

Teach a man to fish

By Elton Islamaj

"Give a man a fish and he'll eat for a day, teach a man how to fish and he'll eat forever". This proverb pops in my mind at the time the group of citizens in Katundi i Ri begin solving the problem of the orphan children. I'm connecting this proverb with the issue of these citizens because it's important to learn to solve issues and not to learn from the others how to solve them for us. The citizens of this group worked with CF for two years and in conclusion of the phase of taking knowledge and the phase of community organizing they identified the issue of the orphan children of their community that in this area are 140. To solve this problem the citizens had a meeting with the head of the commune of Katundi i Ri and were able to get the support on drafting a detailed list of these children. After that they had a meeting in Durrës prefecture to see if they could find new ways to solve this issue. After this meetings I could see that they were signs of pessimism in their faces who really were thinking to solve something from these meetings.

Is it productive that the citizens felt powerless and demoralized? The issues found by the citizens of Katundi i Ri are not easily solved. Being more clear to solve this issue they need funding from the district and from the Ministry of Work and Social Affairs.

WANT POWER ? ORGANIZE FOR ACTION



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Humanitarian organizations need to be included and also media which if used well it is going to be an irreplaceable support. Identifying the commitment of citizens and other sources of the community which have a direct link with the issue is another possibility. Also drafting a well determined strategy, putting deadlines and also knowing that the phase of community organizing needs time, insistence and faith in solving issues, these are determining factors to achieve concrete results. This is a new process for the community and it takes time to learn about it. It is very difficult or might be impossible for the citizens of Katundi i Ri to solve this issue without making efforts. It is Civic Forum responsibility to teach citizens how to solve their problems.

On the other side the citizens think that they are powerless in acting toward these sight as part of a possible strategy. This is acceptable because now citizens are getting organized and are learning to find ways that brings to concrete results. Thoughts like for example "nobody cares about us", "they think only about themselves", or you are an NGO and how can you help us" solve the problems.

Important is to try solving issues. Citizens are having difficulties related to the transition period our country is passing. Also this can be related to economic

*When community is in action
 the problems are solved*

reasons and the tradition of democracy. This makes it difficult for the citizens to work together for issues which need persistence, decision-taking, faith and patience. These are the determinant elements for achieving the objective. Common interests exist everywhere so these bring common responsibilities citizens should know. Taking over this responsibilities it's going to make citizens powerful and so they can put the balance between them and the elected people. Citizens from Katundi i Ri are still working to solve the issue that for sure is going to be solved if the citizens are going to replace pessimism with determination. Their efforts might not bring to a final solving of the issue but is going to serve them as a good lesson for the future. Coming to the proverb of the beginning of the article this made us one thing clear: the importance of citizens participating to learn to solve issues today means be able to solve all issues in the future serving themselves future and community. This is a process related not only to the citizens of Katundi i Ri but also to all citizens who are working to solve common problems in their community.

