



working to forge—and a growing number of these young efforts are already achieving real results.

In an open civil society, advocacy is the organized pursuit of positive change in the public arena. It is the act and process of harnessing citizen voices for change, and of bringing a civic agenda to decisionmakers for collaborative action.

“Advocacy is new—and not only for us,” says Milena Tanusheva, executive director of the TIME (This Is My Environment) Foundation in Sofia. “It’s new for Bulgaria.”

In Bulgaria’s still-recent past, to work for change here was often dangerous, and few tried. Today, in this nation that for centuries has connected Europe’s western, eastern, northern, and southern cultures, channels are beginning to be opened for citizen organizations to join in the process of making laws, programs, and policy. Usually by trial and error, NGOs around the country are discovering how to advance citizen views, how to build relationships with other groups and with public officials, and how to understand and participate in the public process.

“Civil society in Bulgaria is so new; I do believe that our style of government will depend on what society wants,” reflects Kapka Panayotova, executive director of the Sofia-based Center for Independent Living, which advocates for disabled citizens. “And no government in the world will perform well unless society pushes.”

“TO MULTIPLY THE EFFECT”

Since 1995, the Democracy Network Program (DemNet), funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and coordinated in Bulgaria by an American NGO, the Institute for Sustainable Communities (ISC), has been working to build and develop Bulgaria’s emerging NGO sector. Through its office in Sofia, ISC has provided grants, training, and other

VOICES FOR CHANGE

A FIELD REPORT FROM BULGARIA ON BUILDING CIVIC ADVOCACY

DEMOCRACY NETWORK PROGRAM, BULGARIA 2002

Just 12 years after they brought an end to one of Europe’s most tightly controlled Communist states, the people of Bulgaria are building for their country a new kind of history.

As they strive to shape a civil society that is responsive to citizens’ ideals and concerns, even amid tough economic

struggles, Bulgarians have reached an important stage. Their government is democratically elected, yet still strongly centralized. Their country now has hundreds of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that speak and work for citizens on local and national levels—yet Bulgaria has few structures or traditions that encourage these citizen groups to work closely with government.

Advocacy is the vital link. It is one that a growing number of NGOs are now

assistance to hundreds of NGOs around the country. In recent years, DemNet has focused on strengthening 13 Bulgarian *support organizations* that can continue to serve as a sustaining infrastructure for NGOs, providing them with training, funding, and other assistance as they go on working to build democracy and civil society around the nation.

In 2001, ISC began a specific advocacy initiative in Bulgaria. Working through two support organizations, the Institute for Regional and International Studies (IRIS) and TIME, DemNet has supported the provision of trainings, advocacy models, consultancies, and ongoing support for a selection of promising NGOs that are mounting advocacy campaigns on local and national levels.

This publication profiles a selection of these initiatives. The brief feature articles on these pages describe the work of both the NGOs and the support organizations, the challenges they face, and the lessons these pioneers are learning in the field.

“Our broader objective is to have good practices, which will be viewed as precedents—as models which have worked,” says Petar Petrov of IRIS. Elena Triffonova, program director for IRIS’s advocacy project, agrees: “The main goal is to multiply this knowledge that we have gathered. To multiply the effect of advocacy in Bulgaria.”

OUTCOMES AND CHALLENGES

This work faces many challenges: yet there is much here to celebrate. A still-small but growing number of NGOs are working together, developing strategic plans and platforms, promoting and changing media coverage, effecting revisions in national legislation, and earning themselves a place at the tables where public decisions are made.

Perhaps most important, the organizations profiled here are discovering—and demonstrating to their communities—that

civil society can work, that Bulgarian citizens can speak up and create positive change. This work is building new traditions, new skills, and new hope. As Gergana Vassileva, program coordinator at IRIS, said: “Come back to us in two years and see how far we’ve come!”

To be sure, the outcomes described in the following pages are targeted, specific, and ongoing—but they are historic nonetheless. In a country that is learning how to make democracy work, *Voices for Change* portrays the vanguard of a dynamic Bulgarian civil society.

