

# Kosovo Civic Forum



## 2002 Program Analysis and Evaluation

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*Dedicated to the entire 20- person Civic Forum 2002 staff (plus Niti Shehu and Dritan Zhujaj), whose hard work, absolute commitment to a democratic Kosovo, and sustained passion has developed, and will continue to build civil society's confidence to act, and skills to know how.*

## Introduction

This report is the product of the second round of quantitative and qualitative evaluations of NDI's Civic Forum program and results.

The first section is a brief overview of the 2002 Civic Forum program, including its philosophy, objectives, structure and implementation progression.

The second section discusses the survey tool that was originally developed and administered in July-September 2001, and was then supplemented and re-administered in September-October 2002.

The third section provides a picture of the composition of active Civic Forum participants, and details the progress made in democratic participation during 2002.

The fourth section discusses the impact of continued involvement in Civic Forum on the evolution of citizen attitudes about democracy and their role in a democratic system.

The fifth section details the increase in citizens' knowledge about democratic government and political participation.

The sixth section presents the progress of Civic Forum participants as they took significant steps toward activating members of their community and initiating comprehensive advocacy efforts.

The seventh section looks ahead to increased youth and minority democratic participation and Civic Forum's emphasis on public policy and legislative advocacy that will further help develop Kosovo's government institutions and systems of a democratic society.

## Civic Forum Program Overview

The National Democratic Institute (NDI) has been in Kosovo since October 1999 and has continuously worked to strengthen all sectors of a democratic society, including elected officials, political parties, and civil society actors. Since early 2000, NDI has conducted its Civic Forum program to increase citizen understanding of democratic principles, facilitate citizen involvement in identifying and defining the issues that most affect them, and support direct interaction between citizens and public officials to address those issues. Through Civic Forum, citizens learn about the principles and values of democracy and gain the skills needed to solve problems in their local communities collectively, strategically, and effectively.

Civic Forum's civic engagement methodology is founded on extensive research and years of experience in adult education, community action, and grassroots advocacy programs. Its step-by-step approach is designed to help citizens organize themselves and participate in political activity. The program is implemented by local field coordinators who begin by organizing citizens and facilitating "Discussion Groups" that meet regularly and learn about democracy principles. These Discussion Groups then evolve into "Action Groups" that receive training and guidance from the field coordinators on advocacy techniques with the ultimate goal of enabling participants to work with other citizens, NGOs, and government officials to address common problems for the benefit of their communities.

Specifically, in 2000, NDI built the Kosovo Civic Forum program with site assessments, local staff field coordinator recruitment and initial training, and education materials development. In 2001, during the program's outreach and education phase, NDI field coordinators created groups of citizens who met regularly for participatory discussions on issues related to democracy. Also during 2001, the field coordinators began guiding their groups to identify challenges in their communities that they would work to address through the democratic process.

In 2002, Civic Forum squarely entered the advocacy phase of the program. NDI's field coordinators received extensive and comprehensive training on advocacy tools and tactics. (See Annex A for a detailed discussion of field coordinator trainings and capacity). The field coordinators then led their groups (from behind) in advocacy efforts to solve community problems in a strategic and democratic manner.

Through Civic Forum, NDI has helped citizens become empowered and capable of developing issue-specific advocacy initiatives – including issue research and identification, strategic plan development, the planning and implementation of activities to raise public awareness of issues of concern to their communities, and constructive, strategic, and effective engagement with decision makers in order to address the issues in question. With the ultimate aim of giving citizens greater access to the political process and, in turn, promoting transparency and accountability in government, Civic Forum's primary goal is to ensure that Kosovars have and, importantly, demonstrate the knowledge and skills needed to play an active role in a democratic society – as both community and, potentially, future government leaders.

## **Civic Forum Evaluation Methodology**

In order to complement the existing observational and qualitative assessments made in the field, the Civic Forum field coordinators administered the 2002 quantitative survey during a two-month period (September-October) to 73 of their action groups, resulting in 662 completed questionnaires. These numbers represent that data was collected from approximately 63 percent of Civic Forum groups, and 48 percent of citizen participants.

The survey instrument was originally developed in 2001 for Civic Forum/Kosovo by Dr. William Millsap, who has over 25 years of experience in evaluating development programs throughout the world. The 2001 survey questionnaire assessed Civic Forum participants' attitudes about democracy, knowledge of democracy, and how this information was likely to influence their behavior. The 2002 survey questionnaire, while virtually identical to the 2001 version, contained slight adjustments and additions in order to capture and reflect citizens' actual actions, as well as to measure the changes after a year in their attitudes, opinions, knowledge, and inclination to act. (See Annex B for the full survey questionnaire). The 2002 survey includes 121 data points that have been coded and entered into an Access database for analysis.

In 2002, NDI changed the database software used to house and analyze the data. In 2001, NDI utilized the EpiInfo database, which proved to have too many limitations during the analytical process. Therefore, in 2002, Access, a common Microsoft database with greater data manipulation capacity, was utilized and proved to be easy to analyze and share with others. Moreover, it is now possible to cross-tabulate survey results in future years, something not possible with the data stored in EpiInfo.

The 2002 survey effort was a success for a number of reasons. First, it allowed NDI to measure and quantify program strength and progress for a type of program that is difficult to assess. Second, with the 2001 survey results, the 2002 survey findings represent a valuable reference for NDI, USAID, and others to benchmark the progress of citizen programs as well as Kosovo's democratization at the most fundamental level. Finally, the survey results demonstrate that, with consistent and quality training and support, citizens, and therefore, Kosovo's democracy development have, in fact, progressed appreciably.

## Civic Forum Participant Demographics and Analysis

During 2002, Civic Forum/Kosovo worked with 116 groups and over 1,380 participants. These numbers represent a 10 and 15 percent decrease, respectively, from the number of groups and citizens *directly* involved in NDI's Civic Forum program in 2001. There are several important reasons for this decrease.

