

CED

STRATEGIC PLAN



Fostering a tolerant and sustainable community by mobilizing active youth through volunteerism, intercultural dialogue, and non-formal education.

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1.BACKGROUND

1.1 GENERAL CONTEXT

The strategic plan for the Center for Education and Development (CED) serves as a crucial roadmap, outlining the long-range direction and priorities that will guide the organization over the next four years. This plan is designed to align CED's activities with its core vision and mission, ensuring that the organization remains responsive to social developments and effectively addresses the needs of its stakeholders.

CED's vision and mission have consistently been the foundation for defining its priorities and actions. The evolving social landscape has necessitated a more comprehensive approach, involving a broader range of stakeholders and focusing on key thematic areas: education, institutional development, intercultural development, and environment.

Recent social developments and the lessons learned from CED's experiences highlighted the need to revise its strategic objectives. This revision aims to better align the organization's strengths and developmental needs with its goals. Consequently, the planning process involved extensive stakeholder consultation to gather diverse perspectives and insights.

The strategic planning process was inclusive and participatory. Information was gathered from a wide array of stakeholders, ensuring that the plan reflects the needs and expectations of the community CED serves. A two-day workshop held on May 17-18, 2024, included direct involvement from eight key stakeholders. This collaborative effort resulted in the formulation of goals and objectives for the period 2024-2028.

Engaging stakeholders in the planning process is pivotal for building CED's credibility and accountability. By involving board members, staff, and external stakeholders, the organization ensures that its mission, vision, and values are shared, understood, and embraced by all parties. This collective ownership enhances the organization's legitimacy and commitment to its strategic objectives.

The strategic plan is designed to:

Advance the Mission: All organizational decisions and actions will be guided by CED's mission to empower youth and foster community development.

Uphold the Vision: The plan ensures that CED's long-term vision is reflected in its daily operations and strategic initiatives.

Strengthen Core Values: The organization's values will be the touchstone for policies, procedures, and practices, reinforcing its commitment to integrity, inclusivity, and sustainability.

The strategic plan translates CED's enduring ideals into concrete outcomes and actionable strategies. By continually assessing and reaffirming its vision, mission, and values, CED can adapt to changing circumstances while remaining true to its foundational principles. This dynamic approach is essential for organizational development and the sustained impact of CED's work.

This strategic plan is a comprehensive blueprint for CED's future actions. By clearly articulating its long-term direction and priorities, CED is positioned to navigate the complexities of its operating environment and continue making a positive impact in the lives of young people and the broader community. The plan's success will be measured by the tangible outcomes it produces and the sustained advancement of CED's mission, vision, and value.

1.2. The Vision and Mission Statement

1.2.1 CED vision statement

Active youth in a community, committed to positive change and ensuring well-being, in a sustainable and tolerant environment.

1.2.2 CED mission statements

- CED contributes to the development of the community and the creation of a better, more tolerant and sustainable environment for life by mobilizing active youth, volunteerism, intercultural dialogue and strengthening the capacities of organizations and institutions.
- Aims at creating young leaders in the community and the development of participatory democracy through non-formal education on gender equality and equity, good governance, personal development and entrepreneurial spirit to use local resources.
- Promotes and encourages networking of public institutions, the private sector and civil society organizations in building and strengthening civil activism by identifying, making decisions and solving community needs.

1.3 Problem statement

The Center for Education and Development (CED) is an organization committed to empowering youth and fostering sustainable community development. However, CED is facing significant challenges that threaten its ability to sustain operations and expand its impact within a complex and rapidly changing socio-political and economic environment.

Despite its numerous strengths, CED is hindered by internal weaknesses: The organization struggles with retaining staff for extended periods, leading to disruptions in continuity and institutional knowledge. Without a robust communication strategy, CED faces difficulties in effectively conveying its mission, activities, and successes to stakeholders and the broader community. The heavy dependence on a small number of funding sources makes CED vulnerable to financial instability should these sources fluctuate or withdraw support. There is an absence of revenue-generating activities that could provide financial independence and reduce dependency on external donations. Weak administrative structures hinder efficient operations and the implementation of strategic initiatives. High rates of youth demotivation impact the effectiveness and enthusiasm of the workforce, limiting the organization's ability to engage and inspire young people.

