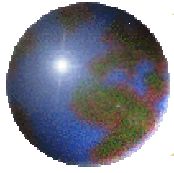


# *Bulgarian Attitudes toward NGOs and Government*

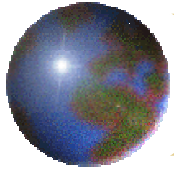
*November 26 – December 6, 2001*

The National Democratic Institute for  
International Affairs



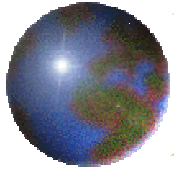
## *Purpose I*

- ❖ To determine citizens' attitudes toward governing institutions and NGOs as mechanisms by which to solve local issues
- ❖ To determine media attitudes toward and willingness to cover NGO activities
- ❖ To determine parliamentarians' awareness of and willingness to engage with NGOs



## *Purpose II: Sharing the Results*

- ➊ Identify issues important to citizens and share them with NGOs as they plan 2002 activities
- ➋ Identify issues and attitudes of citizens and share them with political party caucuses as they craft outreach strategies
- ➌ Identify mechanisms and strategies for approaching media and share them with NGOs.

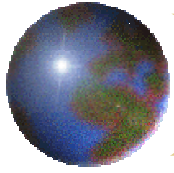


## *Methodology*

NDI conducted:

- Six focus groups with Bulgarian citizens
- One focus group with representatives of Bulgarian media
- 25 interviews with Members of Parliament

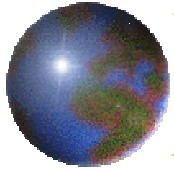
In partnership with Alpha Research (Sofia) and Goodwin Simon Strategic Research (San Francisco)



## *Methodology: Citizen focus group participants*

Citizen focus group participants were:

- ⊕ Aged 25 to 45
- ⊕ Voters and non-voters in the recent presidential election
- ⊕ Men and women
- ⊕ Employed and unemployed
- ⊕ Bulgarian, Turkish, and Roma (all groups ethnically homogeneous)



## *Methodology*

Citizen Focus Groups conducted in six locations

### ● **Sofia**

Voter turn out: 53%  
Peter Stoyanov: 56%  
Georgi Parvanov: 44%

### ● **Silistra**

Voter turn out: 51%  
Peter Stoyanov: 32%  
Georgi Parvanov: 68%

### ● **Vidin (Roma)**

Voter turn out: 58%  
Peter Stoyanov: 36%  
Georgi Parvanov: 64%

### ● **Ardino (Turkish)**

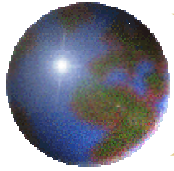
Voter turn out: 41%  
Peter Stoyanov: 30%  
Georgi Parvanov: 70%

### ● **Sandanski (women)**

Voter turn out: 53%  
Peter Stoyanov: 52%  
Georgi Parvanov: 48%

### ● **Bourgas (men)**

Voter turn out: 52%  
Peter Stoyanov: 43%  
Georgi Parvanov: 57%



# ***VOLUNTEERED PROBLEMS***

## **EMPLOYMENT**

- ⊕ Unemployment (local and central)
- ⊕ Low wages
- ⊕ Poor working conditions – long hours, age discrimination, not being paid,
- ⊕ can't find work in their field, underemployment, etc. *"It seems like we are slaves in our own country."*

## **INFRASTRUCTURE**

- ⊕ Lack of repairs/decayed streets, sidewalks, buildings
- ⊕ Decayed or intermittently working utilities (water, electricity, heat)
- ⊕ Lack of cleaning of streets, etc./only clean city centers, not outer parts of community
- ⊕ Housing (too small, run down, hard to find, can't buy)
- ⊕ Parking on sidewalks/unsafe for pedestrians/no parking available
- ⊕ Stray dogs

## **SERVICES/FACILITIES**

- Lack of social and cultural facilities, such as no dance troupe, too few playgrounds, no local football team

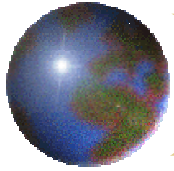
## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