- First, as Civic Forum moved out of the “education-building phase” and into the “advocacy-implementation phase,” it was inevitable that some participants would decide not to move beyond their discussion groups into action groups. However, as the below “Participation and Retention” section reflects, Civic Forum’s retention rate is striking.
- Second, NDI made a programmatic decision at the beginning of 2002 to deepen the skills and involvement of existing Civic Forum participants, rather than to broaden the pool of participating citizens. This decision resulted in focusing resources and attention on those citizens who were already involved with Civic Forum rather than creating new relationships and building new groups.
- Finally, as is demonstrated below in the “Scope of Influence” section, a slightly smaller number of direct participants does not equate to a lower number of impacted and involved citizens. In fact, in 2002, fewer direct participants nevertheless managed to leverage even greater numbers of informed and engaged citizens.

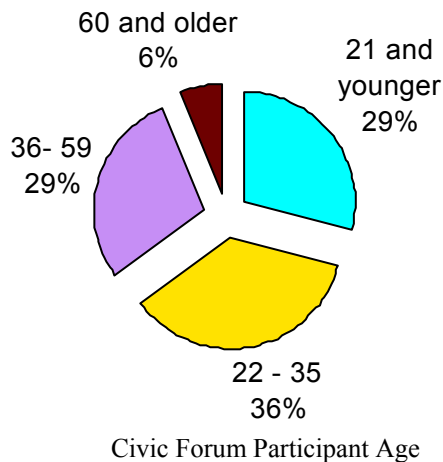
In 2002, Civic Forum operated throughout Kosovo. Civic Forum field coordinators resided in the regions in which they facilitated groups, enabling deep and sustainable connections in their communities, as well as establishing the coordinators as leaders and experts on grassroots organizing and action. Specifically, Civic Forum groups were active in 20 municipalities covering Prishtina, South Mitrovica, Lipian, Podujevo, Obiliq, Fushe Kosova, Vushtrri, Peja, Decan, Ferizaj, Shtimje, Kaqanik, Prizren, Dragash, Suhareka, Malisheve, Rahovec, Gjilan, Vitia, and Dardana/Kamenica. In addition, two field coordinators worked across Kosovo to bring democratic values and tolerance to education phase only groups of TMK members (Kosovo Protection Corps – most of whom were former members of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA)).

### Youth Participation

Young people are the future generation of political and civic leaders in Kosovo. In order for young people to become active citizens and leaders, they must be equipped with the intellectual skills necessary to analyze, and the comfort level to advocate - individually and collectively - their beliefs about what values and principles should inform their social structures. The participation of youth in Civic Forum activities is of long-term importance to the sustainability of democracy in Kosovo where the majority of citizens are under the age of 30. It is therefore critical for the future of Kosovo’s democracy for young people to understand and possess basic democratic principles and values.

In 2002, Civic Forum made substantial gains in its youth civic engagement. In 2001, participants under 22 years of age accounted for only 13 percent of the total. In 2002, however, that number climbed to 29 percent. These statistics demonstrate that field coordinators’ efforts to involve young people, and the program’s transition from education to advocacy, resulted in a substantial

increase in youth participation. Although, as demonstrated below, democratic participation is not age dependent, younger citizens are more likely to take action and advocate for change in their communities than older citizens (see Democratic and Political Action section below). The survey results also demonstrate that NDI's Civic Forum program is making a significant contribution to Kosovo's youth and, therefore, to Kosovo's emerging civic and political leaders.

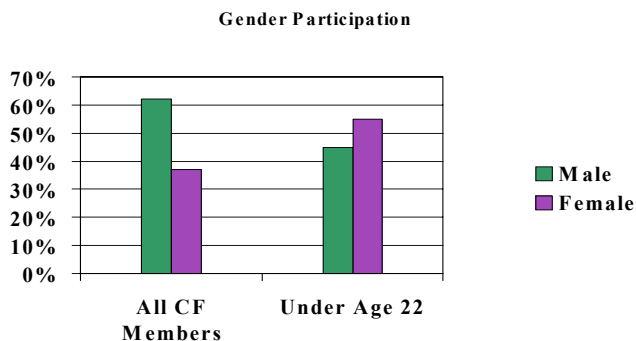


**Age doesn't slow action.** Most of Kosovo's pensioners expect state support in their later years. As Civic Forum participants, pensioners expressed an interest in working closely with NDI to develop an advocacy campaign to secure pensions for the elderly and disabled. In 2001, Civic Forum conducted specialized trainings, attended by approximately 45 pensioners. Although initially focused upon defining advocacy and citizen's ability to affect public policy, the effort soon turned to engaging the media about the issue of pensions. One outcome of the pensioners' effort was that the resultant media attention promoted far greater transparency on the 2002 legislative process on monthly annual pension payments.

In 2002, although the primary goal of Civic Forum's pensioner groups was still to increase the amount of their pension, they recognized after further consultations and trainings that Kosovo's current financial situation would make an immediate solution unlikely. Accordingly, Civic Forum's pensioner groups, especially in Ferizaj and Gjilan municipalities, focused their energy on additional goals. For example, the highly active group of Gjilan pensioners (which is led by an older woman), managed to secure transportation discounts for all senior citizens in the municipality. This group arranged to have all pensioners (including Serbian, Roma, and Bosniak minorities) obtain identification cards that would entitle them to this discount. Further, the group also managed to create an ambulatory care center that would provide free check-ups and medicine to senior citizens. The group also held an event launching the opening of the medical center with various elected officials and media coverage in order to advertise the availability of the service to other pensioners. Accordingly, although the ultimate goal of obtaining increased pensions has not yet been realized, Civic Forum's groups of retired citizens are nevertheless still engaged, motivated, and, importantly, active.

## Female Participation

One of Civic Forum's key achievements in 2002 was the increased participation of female citizens. In 2001, the overall female participation rate was 28 percent. Among participants under the age of 22, 37 percent were women. In 2002, however, the overall female participation rate increased to 36.6 percent of the program's total participants, with the rate for young women soaring to 54.4 percent. This dramatic increase in the number of women taking part in the program is a result of the serious effort made by Civic Forum leadership to engage women, and the field coordinators' emphasis on actively involving high school age girls in Advanced Advocacy Group (AAG) trainings. The higher numbers for young women also likely reflects a generational attitude and willingness on the part of younger Kosovar women to engage in political and community activities -- a very good sign as Kosovo works toward future gender equity and full political participation.



