

Get Out the Vote Campaign to Knock on Every Door in Kosovo

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Pristina. A coalition of more than 28 NGOs and civic groups has initiated a Get Out The Vote (GOTV) Kosovo-wide campaign. Purpose of GOTV is to mobilize Kosovo's voters for the upcoming October elections. Voters will be reached using conventional media techniques such as TV ads, but also through an ambitious door to door effort carried out by GOTV volunteers.

GOTV was organized through a collaborative effort in which each GOTV partner organization contributed according to its means. The core funding came from the USAID/EWMI - Kosovo NGO Advocacy Project (KNAP)/ Foundation for Democratic Initiatives.

ATRC, a KNAP partner, serves as the GOTV campaign's organizing center. The National Democratic Institute contributes human resources, and the Kosovo Women's Network heads the local me-

dia campaign component. As of this writing, OSCE and the Swiss Office in Pristina have also expressed interest in supporting the GOTV campaign.

These organizations are leading a coalition consisting of local and Kosovo-wide NGOs to disseminate the message nationally through a volunteer network. Currently, GOTV partners include: Youth Center, Antigona, Women in Action, Shpresa (Hope), Veteran Educators Group, Our Future, Elita, Aureola, Handikos, Vision of the Future, Safe home and civic groups affiliated with NDI.

The coalition's slogan "Don't

A DO?



RRYMË?



UJË?



RROGË?



RRUGË?



SHKOLLË?



STATUS?



MOS U ANKO, VOTO!

"Do you want electricity, water, salary, roads, schools, status? Don't complain, VOTE!," GOTV campaign posters challenge citizen apathy.

Complain, Vote" coupled with ads, debates and volunteerism is trying to catch voters' attention by raising dis-

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NGOs Establish Kosovo-wide Advocacy Group

Sept. 30. Pristina. Ten people representing non-governmental organizations (NGOs) throughout Kosovo set the foundation

for establishing a Kosovo-wide advocacy network during a two-day training at ATRC.

AvoKo is a formal network of Kosovar NGOs whose new mission, established at the training, is to work to increase citizen participation in decision-making through increasing the capacity of advocacy organizations, exchanging information, engaging the public in monitoring decision-makers and responding as a group to crises events.

The group envisions giving citizens a stronger voice in

decision-making in a changing society.

"With AvoKo we can change decision-making and accountability by including all citizens and changing the manner and mentality behind decision-making," Xheme Shehu from the NGO New Era in Decan said.

Using interest-based negotiation and consensus techniques introduced by trainer Craig Coletta, the group decided that AvoKo would have an organizational structure comprised of a full time central coordinator and seven regional coordinators. Until these coordinators are chosen, Kreshnik Berisha, ATRC Director, will act as the in-

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Public Launch of GOTV Campaign.....
.....Oct. 12, 11:00, ATRC.

AvoKo Meeting.....
.....Oct. 12, 13:00, ATRC.



Emrush Azemi posts a note with an action the network can take, as part of a strategic planning exercise.



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Guest Article: **RFE/RL**

Possible Change in UNMIK Policy towards Kosovo

Sunday, 12 September 2004

Recent Balkan news stories centered on possible changes in international policy toward Kosovo in the direction of granting more powers to the province's elected officials at the expense of the UN civilian administration (UNMIK). This idea has won increasing support in the United States and the United Kingdom. A recent report by Norwegian diplomat Kai Eide to Secretary-General Kofi Annan, and several statements by Danish diplomat Soren Jessen-Petersen, who is the new head of UNMIK, indicate that the UN is moving in a similar direction.

A related issue involves possible changes in the international community's "standards before status" policy there. Some Western critics feel that policy has reached a dead end and that progress is needed on resolving the status question as a prerequisite to peace and stability in Kosovo and the region as a whole (see "RFE/RL Balkan Report," 20 August and 10 September 2004).

Meanwhile, much attention is focused on the 23 October parliamentary elections in Kosovo and the possibility of a Serbian boycott (see "RFE/RL Newsline," 17 August 2004, and "RFE/RL Balkan Report," 13 August 2004).

Quote of the week: "Serbia knows that it has lost Kosovo, but it has intensified its efforts to keep at least some parts of Kosovo. Decentralization is a good opportunity to meddle and manipulate, and Belgrade authorities are using this to their best advantage and [extracting] some privileges from [Soren Jessen-Petersen, who heads the UN civilian administration in Kosovo (UNMIK)]." -- "Kosova Sot," 13 September. ■

Urban FM Mobilizes "Set Out to Vote" Campaign

A campaign organized by Urban FM to raise voter and specifically youth participation in the elections started on September 23. This goal is to be achieved mainly through the use of Urban FM, a radio station oriented towards a young audience, public service spots on TV channels and organizing parties in a popular club frequented by Pristina's youth.