- Rude, treat badly -- *"they don't treat us like human beings"*
- Unresponsive, ignore requests
- Lie, say they will help but do not
- Require bribes
- No system or system is not followed
- Poor communication/little information provided about programs, access, how to get things done
- Lack local expertise or do not use it

## **CORRUPTION**

### **HEALTHCARE (central)**

- Too expensive (vaccines for children not provided by government, parents cannot afford it)



## ***VOLUNTEERED CONCERNS (1 of 2)***

### **TAXES & FUNDING**

- All funds for improvements seem to come from abroad – where does local money go to?

### **PRIVATIZATION**

- Support concept of privatization but angry and dismayed about its implementation – believe it has helped politicians and connected people, hurt regular people. Don't understand where all the money went that government should have gotten from selling state-owned industries. *"They sold enterprises and banks, but what happened to the proceeds, what were they used for?"*
- *"Everybody keeps talking about privatization but the factories remain empty, the equipment stolen."*

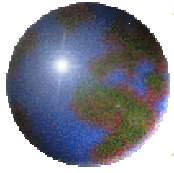
### **LACK OF INFORMATION**

- Not enough information about government programs, systems, ways to get things done, programs being offered – *"How can I learn about a program if it is not well-advertised?"*

### **EMIGRATION**

- Concern that all young people are leaving; others expressed they would leave too if they could.  
*"It is painful, I have two sons whom I bring up to love their country, but I feel that they want to leave this country as soon as they finish their education... Neither Mr. Parvanov, not Mr. Stoyanov can fill my fridge with food or clothe my children."*





## ***VOLUNTEERED CONCERNS (2 of 2)***

### **ECONOMIC SITUATION**

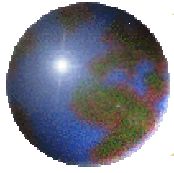
- ✦ Bad economic situation "hurts 90% of the population."

### **LACK OF SOCIAL PROGRAMS**

- ✦ Great concern for lack of funding for social programs. *"I am dreaming of this time when I will meet well-clad, happy, smiling old-age pensioners in the street."*
- ✦ *"Social policy is very poor, we used to have very good social policy."*

### **OVER-RELIANCE ON FOREIGNERS**

- Concern that "lack of self-confidence is a problem" in Bulgaria as a nation. *"We listen too much to foreign advisors." "There are external forces that determine this, the IMF comes here... What can we do if the Minister of Finance cannot defend his own budget?" "Privatization was carried out by Western companies only. As if we were ignorant."*



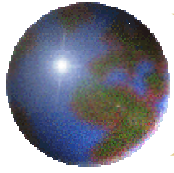
# *LOCAL GOVERNMENT NOT SOLVING PROBLEMS*

## **Participants are clear that:**

- ⊕ Local government is well aware of these problems
- ⊕ They are responsible for solving these problems
- ⊕ They are not solving them.

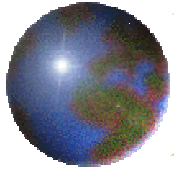
## **Participants volunteered that this is because:**

- ⊕ Not enough government money available
- ⊕ Local government does not have the power/authority
- ⊕ Don't care/are indifferent to regular people/only help powerful people or their own friends/relatives
- ⊕ Officials are only interested in their own financial gain
- ⊕ Corruption/person does not have enough money for bribes
- ⊕ Competition between political parties
- ⊕ Staff are not necessarily competent, hired for connections not skills/expertise/experience



## *CONTACTING LOCAL GOVERNMENT*

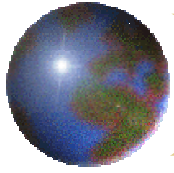
- Most participants had not personally contacted any one in local government for
- help with any problem, individually or collectively. Most of those who had, reported failure or negative ramifications.
- In numerous different contexts, participants make clear their opinion that they and their fellow Bulgarians only get involved in issues that directly affect them.