## Ethnic Participation

As in 2001, the majority of Civic Forum participants were Albanians. Other ethnic groups, however, were increasingly incorporated into the Civic Forum program, both directly and indirectly. For example, although the survey used "mother tongue" to define ethnicity, nearly 4.5 percent of Albanian native speakers are non-Albanian members of the Ashkalija minority group. In addition, many Civic Forum groups have utilized their relationship development and coalition building skills to reach out to other ethnic groups and to engage them in their community-wide advocacy efforts. This was true, for example,

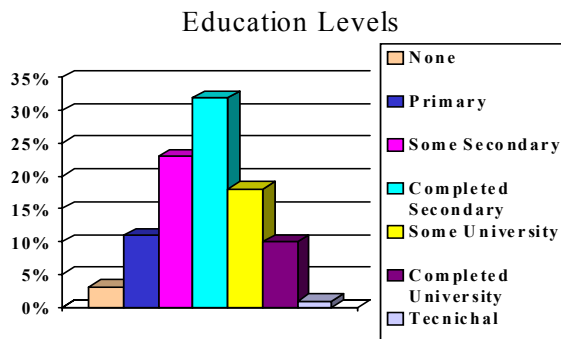
- In Gjilan where a Civic Forum pensioner group worked with Serbian pensioners to secure senior citizen discounts on bus tickets;
- In Vitia, where a Civic Forum women's group formed a coalition that included young people of different Albanian political parties, Serbians, and people with physical disabilities to create a youth center and youth leadership council; and
- In Ferizaj, where a Civic Forum youth group formed a coalition with Serbian students from neighboring Strpce municipality to launch an AIDS awareness campaign.

Notwithstanding these efforts and improvements, a strong effort still needs to be made to directly involve ethnic minorities, especially Serbian citizens, in NDI's civic work in 2003.



## Education

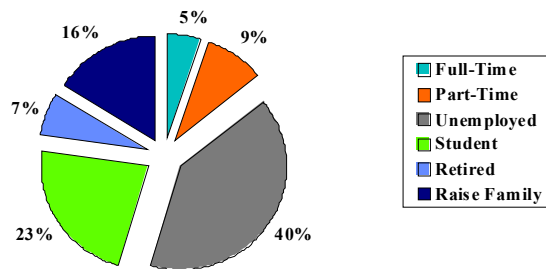
Civic Forum participants are among the educated members of Kosovar society. Nearly 60 percent were secondary school graduates, and 27 percent attended college or university. Although these numbers reflect a decrease in education levels from 2001 where the statistics were 66 percent and 41 percent respectively, the increase in young Civic Forum participants accounts for the reduction as many youth were still attending secondary school (72 percent of participants answering only “some secondary school” are under age 22). These academic records predispose Civic Forum participants to understand and analyze democratic principles and concepts. In Kosovar culture, educated citizens have a higher level of credibility in their communities than those with lower education. Civic Forum participants were more likely to lead their neighbors to adopt democratic values and practices.



## Employment

As in 2001, the majority of Civic Forum participants already had busy schedules and added the responsibilities of community action and involvement to their other commitments. In 2002, over 50 percent of respondents participated actively in Civic Forum in addition to full-time or part-time jobs, going to school, or raising a family. Students made up 22 percent of Civic Forum members, again reflecting the youth activism in the Civic Forum program. Another 6.5 percent were retired. The number of unemployed Civic Forum participants increased from 26 percent in 2001 to 40 percent in 2002, while the number of full-time employed participants dropped from 44 percent in 2001 to 4 percent in 2002. Although still below the national unemployment rate of over 60 percent, this decline in Civic Forum participant employment is nevertheless a disturbing reflection of Kosovo’s economic status and decreasing employment prospects with the departure of international organizations.

Employment Status



## Community Activism

Civic Forum members expressed an interest in community affairs and a willingness to be part of efforts to improve their society. Nearly 83 percent of respondents considered participating in Civic Forum either somewhat or very likely to motivate other citizens to become more involved in improving their communities. When asked whether their own participation in Civic Forum increased their interest in becoming more involved in community activities, a definitive 86 percent said yes. In fact, over 76 percent considered having acquired knowledge and information about democratic political participation from Civic Forum to be fundamental to their participation in community actions.

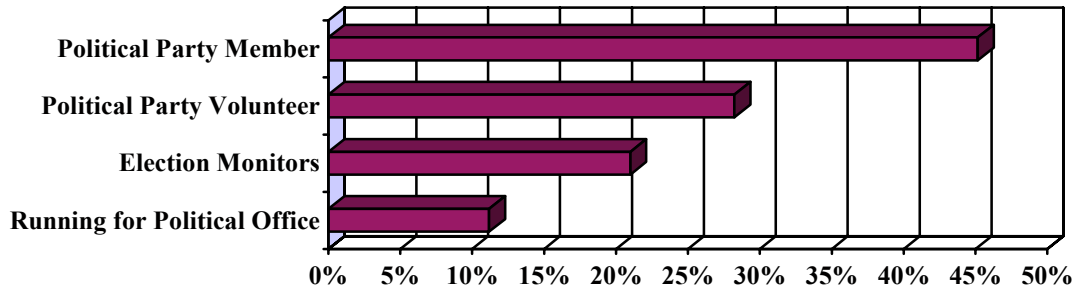
More than 37 percent of Civic Forum participants are involved in other local community groups such as local NGOs, Parent-Teacher associations, war invalid organizations, youth councils, and pensioner associations. Interestingly, an additional 6 percent of respondents listed NDI or their Civic Forum group as the local community organization with which they participated. This information is consistent with field observations that citizens consider NDI and Civic Forum as an organization that they join and belong to indefinitely, rather than as simply a “program” with finite application and duration. The reasons for this view likely range from the organic and collegial nature of the program and its implementation by local field coordinators, to the group formation and collective action nature of the program, to the fact that NDI is clearly viewed as a credible organization to which many Kosovars would like to belong. As discussed below, the program participation and retention rates certainly benefit from these impressions.

## Political Activism

Not only are Civic Forum participants likely to be active in their communities, they are also increasingly interested and willing to participate in the political process. As in 2001, 45 percent claimed membership in a political party. An important new indication in 2002 is that continued participation in Civic Forum increased political engagement and action. Although party membership remained constant, political activities that required affirmatively taking action increased in 2002. For example, in 2001, 25 percent of respondents contributed their time to party activities on a volunteer basis. In 2002, political volunteerism increased to 29 percent.

