



ANNUAL REPORT

2002



Celebrating 5 years of GONG, Zadar April 13 2002.

1. ELECTION PROGRAM

A. ELECTION MONITORING

During the 2002, there were no national elections, but numerous local extraordinary and by-elections and town/municipality neighborhood council elections took place. A total of **176** domestic observers monitored these elections:

▶ **Local extraordinary and by-elections** – Bilice, Gornji Knežinec, Mala Subotica, Makarska, Oriovac, Pribislavec, Razanac and Vinica – **27 GONG observers** monitored.

▶ **Town/municipality neighborhood councils' elections**: we followed 103 elections, mainly informing the citizens when and where the elections will take place, as well as educating them about the meaning of this lowest level of local self-government. Overall **149 observers** monitored **26** city/municipality neighborhood councils' elections.

▶ **Elections in other countries:**

Parliamentary elections in Ukraine, March 2002

- Upon invitation from the Croatian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, **Ivna Bajsic** joined the OSCE/ODIHR election observation mission in the Ukraine as a short-term observer.

- Also, GONG collaborated with the Ukrainian election monitoring organization CVU to organize a joint monitoring mission, which received financial assistance from Freedom House Kiev. The delegation consisted of election observers from Obcianske Oko (Slovakia), C4C (Macedonia), CeSID (Serbia) and GONG. GONG was represented by **Vlatka Svedruzic** and **Jasmina Vukas**.

Local Elections in Montenegro, May 2002

- Upon invitation from the Croatian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, **Masa Kovacevic** joined OSCE/ODIHR election observation mission in Montenegro as short-term observer.

Parliamentary elections in Slovakia, September 2002

- Invited by OSCE/ODIHR, **Dragan Zelic** joined the election observation mission in Slovakia as long-term observer.

Parliamentary Elections in Latvia, October 2002

- Invited by OSCE/ODIHR, **Marta Krizmanic** joined the election observation mission in Latvia as long-term observer.

B. EDUCATING AND INFORMING THE CITIZENS

▶ **City/municipality neighborhood councils' elections**

Using numerous contacts as well as the regular queries posed to us by many citizens, political parties and local bodies, we recognized there was a serious lack of education on organizing and conducting elections for the lowest level of self-government (neighborhood councils). Moreover, most of the queries indicated confusion since these elections are not under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Justice, Administration and Local Self-government or the State Election Commission.

In order to address the problem we:

- Created a **Guide on neighborhood councils**, which we distributed to all towns and municipalities in Croatia.

- Printed **50 000** flyers and **3 000** posters containing information about the role and jurisdiction of neighborhood councils. These materials, which are distributed prior to each election, contain information on the date the elections were to take place. Usually, these were the only materials that informed citizens of these small elections.

- Used GONG's **legal service** as a tool for answering daily queries of citizens, candidates and state bodies, including informing them how to address breaches of Local Election law and procedure.

▶ **“Voters’ Registration-General Elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina” Campaign**

At the end of May 2002, a GONG mini-campaign was proposed to the Croatian Ministry of Foreign with the goal of informing Bosnian citizens who are temporarily living in Croatia of the need to check their voting status in voters’ list by June 20, 2002. This procedure was necessary for those groups of people to be able to practice their voting rights in the upcoming general elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Within a week, the Ministry adopted and supported the campaign.

According to the plan we:

- Created a **brochure** called “Most Frequently Asked Questions and Answers,” of which 50 000 copies were published and distributed to organizations that provide support to refugees and displaced persons living in Croatia;
- Designed **audio** and **video clips** that contained basic information about the voter registration process;
- Laid out a **media plan** that was subsequently implemented with 30 national and local radio stations, which played GONG’s radio jingle 892 times over the course of 12 days. GONG was given a large discount of 40%, which enabled us to save over 46 000 kn. We received the largest discount from the Croatian National TV, which played 17 clips for free, saving us over 388 600,00 kn. On both Croatian National TV and CCN, our clips were played for 10 days without any charge;
- Organized **12 Citizens’ Hours** on numerous local radio stations, inviting activists from organizations that provide help to refugees and displaced persons from Bosnia to share information about the forthcoming elections.

The entire campaign was produced and implemented over the period of 3 weeks, with all expenses covered by financial assistance from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In September 2002, GONG organized a similar media campaign in order to inform those groups of citizens about their right to vote via mail. One of the important pieces of information was that the Croatian post declared such mail to be free of charge. Since the Ministry had very limited sources, we proposed an 8-day campaign on targeted local radio stations. The idea was accepted and the media campaign took place from September 26th till October 3rd on 17 local radio stations, all of whom offered significant discounts (5-50%).

C. “I VOTE FOR THE FIRST TIME”

The project «I vote for the first time» was created in 2001 but has lived through an enlargement and broadening of its components in order to encourage young people to take a more active role in Croatia’s political life. Having in mind that high school graduates acquire their voting rights when they turn 18 years old, we were determined to help them understand their election rights and duties and get involved in democratization processes.