## *CONTACTING LOCAL GOVERNMENT*

### Examples of failed attempts:

- ❖ Woman trying to buy apartment is on waiting list but vacancies always go to someone else (appearance of corruption)
- ❖ Women who sought help from Mayor for unpaid wages
- ❖ Woman who tried to get family of five out of one room apartment into larger housing; they did not have enough money for the needed bribe
- ❖ Local neighborhood came up with plan to clean up abandoned dirty lot, raise money and build a new playground; city blocked it, failed to help, people gave up
- ❖ Examples of negative ramifications:
  - ❖ Man tried to help small businesses remain as tenants, lost his job
  - ❖ Women tried to remove bad principal; school was shut down entirely

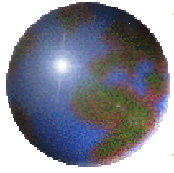


## *CONTACTING LOCAL GOVERNMENT*

Examples of successful attempts:

- ✦ Chapel built. Residential district reaches agreement, collects money, and builds chapel (participants noted that this was not just citizens, government and other institutions were involved as well). (Bourgas)
- ✦ Street cleaned. Man brought deputy mayor to see dirty street that city trucks failed to clean, after that it was cleaned. (Ardino)
- ✦ Water removed. Water in streets, local people circulated and then submitted a petition to the city, problem was solved within one month. (Sandanski)
- ✦ Day care teacher re-hired. School laid off its all-day teacher, no child care available, mothers joined together to talk to headmistress and then mayor; personal intervention of mayor meant teacher rehired in two weeks. (Sofia)

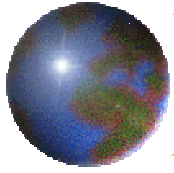
***\*It is important to note that in nine of ten volunteered examples, the individual went directly to elected or government officials. In no case did they first go to an outside institution, such as an NGO, political party or a labor union for help.***



## ***METHODS OF INFLUENCE***

**Primary means of attempting to influence local government have been:**

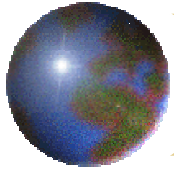
- 1) Petitions** and signature gathering from affected people,
  - 2) Personal meetings with elected officials** or government bureaucrats, particularly the **Mayor**, who is repeatedly cited as the person to see for help
  - 3) Mass meetings with elected officials**
  - 4) Protests**
  - 5) Strikes**
  - 6) Pulling strings through relatives/friends** *"When the institutions do not work, connections work, institutions are circumvented"* meaning you need to use your connections when you cannot accomplish your goal through the established system or rules.
  - 7) Bribery**
- **Participants do NOT use letters/do not think they are effective**
  - **Participants did not volunteer approaching local party leaders for help**
  - **Participants did not volunteer approaching labor unions for help**



## ***ATTITUDES TOWARDS OTHER BULGARIANS AND CIVIL SOCIETY (1 of 2)***

**Many participants say that Bulgarians simply lack the idea of a common Organized effort to improve a situation. They said “the problem is in the soul of the Bulgarian,” they are interested only in material gain and are focused only on their family and homes, not any larger community.**

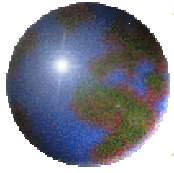
- ✦ “I will be cleaning okay but the neighbor does not know where the garbage container is and throws his garbage out from his terrace.”
- ✦ One woman tried to collect 2 leva from all the families in her apartment building to pay someone to clean the common areas, and her neighbors refused.
- ✦ “Bulgarians don’t want to work as one. People are like cattle, they bump into each other and see who is toughest.”
- ✦ All that Bulgarians care about is “money, money, money.”
- ✦ “Everybody does their own thing.”



## *ATTITUDES TOWARDS BULGARIANS AND CIVIL SOCIETY (2 of 2)*

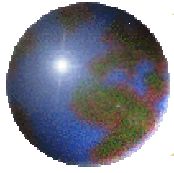
- **Participants feel they are unable to make a change/fix a problem through the official system. Have no confidence in the state.**
  - “If I have any chance of going around institutions, I will, because I know their attitude toward me”
  - “Trying to solve problems using normal mechanisms is a cruel story”
  - “Even if you try to play by the rules, there are no rules here.”
  