IRIS **SHARING A MODEL** **FOR CHANGE**

Based in Sofia, the Institute for Regional and International Studies is an advocacy-oriented think tank whose executive director, Ognyan Minchev, is one of Bulgaria’s best-known political scientists. In recent years its program staff of young, energetic political scientists has developed and field-tested a four-part model for NGO and citizen advocacy—“partly from what we learned from literature, and from our experience,” says Program Coordinator Gergana Vassileva. “We found that it does work.”

After trying and refining their advocacy model in their own work with marginalized village populations in the southern mountains, the IRIS staff published a book, *The Topography of Power in Bulgaria*. With DemNet support, they then invited proposals, and chose to work with eight NGOs around Bulgaria that planned specific advocacy initiatives.

Last autumn, IRIS provided all eight NGOs with training in its model, which centers on strategic planning, building coalitions, media campaigning, and dialogue with representatives of local and/or national government.

All eight NGOs have formed coalitions for their campaigns, and IRIS continues to support their work with advice and DemNet-funded consultancies. Some of the initiatives aim to change legislation and/or policy at the national level, while others focus on local advocacy.

“We provide the tools,” says Assya Hristova, program assistant. “We train them how to be involved in this process of creating policy.”

In choosing project NGOs, “one criterion was financial stability—which, outside Sofia, is a very relative notion,” notes Program Director Elena Triffonova. Another was the willingness to build coalitions, generally with partner NGOs. Media campaigns are also key, says Hristova, “because the media are the natural allies of the citizens.”

“We try to encourage the involvement of more people in coalitions and networks,” says Vassileva. “We’re trying to implement the potential of these networks within civil society. This can happen only if a large number of people participate.”

“Bulgarians are very much individualists,” says Program Assistant Petar Petrov. “People here, if they go into a partnership, prefer that it be informal, and to use some friends in positions of power. This is not officially announced. The main component of the project is work to be done officially, through a formal procedure—the whole process of advocacy.

“That’s why we have planned a large number of training workshops,” he adds. “All the good practices and the workshops are recorded, so we have all these processes documented, step by step.”

“After the end of this project, we will continue to work on this ground,” concludes Triffonova. “This know-how that IRIS has developed is significant.”

TIME

LEARNING HOW TO BE HEARD

This is how advocacy can work: In late 2000, the TIME (This Is My Environment) Foundation, a Sofia NGO that has worked since 1994 for environmental protection and sustainable development, became concerned about serious gaps and problems within biodiversity legislation that had come before Parliament. With advice and support from ISC through DemNet, TIME launched a campaign to improve the bill.

Together with six other environmental NGOs, TIME formed an advocacy coalition. The members developed a strategy and assigned tasks. Through *bluelink.net*, Bulgaria's nationwide network of environmental NGOs, they distributed the bill and collected responses from across the country. In September 2001, the central government returned the biodiversity bill for revisions. The redrafted measure reflects suggestions from the NGO community.

In this advocacy campaign, TIME learned much about the process of making laws and public policy. It also discovered how much environmental NGOs need to learn about joining that process.

Among these NGOs, "we have people who are very skilled and educated in environmental matters—but they don't have lobbying skills and education," says Milena Tanusheva, TIME's executive director.

To build these skills, this year TIME will deliver trainings on advocacy, with DemNet support, to as many as 75 NGOs in the north, the south, and the capital city.

Since late 2000, TIME has also distributed DemNet-funded grants to some 13 NGOs for advocacy projects. It is currently assisting two selected advocacy coalitions,



Two NGO support organizations promoting advocacy skills in Bulgaria, with support from the Democracy Network Program, are the TIME Foundation (executive director Milena Tanusheva, top photo) and IRIS. Both are based in Sofia and work with NGOs around the country on advocacy projects. In the photo above, IRIS staff member Gergana Vassileva is at right with colleague Assya Hristova.

including one organized by the Info Eco Club of Vratza that is striving for more open access to environmental information (see next page).

And, TIME is part of a national NGO network that meets for an agenda-setting conference each year. Last year, the network appointed NGO representatives to monitor and work with all key environmental ministries and other official bodies. These 30 NGO envoys, including TIME's Tanusheva, hope to become conduits for information between government and the third sector.

