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Forum for Civic Initiatives

Annual report 2008



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Table of contents

FORUM FOR CIVIC INITIATIVES	4
LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR.....	4
FIQ PROGRAMS	5
I. RULE OF LAW	5
<i>Civilian oversight of the security sector</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Series of debates regarding the mission of EULEX</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Conference "Small arms and human security in Kosovo"</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>School safety</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Accountability of democratic institutions towards civil society</i>	<i>8</i>
II. ACTIVE CITIZENRY	8
<i>Civic Action FOL'08.....</i>	<i>8</i>
III. GRANTMAKING – SUPPORTING CIVIC INITIATIVES	9
<i>Support for Raushiq village, Peja</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Lubinje e Epërme village, Prizren.....</i>	<i>10</i>
OTHER ACTIVITIES	10
REACTIONS	10
IMPORTANT VISITS	10
POWER OF ART – THEATRE SHOW "TRUTH IN TRANSLATION"	11
PARTNERS AND DONORS.....	12
FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF THE AUDITOR.....	12
STAFF.....	13

Forum for Civic Initiatives

The Forum for Civic Initiatives (FIQ) is a non-governmental organization with a focus on the rule of law that works to increase citizen participation in decision-making processes for peaceful and developed Balkan region. FIQ was created in 2000 to address a variety of urgent needs in post-conflict Kosovo. Since then, FIQ has evolved into an organization with a focus on Rule of Law and transparency and accountability of the government and strengthening the capacity of the Civil Society through studies and analysis, debates, training and grant making support.

FIQ is pleased to work with all partners, communities and active citizens of Kosovo in an appropriate, comprehensive and conflict-sensitive approach. FIQ commits itself in establishing an effective cooperation with national and international institutions, increasing this way the impact of its work for the general prosperity.

Letter from the Executive Director



Dear readers,

This year, Kosovo has entered in the phase of its building and consolidation, where the contribution of every individual will have greater impact than anytime. It is a time which cannot be lost anymore – Kosovo leadership should work in creating a vision for the future of the recently independent country. Now, our institutions have the opportunity to prove that they can implement best democratic practices for governing the country. Kosovo did not have much time for celebration, since the institutional configuration, despite the independence of the

country, still remained complex and complicated. Furthermore, it remained unclear for the people, and even for institutions themselves. The presence of EULEX/UNMIK mission was not easy to be executed, and, especially, it was not easy to see its results. Immediately after the independence, a need for clarifying the responsibilities of national and international institutions was noticed, since the decision-making in Kosovo started to delay, and accountability towards citizens became more difficult. The Assembly of Kosovo worked with its full capacity, never seen before, but the side effect was that members of the Assembly voted for laws which were never debated in the assembly before! In fact, they were not adopting laws, like it happens in the parliamentary world, but they were passing packages of different laws deriving from Ahtisaari's plan.

The year of independence for FIQ and for more than two million citizens of the country was a year of success and general prosperity. FIQ achieved to greatly develop its own programs and to work in its profile as part of the small world of civil society of Kosovo, by developing in the meanwhile its grantmaking program. FIQ increased its influence in overseeing of the performance of our independent institutions. Furthermore, it achieved to establish an excellent network of cooperation with organizations throughout Kosovo, and also achieved to support many projects whose direct beneficiary were the citizens of Kosovo. FIQ continued working with donors who create a space for originality and neutrality, and with whom the main agenda is prosperity of people throughout the world. Thank you all who worked with us! Thank you honoured donors for supporting FIQ, in order for FIQ to be able to support the others!

FIQ PROGRAMS

FIQ initiates and develops projects on its own, or in cooperation with chosen partners. The projects mainly fall into the following programs:

- I. Rule of law,
- II. Active citizenry and
- III. Grantmaking.

In principal every program, tries to respond to few important questions: How can our programs contribute to creating an active society, by not leaving anyone behind? What would be the best way to achieve this? What is the role and responsibility of each and every one of us? How can we establish sustainable communities in Kosovo? FIQ programs can be seen as three strategies for giving an opportunity to ideas and people to establish an active society, and mostly to support and contribute the general development.