Common retreat Albania and Kosova

By Enton Dimni & Refat Hoxha

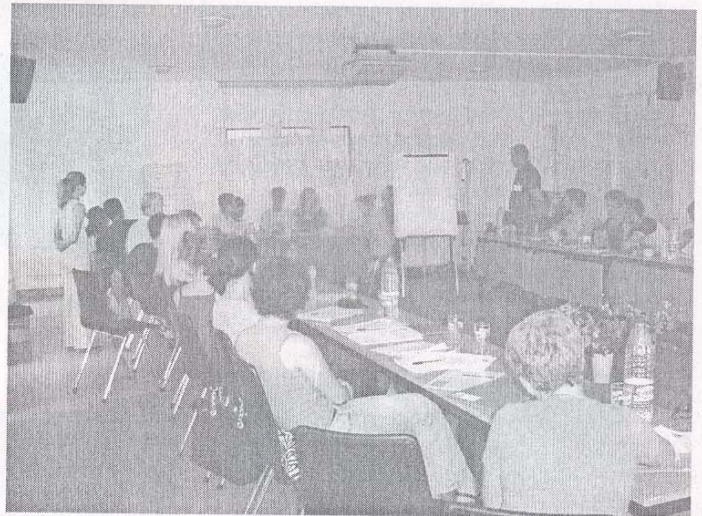


CF/Kosovo Director, Julie Segal presents to the gathering

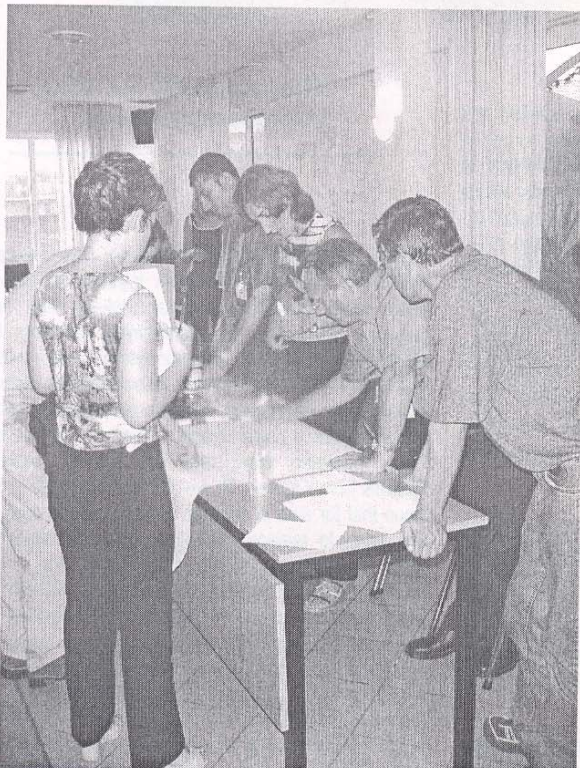
The Field Coordinators also transferred their heightened knowledge about community organizing to the citizens of their groups. In Karpen, Kavajë which is a tourist village, Civic Forum group talked to the community about the problem of the pollution of the environment. They asked community for financial support and finding volunteers to support this action, and the result was a clean beach, double number of tourists and increase of their incomes.

This workshop made clear the vision of the Civic Forum for the future as a uninterrupted process which needs the commitment of all members of the community. Also this is the only way to make the citizens strong and powerful in solving their problems and strengthening the brittle democracy in Albania. This is a message that we convey in all our meetings with the citizens.

From 29 July to 2 August of this year in "Shalom" center in Tirana took place the Civic Forum common retreat Albania and Kosova. During the days of the retreat were discussed and given thoughts and ideas for some issues: What has changed in the Civic Forum program in the last year? How to use media from the citizens in solving problems of their community, and community organizing as the second phase of citizen actions.



Kosovar field coordinators present media strategies



Learning through cooperation

Coordinators from Kosova also gave us their experience in how to use media in a effective way for example: letter to the editor, press conference, debrief for press which help our citizens achieve their objectives. This experience was very helpful to the field coordinators of Albania who are looking forward to apply it with their citizens in their country.

Based on the knowledge taken in this retreat, coordinators of Kavajë chose to use a local radio station, "Fantazia" to explain role of Civic Forum program and NDI as a possibility given to them to learn about democracy and how to get organized in solving the problems of community. This engagement made the number of citizens increase in the groups of discussion. In Golem, group of discussion invited one national television to help them make aware the community, elected people and local government about their big concern which is water supply problem.

Project "Engaged citizens"

By Edlira Pajuni

The power of strength brings the changes. Engaged citizens should take initiatives and give concrete ideas to include other citizens in the way that energies and potentials that exist in the community can move and become realized.

The strategy built by Civic Forum program to engage citizens in solving of common problems has a impact on the community. Pressure toward the elected people make citizens feel stronger. Direct meetings with elected people, participation in council meetings and sending letters addressed to institutions are some of forms used by citizens to influence elected people. Process of inclusion of citizens in decision taking took need devotion, motivation and special skills.

An ambitious vision to prepare committed citizens and communities, and identifying of people who are going to lead communities in these initiatives, these reasons were the resource which made Civic Forum think of the new project named "Engaged citizens". Commitment and independent work is going to improve their life in community. This project is focused in working with a "super-group", compounded by citizens that have been working with Civic Forum for a long time. These people are identified as motivated citizens in solving problems of community and who never missed meetings with Civic Forum. Also they took initiatives like meeting with elected people, writing letters to the editor, these related to the problems of community they are living.



Engaged citizens consider team building

Based in these criteria Civic Forum chose five citizen in each area field coordinators are working. To chose these people it was very difficult because between groups there are many motivated people. Based on this, citizens need to be trained about themes that are considered necessary bases to be a leader.