Two rounds of the project were conducted in 2002 – one in the spring and another in the autumn semester – and included two generations of senior high school students. The Project, officially recommended by the Ministry of Education and Sport, was undertaken in the form of interactive workshops held by teams of 38 trainers, usually young, unemployed lawyers, political scientists, sociologists or senior students from those faculties.

To support the Project, we designed both a **brochure** and a **booklet** called “**Finally 18**” and “**Public Advocacy**” with a goal of making the election process and civic activism in local communities closer to the students. Each student got a condom in a box that said, “I vote (choose) for the first time.” During both rounds of the project, 25 000 condoms were donated by the Durex representative in Croatia . Also, additional materials for educating trainers and ensuring successful coordination in the field and an effective reporting system (handbooks, reporting forms, databases etc.) were created. We published the **Lexicon For the First and Every Other Time** (dictionary of election definitions) for young people that we donated to all high school libraries alongside with Project Reports that we published in both English and Croatian.

▶ The overall goal of the Project for the 2001/2 school year was to conduct **336 educative workshops for 10 000 high school graduates** all over Croatia, but total number increased to **514** thanks to great interest from the schools. As a result, **14 600 students** took part in the workshop.

▶ The overall goal of the Project for the 2002/3 school year was to conduct 600 educative workshops for **18 000 high school graduates** all over Croatia, and by the end of the year **571 workshops** were conducted for **17 000 high school students**. At the same time, more than **130 workshops** were scheduled for January and February 2003.

! 31 600 students have participated in **1 085 “I vote for the first time” workshops** during 2002, and more than **50% of all Croatian high schools** were included in this project.

D. ELECTION PACKAGE

The project «**Election Package**» started in spring 2002 after GONG won a European Commission public bid for financial support. The main goal of the Project was to organize expert public debates and create recommendations for 5 laws that regulate election processes: *Voters' lists, Political parties, Election law, State election commission as a permanent body and Financing election campaigns*. In 2002 we organized **4 round tables** dealing with the **Law of Voters' Lists (June)**, **Law on Political Parties (July)** and the third and fourth dealing with the **Election Law** and **Law on State Election Commission as a Permanent Body (December)**.

Prior to each of the roundtables, we formed a working group in order to prepare the working materials and present them to the experts. After each roundtable, we sent the recommendations to all political parties and relevant institutions in Croatia, such as the Croatian Government and Parliament, different ministries, independent experts and the media. By the end of the Project in 2003, all of the recommendations will be published and presented to the public as well as to all relevant institutions.

2. PARLIAMENT PROGRAM

The Parliament Program, with its main goals – **increasing civic confidence in democratic institutions and elected representatives and encouraging transparency of state bodies** - has been further developed with significant results.

A. OPEN PARLIAMENT

50 citizens attended Parliamentary sessions with our assistance, and **2 334 citizens** visited the Parliament as a part of regular Monday tours, which were initiated in 2000. These tours are organized in close cooperation with Parliamentary services (providing the tour of the building and a lecture) and GONG (providing citizens technical help).

We used our web page as well as media in order to inform as many citizens as possible about their right to visit Croatia's highest representative body.

! From the very beginning of the Project (spring 2000) 373 citizens attended Parliamentary sessions and **4 219 citizens** visited the Parliament as a part of regular Monday tours.

!! From March 2001, GONG began providing support for students outside Zagreb to visit the Parliament. Thanks to financial aid from the Canadian Embassy, the activity was further developed. Apart from covering students' traveling expenses, GONG also organizes a meeting with Members of the Parliament (MPs) coming from their electorate. Over the course of the last year, students from 45 high schools from all over Croatia visited the Parliament.

The overall number of schools that visited the Parliament one or more times is now **57** and **67 MPs** responded to our invitation to meet the students, some of them even a few times in a row.

B. "CITIZENS' HOUR"

The project «Citizens' Hour» was developed with a goal of increasing communication among elected representatives and citizens.

During 2002, GONG organized **150 "Citizens' Hours"**, **104** of them in the form of radio talk shows and another **46** in the form of panel discussions. Around **446 guests** took part in "Citizens' Hours" (MPs, ministers, town mayors, county mayors, town council members, experts, activists etc.). Approximately **2.300 citizens** participated in panel discussions, and **525 citizens** used the possibility of posing a question to their elected representatives during live radio talk shows.

! Starting in November 2000, we have organized total of **269 "Citizens' Hours"** all over Croatia.

C. GETTING TO KNOW LOCAL REPRESENTATIVE BODIES

Using the model of opening the doors of Croatian Parliament to its citizens, in October 2000 GONG started to inform citizens about their right to attend sessions of local government bodies. With our technical support, citizens attended **15 different local representative bodies' sessions** during 2002.