"For the organizations that are lobbying, I think the most important thing is to learn to negotiate—and to listen," she reflects. "Because as much as the government is opinionated, we are the same. We are trying to change ourselves to be more flexible. We think as we get better at this, the other side will, too."

FIGHTING TO OPEN CLOSED DOORS

When national authorities last year proposed to tighten restrictions on environmental information, Info Eco Club teamed with two other NGOs to fight the bill.

INFO ECO CLUB, VRATZA

"The way people think changes with great difficulty," observes Maria Moleshka, a longtime environmental activist who is director of the Info Eco Club in Vratza, in northwest Bulgaria.

In the mid-1990s, the Info Eco Club worked with ISC and the TIME Foundation to carry out a national pilot project for solid-waste management. The result was both a new national policy and, in Vratza, one of Bulgaria's most active and modernized landfills.

The Info Eco Club then began to do more with advocacy. The club has received DemNet funding through TIME for its advocacy work—and on both local and national levels, it is leading the fight to open up access to public information and environmental decisionmaking.

It is a hard fight. When national authorities last year proposed to tighten restrictions on environmental information, the Vratza NGO teamed with two other NGOs to fight the bill.

"At first reading, the draft of the act was rejected—and we were really happy," says Moleshka. "But the second draft was even worse than the first!"

The club is helping convene a meeting with the Parliamentary environmental committee and representatives of 20 NGOs, their positions clarified by an Internet discussion with some 32 environmental and legal NGOs.

"We must muster up our energy," Moleshka resolves.

Locally, when a petrol chain proposed a new filling station that would increase traffic next door to a kindergarten and a high-rise residential community, and within the legal buffer zone around the city's chemical plant, the club challenged the project in court. After four years, the station has been built—but the club continues fighting.

"We do not want a big petrol station inside the town," Moleshka says. Info Eco's court petitions have documented high local concentrations of air pollution and of child asthma and lung diseases. The club now awaits a ruling on whether the station, which it argues would worsen those problems, was built illegally.

Through its new Web page, the club shares its hard-earned lessons on advocating in the court system. Among its local allies is Ivan Naidenov, a silver-haired gentleman who represents the neighborhood around the petrol station.

"It's difficult to fight," he says. "But we will try to win. We have lived our lives—but what about our children?"

In the northern City of Vratza, environmental advocate Maria Moleshka of the Info Eco Club listens, along with neighborhood organizer Ivan Naidenov (center), as a local resident expresses his concerns.



MOVING FROM “CAN’T” TO “CAN”

CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING, SOFIA

With 25 NGOs advocating for disability rights in its nationwide network, the Center for Independent Living in Sofia aims to achieve no less than a transformation of policy and law.

Today in Bulgarian policy, “disabilities are understood as incapacities,” explains Kapka Panayotova, the center’s executive director. “You can’t run, you can’t see, you can’t hear. We want to make it oriented to what you *can*. Perhaps a person can’t hear, but she may know English, she may know how to do many other things—and with the advance of technology, many incapacities can be compensated.”

Formed in 1995 as an outgrowth of informal activities by a group of disabled people, the center supports the disabled in striving for independence and self-sufficiency. It also coordinates a training and development program, including advocacy, “to affect the whole social group of the disabled,” Panayotova says.

Connecting social services and supports to disabilities keeps people at home or in institutions, the director argues—but it does not necessarily cost less than investing in accessibility and inclusion. For example, most Bulgarian schools are not handicapped accessible. Disabled young people tend, instead, to be educated at separate schools.

“It depends on the policy decision,” Panayotova says. “Do you allocate money to institutions and their staffs, to keep people in isolation, or do you reallocate money to people in their community?”

The initiative builds on a two-year campaign to amend the country’s core legislation on services to the disabled. The center received advocacy training from IRIS last fall.

In its 2000-01 effort, “we achieved one enormous success—and a lot of unsuc-

cessful provisions,” says Panayotova. The success was a new anti-discrimination provision, “spelling in a very clear way what is discriminatory: what is indirect and what is direct discrimination. And all the rest of the law remains discriminatory in its practice.”

Panayotova herself can walk only with difficulty. Her government disability paper says she is 76 percent disabled. “I work 18 hours a day—but my document says I have 76 percent lost ability to work,” she says. “This is ridiculous!”