- **Participants also note there is a strong sense that you should solve your own problems and not turn to others for help.**
  - “Everyone is used to earning his living on his own without anybody’s help.”
  - Bulgarians “close our door, says this is my home, I live here, and nothing else matters.”
  - “Everybody has their own problems here.”
  - “I think I have to cope with the problems on my own.”





## ***CENTRAL GOVERNMENT: AWARE OF PROBLEMS***

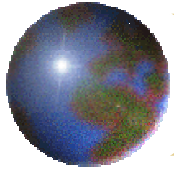
- **Most participants feel that MPs are fully aware of their constituents' problems and still do not fix them.**
- **A few participants feel that MPs do not actually know about the problems in their communities**
  - ***"MPs don't know what the problems are because they don't meet the people."***



## ***CENTRAL GOVERNMENT: AWARE OF PROBLEMS***

### **Why participants believe that MPs know about their problems:**

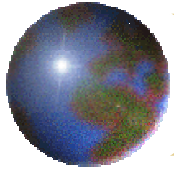
- MPs live in the communities themselves, or their family and friends do; also “don’t have to live somewhere to know problems”
- MPs visit communities in advance of elections and ask about local problems
- “Everything goes through Parliament, they know everything.”
- “If they have any will, they can learn. That is why an MP gets his salary.”
- MP’s local party members inform them of issues/problems
- Local government tells MPs about problems



## ***WHY DON'T MPs FIX THE PROBLEMS? (1 of 2)***

### **Participants think that MPs do not fix problems because:**

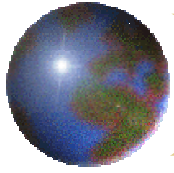
- **MPs only run for office for the benefits/power/personal gain, not because they want to improve life for others**
  - *There is a stereotype that MPs "travel in Mercedes Benz with dark windshields and see nothing," though participant who raised it denied its accuracy.*
- **MPs do not have any real power, only Ministers have power**
  - *all an MP can do is "raise a question" and it would be "a miracle of miracles" for a Minister to respond substantively to a raised question;*
  - *MPs "don't ultimately decide the important issues"*
- **Don't solve problems because of political competition between parties**
  - *"I have not heard a 'blue' member of Parliament raise an issue for a 'blue' minister to respond to."*
- **MPs only serve interest of their party, not public interest**
- **Don't solve problem unless it can provide MP with material gain**
- **Only help their friends/family, not everyday people**



## ***WHY DON'T MPs FIX THE PROBLEMS? (2 of 2)***

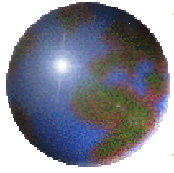
**Participants think that MPs do not fix problems because: (continued)**

- ⊕ **MPs only use issues for public relations purposes; *"references to local concerns are artificial initiatives"***
- ⊕ **Central government is far away, *"When an MP moves to Sofia, they forget about us."***
- ⊕ **Due to system for allocating MP seats, some communities do not have MPs.**
- ⊕ **There is no money to solve these problems**
- ⊕ **Problems are too big, cannot be fixed**
- ⊕ **Some problems should be solved locally, *"Our dirty streets are not the concern of MPs."***
- ⊕ **Some problems can only be solved locally, cannot be solved centrally.**



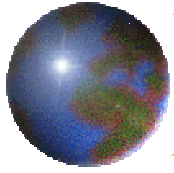
## ***CITIZENS DON'T EXPECT PROBLEMS TO BE FIXED***

- ⊕ **Participants are very skeptical that their problem would actually be addressed if they took the time to raise it to either local or central government officials.**
  - ⊕ *One participant noted that he would inform an MP of a serious matter, like corruption, but as a moral duty, or from despair, not due to any expectation of action.*
- ⊕ **Participants believe that MPs should in fact seek out problems and not depend on citizens to inform them about problems. Yet they have no illusion that this is the case.**