The organizers believe that it is necessary to bring out voters 18 to 30 years old. This age group is crucial since in the last elections 400,000 eligible voters in this group did

not participate. Urban FM is hoping to get 15 percent of these potential voters out.

"In order to reach the goals of the campaign, we must ensure that people are aware of the importance that voting has for all by using the media," Dardan Islami, the campaign's coordinator said.

Urban FM tailored the message to young voters through careful utilization of symbolism and word of mouth generated by URBAN FM radio. The symbols, a fish and a balance, attempt to inform people that their intelligence, superior to that of a

fish, demands that they vote since their vote can pull a lot of weight. Shock value is also being used to "awake" the electorate.

Urban FM's "Set out to Vote" campaign is a non-partisan effort sponsored by a large number of various donors.

"We want people to vote in the elections but the day after we will become the winner's opposition," Islami said.

This project was funded by the Foundation for Democratic Initiatives through the Kosovo NGO Advocacy Project. ■



"Set out to Vote"

As the content of this poster demonstrates, this initiative targets young voters who have not taken part in previous elections. The campaign has been organized by Urban FM, a local NGO.

Forum's Pre-electoral Debates Impact Politicians' Accountability

The Forum, a local NGO functioning since 1999, is organizing a second round of pre-election debates, moderated by Avni Spahia, the director of programming for RTK. All 32 political groups registered for October elections, will be given a chance to participate

This is another attempt by civil society to raise political participation and accountability by bringing the elected in direct contact with the electorate.

These public debates have brought together politicians and wide public audiences since the first electoral campaign in 2000. They have allowed voters to inquire about politicians' failures to fulfill their electoral promises.

Their local nature demands ac-

countability even about specific local projects that could be ignored by Kosovar media.

While the first debates had minimal public participation and less engaging questions, the number of participants and quality of participation has grown with time, according to organizers.

"As audiences get used to raising issues close to home, to which politicians must respond truthfully since the same audience will be present again next year, they are engaging seriously in the debate in ever-growing numbers," Ylli Hajdari of Forum said.



Historically, The Forum has been influential with campaigns such as "Boll Ma!", which also worked to engage citizens in decision-making.

This year RTK is promoting the debates, ensuring that the population is informed.

This program has and will continue to raise public interest in politics leading to a more accountable political class and hopefully better policies.

This project received support from our partner FDI as part of the Kosovo NGO Advocacy Project. ■

Get Out The Vote Campaign, Continued

ATRC Hires New Information and Outreach Coordinator

ATRC hired Oerd Imami as the new Information and Outreach Coordinator, beginning in September.

His responsibilities will include: maintaining ATRC's relations with the public; writing and designing the ATRC monthly newsletter, "The Advocate"; organizing ATRC public discussions; informing the media and NGO sector about ATRC and other organizations' activities; writing news articles on issues of interest regarding the NGO sector; and further developing ATRC's Information Program. He is also involved in the GOTV campaign as ATRC's contact person. He will work closely with ATRC's Information and Outreach Officer, Nicole Farnsworth. ■

Are you interested in journalism trainings?

ATRC is contacting with journalism professors to set up trainings. In the mean time we would like to see the degree of interest in trainings of those individuals who maintain public relations in local NGO's.

These 2-3 day trainings will be led by local professors and the dean of the journalism department in the University of Tirana. If interested, please contact with Oerd Imami at - 38-244 810 or at oerd@advocacy-center.org

turbing issues, such as power shortages or unemployment that could lead to voter apathy. This is an attempt to redefine public reaction to such disturbances by making them understand the power of their vote to change current realities.

The campaign is still in its organizational stages, although the message has been developed and local coordinators have mobilized many of the

2,800 volunteers, therefore newcomers are still welcome. Serb NGOs have been contacted but have not officially joined the coalition due to the uncertainty as to whether Serbs will vote.

"The scope and number of people involved makes this the most significant volunteer campaign ever attempted in Kosovo," Heather Kashner from NDI said. Therefore, any

While many other campaigns are trying to reach voters, only the GOTV campaign is trying to reach every Kosovar family in their home. By complementing media ads with the physical presence of volunteers and with those individuals that will be walking billboards by wearing the GOTV campaign's T-shirt, the GOTV message has a strong chance to influence voter behavior.

At the same time, the GOTV coalition will use other unconventional methods to reach younger audiences by placing the message in internet cafes, nightclubs and other public institutions frequented by young potential voters.

Please contact ATRC if you would like to become a GOTV coalition member and help with volunteer recruitment. ■



MOS U ANKO, VOTO!