An undefined hierarchy creates confusion and inefficiency within the organization, affecting decision-making processes and operational clarity. The migration of skilled individuals out of the region further depletes the pool of available talent and potential volunteers.

CED also faces substantial external threats: Engaging the community, particularly youth and local institutions, remains a persistent challenge. Cultural and traditional mindsets among parents can impede progressive initiatives aimed at youth development. Environmental changes pose risks to tourism and agriculture, sectors crucial to the local economy and CED's environmental initiatives. The emigration of educated and skilled individuals seeking better opportunities abroad weakens local human resources. Similar to brain drain, labor migration affects the availability of a stable workforce. The reliance on international donations makes CED vulnerable to changing donor priorities and economic conditions abroad. Donors' changing focus areas can lead to unpredictable funding landscapes. High levels of political division can create an unstable operating environment and impact collaboration with government bodies. The partisanship within institutions can lead to biases and inefficiencies in support and collaboration. Rapid political changes can disrupt planned projects and funding streams, creating an uncertain environment for long-term planning.

The national context of CED's operations is characterized by economic instability, political fluctuations, and social challenges. The national economy is often subject to volatility, affecting funding and resource availability for civil society organizations. Political changes and polarization can result in inconsistent policies and support for civil society initiatives. Societal attitudes, particularly conservative or traditional views, can hinder progressive social initiatives and engagement efforts. While the process of EU accession presents opportunities for funding and alignment with European standards, it also requires significant adaptation and compliance efforts.

To navigate these challenges and leverage its strengths and opportunities, CED must adopt a comprehensive and resilient strategic plan. Key components of this plan should include: Developing and implementing a robust communication strategy to effectively engage with stakeholders, showcase successes, and build broader community support; Explore and secure diverse funding avenues, including grants, partnerships with socially responsible companies, and revenue-generating activities to ensure financial stability; Develop products or services that can generate income, reducing dependency on external donations. Strengthen administrative structures to enhance operational efficiency and project execution; Implement programs and initiatives aimed at increasing youth engagement and motivation, such as mentorship, leadership opportunities, and recognition schemes; Define clear roles and responsibilities within the organization to improve decision-making and operational clarity.

Leverage opportunities such as networking with other organizations, promoting multiculturalism, utilizing the experience of foreign volunteers, engaging in activities in the Sharr Mountain National Park, and aligning with EU accession processes to enhance CED's impact and sustainability.

By addressing these internal weaknesses and external threats, while building on its strengths and seizing available opportunities, CED can enhance its resilience, sustain its operations, and expand its impact in the region.

1.4 CED Development through the years

The Center for Education and Development (CED), a civil society organization founded in 2006 in the Municipality of Tearce, has a rich history of growth and achievement. Through numerous projects, initiatives, campaigns, and activities, CED has consistently pursued its goal of empowering youth and fostering community development. Here is a brief overview of its development through the years:

CED began with a focus on non-formal education and youth empowerment. Early activities included local educational programs and community engagement initiatives aimed at developing skills and fostering social cohesion.

From 2010, CED expanded its reach through international cooperation, participating in various intercultural exchanges and training programs. Hundreds of young people received training in work skills, enhancing their employability and career prospects; Organized various conferences and debates to engage youth in critical thinking and dialogue on social issues.

From 2015 to 2020, CED realized dozens of intercultural exchanges, fostering understanding and collaboration among diverse groups; Inspired young people by connecting them with successful entrepreneurs, demonstrating the possibilities of innovation and entrepreneurship; Played a crucial role in the successful campaign to designate the Sharr Mountains as a National Park in 2021.

CED proved its adaptation and resilience during the Pandemic 2020-2021: Conducted a successful youth exchange in the Children's Village in Pestalozzi, Switzerland. Hosted foreign volunteers, showcasing CED's commitment to international cooperation and resilience; Continued as a key partner in environmental conservation efforts, particularly in declaring Mountain Sharr a national park; Maintained and adapted traditional and new activities to promote youth activism and protect the community from the virus.

Recent developments and future goals from 2021 to present: Sustained efforts in youth education, intercultural exchanges, and community engagement; Continued offering free language courses and schools, providing valuable learning opportunities; Organized cultural events and exchanges to promote regional culture and interculturalism; Focused on environmental conservation and the economic benefits of the Sharr Mountains National Park; Prioritized work skills training to offer alternative opportunities for young people; Advocated for increased transparency and accountability in institutional development.