I. Rule of law

In regard to this program, which aims to increase the role of civil society in the oversight of Rule of Law institutions, in order to make them more effective and accountable towards the citizens, below you can read more on the most important activities of this year:

Civilian oversight of the security sector



Historically, security and safety institutions of Kosovo until 1999 have been seen as a threat to private life, especially the Police, Intelligent Service, and the Army, including the justice. These institutions were not seen by the citizens as actors or promoters of their rights and freedoms, but as an instrument of the country to control their individual and family life, and sometimes even as permanent executors of violence towards citizens.

This project, supported by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, aimed to establish a platform of communication and cooperation between institutions of Kosovo and civil society organizations, in order to increase the accountability of Kosovo's institutions towards citizens. The oversight role of civil society organizations is crucial in order to ensure that:

- Drafting and approval of policies is done in appropriate way, considering the political, economical and social context and development of the country,
- There is participation and ownership of the citizens in the drafting process of policies,
- The implementation of these policies is overseen by external actors of civil society.

Forum for Civic Initiatives

Annual report 2008

Through this project, FIQ lead the work of a network consisting of eight organizations from the biggest municipalities of the country, which systematically have engaged in overseeing the work of security institutions, in identifying mechanisms for non/transparency, public promotion of their work, readiness of institutions to establish cooperation with civil society, and accountable mechanisms of these institutions towards the citizens of Kosovo.

Main findings of the study, which is of great importance for the project, will be presented in 2009.

Series of debates regarding the mission of EULEX

FIQ and Saferworld, two partner organizations since 2005, in November and December, 2008, organized a series of debates in several Kosovo cities regarding the mission of EULEX, its effect and power in the rule of



law and strengthening the rule of law in Kosovo. This mission came to Kosovo as a part of what was seen by the international community to be an oversight of the independence of Kosovo. It was a large mission of EU which was coming after another large mission of UN (UNMIK) but which was bringing with itself a complex configuration in country. The main objective of the initiative and organization of these debates was to enable citizens, civil society, and the public opinion to learn more about the role, actions and mandate of the EULEX mission in Kosovo. Another important objective was to identify the accountability mechanisms of this mission.

In these debates, participants asked and commented about the work of EULEX Prosecutors, Judges, and Police regarding heavy crimes, organized crime, corruption, human rights, property usurpation, then the means of executing the monitoring of national institutions, access and limits of interfering in the work of national institutions, the issue of missing persons, the functionality of Customs in the north of Kosovo, and many other concerns.

In all the debates, the composition of discussion panels had participants of high officials from three components of EULEX: Justice, Police, and Customs, and representatives of municipal governance, courts, Prosecutor's Office and the Police of Kosovo. These debates were financially supported by the German and British Governments, as part of a joint program of FIQ and Saferworld, called "Safeplace".

Conference “Small arms and human security in Kosovo”



On 20th of November, in Prishtina, FIQ and Saferworld organized the conference “Small arms and human security in Kosovo”, where around 80 representatives of the civil society and national and international institutions have participated. The aim of this Conference was to promote debate on issues linked to weapons and human security and to advance the cooperation between all actors involved in improving community safety in Kosovo.

The referees of this Conference were: Dukagjin Gorani, Security Adviser to

the Prime-Minister of Kosovo, Shqipe Krasniqi from the Agency of Gender Equality under the Prime-Minister's Office, Lieutenant-Colonel Naim Rexha, Director of the Department for Community Affairs, Dr. Basri Lenjani, Director of Emergency Centre in University Clinical Centre of Kosovo, Musli Marevci from the Directorate of Education in Ferizaj, Luljeta Vuniqi from the Kosovo Centre for Gender Studies, Rexhep Shkodra from the Hunters Federation, Rrahim Sylejmani, representative of Gërmova village of Vitia, Alain Lapon from UNDP-KOSACC.

In this Conference, FIQ and Saferworld, on their third year of series of studies on perceptions of small arms and light weapons, and human safety, published the latest study called “Through the crosshair – a survey of changing attitudes towards small arms in Kosovo”. This study treats changing perceptions in regard to civil possession and prevalence of weapons, and suggests main issues that need to be taken into consideration when compiling a framework for collecting and controlling weapons.

Safety in schools

Treating education as a primary issue in advancing and improving life in Kosovo, FIQ supported as much as it can the education community of Gjilan in their attempts to have a safer school environment and a qualitative education. The attraction of the Students Council of this city, and their original ideas for sending peace and educative messages has made FIQ support their graffiti campaign. This campaign was realized in close cooperation with school Principals, Municipal Education Directorate, and was supported by the Mayor of the Municipality.