The center has been invited to join a Parliamentary council on labor and social policy. It has also organized a number of media events that have helped alter the coverage of disabilities. Rather than simply reporting on “poor, miserable disabled people,” Panayotova says the media “have started telling about human rights, about people with disabilities who fight for their rights. Our campaign made a difference in the reporting perspective.”

In the policy arena, “our argument now is that we want a totally new piece of legislation, whose policies and values will be developed in consultation with the disabilities community in this country—and that will be a framework to guide specific provisions in many other laws,” such as education and labor law.

Though the center has learned the importance of building positive relationships within government, “there is no government in the world that will perform well unless society pushes,” Panayotova observes.

“We will do that work for our network members in this country. Well, I hope we will. We are trying our best.”



Kapka Panayotova and the NGO she directs, the Center for Independent Living, are working to transform Bulgaria’s approach to the rights and needs of disabled citizens.

The motto of the Center for Independent Living’s 2002 national advocacy campaign is “Change Is Inevitable. Progress Is Optional.”



In Stara Zagora, the Samaritans Foundation helps dozens of street children stay in school, have fun, and pursue positive interests. The Samaritans are now leading a campaign to create a local coordinating council for children's services.

OFFERING CHILDREN A FUTURE

SAMARITANS FOUNDATION, STARA ZAGORA

In the south-central City of Stara Zagora, the Samaritans Foundation keeps a photo album. Like many scrapbooks, this one is filled with children's photos—but these show kids living on streets, begging, sleeping in a bus station.

"Daily problems street children face," says an inscription: "loneliness, disease, hunger, drugs, sexual exploitation, prostitution, violence, cold."

Stara Zagora is a pleasant community, known for the linden trees that shade its central plazas. But street children were a constant presence here when, in the late 1990s, a group of adults gathered to talk about finding a way to help them. Their work has created a busy youth center—and now the Samaritans are leading a local coalition in advocating for a

permanent community council to oversee social work and children's protection.

"When we advocate on a certain issue, this allows us to focus our efforts on a high level—to achieve big results for our target group," observes Dimo Dimov of the foundation's staff.

When the Samaritans first began working together, they were unsure how best to help Stara Zagora's street kids. "We started meeting them in cafes and buying them sweets, so we could understand what their real problems are," says Diana Dimova, a social worker who is now the NGO's executive director.

Created in 1998, the Samaritans Foundation has become one of the city's most effective NGOs. At its day center, a staff of five and up to 15 local volunteers help dozens of street kids clean up and return to school, provide them with clothes and school supplies, help them prepare lessons, and offer them some 10 interest clubs and sports programs for their free time.

The foundation also strives to work with parents. One father, recently discharged from prison, earnestly dons a tie to teach a folk-dancing club. Others are not so caring. On the office wall is the black-draped photo of a day-center friend, a young girl who was killed by her father.

Street children were a constant presence in Stara Zagora when, in the late 1990s, a group of adults gathered to talk about finding a way to help them.

"Sometimes the best we can do is protect the child from their parents," says Dimova. "We try to take those cases to the courts; but when it's possible, we try to engage the parent as a partner."

With Bulgarian law now permitting alternatives to state institutions, the group is opening Samaritan House, where up to 20 children without families can live in "security and hope," Dimova says.

Still, in direct-service work, "sometimes the efforts are larger than the results," notes Dimo Dimov of the staff. So last year the Samaritans decided to venture into advocacy.

The group received IRIS advocacy training last fall, and speedily organized a coalition of 10 local NGOs. Coalition members have built mutual trust through developing a strategic plan and media strategy, creating working groups, and providing internal trainings.

"We used the principle 'Learn From Your Mistakes,'" says Dimov.

"We are very good students!" quips Dimova.

Seeing that they needed to work with local government, coalition members have mapped the city's power structure and invested much time in building

relationships with decisionmakers at lower and middle levels. They have proposed a permanent advisory council on social services, with city and NGO representatives. City officials had recently seen such collaboration on a study tour to the U.S., and are receptive to the experiment.

"Our goals are that the organizations share their problems over time, and that we seek ways to resolve these problems," Dimova says. "We do not want to report good results only. We want to really learn how to do this."