"ZHUP" director Sandra Houston in introduced leadership ideas

Once a month there will be trainings in NDI Civic Forum offices in Tirana and Durrës. Some of themes will be: leadership, communication, team building, conflict management, right of information, media and thinking strategically.

What will be the follow up with these citizens? This is related to their work expectations. Civic Forum expects that these citizens will go back to their communities and lead the initiatives.

The power of organization is going to strengthen the influence on the elected people to solve problems. For these reasons these citizens need to improve their skills so they can be effective in leading communities and complete their mission.



Leadership demands innovation

To build this project Civic Forum used its assets, human and technical resources, and experience gained in these two years.

Civic Forum is using partnership with other organizations and NGO which programs are based in spreading basics of democracy and consolidating of new ideas. In a more concrete way, The citizens advocate office, and anticorruption office which helped C F in training related to the right of information.

Zhup program, did training about leadership, "ANTARRC" NGO helped with materials and assistance field coordinators in organizing training for team building and conflict management.

Since first of October these citizens met each other three times. This is only the beginning they have big challenge in front of them.

When We Get Organized We Solve Problems

By Kiço Loli & Rrahman Shehu / Golem, Kavaja



Citizens from Golem make strategic plans

Our discussion group in Golem village in Kavaja during last year took knowledge about the functioning of democracy. Now we are in the phase of community organizing which means finding out and solving issues.

We listed some of the most important issues we need to solve in our community. After a long discussion about these issues we decided to commit to solve the issue of water supply which is lacking since a long time.

We build the strategy of our actions and divide the duties for each person. All agree that first we need to have a meeting to make the citizens aware of the situation. This meeting could be held in the shops, coffee shops, at citizen homes, where they

work and with the elected people. Wherever we go we made clear our final objective and the necessity to get organized so we can be powerful in solving this issue.

In this campaign we were supported by the members of the community who showed good will in contributing to solve the issue.

After that we had a meeting with the elected people in our commune and we convinced them to support our action. Also we took part in a meeting of the council of the commune and there we made present this issue and insisted in finding concrete ways to solve it. After a long discussion for this issue we decided to write a petition addressing it to the Deputy of the area Mr. Ejup Tabaku, one to the Ministry of the Local government, and one addressed to the main national TV. This petition helped because the institutions listed above send their representative in the next meeting with the elected officials and our group of discussion.

Representative from our group Mr. Kico Lela and Mr. Rrahman Shehu present once again the issue and suggested ways how to solve this issue. All the participants exchanged opinions and ways how to solve it and in the end it was decided that until the solving of this problem which is the building of a water pipe, the water supply for Golem can be made by water machines container financed by the local government and the prefecture.

We want to accentuate that the commitment of the citizens and the collaboration with local government was very important in solving this issue, and made the community believe that when they are committed they can be powerful and improve their day by day life. We as members of Civic Forum program are working to solve other issues with the slogan "All together organized to improve the day by day life of our community".

How do I feel in Civic Forum

By Rustem Thortori / Sineballaj Kavajë

The mission of the C.F in Albania is to support the development of strengthening of the democratic process in Albania. This Forum supports activation and initiatives of the citizens in rural and urban areas, and supports the cooperation of groups of citizens, administration officials of the communes and municipalities and groups of teachers in the schools to make them conscious for their job and improve the skills of these groups in contributing to the solving common problems.

In Sineballaj commune we have created a small discussion group and during the meetings between C.F staff and this group we discuss different themes. During these meetings members of groups take knowledge about the elements of democracy, the concerns of the community, ways how to solve things and understand that solving of the problem begin where this problem was generated.

Using this way of information and having knowledge about concerns, the community will benefit and solve these problems in a very organized way and not individually. Because it is easier for the representatives of the local government to be informed about a problem from representatives from the community rather than a single person.



How Civic Forum Looks to Citizens

By Bashkim Kushi / Rogozhinë



Bashkim Kushi has participate
in discussion of CF since September 2001

After a long time in a system with only one party in power, with very strict rules, limited and definite in time and with prohibited borders, now in democracy more than anyone, Civic Forum is accomplishing a clear mission in spreading, teaching and educating the rules and elements of democracy and gaining of the new culture of democracy.

As a citizen I think that this Forum with its various activities widespread is serving in a very good way Albanian democracy, leading to the people of different categories the rules of a real democracy, the rules of discussion, rules of law and constitution in both theory and practice.