FIQ continued its commitment to school safety, and supported by the American Foundation Balkan Trust for Democracy (BTD) realized a project for improving safety in schools of our capital, Prishtina. The project was characterized by a media campaign of strengthening the role of Student Councils and advocated in order that Kosovo has a national strategy for improving safety in schools. FIQ also published a report which summarized the achievements of this project and the work that is left to be done by our institutions and society.

Accountability of democratic institutions towards civil society

Supported by the American foundation National Endowment for Democracy (NED), in October, 2008, FIQ started a one-year project, which is being implemented in partnership with five organizations from around the country. The project aims to evaluate the accountability and efficiency of national institutions, by registering experiences of citizens and by sharing the results with the public and institutions.

This information will be gathered from random interviews, office interviews with citizens who approach us with their concerns regarding any public institution; afterwards, we will organize regular meetings with citizens in order to get informed about their experiences with institutions, making this way pressure to municipal/central institutions in order to offer better quality services and be more accountable to Kosovo people.

At the end of the project, there will be a comprehensive analysis, followed by the publication of the report which will be distributed to the citizens and national institutions of all levels. FIQ's partners for this project are: Syri i Vizionit, Peja, Business Development Community Centre (Community Business Development Centre), from Gjakova, and Communication for Social Development, Gracanica. Findings of this project will be published in 2009, the year when the project will also come to its end.

II. Active citizenry

Seeing active citizenry as key mechanism to the continuous democratization of the country and the only way of including a great number of citizens in decision-taking processes, FIQ never stopped its commitment to this issue.

Civic Action FOL'08



The diminishment of the proactive role of civil society, and the general quietness in regard to major citizen problems, motivated FIQ to support the Civic Action FOL'08. FOL'08 is an independent initiative of the civil society, which functions under the program for active citizenry of the organization Forum for Civic Initiatives. FOL'08 refers to the year of independence – the year which marks the end of sacrifices of civic initiatives for the sake of political

status of the country. FOL '08, asks from the citizens, now belonging to an independent country, to react in order to protect their own country for which they sacrificed and worked hard.

FOL '08 has started its activity in September, 2008, for strengthening the civic influence in decision-taking for accountable and efficient governance. Use of public funds, conflict of interests, institutional negligence

and accountability, including access to official information, are key issues of the work of FOL'08. In order to achieve these objectives FOL'08 tries to fight the civic apathy and indifference towards decision making, and the ignorance of decision-making officials towards citizens. FOL'08 is a call for constructive criticism and opposition to non-functional policies, abuse of power and political force.

III. Grantmaking – supporting civic initiatives

Through this program, FIQ has mainly supported groups of citizens (village Councils), focusing mainly in rural communities, in order to find a solution to their daily problems. Accumulated problems, never discussed in close forums, nor addressed to the right place, gathered people of different professions, and mobilized them to work actively in action plans, which successfully resulted in creating practices for organized actions, with institutional inclusion, and also in creating opportunities for benefits of other organizations. During this year, FIQ supported the following projects:

Support for Raushiq village, Peja



People felt tired of complaining throughout the years, and they did not forget many victims of road accidents in the highway passing through the village. Officials of the Department for Road Infrastructure in the Ministry of Transport have participated in the project of FIQ, village Council of Raushiq and our partner in Peja, NGO Syri i Vizionit adding this zone to the list of priorities for safer road infrastructure. While waiting for this issue to be solved, the community has cut

the old trees in the school yard, which, because of their age, were breaking off and falling endangering this way the safety of students. Inside the school, they also created a room/cabinet for safety lectures, in which the police conducts regular monthly lectures to the pupils regarding the need to increase the care and self-protection. In the same school, twenty old doors were replaced with new ones, making this way a big improvement in this school. FIQ and Syri i Vizionit had the pleasure of supporting this community and invite others to do the same.

Lubinje e Epërme village, Prizren



The community of Bosnian minority, despite their organization, was not able to make pressure on the authorities to address their problems. FIQ has supported this community in establishing a relation with the Police and KFOR, and has also supported them in repairing the electric power network, by replacing the old electric posts with new ones, since the old ones were expected to fall every moment and endanger the lives of citizens and their houses. It is worth highlighting that this community should serve as a model for community organization. FIQ and its partner in Prizren, NGO Peace and Human Rights Council had the pleasure of supporting this community and invite others to do the same.