Also in 2001, interest in running for political office was 9 percent while continued involvement in Civic Forum increased participants' interest to 12 percent in 2002. Finally, while nearly 13 percent served as election observers in 2001, 21 percent of 2002 respondents reported monitoring elections. As is discussed in more detail below, these increased levels of political activism indicate Civic Forum's impact on increasing citizens' confidence in the democratic process and in their willingness and ability to take action and have an impact.

**Political Interest:**



**Peaceful Activism**

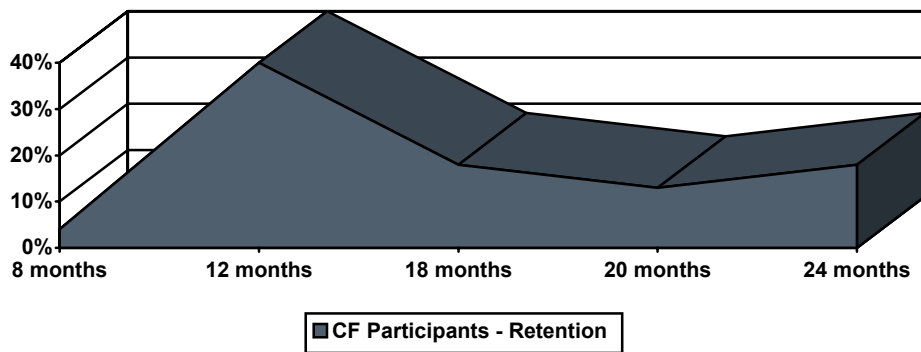
In a post-conflict environment, one of the most important measurements of successful peaceful transition is non-violent activism and participation in the democratic process. Considering that democracy is a means to the end of a society that operates and coexists in peace, democratic civic participation and activism among former combatants is vital. NDI Civic Forum worked in the first half of 2002 with approximately 300 members of the TMK (Kosovo Protection Corps – most of whom were former members of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA)) throughout Kosovo in order to educate them about democratic principles and values. Although the work with the TMK never went beyond the education phase, the democracy education was very popular and well received – yielding positive responses from the TMK participants as well as from the international organization tasked with their overall training.

In addition to the TMK, Civic Forum's civilian groups included former combatants who had returned to their communities after the war. In the 2002 survey, Civic Forum civilian (non-TMK) participants were asked whether they had been members of the KLA. A striking 16 percent of respondents claimed membership, with 9 percent choosing not to answer the question. (The average non-answer rate for the rest of the survey was approximately 3 percent). It can be argued that these former members of the KLA have chosen to remain activists in their communities, trading their weapons for dialogue and advocating for change peacefully within the evolving democratic system. With more than one out of every seven people who chose to participate in Civic Forum having served in the KLA, NDI has provided an outlet for non-violent advocacy to many people who may not otherwise have had such opportunities.

**Participation and Retention**

One of the unique and important aspects of Civic Forum is its consistency and regularity of contact with citizens. Citizens require more than one-time training to provide the confidence to

act, to change attitudes, and to create a pool of activists. At the time of the November 2001 report, many Civic Forum participants had recently entered the program, with most of the analysis distinguishing between citizens who had attended more or less than five meetings. With the 2002 program decision to deepen the skills, rather than broaden the pool of Civic Forum members, all survey participants were seasoned and had worked with NDI as a part of Civic Forum for between eight months and two years.



**Skills Development** – Civic Forum’s ability to retain citizen interest and involvement is impressive and is likely a result of several factors. First, as in 2001, citizens reported joining Civic Forum in order to understand how democracy works and to improve their communities. Specifically, 79 percent of respondents in 2002, compared to 51 percent in 2001, were motivated by learning about democracy. Also in 2002, 79 percent, compared to 36 percent in 2001, felt that they were participating in order to cooperate with others to solve community problems. Interestingly, in 2002, 89 percent decided that gaining skills for solving community problems is a primary reason for participating, while only 46 percent in 2001 found skills development a motivating factor. Finally, although only 21 percent cited becoming a leader or getting involved in politics as prompting involvement, over half the respondents felt that participating in a group and taking an active role in the community were reasons to belong to Civic Forum.

**Learning by doing** – Another reason for Civic Forum’s retention rate is likely the transition in 2002 from education to advocacy. Once citizens began acting on their own behalf, they realized their own power and began to see results of their own efforts to solve community problems. Civic Forum’s philosophy of “learning by doing” succeeded in keeping citizens engaged and active. Civic Forum evolved from a passively participatory education program to an active community movement that made a tangible difference in citizens’ lives. Citizens were motivated by the issues on which they worked rather than by only the program in which they participated. Civic Forum consistently and continuously developed citizens’ confidence to act, and skills to know how in a way that kept them engaged throughout the existence of the program, and provided the necessary preconditions for sustainable citizen action in the future.

**Field Coordinator impact** – Civic Forum field coordinators are directly responsible for continued citizen involvement in the program. In 2002, 79 percent of participants report having been recruited to Civic Forum by NDI local staff field coordinators. In 2001, exactly the same number – 79 percent – joined Civic Forum at the urging of field coordinators. As mentioned above, field coordinators stopped recruiting additional members in early 2002. Continued citizen participation is therefore a testament to field coordinators’ grassroots organizing, meeting

facilitation, and training abilities. Further, relationships developed with, support provided by, and skills gained from Civic Forum field coordinators provided a central reason for joining – and more importantly staying in – Civic Forum.

**No compensation** – Civic Forum’s participation and retention rates are particularly impressive given that members receive no financial incentives to participate in the program. The rates of participation and retention reflect entirely substantive motives on the part of citizens to learn about democracy and to make a difference in their communities. Civic Forum participation is purely voluntary and the members are unpaid activists -- an important accomplishment of the program in an otherwise money driven NGO environment, and a strong indication of the likely sustainability of citizens’ initiative and actions.

**Regular meetings** – The duration of continued participation in Civic Forum is even more remarkable when one examines the amount of time committed and the number of meetings citizens regularly attended. In 2002, as advocacy increased, Civic Forum groups met more frequently in order to keep up with the demands of their activities. In 2001, only 9 percent of groups met weekly. In 2002, however, 42 percent of groups met once a week or more. In 2001, 65 percent met bi-weekly, compared to 45 percent in 2002. Although more than 87 percent of participants met at least twice a month, field coordinators never reported having difficulty getting citizens to attend meetings. Finally, due to the sometimes frequent and hectic nature of advocacy activities and the inability of coordinators to attend every necessary meeting, Civic Forum groups also met occasionally without field coordinators – an indication that citizens’ work was collective, independent, and therefore sustainable.