2. STRATEGY AND APPROACH

CED's strategy is prepared through a consultative and participatory manner following the evaluations of the achievements of the previous strategic plan and implemented projects as well as the current national and local developments. The strategy pillars were also consulted with the CED's stakeholders and it was upgraded towards their needs, visions, and recommendations. This strategy is a result of CED's executive office and approved by the CED's Board. The strategy is finalized in June 2024.

2.1 Target areas

The Center for Education and Development (CED) is an organization dedicated to enhancing the capacities and opportunities of young people through various thematic areas. Its mission is rooted in non-formal education and the holistic development of institutions and communities. The four main themes that guide the Center's work are education, institutional development, intercultural development, and environment. CED works on generating visibility and communicating about all projects.

❖ Education

CED places a strong emphasis on non-formal education, recognizing that learning extends beyond the classroom. This theme focuses on:

- Skill Development: Providing young people with the skills needed for personal and professional growth.
- Capacity Building: Enhancing the abilities of youth to engage effectively in society and the workforce.
- Workshops and Training: Conducting various programs to impart knowledge and practical skills.

❖ Employability & Entrepreneurship

By developing employment skills in our youth and promoting youth entrepreneurship, CED strives to foster economic development in the region. Initiatives to support this include:

- Developing skills that match market demands helps reduce unemployment among youth.
- Teaching the fundamentals of starting and running a business, including business planning, financial management, and marketing.

❖ Institutional Development

This theme revolves around creating and sustaining robust institutions that can support community development. CED's efforts in this area include:

- Capacity Building for Institutions: Strengthening the capabilities of local organizations and institutions to ensure they are effective and sustainable.
- Governance and Leadership Training: Promoting good governance practices and developing leadership skills within institutions.

❖ Intercultural Development

CED acknowledges the importance of fostering a culture that embraces diversity and promotes mutual understanding. Activities under this theme include:

- Cultural Exchange Programs: Facilitating exchanges that allow young people to experience and learn from different cultures.
- Promoting Tolerance and Acceptance: Educating communities on the value of diversity and inclusion.
- Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding: Implementing programs that address and resolve intercultural conflicts.

❖ Environment

The environmental theme focuses on creating a clean and stable living environment. Key initiatives in this area involve:

- Environmental Education: Raising awareness about environmental issues and sustainability practices.
- Conservation Projects: Engaging in activities that protect natural resources and promote biodiversity.
- Community Clean-Up Campaigns: Organizing efforts to clean and maintain local environments.

Sharing and disseminating what CED is doing is key to keeping all those involved in the projects informed, and also to generating visibility amongst different stakeholders regarding the work that CED is doing. In the next period, CED should work on developing of communication plan and communication objectives that will reflect what CED target audience wants to learn, take away, or act upon. This will also identify the channels (or how) CED will best convey the key messages and reach the target audience. Options can include social media, websites, print, press. Channels will differ depending on the type of audience.

2.2 Target group

CED target group is:

- A) CED's constituencies (citizens, youths, volunteers, supporters)
- B) Units of Local Self Governments:
Municipality councils;
Local institutions, schools;
- C) Government and ministries;
- D) National Agencies;
- E) Shara's Hunters;
- F) Civil society organizations and networks of civil society organizations both on the national and regional levels;
- G) Business Community;
- H) Representatives of political parties;
- I) Religious communities;
- J) Media and media workers.

2.3 Values, Beliefs, Attitudes:

CED activities are based on the provision of equal development opportunities, and respect for different ethnic, gender, religious and cultural backgrounds. Tolerance, solidarity, and free expression of ideas and opinions are integrated values and culture of the organization's activities.