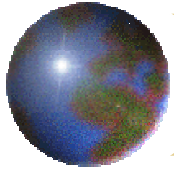
## *CITIZEN ATTITUDES TOWARDS NGOs (1 of 2)*

- Little knowledge about NGOs, what they are, how they operate, what they can accomplish.
  - Roma are only group that is quite familiar with them; Turks are least familiar. Roma feel NGOs can have an impact.
  - NGOs relating to women are the most likely to be recalled.
- The best known NGOs are ones associated with wives of prominent politicians, particularly the former prime minister and president, but also wife of local mayor, for example
- Most associate NGOs with foreign funding sources/outside money and outside influence; some resentment about outside influences/outside experts
- Few can provide examples of NGO programs in their area that involve citizens; the examples provided are often considered unsuccessful or misdirected (Swiss saving birds)
- Outside Roma, few have had direct experience with NGOs, aside from labor unions



## *ATTITUDES TOWARDS NGOs (2 of 2)*

- ⊕ Some participants say they would be willing to be involved with NGO projects but only on important issues, such as jobs and economy (i.e. not on environmental protection)
- ⊕ Several express sense that NGOs have misplaced priorities; feel the top priority must be economic problems.
- ⊕ Some participants agree that NGOs “are very passive, their opinion is not heard widely enough.”
- ⊕ Sense that NGOs raise money for their own goals, not for the community.
- ⊕ Some feel that NGOs do things for minority communities but not for other Bulgarians.



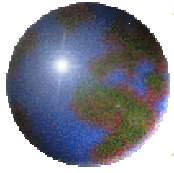
## ***EXAMPLES OF NGO PROJECTS INVOLVING CITIZENS***

**In six focus groups, there were very few examples that anyone could offer of NGO projects that involved citizens.**

Those offered were:

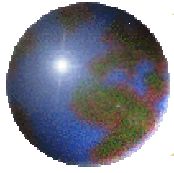
- (Burgas) Dutch program aimed to stimulate citizen participation in government, BSP youth formulated program to restore local chapel.
- (Burgas) Internationally (Swiss) funded effort to clean up trash on local mountain/protect birds/environment.
- (Vidin) Integration of Roma children into Bulgarian schools.





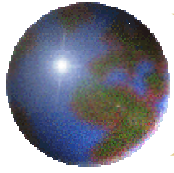
## *CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT IN NGOs*

- ⊕ Hard to assess actual willingness of people to participate in NGOs since so few really understand what NGOs are or what participation in NGOs would actually entail.
- ⊕ However, most participants say they would be willing to participate if the work was on an issue important to them.
  - ⊖ one man said environmental problems were not important enough in today's economic climate, another said he could not see himself giving time to an anti-drug campaign.
- ⊕ The legacy of forced volunteerism presents a challenge – someone characterized working with an NGO as “something like a Lenin's Saturday.”
  - ⊖ Some say they would only do so if paid, are struggling too hard to earn money, not willing to work for free.



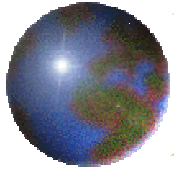
## *NGOs v. POLITICAL PARTIES*

- ⊕ Most participants believe only parties have the power to make substantial changes. NGOs do not have that power.
- ⊕ In Vidin, participants doubt that NGOs and parties can work well together, *"NGOs are close in, resent working with MPs, none is willing."*
  - ⊖ This was attributed in part to the different character of the organizations, *"There is no way in which they can cooperate... they use entirely different means."*
- ⊕ On the other hand, some participants feel that NGOs can achieve changes and make concrete improvements because they are able to focus on narrow problems.
- ⊕ NGOs do not have much of the negative image that political parties carry.
  - ⊖ *"Twelve years I have been voting and nothing changes"*
  - ⊖ *"I do not trust anybody anymore"*
  - ⊖ *"There is no political party that would pay attention to us"*
  - ⊖ *"Politicians are far away" but an NGO could "understand us"*
  - ⊖ *"Affiliation is not important, commitment is."*