The methods and ways the Civic Forum is using are varied and well intertwined with methods of discussion and dialogues, concretized theory and practice. The supplying with theory and practice materials it has been continuously insuring the basics of swallowing the knowledge and also studying this knowledge. What have the citizens gain from the seminars done by the Civic Forum in Rogozhina?

First- all learning the theory and practice main rules of a discussion which are necessary in every meeting. It's not enough knowing to discuss an issue, but important is to know the rules of a discussion, respecting the ideas and thoughts of the others, proposing ideas in solving problems and never turning a discussion to

a debate. We are witnesses of discussions without rules in the communes and municipality meeting and even in the parliament, so without knowing this rules we can create very unpleasant situations and instead of solving problems we go on with long theorist discussion and never come to the point.

Second- understanding the law and the constitution is very important because these are the basics of the country. The Constitution is like a locomotive of the country and the wagons are the laws on a whole.

The more perfect constitution is the more perfect is the country which follows this constitution.

We have compared different constitutions and we think that some articles related to the President or to the System of Justice might be changed.

Third- the elements of democracy are a absolute necessity in building of a democratic country. Without knowing and following this elements is impossible to build a democratic country.

Discussion related to this themes have been very interesting and useful. I would like to thank the two Civic Forum field coordinators who facilitate this discussion in a very pleasant way.

As a summary I think that in the seminars of the Civic Forum happens the process of knowing, analyzing, comparing and solving.

The following the rules of a discussion and being tolerant is a result of growth of the democratic culture of the citizens.

Myself and the group are very pleased in the active participating in the Civic Forum program.

How do I feel in Civic Forum

By Rustem Thortori / Sineballaj Kavajë

One of the benefits in the C.F program is the way communities of communicate with elected people as a valuable way that needs to grow in the future where the elected people need to keep the promises they made during their campaign and this begins from the head of the commune and finishes to the members of the parliament. From this communication during the meetings it is achieved that the immediate problems of community are discussed.

For example:in the commune of Sineballaj which covers nine villages only two of them have road connetion with the center of the commune and for the other

seven villages there is no connection. As a result of that too many citizens are moving toward the urban areas and creating there problems of accommodation and unemployment. For the citizens of this commune the problems to be solved are: roads, water system, drains and school reconstruction.

Solving of these problems is going to increase the incomes in our community because if we have roads it is easy for us to go and find the market and sell our products. From the cooperation with the Civic Forum Albania we have learned to verify problems and their

causes. Now we are ready to solve problems but this doesn't mean that we achieved everything, because it is necessary to continue the trainings from Civic Forum. In this way we can be able to draw projects and propose ways to solve those for the good of our community.

Also we need these trainings to gain from the experience of other homogeneous groups in other countries with a high citizenship culture, because our country it is suffering now the fifty years of isolation.

Albarrom part of the integration process

By Juliana Koni & Enton Dimni



have expressed the idea that what is missing in the efforts of their community is the participation and commitment of its citizens. They maintain that the best way to face the challenges of their community is to engage these citizens.

To insure better commitment and participation of their citizens, last June the leaders of "Albarrom" contacted Civic Forum with hopes of collaboration to learn how to better organize themselves and to learn to think strategically. The result is a CF discussion group within the Roma community that encourages citizens to participate in discussions about democracy in Albania and to become more active in their community.

The Roma community will be participating in a campaign to make citizens aware of the big problem of human trafficking.

Important to be underlined is that many citizens of this community are going to take part and this is a sign that this community can be organized and can move from period of apathy and has values as other communities.

The future challenges for Civic Forum and Albarrom will not be easy but integration of small communities like Roma is a very important element in building a strong democracy. Democratic societies should be respectful whoever you are, so let it be the integration of Roma minority into society as a measure of how well Albanian democracy works.

In suburb 14 of Shkozë-Durrës a considerable number of citizens are from the Roma community. They, as all the Albanian society, have social problems. Being an ethnic minority sometimes these people are disdained, and most of the time they have to deal with discrimination, and prejudice against their culture and tradition. Other phenomena are the low education level, illiteracy and the worst one is human trafficking.