2.4 Situation Analysis: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats

Strengths: Trust and public awareness of the importance of the organization; Skilled and committed staff; Good organizational capacities; Employee motivation; Strong leadership; Capacity to deliver quality projects and services; Developed practice for volunteering; Stable finances for traditional activities; Functional youth employment center; Proactive on social media.	Weaknesses: Lack of long-term employees; Lack of a communication strategy; Relying on a single or limited number of funding sources; Lack of self-financing activities, such as generating revenue through services or products; An absence of robust administrative frameworks; A demotivated youth workforce; An absence of a clear functional hierarchy; Lack of Organizational vehicle; High rate of migration.
Opportunities: Recognize and reward networking with other organizations; Promoting the concept of multiculturalism; Experience and contribution of the foreign volunteers; Actions in a rural environment – Shar Mountain National Park; Permanent strategic donors; EU accession process; Cooperation with socially responsible companies	Threats: Lack of interest of citizens, young people, and institutions; Parents (their mentality); Climate change (for tourism, agriculture...); Brain Drain; Labor migration; Dependent on foreign donations; Changing priorities of donors; Political polarization; High level of partisanship of institutions; Unpredictable and rapid political changes;

3. Management efficiency and effectiveness

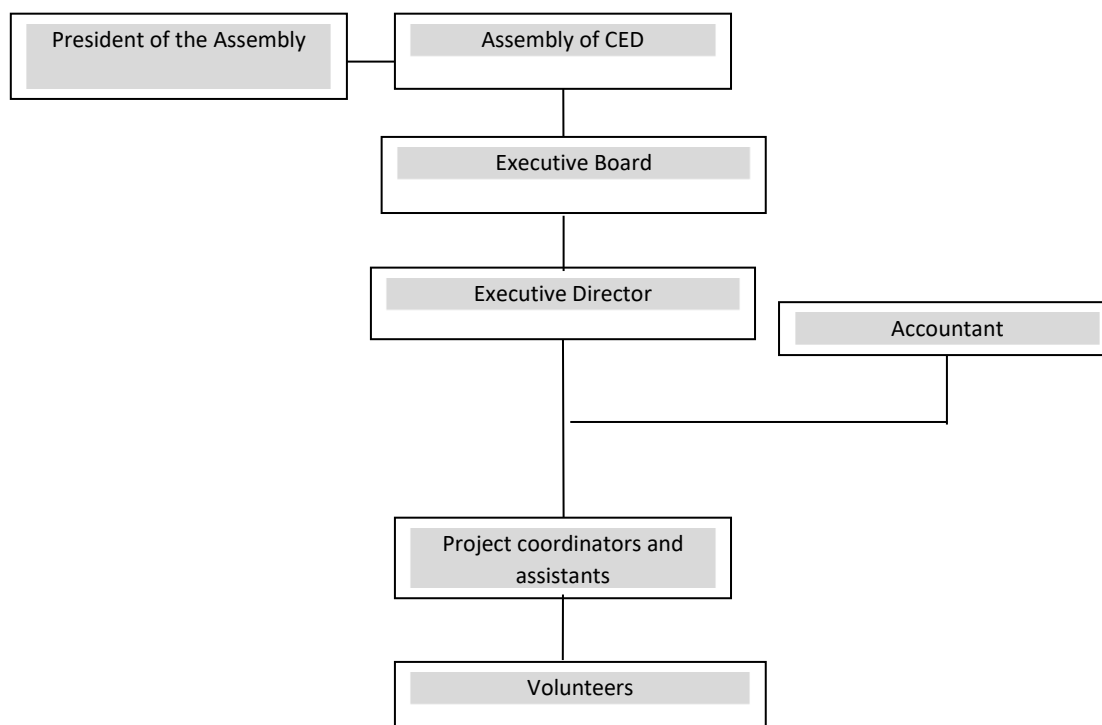
Sound organizational strategies must be backed by effective and efficient management that is intensively focused on the achievement of concrete goals. CED will use results-based management to support Strategic Plan implementation, based on clear principles, best practices, accountability, and transparency. Ongoing improvements in accountability and transparency will enable CED to better quantify and articulate how it is contributing to outcomes and final results for target groups. The Strategic Plan will support management and operational excellence, including through enhancement of plan and operations efficiency and effectiveness.

CED also needs to strengthen the ability to measure and report performance in (a) effective leadership and executive direction; (b) oversight, assurance and accountability for results; (c) management of financial resources; (d) information and communication technology; (e) human resources; (f) partnerships, communication and resource mobilization;

4. Organization structure and operation

CED's highest body is the Assembly, which has 15 members. The members of the Assembly are electing the President of the Assembly, who runs the Assembly sessions. The Assembly meets as needed, and at least once a year. The Assembly from the ranks of its members on the regular or extraordinary assemblies, elects the highest executive body, that is, the Executive Board, which consists of 5 members. The Executive Board is headed by the Executive Director, who are in fact the legal representative of the Association. In the executive office at present, CED has 3 full-time employees, 2-part time as well as external associates. These are well-established, multi-ethnic staff. The organization has concluded employment contracts with all employees following the legal procedures in the country. CED manages its own office by the legal regulations and keeps records of the necessary documents as an integral part of the annual financial reporting.