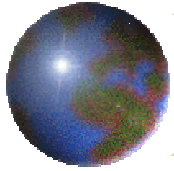
## *ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE MEDIA*

- Believe media is responsible for exposing problems.
- At same time, don't entirely trust the media, believe they sometimes have bias/own agenda.
  - Believe that politicians under press attack sometimes counterattack journalists
- Some don't read newspapers because they cost money, rely on TV or radio instead



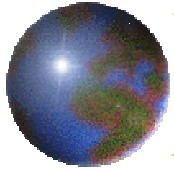
## *POLITICAL COMMUNICATIONS (1 of 2)*

- ⊕ Participants skeptical of all the “empty promises” they hear in advance of an election
- ⊕ Resent that politicians “approach us only when elections are at hand”
- ⊕ Incumbents make minor last minute improvements to win votes (installed seven street lamps in town center)
  - ⊞ Come to community with notebook and ask about problems; after the election “they lose their notebooks”
- ⊕ No party was perceived as having delivered their message more effectively than another
  - ⊞ It is striking that though the focus groups were conducted from 1-5 days after the second presidential election, no one could say what the platforms of the respective candidates were
- ⊕ The only political communications content which was raised in the group were the promises from the Prime Minister’s campaign, about “800 days” and “5,000 leva.”



## ***POLITICAL COMMUNICATIONS (2 of 2)***

- **Participants are seeking more in-person meetings and visits to their neighborhoods as a method of communication.**
  - While generally aware that office hours exist, MPs don't have offices in every community; to learn what office hours are, need to travel there first.
  - Many participants complained that politicians only visit central areas, do not visit outskirts.
  - Also complained that on visits, they only talk to local leaders and not also to regular people.
- **Participants constantly say they want more information and better communication.**
  - "I don't know a lot about the new government, maybe it is because they are not giving enough information."
- **Some participants say that if the MPs were doing a good job, they would not even know it since they receive no communications from them. They say that MPs need to let citizens know what they are working on so they at least know the MPs are trying to make improvements.**



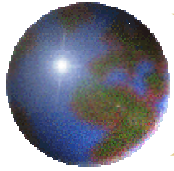
## ***ISSUES IN MINORITY GROUPS (1 of 3)***

**There are some issues that were raised just in the Vidin (Roma) or Ardino (ethnic Turkish) groups, that may be related to their position in society as ethnic minorities.**

- Language and literacy barriers also appear; if trying to appear as a regular “Bulgarian,” their speaking voice reveals them.
- Minorities express some intimidation at idea of approaching officials; in Vidin, expressed as need to get dressed up and speak properly; in Ardino, there “is a lack of trust... intimidated by the local and central authorities;” “local government is treating us badly” and “people in our region are very subdued” when it comes to approaching authorities
- Discriminatory attitudes of majority population; lack of ethnic tolerance – “Authorities treat you in a bad way ... they are ready to listen to you until they realize that you are a gypsy.”

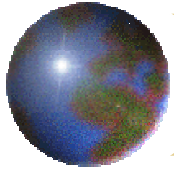
**Outsiders running things/having responsibility in their communities is a source of contention in both Ardino and Vidin**

- Isolation: living in a “ghetto”; being isolated from information about opportunities.



## *ISSUES IN MINORITY GROUPS (2 of 3)*

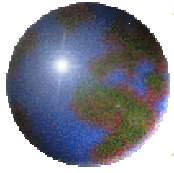
- ⊕ Roma are most aware of NGOs, their abilities and how they operate; all participants are aware of different projects aimed at addressing Roma problems.
- ⊕ Some Roma feel their own Roma NGOs operate selectively in a “closed” way, helping only certain people. Also say that with NGO managers, “close friends and kin interests come first, that’s why NGOs are inefficient.”
- ⊕ Great deal of skepticism about efficacy of NGOs. “They start with a nice idea, but it turns foul, and in the long term fails to have any effect.”
- ⊕ However, participants are more positive about NGOs than they are about parties. They say that NGOs are primarily concerned with specific problems and their solutions, and they are believed to be closer to the needs of the people.
  - ⊖ Those few who favor parties say they can be held accountable through elections, while NGOs cannot.
  - ⊖ They also say that parties can help with jobs and unemployment, while NGOs do not.