Do Roma citizens want to be part of this sad reality? No. For one year, the NGO "Albarrom" has expressed a desire for changes in their community. The mission of this NGO is to strengthen the traditions of the Roma community, improve the level of education, and fight against illiteracy, which are small steps to improve their social life in this community. The leaders of Albarrom

OPINION

When Dead People Revive Destroyed Idols

By Klara Shtrepi & Anila Disha

In 50 years of totalitarianism our existence was ruined. Murdered spirits, imprisoned fantasy, numbed minds wriggled inside the communist cage.

Children with toys in their hands, manipulated as lifeless machinery, we gathered in a whitened "hurrah" for the dictator.

Women dressed as men in military uniform, girls with dead dreams for love and life, defaced people who were scared even to hope: this was "the new citizen" modeled by communism.

Dictatorship wanted to kill hope. But hope dies the last. You can't kill the hope of a whole nation.

The 1990s came. New winds blew in the world. Restrained energies exploded and aspirations for democracy and freedom took life.

The destruction of the Berlin Wall- this powerful earthquake -spread strong democratic waves in all the communist dictatorships.

Lifeless people begin to resuscitate, they turned down busts that were transformed into idols, and smashed the irons of the communist cage. The rebirth was total, social rebirth, political rebirth, economic, and above all moral and spiritual rebirth.

People, free now, felt the strength of power.

realized through their free vote.

New democratic processes demanded citizens to be necessarily an active part of aspired changes. It is this citizen, with the energy that freedom gives, who will be the main actor of these democratic developments.

It is this reborn citizen who through his vote build his own power.

It is this citizen who with new space takes now a new form.

Civic Forum Interviews

By Rovena Sorra



Students represent 20%
of CF participants and are very active

This time "Interviews with Civic Forum" is made with the opinions of the students who participate in the Civic Forum program.

They have been meeting with each other for one year before discussing themes and exchanging ideas and improving their communication skills.

These students took part in a contest between student groups of Civic Forum, which related to knowledge taken during the series of discussion.

Now these students are making aware their community for the problem of pollution of the environment.

Civic Forum interviewed three of them to have their opinions.

Frida Gjini(F.GJ) - member of the C.F group in Rrogozhina.

Sonila Pici(S.P) - member of the C.F group in Gosë

Erion Shuaipi(E.SH) - member of the C.F group in Kavajë.

Question 1- What appeals to you in the Civic Forum program?

F.GJ- The way of dwelling on the discussion themes.

We discuss these themes in school instead of a teacher giving the information, in Civic Forum program, students are led by the field coordinators in exchanging information.

S.P- is it's objective. The commitment of the citizens in the community.

Also Civic Forum gave us for the first time the possibility to learn about the democratic process in our commune and to act about it.

E.SH- I always like to take part in the groups of Civic Forum and also I'm attracted by the very interesting discussions.

The activities in group have the objective of group cooperation.

Question 2- What did you benefit from the activities with the Civic Forum group?

F.GJ- Me and my group have been very active in the C.F activities and this made us benefit a lot. I would like to mention the activity with local officials.

Before the meetings we need to have a strategic plan guiding us like - Why we were going to meet- When- fixing an appointment or where-meeting place or who- our representatives.

All this showed us that the group needed to have a strategic plan to lead us to success.

S.P- We had the possibility not only to benefit as a group but also as a community.

The activity done by the Gosë students and the local government made too many citizens participate in filling the surveys, and some others read our materials and begin thinking what they could do in protecting the environment which is a big concern for all of us.

E.SH- My benefit in C.F I see it in the point of view related to the democratic process.

Also working as a group we have the possibility to exchange information and also in strengthening the organizing, cooperating and communicating skills and all this happens during the discussions.

Question 3 – How it is changed your attitude this related to the democratic process in your community.

F.GJ- Yes is true, besides new ideas activities it changed us in our mentality and our attitude.

Even we are going in another school far from Rrogozhina wherever we go we are going to transmit what we learn about democracy in the C.F program.

Also in the future we hope this knowledge can be valuable for Rrogozhina as well.

S.P- If yesterday we could see reality with the eyes of our parents now after the basic knowledge taken in C.F we have our own vision.

Also the meeting with the local government and the cooperating with them and also the work to make the citizens consciousness about their role these for me are commitment so I think that my attitude and what of my friends is changing.

There are two things needed in life "JUSTICE – POWER"
Sami Frashëri 1899



*Kosovar and Albania field coordinators met
in Tirana for the second joint retreat. (Story on page 2)*

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