## Scope of Influence

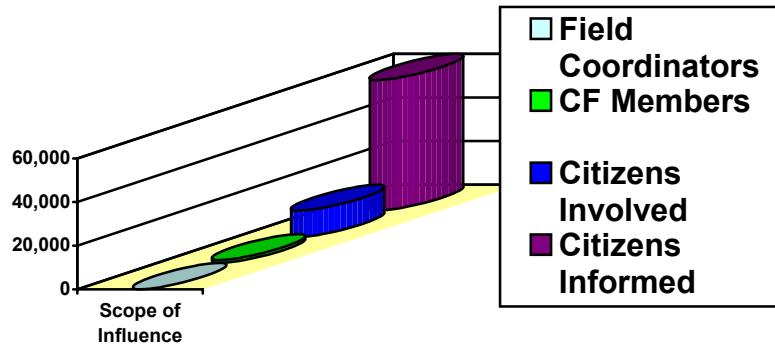
Civic Forum is designed to have an exponential effect of bringing Kosovars into the democratic political process. NDI’s and USAID’s primary investment is in the national staff capacity and their professional skill development. (See Annex A). The efforts of Civic Forum’s 15 field coordinators generated the dedication, commitment, and capacity of 1,080 Civic Forum citizen participants.<sup>1</sup> According to 2002 survey responses, those 1,080 Civic Forum members *each* brought between 6 to 15 fellow citizens directly into their community actions and advocacy efforts. Specifically, 15 have leveraged 1,080, who in turn have leveraged between 6,500 and 16,000 citizens in their communities.

It is important to note that Civic Forum participants *actually involved* these 6,500 to 16,000 citizens in their Civic Forum activities. In 2001, the survey asked Civic Forum members how many citizens they *expected* to involve as their work in Civic Forum moved ahead. The results of the 2001 survey demonstrated that Civic Forum participants expected to involve upwards of 20,000 citizens in their efforts. The 2002 survey, on the other hand, asked how many citizens would be directly involved in some type of community activity as a result of Civic Forum. The 2002 survey also included a separate question asking participants to estimate how many people they had educated about the Civic Forum program and activities. The response to this question yielded in excess of 60,000 citizens. Therefore, after only two years of Civic Forum’s operation,

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<sup>1</sup> For purposes of this analysis, the two TMK Civic Forum field coordinators and the approximately 300 TMK Civic Forum members have been removed. Civic Forum’s TMK program did not involve direct action or advocacy activities, and is therefore not applicable to this discussion.

at least 3 percent of Kosovo's entire population is involved in, or informed about the program's efforts.



## Attitudes and Beliefs about Democracy

**Community Action Essential** – Civic Forum members are likely to endorse local political institutions and seek partners, not competitors, in their elected officials. While nearly 60 percent of 2002 participants believed that the municipal government was playing an important role in improving their local community, 97 percent thought many community problems could be solved through community action with their neighbors. Civic Forum members are also likely to understand their roles and responsibilities in a democracy, as well as for Kosovo’s democratic transition. In fact, fully 66.5 percent of respondents in 2002 considered Kosovo’s transition to democracy to be progressing effectively, and 92 percent believed this transition could only be successful if community members get involved.

**Citizens need more education** – Civic Forum participants’ opinions about citizen awareness of democracy, however, were mixed. While 62 percent of respondents believed that citizens know who their elected officials are, only 51 percent thought citizens understand the role of elected representatives, and 46 percent felt that citizens know the structure and functions of government. Accordingly, Civic Forum participants indicated that democracy education and information for the general public is lacking.

**Elected officials should be accountable** – Civic Forum participants in 2002 also believed that elected representatives should be directly accountable to the public for their decisions. However, while 95 percent said elected representatives *should* be accountable, only 35 percent believed that they currently *were* accountable, with an additional 40 percent acknowledging that they were “sometimes” accountable. These attitudes reflect a decrease from the 2001 survey results where 89 percent of Civic Forum participants reported believing that elected officials are directly accountable to their constituents in some measure.

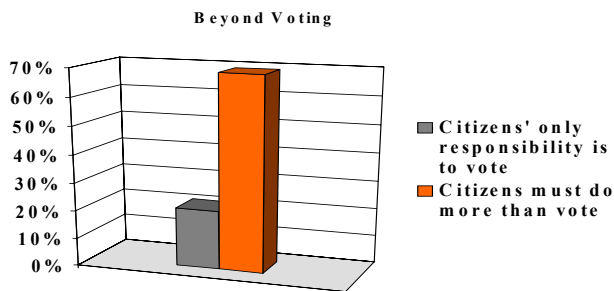
**Desire to make changes** – When asked what personal attributes members of the community should possess in order to solve community problems, Civic Forum participants’ opinions centered on tolerance of other opinions (83 percent), willingness to listen to others (80 percent), ability to develop good relationships with government officials (74 percent), and desire to make positive changes (73.5 percent). Interesting, although participants considered the *desire* to make positive changes important, only 54 percent felt that the *ability* and skills to make positive changes in society was a necessary personal attribute. As reflected in the discussion below about political action, Civic Forum participants’ attitudes also demonstrated that advocacy skills, such as the ability to think strategically (69 percent), the ability to reach agreements with others (52 percent), and the ability to lead others to take action together (50 percent), are important to solve community problems.

**Rule of Law** – Civic Forum citizens understand that the rule of law is fundamental to the health and rigor of any democracy. Ninety-seven (97) percent of participants reported agreeing or strongly agreeing that respect for the law is a fundamental principle in any viable democracy. Another 92 percent believed that, in a democracy, the rights of the individual are guaranteed by law. Finally, 94.5 percent felt that all people are equal in the eyes of the law in a democracy.

