support: 2.5 mil kuna
- >> local businesses support: 1.7 mil kuna
- >> other support from local citizens: 330,000 kuna
- >> other support from other community stakeholders: 1 mil kuna

:: CroNGO Program ::



:: PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR MOBILIZING  
LOCAL RESOURCES ::



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# :: Practical suggestions for mobilizing local resources ::

If your organization or group is trying to mobilize local resources, you will have to coordinate contributions from different sources. Before you begin, you should be sure that you have plans to implement, monitor, and evaluate this effort. To do this, you may need to train current staff and members, hire or recruit additional staff, or find partner organizations whose areas of expertise complement your own.

Regardless of local circumstances, if your local community values the work you are doing, it will find ways to support you. The most important thing is to recognize that there are many ways to sustain and improve your work without large financial contributions. Your organization's future ultimately lies in your local community, and depends on your ability to develop creative ways for the community to support the services you provide.

With that in mind, the following are some practical tips for mobilizing local resources:

- **Don't be afraid to ask for support!** In many countries, surveys have been done to find out why people do not donate. The most common answer is that they are never asked.
- **Think beyond money.** Find ways to utilize every available resource required for planned activities. Don't assume that only financial resources are needed. Also, get your potential supporters past the response "we don't have the money to do that", which is often used as a substitute for creative thinking and mobilizing other kinds of available resources.
- **Get people to connect with the work being done.** Conduct site visits with potential stakeholders to encourage them to invest their resources. Share the goals, objectives, and status of the program with stakeholders and the community.

"No matter how poor, almost every community has services, goods, or expertise that can contribute to local projects and actions. The key is to mobilize them!"

Branko Panić,  
Oasis 98 Selnica



- :> **Keep the local community and selected local resources updated** about the implementation and development of your activity or program, whether they provided support or not. Give them the opportunity to reflect on the impact of your work.
- :> **Be visible.** It is important to develop simple and attractive promotional materials about your activities with information on how others can support your efforts. Involve media as a partner in the promotion of community successes.
- :> **Be cost-effective.** Look for ways to keep costs low and limit administrative costs to make resources go farther. Seek resources that complement what is already being done. Only accept resources that add more value than they cost to obtain.
- :> **Build local skills.** Implement cost-effective training programs. For example, previously trained volunteers can provide training to other volunteers, who can then train still more volunteers.
- :> **Keep records and be transparent.** Maintain documents to help others access information about the contributions you have obtained, which will also encourage additional contributions. Quantify both financial and in-kind contributions from different sources to document your increased sustainability.
- :> **Stay in line with your mission.** Seek resources that further your NGO/LCI's mission and goals, support long-term activities, and extend the reach of your activities.
- :> **Diversify your sources of support.** You will be less vulnerable if you have many sources of support, so that if one is discontinued, you have other resources to continue your activities.
- :> **Express your gratitude to all supporters at the end of an activity or project.** If you are mobilizing resources for a longer-term program, it is important to update and acknowledge local contributors and partners on a regular basis, not only at the end of a multi-year program.



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