At its day center, the Samaritans Foundation offers 10 interest clubs and sports programs for local street children, works with their families, and advocates for them in the courts.

MAKING RECYCLING WORK

“We learned that some things depend on us—and we can really change things.”

ECO CLUB DETELINA, GABROVO

When eight selected NGOs gathered last October for IRIS advocacy training, the Eco Club *Detelina* (“Shamrock”) from the Technical University of Gabrovo was the youngest participant. Yet this group of about 15 university students had already compiled an impressive track record.

With recycling almost unknown in Bulgaria, the club had already completed a two-year source-separation project at the university. Members designed and installed nine bins with containers for glass, paper, and plastic, and collected a

total of 2,000 kilograms of glass, 500 of paper, and 400 of plastic for resale.

Working with the National Park Central Balkan, the club also delivered lectures on biodiversity conservation to schoolchildren in this north-central town. Members helped gather some 5,000 volunteers for outdoor cleaning and tree planting on Earth Day last April; and the club organizes a yearly cleaning of the university campus.

With its training in advocacy, the club has now begun a coalition campaign to change municipal law and begin community-wide source separation, using a plan the students devised to make recycling more economically attractive to both citizens and municipalities.

“This is a new topic for Bulgaria. After we had worked for two years with the students, we thought that this could be spread among the rest of the population,” says club chair Adrian Vassilev. But, he adds, “this is something which doesn’t happen overnight. You need at least one-to-two years to change the way people think.”

Club members first devoted a weekend to building a strategic plan, assisted by IRIS consultants. They then organized a coalition that includes five local schools, the town hygiene inspectorate, the Scouts organization, the park directorate, and another NGO. The initiative has begun a poster contest in the schools, carried out a poll by schoolchildren of their parents, and distributed information bulletins to the local media.

A Roma child at a trash dump near Gabrovo, where university students in an ecological NGO are working to persuade the city to adopt a new recycling program.



"We have a strong coalition, and we've had a lot of articles published in the local newspapers," says Valentin Kuzev, a club board member who edits the university newspaper. "We will use a press conference to announce the results—after the draft of the new ordinance is approved."

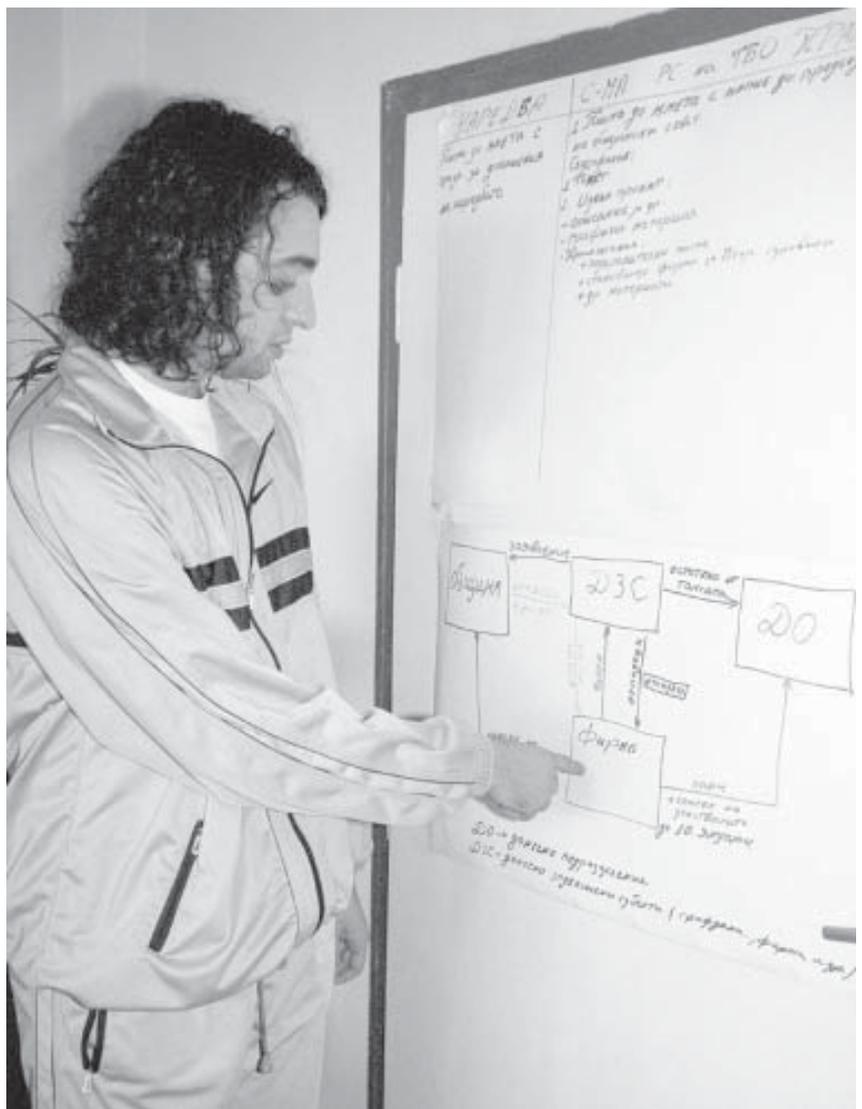
The partners have been meeting with key municipal officials, seeking advice, reporting on progress, and building relationships. "At the beginning, they didn't take us very seriously," says club member Martin Ivanov. "But when we told them we would be meeting with them again and again, then they took us seriously."

