

Get Out the Vote Campaign Successfully Concludes

Pristina. October 12. A coalition of more than 30 NGOs and civic groups ran a "Get Out the Vote" (GOTV) campaign in Kosovo. Its reach was extensive not only due to the involvement of the mass media, but also thanks to the 2,200 volunteers that participated. This was one of the most significant volunteer efforts of this magnitude since before the 1999 conflict in Kosovo.

The GOTV central coordinating committee was comprised of the Advocacy Training and Resource Center, the National Democratic Institute and the Kosova Women's Network. They, in turn, involved 30 local NGO coordinators.

GOTV was organized through a collaborative effort, in which each GOTV partner organization con-



Get Out the Vote campaign volunteers reached out to citizens throughout Kosovo, asking them to vote.

tributed according to its means: U.S. and European organizations provided funding for direct expenses; Kosovar NGOs provided in-kind services that include recruiting volunteers as well as distributing leaflets, T-shirts and posters; and the Kosovar media provided free airtime for GOTV com-

mercials. The coalition united under the GOTV campaign slogan "Don't Hesitate, Vote".

As far as achieving its organizational goals, this campaign was a success. First, the campaign demonstrated that large scale volunteer campaigns are

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Republican Club hosts "ICTY, Media and Security in Kosova" discussion..... Nov. 11, 18:00, Arts Gallery of Kosova.

Women's Wellness Center organizes White Ribbon Day..... Nov. 25, Peja.

KWN launches "Know Your Rights" with performance..... Nov. 26, 20:00, Oda Theatre.

NGOs Present Research Findings on March Events

Pristina. October 13. Four research groups promulgated their analyses of the March events at a public discussion held at ATRC. The presenters included: the Kosovar Research and

Documentation Institute (KODI), the Institute for Social and Policy Studies (Sfera), the Ron Brown Group of the American Universities Alumnae Association and the Informal Group

of Researchers. The presentation, attended by more than 50 representatives of local and international organizations, drew extensive media coverage from TV channels and newspapers.

KODI's presentation focused on decentralization and its impact on ethnicity and governance. They argued that although decentralization can have a significant impact in raising the level of security for both minorities and majorities, it will be unsuccessful if Serbs maintain parallel structures. They recommended cooperation between all parties interested in decentralization as the sole way of finding a solution



Researchers who analyzed the March events presented their findings at an ATRC public discussion.

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Guest Article: **AP/ UNPO**

Kosovo Ready for Elections

Less than two weeks before key parliamentary elections in Kosovo, a campaign kicked off Tuesday (12 October), encouraging voters to go to the polls. The 23 October vote, the fourth since 1999, is viewed as a major test for the international community's efforts to build multiethnic democracy in the province.

A pool of international organizations and NGOs launched the "Get Out the Vote" campaign amid indications of low voter interest in the upcoming poll and calls for a *Serbian Kosovars* boycott of the vote.

Quoting one of the organizers, Kreshnik Berisha, the AP reported that 2,800 volunteers are taking part in the initiative, which includes television spots, posters, leaflets, T-shirts and a door-to-door effort.

A survey conducted by the Kosovo Institute for Ethnic Relations has indicated that about 25 per cent of the province's registered voters, mostly *Albanian Kosovars*, may stay away from the polls due to continuing economic problems and disappointment with political parties. ■

Italicized items have been edited.

ATRC Joins Anti-corruption Coalition

Pristina. October 28. A campaign organized by civil society and the Office for Good Governance, Human Rights, Equal Opportunities, and Gender Issues in the Prime Minister's Office, invited ATRC to join a coalition of local NGOs interested in contributing to the fight against corruption. The Office for Good Governance cooperated with NGOs, including ATRC and FDI to design the anti-corruption campaign and to compile a draft project. Now, the partners are finalizing the work plan and identifying each individual organization's role in combating corruption in Kosovo.

The scope and seriousness of this campaign are demonstrated in the breadth of the coalition, which brings founda-



The joint anti-corruption campaign was publicly launched in Pristina in September with the publishing of "Combating Corruption in Kosovo: A Citizens' Perceptions Survey in Support of the Kosovo Anti-Corruption Strategy."

tions like FDI, advocacy organizations like ATRC and research institutions such as Riinvest and Sfera, together with government actors.

Through its involvement in this project, ATRC is working

to further its goals to increase accountability among local and international governing officials and institutions; and, to build legislation, programs and initiatives that address corruption on all levels. ■

Interview with Violeta Zeka, Co-coordinator of GOTV

Q: What gave you the most pleasure in this campaign?

A: It certainly was the work with our volunteers, especially their enthusiasm in reaching voters. It was a pleasure to see so many young people interested in doing something for their future.

Q: Which of our campaign activities seemed to be the most successful to you?

A: Organizing the "door to door" canvassing was really

interesting since it hadn't been done before. Previously, we had not seen people's reactions to volunteers knocking on their doors. Their reaction was quite positive.

Q: What do you think were the failures of this campaign?

A: Retrospectively, I wish we had more time to organize an even more efficient door to door campaign. The

volunteers should have been trained better as well. Our resources didn't allow us to give maps and voters' lists to the volunteers.

Q: Did the campaign influence voters' behavior?

A: It is difficult to measure the extent of our influence on these elections, but when one considers that 53% of the population came out to vote, it must have had an impact. This is not to say that the other campaigns to mobilize voters, by political parties and other NGOs, were not successful. After the March events, many analysts expected a much lower turnout. Yet the results of the elections show that a sufficient number of voters participated. Although the turnout wasn't as good as we hoped for, I am happy that so many citizens used their vote. In conclusion, I will say that we were not the sole influence, yet I believe that we had a positive impact. ■



Violeta canvasses with volunteers in the streets of Pristina.

