

5. ABOUT MANS

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MANS is a non-governmental organisation striving for social justice in Montenegro through efforts on poverty reduction, fight against corruption and increased public participation in decision-making.

MANS's vision is Montenegro as a society of active citizens exercising their social, economic & civil rights in cooperation with accountable, transparent and efficient government at all levels.

Our **strategic goals** for the period 2005 – 2008 are:

- Development, implementation and monitoring of social, economic and civil policies and legislation done with public participation;
- Implementation of effective civil actions in fight against corruption in public authorities; and
- Citizens and civil associations use and enhance mechanisms for communication with public institutions in areas relating to social, economic and civil liberties.

Our goals are attained through three **program fields**:

- Enhancing public participation in the development, implementation and monitoring of public policies and laws through information and education campaigns, public debates, workshops, guides for citizens, free legal aid to citizens whose rights are violated and public campaigns to enhance respect for public opinion by public authorities at all levels;
- Scrutiny over the operation of public institutions in the process of developing and implementing laws and policies through consultations with the public and with experts, site visits, SOS lines to report violations and malpractices of public authorities, INFO lines for free access to information, media monitoring, research and analysis.
- Capacity building of the civil society in advocacy for social changes and the establishment of the rule of law and providing assistance to the citizens in the exercise of their rights through the enhancement of social and legislative framework for the participation of the NGOs in decision-making, training, support to the exchange of information and establishing cooperation within the non-governmental sector and with other relevant social actors.

The activities of MANS in the field of fight against corruption have been recognised even by **Transparency International**, the leader in fight against corruption globally with which MANS has signed the partnership agreement.

MANS is a member of the **FOI Advocates** network gathering individuals and institutions worldwide striving for respect and enhancement of the right to free access to information.

MANS is a member of **UN NGO IRENE**, a network of non-governmental organizations under the auspices of United Nations, as well as **the Civic Pact for South-East Europe and Integrity Network** aiming at preventing political corruption in the SEE countries and the establishment of new standards of integrity.

Poverty and Corruption

During 2002 and 2003 MANS was supporting public participation in development of Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper for Montenegro (PRSP) where over 6000 citizens and over 60 NGOs participated in poverty assessment, identification of solutions, priorities and indicators for monitoring and evaluation.

Since Government of Montenegro decided not to take majority of citizens opinions and suggestions, especially those related to corruption, as key cause of poverty, on the basis of citizens inputs we have developed shadow report that have included recommendations for poverty assessment and social and economic policies.

MANS conducted watchdog of the PRSP implementation, advocated for changes and improvements, and lobbied within the World Bank, IMF, UN Agencies and other relevant institutions to create additional pressure toward the Government. As outcome of our lobbying and advocacy, most of remarks have been confirmed in the Joint Staff Assessment of the Montenegrin PRSP conducted by the World Bank and IMF, and in official remarks given by UN Agencies. The Government was forced to start the process of identification of priorities for the PRSP and development of anti-corruption policies.

Key Outcome: Due to advocacy campaign conducted by MANS, the Joint Staff Assessment prepared by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund requested the Government to respect citizens' opinions and recommended for PRSP to incorporate anti-corruption policies.

Millennium Development Goals

MANS have implemented a strong awareness raising campaign on PRSP and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), that according to United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) represent unique contribution to global campaign on MDGs.

In partnership with public broadcasting service and two private TV networks and in cooperation with over 60 NGOs and institutions, we have developed eight 40-minutes shows. All eight shows were broadcasted in prime time, twice per each TV network. Each show was dedicated to particular MDG and showed different faces of poverty through life stories told by poor themselves, interviews with public officers and statistics.

MDG TV Shows were Montenegrin nomination for the UN MDG Award as well as presented as Montenegrin nominee at International Festival of Documentary Film on Human Rights in Prague.

Key Outcome: Raised public awareness and linked Montenegrin context of Millennium Development Goals to global targets through national campaign conducted in partnership with the Government, NGOs and three national TV networks.