## *ISSUES IN MINORITY GROUPS (3 of 3)*

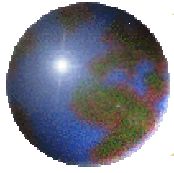
- ✚ Roma are more willing to approach local, rather than central, authorities for help. “We’ve approached the mayor many times;” in contrast, some said they would not meet with MPs.
- ✚ Roma were often critical of their own leadership, calling some of them “chicken-hearted” because of some instances where the leaders tried to quell local protests. Also felt that Roma leaders put forward achievements to outsiders but hid continuing problems.
- ✚ Roma know how to work the system, citing the use of “letters, requests, appeals, personal meetings” to communicate complaints to officials, and saying “organized group actions are required to accomplish a project... there has to be an organizational committee or nobody is interested.” They even discussed the process of applying to an NGO for funding support for an idea.





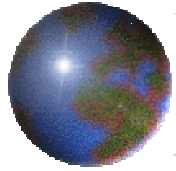
## ***MAJOR FINDINGS (1 of 2)***

- 1) There is a long way to go in terms of developing a participatory culture.
- 2) There is little knowledge about NGOs and the role they do or can play.
  - There are few examples in people's every day lives of NGOs making positive changes on issues participants feel are important.
- 3) Most participants have not tried to make changes. Those few who have offer discouraging stories about their treatment and their inability to make a difference.
  - Those who have tried to make change have generally gone directly to a government official, rather than seeking assistance through an organization such as an NGO, political party or labor union.
  - Major tools for attempting change are petitions, protests, strikes and in-person meetings with elected or government officials (particularly the Mayor).
- 4) They have almost no faith in government or in its ability or willingness to improve their daily lives. They will need to see a series of successes and substantive changes in order to regain faith in government.



## *MAJOR FINDINGS (2 of 2)*

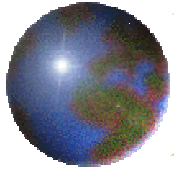
- 5) Bulgarians recognize that the problems facing their nation, particularly economic ones, are tremendous and not easy to solve. Yet they desperately want relief from their daily economic struggles.
- 6) As well as actual corruption, perception of corruption is damaging. Participants often attribute actions/inaction to corruption when there could be legitimate reasons for that outcome.
- 7) Corruption is viewed in at least three ways:
  - as a national problem hurting the entire nation, for example through privatization abuses;
  - as a local problem hindering their day-to-day living (selective enforcement of laws; bribes required for police, health care etc.)
  - in the form of “relationships” or “strings you pull,” the only way to get things done since the system is broken.
- 8) There is an underlying resentment about foreign interference.
- 9) While parties are perceived as powerful, NGOs are accepted as a potential mechanism for change, in part because they can narrowly focus their attention on specific problems.
- 10) There is a strong desire for more information and more communication.



## *Methodology*

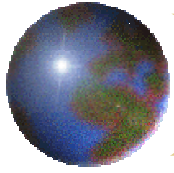
Media Focus group participants included representatives from:

- BTV
- Bulgarian Telegraph Agency
- 24Chasa
- Bulgarian National TV



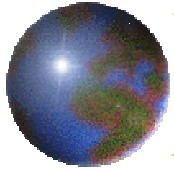
## ***MEDIA PERCEPTIONS (1 of 2)***

- ✦ Perceive NGOs as think tanks, with whom they regularly interact and have existing relationships. Think of NGOs in terms of personalities, who their spokespeople are.
  - ▣ Only when pressed did they think of other kinds of NGOs, such as the Committee of Mothers and an NGO that helps handicapped people.
  
- ✦ Seek out NGOs that have experts and expertise on issues, to serve as a research resource for them when writing stories.
  - ▣ Feel that information from NGOs adds to credibility of their stories.
  - ▣ Feel that NGOs frame issues for the public agenda.
  - ▣ Want NGOs to have regularly updated websites since this is important research tool for the media.
  - ▣ NGO newsletters provide good background information for press.
  