# Knowledge about Democracy

## Voting

With increased participation in Civic Forum, citizens are more likely to understand government processes and the roles of democratic sectors, including elected officials and civil society. Civic Forum participants also understand that citizens' rights and responsibilities in a democracy extend beyond voting. In 2001, 59 percent of new Civic Forum members thought that the only responsibility a citizen had in a democracy was to vote. Of the participants who had been in a Civic Forum group for between 2 months and one year, 37 percent believed their role was only as a voter. In 2002, however, only 21 percent of respondents thought voting was their only duty. Accordingly, Civic Forum has demonstrated that on-going education and trainings convince citizens that their democratic rights and responsibilities do not end on election day. The table below demonstrates the understanding among Civic Forum participants that democracy is beyond voting on election day:



## Inter-ethnic Cooperation

Civic Forum participants also grasp that citizens have the right to participate in the democratic process regardless of ethnicity, religion, or political beliefs. Whether because of the type of people inclined to participate in Civic Forum, or because of Civic Forum's education and training about rights and tolerance, more than 95 percent of participants stated unequivocally that everyone has the same right to political participation. In 2001, that figure stood at 90 percent.

Civic Forum participants demonstrated these views with their actions as well as with their words. In addition to the illustrations of inter-ethnic cooperation in the above ethnic participation section, following are further examples:

- A Civic Forum group of people with physical disabilities in Shtime municipality initiated meetings with physically disabled Serbian citizens in Strpce in an effort to attempt to combine services and to try to reintegrate these disabled communities in the economic and social development process in Kosovo.
- A Civic Forum group of Ashkalija citizens in Fushe Kosova municipality initiated a multi-ethnic dialogue with Albanian, Roma, and Ashkalija parents in their community after Roma and Ashkalija primary school children were badly beaten by older Albanian



children. The Civic Forum members managed to unify all the families against such ethnic violence and to secure additional police patrol for the primary school.

- A Civic Forum group in Plemetin village (Obiliq municipality) worked with a neighboring Serbian village to create a joint ambulatory care center. Part of the reason for this joint venture was because of previous relationship development. Several months earlier, the Civic Forum group had led the Albanian community in Plemetin to agree to provide space for a school for Serbian students.

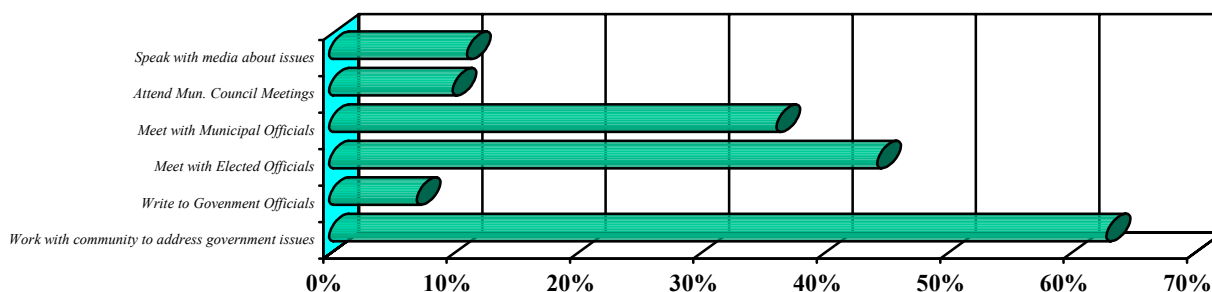
While this inter-ethnic outreach is often difficult, these actions reflect Civic Forum participants' willingness to address issues that must be resolved if Kosovo is to continue its successful development.

## **Democratic and Political Action and Advocacy**

Civic Forum's two primary objectives for 2002 focused on political action and advocacy. All efforts and trainings in 2002 were targeted to help Civic Forum participants identify specific community issues and advocate for change to decision makers, and hold government officials accountable to the public. Although the term "advocacy" is often difficult to define, Civic Forum operated with the premise that advocacy is an umbrella term for citizens taking collective, strategic and effective action to address issues of common concern. Importantly, in a post-communist environment where citizens are not accustomed to having a collaborative relationship with their government, Civic Forum members were also taught that a key to effective advocacy is constructive relationship development with government officials.

In order to lead Civic Forum participants through often complicated processes, sophisticated strategies, and lengthy activity timelines, Civic Forum field coordinators trained participants on such topics as strategic planning and goal setting, grassroots organizing, message development, coalition building, persuasive meetings strategies (i.e. lobbying), and media skills. The results of these efforts were that Civic Forum participants took the initiative to organize their communities and to meet with government officials about issues of common concern. According to survey results, 36 percent of Civic Forum participants met with civil administrators, and 44.5 percent met with *elected* officials about community problems. Importantly, none of these actions occurred before, or would have occurred without Civic Forum. Only 29 percent of participants report having met with government officials before joining Civic Forum, while 67.5 percent stated that they only engaged with their government after participating in Civic Forum.

### **Political Action:**



Specifically, the following represent a few examples of Civic Forum participant advocacy and interaction with government:

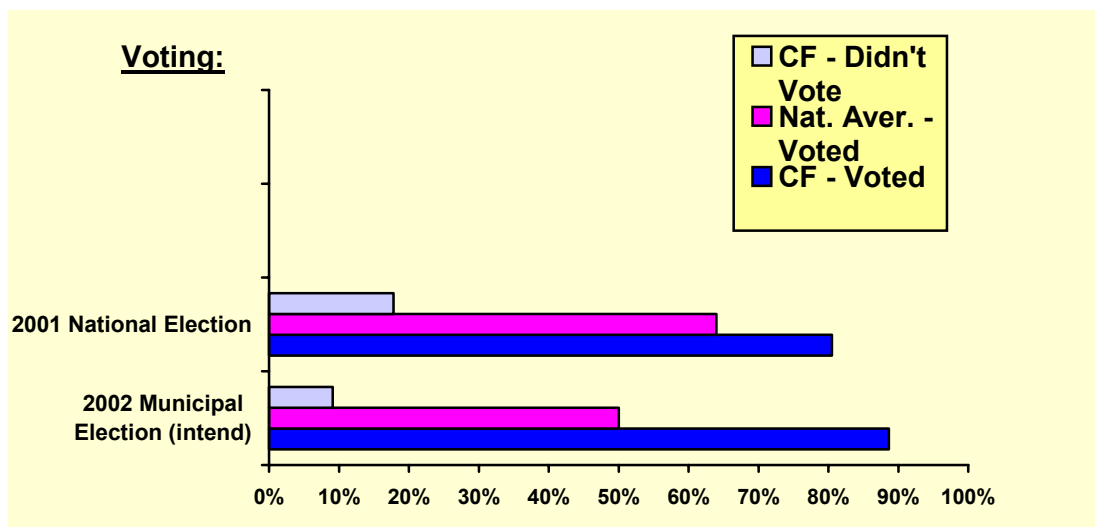
- The Civic Forum youth group in Shtimje has taken several actions that are important to all of Shtimje youth. Group members have been actively engaged in improving and maintaining the youth center in Shtimje from where they conduct their activities. The group has managed to refurbish part of the building and to supply it with internet access. This Civic Forum group also recently launched an issue-based campaign against smoking. As part of its campaign, the group organized a roundtable discussion by experts of the consequences of smoking and the importance of fighting against smoking. The group also arranged for the same experts to appear on a local radio program where the problems associated with smoking could reach a greater audience. The Civic Forum group has also managed to involve other youth in the community in its efforts. What attracted most of the youth to the campaign were sport activities such as soccer competitions between teams from the Civic Forum group, youth wings of political parties, local NGOs, KFOR, and the police. At the end of the soccer tournament, the Civic Forum group distributed 50 T-shirts with the logo “stop smoking.” This and other activities conducted by this group have motivated it to reach out to the larger community in future activities and also to involve municipal officials in Shtimje in its efforts.
- The Civic Forum Ashkalija group from Plemetin Camp (Obiliq) has been working for some time on trying to build a new neighborhood for the Ashkalija people who have been living in the Plemetin Camp for three years. The Civic Forum coordinators have provided intense advocacy training for the members of this group, including lobbying skills and media strategy. Members of this group have also met with local foundations about funding opportunities for their houses. One of the group’s members is a member of the Municipal Assembly and has submitted a proposal for the houses to the head of the Obiliq Municipality, the chief executive of the municipality, and representatives of the minority rights division of UNHCR, OSCE, UNMIK, and the EU. Representatives of the group managed to persuade the head of Obiliq Municipality and the chief executive to support their efforts for building new houses and to accompany the group when it meets with potential donors for the project. As a result of this relationship development, the municipal officials managed to convince a Swiss donor organization to sign an agreement to provide funding for 19 new houses for the residents of the Plemetin Camp. The group has also identified other possible donors and is in the process of advocating to them for funding for houses as well.

- After a Decan Civic Forum youth group's success on Earth Day when it helped pick up garbage around the city, the group decided to advocate for citizen awareness of the environment and environmental protection. The group's strategy included meeting with the director of "Higjeno Teknika," the municipal authority responsible for trash collection, where the group presented the problem of littering and garbage accumulation in Decan and asked if he would support its campaign to educate citizens. The Civic Forum group came up with the idea of providing every household in Decan with a large plastic garbage bag on which a slogan/message about "keeping our community clean" would be printed. The group asked the director to donate the bags and to pay for the printing of the slogan in return for the group participants delivering the bags to every household in the community. The group also asked for posters to be printed that it would also display around town with the same slogan. The director of Higjeno Teknika agreed and provided the students with garbage bags that they distributed to the community. The Civic Forum youth group also asked Higjeno Teknika to install small wastebaskets on the telephone poles around town and to empty the large trash bins more frequently. Since these efforts required money, the director asked the students to encourage citizens to pay their trash collection fees as a part of the students' campaign and message to the community. The students agreed, and Higjeno Teknika later installed small wastebaskets around the town. The Civic Forum group also managed to persuade the producer of the local radio station to give it a weekly one-hour radio show (for three months) during which it could educate the public about environmental protection. The students conducted their radio show with guests such as the director of Higjeno Teknika, municipal officials (Municipal Assembly and Municipal Environment Department), and the Kosovo Police Service. Finally, the Civic Forum youth group met with Municipal Assembly members regarding proposing a law against littering that would require people to pay a fine if they were caught throwing garbage on the streets. The Civic Forum group is currently proceeding with its issue-based campaign with the new municipal representatives; participants are continually encouraged by the positive response to their actions and the realization of their own power as citizens.
- The Civic Forum group in the village of Krajk (Prizren region), after several meetings to determine whether to advocate for a bridge that would only benefit its village or a road that would benefit several other villages as well, decided to advocate for a road to connect five villages. In order to achieve its goal, the group decided to create a coalition of the Civic Forum group, leaders from the other villages, and other community activists from Krajk. The Civic Forum group then arranged initial meetings with representatives from other villages to inform them about the idea. After these successful initial meetings, the Civic Forum group organized a joint meeting where the participants officially agreed to the joint action plan and formed a group called the "Joint Coalition-Citizens Forum" with the goal of building the road. This "leadership" group then planned its strategy. Participants decided to meet with the National Minister for Transportation in Prishtina, the Municipal Assembly, the Municipal Department for Urbanism, and "Magjistrala," the public company responsible for road building and maintaining. They met with all municipal authorities in order to learn their resource allocation priorities for 2002. In preparation for a meeting with the national Minister in Prishtina, the group received training on message development, persuasive meetings, and media strategy. (The Civic

Forum group planned to use the media to educate and inform other citizens about the importance of the road.) The group then met with the national Minister of Transportation and, although participants were informed that there were no funds for the road in 2002, the group is nevertheless continuing with its campaign and hopes to achieve its goal in the future.

**Holding local officials accountable** – There are many ways in which citizens can hold government officials accountable to the public. For example, citizens can meet with government officials and monitor local government processes – both of which implicitly give elected officials the message, “we’re out here, we care about this issue, and we’re watching you.” Citizen influence, however, cannot be fully effective unless the message citizens deliver is the more persuasive, “we’re out here, we care about this issue, we’re watching you, and we vote.” Above all else, voting is citizens’ explicit power in a democracy.

The 2002 survey demonstrated the effect Civic Forum had on participants’ voter turnout in the last two Kosovo elections. In the 2001 national election, the national voter turnout rate was 64.3 percent. According to the 2002 survey, 80.5 percent of Civic Forum participants voted in that election. Similarly, the voter turnout rate for the 2002 municipal election was just over 50 percent Kosovo-wide. More than 88.5 of Civic Forum participants, however, anticipated voting in the October 2002 election. (The survey was administered before the election). NDI conducted a “Get-Out-The-Vote” campaign, and in addition to voting themselves, many Civic Forum participants encouraged others in their communities to vote as well, likely increasing turnout. Furthermore, almost all Civic Forum field coordinators participated in NDI’s election monitoring effort, including training the citizens who would serve as monitors. These statistics and election efforts demonstrate that citizen programs help encourage and empower citizens to exercise their influence in Kosovo’s emerging democracy.