Only a tiny handful of Bulgarian communities now recycle—in part because trash-collection fees are a major source of municipal revenue, and recycling would reduce that. So in the students' plan, townspeople would receive coupons for bringing bottles, plastic and paper to a recycling company. They could then bring in the coupons for a reduction in their trash-collection fees; and the municipality could then redeem citizens' coupons for cash from the recycling company, which would still have the plastic, glass, and paper to resell.

"The final objective, to recycle the waste, is achieved—and each actor in this whole process is happy," Vassilev explains.

Yet the students know their goals won't be instantly achieved. "We do not expect that there's going to be 100 percent participation—but there are a lot of optimistic people," says club member Nadezhda Dimitrova. "The lectures that we organized in primary schools are very important to change people's way of thinking. I'm convinced that this will happen."

"At the beginning, most of us were very skeptical—but in the course of our work, I have become an optimist," adds Ivanov. "I think the rest would agree with me. We learned that some things depend on us—and we can really change things."



At the Technical University of Gabrovo, members Valentin Kuzev (top photo, left) and Milko Soluchkov of the Eco Club Detelina listen as club member Martin Ivanov outlines the club's creative proposal for one of Bulgaria's first local waste reduction and recycling systems.



In the medieval city of Plovdiv are Sonya Taushanova, director of the NGO Culture, Art and Children, and young adults Tihomir Karatotev (center) and Rositsa Dingileva. Taushanova's group is advocating for a coordinated local effort to create jobs and entrepreneurship among local young adults.

Under the ancient Romans and the Ottoman Turks, Plovdiv prospered—but today one-in-four young people between 19 and 28 years old here is unemployed. For every job that is advertised, 34 young people apply.

"We are proposing a long-term program to work with unemployed young people," says Sonya Taushanova, executive director of Culture, Art and Children, whose offices are in Plovdiv's historic, cobblestoned central city. "We hope to stimulate the municipality, to convince them they can participate in this."

Formed in 1994, Taushanova's NGO has been promoting children's talents and rights with an arts club, a TV show, theatrical and arts events, and a video and reference book on children's rights. Now it has organized a coalition of seven NGOs to lobby for a coordinated local campaign that will build job and entrepreneurship opportunities.

Last autumn, CAC received advocacy training from IRIS. It then pulled together its coalition of NGOs, including local, regional, national, and international

OPENING NEW OPPORTUNITY

CULTURE, ART AND CHILDREN, PLOVDIV

Tihomir Karatotev's clothes are bright—he wears a sky-blue jacket and lemon-yellow jeans—but his expression is grim. He looks around his home city of Plovdiv, Bulgaria's second-largest, and doesn't see a lot of job opportunity for young adults like himself. But if the NGO Culture, Art and Children (CAC) can succeed in its new advocacy campaign, many local young people like Karatotev may discover how to create opportunity for themselves.

groups with local offices. Led by a group of three people who manage its activities, the coalition has already:

- crafted a strategic plan;
- added a new segment on the workings of local government to CAC's national weekly TV show for young people; and
- submitted a detailed proposal to Plovdiv authorities, with potential funding sources, for an initiative that would include a new local council, with municipal and NGO representatives, to coordinate all youth-employment activities in the city.