Planning and Illegal Development

During 2004, in cooperation with other NGOs we have ensured that municipalities of Podgorica, Kotor and Kolasin are defining proper mechanisms and clear procedures for citizens' participation in decision-making. In order to create space for future large apartment buildings, local government in Podgorica started pulling down illegally developed inhabited individual objects, using police forces and violating human rights. We have used newly adopted legal mechanisms, collected over 1000 signatures and submitted the first civic initiative to the Local Assembly. Local parliament have refused the initiative, but MANS have implemented strong advocacy campaign and succeed to stop pulling of inhabited houses until development of proper legal measures.

Since the Government has signed Vienna Declaration on informal Settlements in SEE¹, on our initiative, the Stability Pact, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights for Serbia and Montenegro and United Nations Development Program, requested the Government to resolve problem of illegal developments in a transparent manner and with full respect of human rights. In late 2005 the Ministry of Spatial Planning and Development started developing the new legislative, and MANS have mobilized over 1500 citizens to participate in that process, ensuring their voices are heard.

Key Outcome: MANS watchdog role led to cessation of human rights violations in resolving problem of illegal developments, new legislative is developing in consultations with citizens.

Transparent and Accountable Government

MANS have conducted media campaign and created pressure toward government to process and Parliament to adopt the Law on Conflict of Interest in 2004. Since MPs significantly changed the Law during discussion in the Parliament, MANS have submitted initiative to the Constitution Court that Government members are not allowed to participate in boards of directors of companies and the Court decided that questioned article is not in compliance with the Constitution. After the decision, the article was removed from the Law and members of the government resigned from other public functions.

MANS have established SOS line for victims of corruption and law violations, since 2004 provided free legal advices in over 300 cases and since adoption of the Law on free access to information (November 2005), submitted over 750 requests to more than 60 institutions.

We have conducted the first and so far only research on forms and methods of corruption in area of spatial planning and development and developed publication with 40 case studies that was presented at 58th UN NGO Conference. On the basis of our initiative, the Agency for Anti-Money Laundering developed procedures for monitoring financial transactions in construction industry.

¹ Vienna Declaration on National and Regional Policy and Programs regarding informal Settlements in SEE, signed in Vienna on 28th IX 2004 by Ministers of Albania, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia, in the presence of Dr. E. Busek (Special Coordinator of the Stability Pact) and L. Reutersward (UN-Habitat, Director of Global Division).

In cooperation with the Council of Europe, UNDP and Governmental Agency for Anti-Corruption, MANS have organized the first ever National Anti-Corruption Conference gathering representatives of more than 40 relevant institutions and foreign experts. The Conference participants advocated for development of the Action Plan for Combating Corruption and Organized Crime that will enable implementation of policy documents adopted by the Government. After the Conference, the Ministry of Interior has established the Commission for development of the Action Plan that recently finished the first draft, where MANS as the only NGO member of the Commission is ensuring civil society is able to influence content of the document.

We have lobbied within the Ministry of Justice to establish framework for combating corruption by local governments and developed draft Local Anti-Corruption Action Plan (LAAP). The Ministry have established working group for development of the Strategy for Combating Corruption at Local Level, and accepted draft LAAP as a base for its development.

Key Outcomes: Following MANS application to the Constitutional Court and its positive ruling of this issue, members of the Government are not able to hold other public functions, and four Deputy Prime Ministers and six Ministers have resigned on their positions in boards of directors of companies, on the basis of conflict of interest.

Awareness raising and advocacy campaign conducted in partnership with international organizations led to Government developing the Action Plan for implementation of Program for Combating Corruption and Organized Crime.

So far, MANS work was supported by numerous **donors**, including:

- United Nations Development Programme
- US Agency for International Development/ ORT
- Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
- Council of Europe,
- German Government, Stability Pact for Southeast Europe,
- Balkan Trust for Democracy,
- Swedish Helsinki Committee for Human Rights,
- Open Society Institute - Human Rights & Governance Grants Program,
- Charles Steward Mott Foundation,
- Rockefeller Brothers Fund,
- British Embassy,
- Royal Netherlands Embassy,
- IRD/USAID,
- HIVOS - Netherlands,
- Norwegian People's Aid,
- International Rescue Committee,
- Catholic Relief Services,
- Regional Environmental Center