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An academic career has always crossed my mind. But, like many students in Albania, I was unable to pursue my real interests since meaningful courses in areas such as politics, law, diplomacy, international relations or else simply did not exist.

It was only with the revolutionary events of 1990-1992 that the educational system began to show signs of change. It was also the exact time that I decided to commit myself in educational procedures.

Frankly, I made this decision without forgetting my professional ambitions and interests as first priority, to enhance my job opportunities. But, if the changes were to reach their potential, I had to assume many responsibilities and demonstrate the commitments to do my own part.

When I look back in my life and its challenges, its successes, its “failures”, its difficulties, I feel very good. I have passed the very important steps. So, I have become familiar with the stages of development of my country and so I can visualize its future. After some years of job experience, where I continued to combine everyday life, family, job, I never ceased to study, to keep abreast with changes, with news.

Let me mention here the very critical time of Kosovo crisis. I was doing my best to help the situation. I decided to change my position and I did the Director of American Red Cross in Albania. It was a high responsibility. I needed dedication, it needed time, and it needed heart to face that difficult time, to help Kosovo people in Albania. It was also a “test” to work with American counterparts, to make them familiar with Albania and Shkodra and to work very hard together in facing with dignity the Kosovo crisis.

After that, the Master Course in European Studies that I have successfully finished in Kapodystrian University of Athens, for more than one year, has laid my foundations in this field.

But, to get an expertise in the field of local government and to become a real agent of change, I needed to have a clear understanding of my vision in this field. In this respect, I started to work for Foreign Affairs in Shkodra Municipality and as part-time Lecturer in Shkodra University.

My economic background and other interests in politics, local government, education, have helped me better understand and explain the current regional developments, issues and problems related to them and both positions have played a significant role.

In the meantime, I have “found” myself working in programs which have specifically contributed to the achievement of my goals in the aspects I have already mentioned. Indeed, these studies, among other things, included the acquisition of necessary experience to work out plans for my future career, skill development incorporating here organizational skills necessary for involvement in important activities. Since 1997, we have established an organization called “Everything for new generation”, with support of CRS-Catholic Relief Services-in Albania. This NGO has had a real sound in our reality, although the civil society is not currently active. As you can guess from the name, our organization, has a noble mission, trying to work in the present with eyes toward the future. This means, involving all the strata of society in different activities regarding the future, which is the new generation. So, we have worked with children, adults, teachers, parents, community, media, trying to promote positive messages through it. This has been a real experience for me and I was awarded a Diploma from American Embassy here in Albania, **“For contribution in consolidation of civil society in Albania”**.

Next, my intention is to help myself put together the knowledge and skills I possess with whatever new will be presented in order to be able to actively participate in the diplomatic affairs of the state and to strengthen and develop my capacities in the fields mentioned, the ways and methods of designing the framework for LG apparatus in the current Albanian society. Such capacities will

assume greater professional skills and responsibilities; widen my horizon and broaden my perspectives in the fields of decentralization.

More, I am trying to establish a network, a local one where local and international actors are involved. I intend to organize the courses, trainings, to explain and teach different topics related to the actual concepts, phenomena, to make analysis of the past and the future, to insert new methods and techniques of teaching and learning. The target groups in this case will be different people, different ages, considering their backgrounds and interest to know and widen their horizon. We need to open the minds of the people, to make them learn about new processes and situations we are passing.

Last but not least, for four years I am trying very hard to finish my PhD. It is a long process, bureaucracy, especially here in Albania, where you are equal by law, but in reality the women have much more difficulties to reach a goal. Or, to live in Shkodra and to be successful with procedures in Tirana is very difficult! This is because a person from another city is seen one way or another as inferior to Tirana people, so a kind of discrimination. We must not forget the so-called “positive discrimination” regarding women in general. This in fact is something which has to do with culture and mentality, without forgetting our history, the fact that we are Balkans and the 45 years under communism. All these facts make proper work and difficulties harder. I am experiencing myself. I have finished my Master Studies in Athens, then one other online with Malta Diplomatic Academy. But, I couldn’t be away from my family again! So, I had to work with Tirana University and here the difficulties are very high. And, which ones I am trying to face with work and standards.

As Barbara Ferris, IWDC (International Women’s Democracy Center) states “In order for any nation to achieve its full economic, social and political potential, all of her citizens must have an equal opportunity to participate in the democratic process”.<sup>1</sup>

The three L-s, have served as my motto for all my life, Long Life Learning, has always been based on my being a woman, a wife and above all a good mom. I have two children and I have always tried to educate them well, to raise them and to create a strong and consolidated family.

Finally, with my writing, I would like to send a special message to all women. Despite the unstable situation and unfavorable one, I am an emancipated woman now, perhaps more than Albanian politics; I am able to discuss problems and find ways to solve them. Albanian women, in any position whatsoever, want to grow and develop. We have to unite, to organize, to widen our capacity and our horizon. Women must see themselves as competing among each other and not as opponents; women have to disagree with the stereotype of “weak gender” or “real victim” of tradition or society. Therefore it is important for all women to work together to raise the awareness in our societies about the fact that in our journey, as a society, we have to “civilize” mentalities, behaviors and to “open our minds” in terms of the woman and her deserved position.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.iwdc.org/>