"We see too many young people who are relying on social assistance," says coalition member Kamen Stratiev, local director for the Christian Children's Fund of Great Britain. "We want to make them more independent, so they can take the future into their own hands."

Included in the coalition's plan is a proposal for a new "social and business incubator" for young-adult entrepreneurship. The idea builds on a year-long project that Culture, Art and Children carried out last year. Within the municipal building, CAC leased space that it named "The Pot," where it provided business-start-up equipment and supplies to young adults from socially disadvantaged backgrounds—people with no family support, and young single mothers.

In Plovdiv, local young adults like Marin Mitev, shown here with the city in the background, hope to benefit from the advocacy work being done by the NGO Culture, Art and Children.

The incubator served 27 young people, whose projects included a very profitable dealership in second-hand school textbooks. The experience led to a segment on CAC's TV show and a new book: *A Guide for the Young Entrepreneur*.

"We think this idea has a future," Taushanova says of the incubator.

Asked if he has a dream for his future, Tihomir Karatotev gives a rare smile. "I want to do what my father did—become a designer of women's clothing," he says.

Taushanova hopes the coalition's work can stimulate new hope and creative energies in this young man and many others like him.

"Since we're in a very difficult economic situation, there are no efforts done for young people who are in difficult situations," she says. "Our idea is to teach them how not to rely on donations—how to do something for themselves."

"We see too many young people who are relying on social assistance. We want to make them more independent, so they can take the future into their own hands."



BACKGROUND

The **Institute for Sustainable Communities (ISC)** was one of the first U.S. organizations to develop projects at the community level in Bulgaria and has managed seven projects there. ISC is an independent nonprofit organization with 11 years of experience providing training, technical assistance, and financial support to communities, NGOs, businesses, and governments. Since 1991, ISC has carried out more than 45 projects in 14 countries. All of ISC's projects emphasize public participation, leadership development, multi-stakeholder involvement, institutional capacity building, partnership, and collaborative decisionmaking.

With support from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), ISC is implementing the second phase of the Democracy Network Program (DemNet) in Bulgaria. DemNet's aim is to improve citizen participation in public-policy development and decisionmaking by strengthening Bulgarian support organizations (SOs) that work in a variety of sectors. These partner SOs provide services, grants, training, technical assistance, and policy analysis to the broader civil society in Bulgaria. As NGOs play an increasing role in educating and involving citizens in activities to identify and resolve issues in their communities, they are natural candidates for an expanded advocacy role.

The DemNet partner SOs have created a diverse and competent core of individuals and institutions that can serve as a lasting resource for advocacy and civil society as issues arise over time. As part of DemNet, ISC's advocacy initiative includes:

- developing advocacy trainers and coaches similar to the core of trainers in other areas that DemNet has built during the project;
- designing and testing a Bulgaria-specific advocacy curriculum that can be offered by SOs and leading NGOs to NGOs and others in combination with opportunities for practical experience; and
- providing follow-on activities in Bulgaria to complement the curriculum development and engage a broader group of participants that will undertake advocacy activities in their communities or organizations.

The DemNet advocacy initiative will improve the overall connection between citizens and decisionmakers, allow more effective public advocacy by NGOs on key democratic reforms, and increase cooperation among groups working toward common goals. Through this effort, ISC is helping to ensure that civil society functions as a cornerstone of democracy in Bulgaria.

Front cover photos, clockwise from top left: *Kapka Panayatova of the Center for Independent Living; Alexander Kashamov of the Access to Information Program, an NGO working with the Info Eco Club; Sonya Taushanova of Culture, Art and Children; Maria Moleshka of the Info Eco Club (with townspeople); Dimo Dimov of the Samaritans Foundation; and Assya Hristova (left) and Gergana Vassileva of IRIS.*



ISC's mission is to help communities around the world address environmental, economic, and social challenges to build a better future shaped and shared by all.

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