GOTV's Slogan: Don't complain, VOTE!

help that the coalition can get in reaching our ambitious goal of mobilizing 2,800 volunteers would be appreciated.

What makes this campaign unique is the use of many different tools to reach the public.

Women NGOs and US Civil Rights Activists Exchange Knowledge

Sept. 22. Pristina. A group representing Kosovar women's NGOs met with two U.S. civil rights activists and Larry Corwin, the new information officer at the United States Office in Pristina, to discuss strategies that women should use to empower themselves. The frank discussion touched upon many topics including: inter-ethnic relations, implementation of U.N. Resolution 1325 and women's current position in decision-making.

The U.S. civil rights activists came with a clear message

that "the current majority should not play like the old one". In other words, the oppressed should not become the oppressor.

The meeting also gave the U.S. activists a chance to learn more about the position of women in Kosovar society vis-à-vis male dominance and the international community. Women activists shared their work experience with ethnic minorities, and their concern that non-Serb minorities and women's rights are being ignored by the international community. They

contended that Serb women are willing to have an open dialogue with Albanian women, yet the pressures exerted by males have limited the opportunities for such cooperation.

Other problems identified were that UNMIK has not fulfilled the obligations of U.N. Resolution 1325 to incorporate women in peace-making among other things; NGOs' inability to "raise issues that must be raised"; being limited only to monitor; and lacking the means, due to structural issues, to hold politicians accountable.

The U.S. civil rights activist Burt Reynolds replied that only unity between women and proper use of the media could lead to healthy results. He focused on enhancing the ability to create coalitions strong enough to influence power holders. He also introduced the idea of focusing on coexistence rather than integration, as well as education, in order to make minorities feel more comfortable. ■



Women's NGO's representatives met with U.S civil rights activists at ATRC's conference hall.

Kosovo-wide Advocacy Group, Continued



Using a method for consensus-based decision-making called "fist or five", AvoKo decided up its new mission statement.

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Did you notice some changes in this issue of "The Advocate"? Please share your thoughts on what you like and what you'd like to see improved by writing to info@advocacy-center.org.

terim coordinator.

"It is best for a group to function as one -- not like tree branches, but as a strong trunk where experiences and ideas come to-

gether," Hysen Nikqi from Aquila in Peja said.

The new AvoKo has established a work group which will begin collecting information that will be

used to develop the group's strategic plan. The next meeting is scheduled for Oct. 12 at 13:30. New members are welcome.

Participants included representatives from Elita in Viti, Visions for the Future in Shtime/Lipjan, Euro-ecologists in Peja, Adhmeria Jone in Suhareke, Aquila in Mitrovica, Aureola in Prishtina, Kosovo Development Center in Gjakova, New Era in Decan and ATRC.

Anyone interested in joining this new network can contact ATRC.

Coletta Conflict Resolution, Consensus and

Craig Coletta, an independent consultant with experience in conflict resolution, acting and American carnivals, met with Kosovar NGOs interested in establishing a rapid reaction strategic intervention civic movement.

The NGOs hope to develop a network based on common interests that will enable them to carry out more influential and effective advocacy work, including the ability to rapidly respond to future large-scale issues, such as the violence that shook Kosovo last March.

"There are obvious advantages to having advocacy organizations work together in areas where they have common interests," Coletta said. "It will increase their ability to get things done and better their individual work through cross fertilization of ideas."

The group could function in at least three ways:

1. Generate Action: if an issue is meaningful to all group members they could work on that issue as a group to influence change.
2. Experience-sharing: the group could benefit from each other's expertise, resources and skills.

3. Information-sharing: the group can share information in order to avoid potential conflicts or duplication in activities.

Coletta hopes to support the development the network by assisting the group in strategic planning and building the members' skills for working together, including interest based negotiation, active listening, facilitation versus moderation, consensus based decision-making and tools that will help the group reach consensus.

He also hopes to provide some ideas as to how the structure and functioning of the group could work.

"I try to make this process exciting and enjoyable because people do their best work when they enjoy it. I want people to have fun and see real possibilities in doing something," Coletta said.

Currently a private consultant, Coletta used to be the Coordinator for the National Association for Community Mediation. His past experience includes dispute resolution, acting and folklore, focusing on the American Carnival. This experience makes for an



interactive style of training in which Coletta uses carnival tricks to explain concrete actions that people can take.

His prior work with con-men, swindlers, and "carnitalkers" has contributed to understanding how people communicate and manager each other's perceptions, he said. "For example, conflict resolution is realizing the opportunity for change. Nothing is wrong with conflict; it is natural," Coletta said. "How we respond depends on how we perceive. Therefore, by building a system that is prone to little conflict, we can create a high functioning group". ■