CED organizational chart:



5. Financial implications

Our ability to deliver this strategic programme depends on securing a strategic partnership with the donor community. This includes:

- Building long-term partnerships with Foundations/partner funding organizations
- Building corporate relationships;
- Facilitating private donations & individual supporters;
- Applying for project grants/another public sector to deliver on our strategic goals;
- Developing training, capacity building, and consultancy services;
- Program based operations; institutional support projects and technical assistance; policy dialogue and advisory services.

Annex 1. STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

CED vision statement	Active youth in a community, committed to positive change and ensuring well-being, in a sustainable and tolerant environment		
CED mission statements	▪ CED contributes to the development of the community and the creation of a better, more tolerant and sustainable environment for life by mobilizing active youth, volunteerism, intercultural dialogue and strengthening the capacities of organizations and institutions. ▪ Aims at creating young leaders in the community and the development of participatory democracy through non-formal education on gender equality and equity, good governance, personal development and entrepreneurial spirit to use local resources. ▪ Promotes and encourages networking of public institutions, the private sector and civil society organizations in building and strengthening civil activism by identifying, making decisions and solving community needs.		
Strategic areas	1. Community Development and Sustainability	2. Leadership Development and Participatory Democracy	3. Networking and Civil Activism
Overall strategic objective	CED strives toward a more tolerant, sustainable, and engaged society		
Specific objectives	1.1. Youth Mobilization and Volunteerism: Engage and mobilize young people in community service and volunteer activities that contribute to local development and sustainability. 1.2. Intercultural Dialogue: Promote and facilitate intercultural dialogue and understanding to build a more	2.1. Develop programs that train young people to become community leaders with a strong sense of civic responsibility and engagement. 2.2. Educate youth on the principles of good governance and participatory democracy to empower them to contribute to transparent and accountable community leadership. 2.3. Foster an entrepreneurial spirit among youth, encouraging them to utilize local resources and develop sustainable business ventures.	3.1. Facilitate partnerships and collaborations between public institutions, private sector entities, and civil society organizations to address community challenges effectively. 3.2. Encourage and support civil activism by providing platforms for community members to identify needs, make decisions, and implement solutions.

	inclusive and tolerant community. 1.3. Environmental Sustainability: Implement and support initiatives that promote environmental conservation and sustainable living practices.		3.3. Strengthen the capacities of local organizations and institutions through training and resource provision, enabling them to better serve their communities.
Outputs	1.1.1. Organize and execute at least 4 annual campaigns to recruit young volunteers for various community service projects; 1.1.2. Implement at least 10 community service projects annually, with active participation from youth volunteers, addressing local needs such as cleaning public spaces, aiding disadvantaged groups, and supporting local events; 1.2.1. Implement 3-4 cultural exchange programs per year, enabling young people from different backgrounds to experience and learn about each other's cultures; 1.2.2. Host at least 5 community events annually that celebrate cultural diversity, including festivals, art exhibitions, and cultural performances.	2.1.1. Conduct regular workshops focused on leadership skills, including public speaking, conflict resolution, team building; 2.2.1. Organize regular meetings and forums for youths to interact with local government officials and community stakeholders; 2.2.2. Organize workshops and seminars on participatory democracy, including the role of citizens in governance, electoral processes, and civic rights and responsibilities; 2.3.1. Provide training programs focused on entrepreneurship skills such as business planning, financial management, marketing, and innovation.	3.1.1. Organize regular Multi Stakeholder Forums and discussions that bring together representatives from public institutions, private sector entities, and civil society organizations to identify and discuss community challenges; 3.2.1. Develop action plans and collaborative projects based on the outcomes of these forums; 3.3.1. Launch joint projects that leverage the strengths and resources of different sectors, for infrastructure development or joint programs that address key community challenges such as education, environmental protection, and economic development;

	1.3.1. Implement at least 4 eco-friendly projects per year, such as tree planting, clean-up drives, and the creation of community gardens, involving active participation from volunteers.		
Timeline	June 2024 – June 2028		