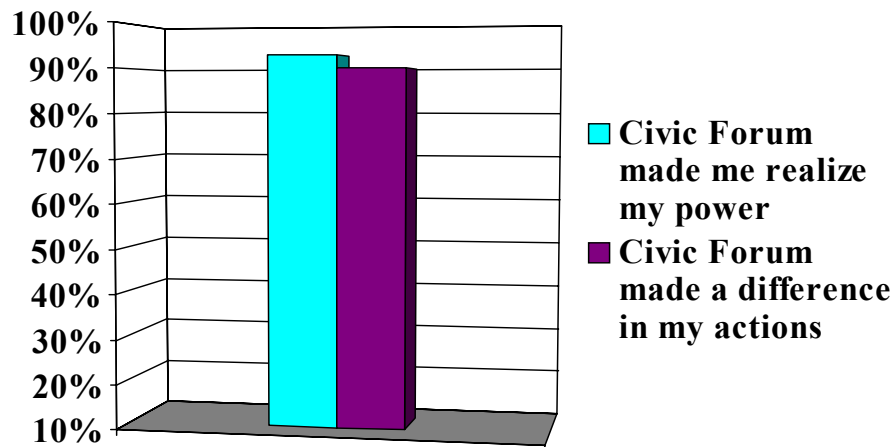


Finally, one of the most important testaments to Civic Forum’s contribution is the impact participation in the program had on citizens’ realization of their own power. In response to the survey question whether participating in Civic Forum had made a difference in their *attitude* about their power as a citizen, 93 percent of respondents said that it had. Further, when asked whether participating made a difference in their *actions*, 90 percent credited Civic Forum with

their participation in government processes. Above all else, the program helped to shape citizens' attitudes and actions to conform with democratic principles and ideals.

The survey data clearly reflects Civic Forum's grassroots appeal. Civic Forum directly impacted thousands of citizens previously unconnected to the political process. Civic Forum taught citizens how to work with others, strategize, organize, listen, and lead. In this regard, Civic Forum supported other NDI programs that seek to build political parties, monitor government activity, and establish democratic decision makers. By teaching advocacy skills to community activists, Civic Forum educated and will continue to develop the next generation of Kosovo's civic and political leaders – enabling them to meet their basic day-to-day needs, as well as to address long-term interests of a democratic society.

### Citizen Power



## Next Steps in 2003

With the above illustrations on the success of youth civic engagement, NDI looks forward to 2003 when it will focus additional resources and attention on the youth participants in Civic Forum. Further, as mentioned above, NDI will make an effort to expand its outreach to minority citizens (especially Serbian citizens) in 2003, including building the program and hiring staff to work in primarily Serb municipalities.

Another component of Civic Forum's 2003 effort will be on increasing citizen action on issues of public policy. This may prove to be one of Civic Forum's greatest challenges in 2003 as most groups have primarily worked on infrastructure development with donors, rather than on issue-based public policies with elected officials. Specifically, in response to the survey question that asked participants what they thought their communities should work on, 25 percent said infrastructure issues, such as water, building schools, electricity, and roads. Another 27 percent said various public policy issues, such as human rights, education, democracy development, and issues affecting people with physical disabilities. When asked what issues their groups were currently working on, 15 percent said infrastructure, and a few people said democracy development, transparency, education, and women's issues.

Much effort and some progress have already been made to encourage citizens to think more broadly and to advocate on issues that impact a larger number of citizens. For example, the youth groups have started working on environmental, anti-smoking, and AIDS awareness campaigns. These issues of public policy affect many more Kosovars than most infrastructure projects and enable Civic Forum citizens to begin to understand the need to work in the public interest. In addition, during Civic Forum's training in 2002, all scenarios for small group break-out sessions involved issues of public policy, such as environmental protection, domestic violence, pensions, and maternity/paternity leave. The training required participants to plan advocacy campaigns on these issues to demonstrate that tackling larger issues is accessible to them. Although some inroads have been made, much more effort to increase public policy advocacy is necessary.

The survey results illustrate other upcoming challenges for the program and for the field coordinators. For some time, there has been a question of what will happen to the groups when the field coordinators stop meeting with them regularly. Will they keep working as a group? Will they keep working at all? Will they utilize their skills and remain interested, active, and engaged? These questions should be confronted directly as field coordinators further attempt to divest from their roles as group managers. This is particularly important in youth groups where field coordinators take on greater responsibilities.

Finally, Civic Forum will conduct its work with a smaller staff in 2003. The tendency of the field coordinators has always been to take on more work than there is time or resources to accomplish. The staff must therefore work within the limits that exist and try to build as much democratic participation with the time, staff, and resources allotted.

Civic Forum will go on as long as the democratic process in Kosovo does.

*Neslihane Mati,  
Prizren field coordinator*

## Annex A: Our Primary Investment: Civic Forum Field Coordinator Capacity

Civic Forum had 17 local staff field coordinators who received and conducted trainings in the following topics:

- ✓ Over 12 civic education topics such as citizen rights and responsibilities in a democracy, human rights, the constitution, and “why we need a government.”
- ✓ Strategic advocacy planning (goal setting, ally and obstacle identification, resource assessment, and tools and tactics analysis)
- ✓ Meeting facilitation skills
- ✓ Grassroots organizing
- ✓ Leadership
- ✓ Coalition building
- ✓ Message development
- ✓ Persuasive meetings strategies (i.e. lobbying)
- ✓ Media skills
- ✓ Proposal writing
- ✓ “Get Out The Vote”
- ✓ Election monitoring

Field coordinators routinely trained and advised Civic Forum participants, as well as other professional (NDI national staff and others) on civic education and advocacy tools and tactics. Field coordinators also led and provided strategic guidance to citizens on sophisticated advocacy activities and government interaction. The field coordinators have frequently been asked to provide trainings to other organizations and have therefore been recognized as expert meeting facilitators and trainers.