- ✦ Feel NGOs play an important role in society
  - ▣ “NGOs succeed in building certain standards in Bulgaria which otherwise wouldn’t be here.”



## ***MEDIA PERCEPTIONS (2 of 2)***

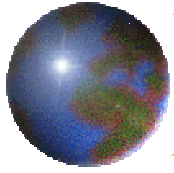
- Media feel it is important for NGOs to establish themselves as credible in order to get media attention. This involves showing some kind of expertise and having good spokespeople.
  - Only want spokespeople who are concise, articulate, quotable in sound bites. Complained of people who cannot say their point briefly, called them “useless.”
- Would like more open, easy access to information about their donors to dispel concerns about bias.
- Interested in covering current, newsworthy stories, not broad social issues.
  - In order to cover a story, must convince editors that it: 1) is socially important 2) has significance for whole society 3) is something people care about 4) has concrete particulars, not just generalities 5) is current and newsworthy today. For TV, also needs good visuals.
- Want specific examples and attractive, articulate spokespeople for their stories.
- When contacted to cover a story/issue, want facts, figures and other background information to be provided.



## *Methodology*

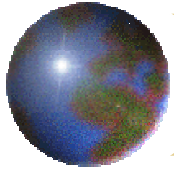
Interviewed MPs from all Parliamentary groups

- 12 National Movement Tsar Simeon
- 5 Union of Democratic Forces
- 4 Coalition for Bulgaria (BSP)
- 4 Movement for Rights and Freedoms



## ***MP PERCEPTION OF NGOs: GENERAL FINDINGS***

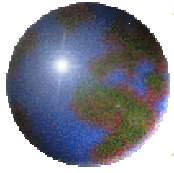
- ✦ Of all NGOs, MPs are most familiar with trade unions and business syndicates. Unions and business interest groups are mentioned by nearly every MP.
- ✦ After trade unions, MPs refer to international NGOs most frequently. “NGOs stand out in Bulgaria as very organized, I mean the foreign ones, that’s what most of them are.”
- ✦ MPs are generally open to interaction with NGOs, although veteran MPs are typically more comfortable with the specifics.
- ✦ MPs recognize that inadequate funding is one of Bulgarian NGOs greatest obstacles.



## *MP RELATIONSHIP WITH NGOs*

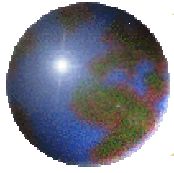
- MPs do not believe NGOs are active enough in soliciting media or MP attention. They value the expertise that NGOs bring, but do not have time to locate NGO partners/experts on their own.
- In order for NGOs to be taken seriously, they must present proposed solutions and research, not just identify problems.
- MPs are open to NGO involvement in legislative processes but have varying attitudes toward the degree and type of cooperation.





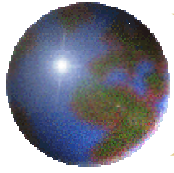
## *PARLIAMENTARIAN IMPRESSIONS OF LOCAL NGOs*

- MPs universally believe that NGOs outside of Sofia are limited in number, scope, and capacity.
- Several MPs indicate that this is in part because the activities of local NGOs are driven by international donors or “projects” designed in Sofia.
- MPs see themselves interacting only indirectly with local problems through advice to local officials.



## *VETERAN MP PERCEPTIONS*

- A majority of veteran deputies were able to cite examples of NGO contribution to the legislative process (typically through Commissions)
- Veteran MPs report that they see value in the expertise of NGOs and are comfortable with their participation in the legislative process
- Returning MPs recognize a legitimate role for NGOs as advocates or opponents of certain kinds of legislation



## *PERCEPTION OF RECENTLY ELECTED DEPUTIES*

- Have mostly vague knowledge about “NGOs”
- Are more familiar with international NGOs and donors
- Appear to believe NGOs need permission to interact with the legislative process
- Are uncomfortable with NGOs exerting political pressure