Elita Pushes through Public Participation Legislation

The regulation for public participation in decision-making in Viti municipality was approved by the municipal committee on November 1. This comes after NGO Elita's advocacy campaign in which they conducted public debates with citizens and political parties, gained support from municipal councilors and cooperated with the Committee for Politics and Finances. This project was realized with financial and technical support from the USAID-supported East West Management Institute (EWMI)/Kosovo NGO Advocacy Project (KNAP) as well as its partners the Kosovar Institute for NGO Law (IKDO), the International Center for Not-for-profit Law (ICNL) and the Foundation for Democratic Initiatives (FDI). ■

FDI Changes Location and Telephone

The Foundation for Democratic Initiatives (FDI) is now located at:

**Rr. Marlin Barleti
nr. 46/II
Gjakove**

Tel: 039 027 573

In the near future, FDI will have a branch office in Pristina at ATRC.

Get Out The Vote Campaign, Cont'd

achievable in Kosovo. Second, there was no significant drop in voter turnout for the first election after the March riots, even though low turnout had been predicted.

Participation from the mass media was vital for the campaign's success. All three major Kosovar TV channels carried campaign TV spots and offered free air time. Free air time was supplemented with prime-time slots for campaign ads. Local media stations cooperated with GOTV local coordinators and the Kosova Women's Network to broadcast spots and host local debates. The cam-



The GOTV campaign was officially launched in cooperation with local and international coalition partners at ATRC on October 12th.

campaign also received coverage from the Kosovar print media as well as the international media.

In an effort to reach out to all communities in Kosovo,

the GOTV coalition included NGOs representing all ethnicities, and campaign materials were printed in Serbian as well as Albanian.

The volunteers' direct contact with voters has provided NGOs with a better understanding of the electorate, including how to individually approach all members of Kosovar society.

This campaign's success is a significant lesson to all NGOs that are interested in spearheading innovative campaigns in Kosovo. All steps for planning the campaign, including lessons learned, are available in the ATRC library. ■



National and local coordinators officially kick off the GOTV campaign at a press conference at ATRC.

International NGOs learn about ATRC's Initiatives

Pristina, October 28. In a meeting at ATRC, members of NGOs from Poland, Macedonia, Sweden and Kosovo met to share experiences. ATRC Director Kreshnik Berisha represented ATRC in this meeting and gave an overview of the organization's achievements since its conception.

Berisha focused his presentation on the attempts, successful and otherwise, to shape the political environment in Kosovo. His presentation of the situation in Kosovo was supported by the presentations of

three other Kosovar NGOs: Koni, Care and Nansen Dialogue Center (NDC). Koni focuses on youth and in-

terethnic dialogue. NDC has a similar focus, but is located in Mitrovica and

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European and international NGOs learned about ATRC's activities at a meeting on October 28.

Presentation of Studies on March Events, Cont'd

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Do you have any suggestions for ATRC? Are there any services you would like to see us provide next year? Please share your thoughts by writing to info@advocacy-center.org.

to the problem. However, they noted that all parties in Kosovo are incapable of cooperating to reach a consensus.

Sfera's study examined the role that the mass media had in inflaming the populace into rioting. The detailed study of the media didn't find a bias significant enough to have increased participation in the riots. In fact, the level of unbalanced reporting was almost the same in February as it was in March. According to Sfera, this is a clear sign that there wasn't a significant change in reporting - at least not significant enough to lead to rioting. Sfera's study noted that the recommendations given to TV stations had not been followed as they should have been. RTK had best implemented the recommendations, but the other two national channels were

lagging behind. Sfera warned that due to the pressures the media is facing it could fall into a pattern of self-censorship.

The Ron Brown group analyzed reports from the Prime Minister's office, International Crisis Group, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. They concluded that the economic situation had a great impact on the March events. They also argued that the legal system needs to be unified, rather than running parallel structures. They recommended a structure that would deal with human rights abuses in an impartial manner. Other recommendations of the group dealt with the need for economic development that would lower ethnic tensions.

The Informal group of Researchers argued that the status issue must be solved as soon as possible. Ac-

ording to them, one of the most critical issues was the fact that the population was frustrated while the local political elite was isolated from the most important decision-making. According to Profesor Anton Berisha, the process of transferring power and competencies is instrumental to raising the tolerance of a population that has been waiting for too long to govern itself. "The transfer of the competencies to locals means more responsibility for a more tolerant Kosovo," he said.

All four researchers' work was made possible through a grant from the Foundation for Democratic Initiatives (FDI) as part of the East West Management Institute's (EWMI) Kosovo NGO Advocacy Project (KNAP). This project is supported by the American people through USAID. ■

International NGOs Learn about ATRC's Initiatives, Cont'd

CARE is a well known international organization. These three NGOs reported on their activities in Kosovo, before a frank and genuine discussion on ethnicity and politics took place.

The discussion focused on the situation in the divided city of Mitrovica and the social costs of this division along ethnic lines. Neither Serbs nor Albanians are capable of moving freely in what once was their common city. Younger generations are even more separated by the language barrier. Others have lost more than just friends or opportunities to live in a more diverse world. In the words of a participant "Since the war, I lost my house. Although now the

war is over, and my house is still there, I cannot return. I feel like I will always be internally displaced."

Members of foreign NGOs paid close attention to the presentations

and asked many questions on the nature of the problems Kosovars are facing. They left with a promise to come back and follow up on the situation in Kosovo. ■



In Mitrovica, many people have lost their homes, and others have not been able to return to their homes.