Other activities

Reactions

Understanding the reaction on important issues as a process towards democratization and the development of civil society, FIQ has practiced public reaction on important developments in regard to its work scope. The 6 point plan of the General Secretary of UN has drawn our attention and energy, as it happened with many organizations of the civil society of our country, which demonstrated in big protests against the juristic division of the country. For this matter, FIQ, together with a group of other organizations, requested from the Assembly of Kosovo to oversee the EULEX mandate in Kosovo.

Important visits



Now becoming a tradition, FIQ this year also welcomed and accompanied donors and friends from abroad in meetings with important actors of the society.

This year, we had a visit in our offices by the President of Rockefeller Brothers Fund, Mr. Steven Heinz. He met with members of partner organizations Network, which worked with us in many initiatives, especially in the oversight of the security sector project, which was supported by RBF. Another important visit for our work on the

three-year program “Safeplace”, was done by Mr. Michael Hasenau, a high official from the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which finances this program for three continuous years, together with Mr. Henry Smith, Director of our partner organization Saferworld, from London.

During this year, FIQ had the pleasure of meeting and discussing with a British Member of Parliament, the Liberal Democrat Mr. Michael Moore. In this visit, Mr. Moore met with high officials of the country and representative of civil society in order to gain information about the perceptions of people for the support of the British Government to Kosovo throughout the years.

Power of art – Theatre show “Truth in Translation”

By successfully promoting and bringing to life the regional and international cooperation, FIQ, together with its partner organizations, mobilized themselves to bring to Kosovo a great theatrical group from South Africa, which through their artistic stories touched the hearts of millions of people throughout the world.

The theatrical show “Truth in translation” was played for three nights for the Kosovo public in the National Theatre of Prishtina, and also travelled to the north of the country. The show came to Prishtina directly from the Edinburgh Festival, in Northern Ireland, and was previously played in Rwanda and Zimbabwe, now continuing its tour in West Balkans. The tour to Kosovo was supported by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, with support by the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport.

This award-winning show, followed by the music of legendary Jazz and world music composer, Hugh Masekela from South Africa, treats the history of a nation coming out of conflict and apartheid who ask themselves “Can we face the past in order to save the future?”

Partners of FIQ during 2008

1. Saferworld
2. Syri i Vizionit (SiV), Peja
3. Community Building Mitrovica (CBM), Mitrovica
4. Kosovo Centre for International Cooperation (KCIC), Gjilan
5. Youth Network of Gjilan (RRRGJ)
6. Centre for Civil Society Development (CCSD), Mitrovica
7. Communication for Social Development (CSD), Gracanica
8. Centre for Business Development of the Community (CBDC), Gjakova
9. Peace and Human Rights Council (PHRC), Prizren
10. Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN), Prishtina
11. Initiative for Progress, (INPO) Ferizaj
12. NGO, Council for the Defence of Human Rights and Minorities, Obiliq
13. Directorate of Education in Ferizaj
14. Directorate of Education in Gjilan
15. Students Council in Ferizaj (NKF)
16. Students Council in Gjilan (KNGJ)
17. Council of Gërmova village, Vitia
18. Council of Palaj village, Kastriot
19. Council of Lubinje e Epërme village, Prizren
20. Council of Raushiq village, Peja

FIQ donors during 2008

Saferworld

Rockefeller Brothers Fund (RBF)

National Endowment for Democracy (NED)

Balkan Trust for Democracy (BTD)

Financial statement of the auditor

Total income: 287,458 euro

Total expenditure: 236,418 euro

Staff

Ferdinand Nikolla
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Nazim Haliti
Project Manager

Ardiana Basha
Administration Officer

Sefë Govori
Finance Manager

Ramadan Ilazi
Coordinator for the civic action FOL '08

Petrit Zogaj
Project officer, FOL '08

Mexhide Demolli
Media and Public Communications Officer, FOL '08

Bardha Gashi
Monitoring Officer, FOL '08

Other staff members who have worked during 2008:
David Labrador, Albina Balidemaj, Labinot Salihu, Adelina Sylaj