As in April 2001 Parliament passed a new Law on local government and self-government that did not contain an article about publicizing local representative bodies' sessions. Over the course of the summer 2001, we addressed all local representative bodies in Croatia (counties, towns and municipalities), suggesting they should incorporate such an article in their statutes and rules of procedure. We encouraged them to include an **article that would describe publicity of sessions in detail, taking into account the citizens** and not just indicating that sessions are open for the media representatives.

Our regional offices contacted local bodies on several occasions in order to research to what extent local representative bodies are open to citizens, and by July 2002, the initiative was brought to its end. We gathered following results:

- Out of 20 contacted counties, we received **16** statutes or rules of procedure;
- Out of 123 contacted towns, we received **80** statutes or rules of procedure;
- Out of 419 contacted municipalities, we received **159** statutes or rules of procedure **containing a detailed and easy to use article on publicity of their sessions.**

As a part of this initiative, we encouraged Fericanci Municipality Council and Pozesko-slavonska County Government to reopen their sessions to the public. This initiative is ongoing, as we have brought a motion to the Constitutional Court of Croatia to clarify this issue.

D. INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

► Croatian Parliament

The *Internship* program in the Croatian Parliament, which enables students and young professionals to volunteer for MPs, was officially recognized by the Parliamentary Presidency on April 10, 2001.

During 2002, new interns joined the existing group of **15 students** and the overall **number of volunteers** in Parliament **rose to 22.**

! We managed to build a close and very constructive relationship with the Parliamentary Secretariat, which enabled the full success of the Program. During spring 2002, interns received official accreditations in Parliament. A few months later, Parliament officials agreed that after going through GONG training workshops, new interns should pass through additional training in Parliament where

they could learn more about Administrative Services. This was conducted in November 2002, when new interns visited post office, archive, printing office, library, public relations office, information-documentation centre, sessions' preparation service and committee service and had lectures on their work and ways that interns can use them.

Additionally, at the end of the year, the Parliament Office for Public Relations agreed that interns could be of great help with the Monday tours and become guides for all interested students and citizens. We hope this will happen during spring 2003.

► **Croatian Government**

The Governmental Office for Social Partnership, in cooperation with Management Systems International, at the end of 2001 expressed a strong need to have volunteers supporting their work, and during 2002 accepted **three interns** to their office. Also, **one intern** served in Governmental Office for Development Strategy.

► **Local level**

Having in mind our years' long cooperation with local representative bodies, we felt encouraged to introduce the Internship Program at the local level, too. Regional offices conducted needs assessments in their counties and towns (Zadar, Rijeka, Zagreb and Slavonski Brod). Afterwards, the regional offices conducted a selection of candidates and office management workshops and prepared a group of interns that started volunteering at the beginning of 2002:

- **Two interns** volunteered in Rijeka Town government.
- **One intern** worked in Zagreb City government and **two** for Zagreb Town councilors from two political parties.
- **One intern** served in County Office for Social Activities in Slavonski Brod.

! At the end of 2002, we had **29** active interns and **9** alumni interns who graduated, were employed or received a scholarship to study abroad.

!! Since all interns located in Zagreb have weekly meetings in GONG, we decided that these meetings could serve not just as an experience exchange but also as additional education through meetings with interesting persons from Croatian politics, media or civil society. From November on, meetings were held every Wednesday, where interns met and talked with Green Action President Jagoda Munic, Zlatko Canjuga (MP), and Parliament Secretary Danica Orcic as well as ex interns who now work in the Government, Ministries, University or other institutions.

E. AD HOC INITIATIVES

a) As a part of our cooperation with Croatian Parliament we suggested various initiatives that aimed to improve working conditions for MPs and also to enable easy access to information for both citizens and MPs:

► **Improving the content of the Croatian Parliament's official web page** – back in 2000, GONG suggested numerous ways to improve the Parliament's web page. In March 2002, the new plan for Parliamentary Internet reform was presented to the public, suggesting improvements to the web page that would enable citizens to access all information and make all the procedures more transparent. GONG closely cooperated with the Committee for Informing, Informatization and the Media, attending all committee sessions. We conducted a comparative analysis of Parliamentary web pages all over Europe and presented our suggestions to Committee members. The Committee formed a working group consisting of experts and NGO representatives who then created written suggestions to the Committee. Those suggestions were accepted by the Committee, which then laid down the deadline for employing a webmaster that would provide technical support and maintain the web page. The web page is currently under construction. In the meantime, until the new web page is introduced, we suggested a simple improvement of the current web page be made, which was to put the daily schedule for the Plenary Session on the web page. The suggestion was adopted and a new link was added ("Today in the Parliament") where the public can be informed of the current schedule of the Plenary Session from each day forward.

► **Opening of Committee for Constitution, Rules of Procedure and Political System's session on opening political parties' annual financial reports to the public** - In January 2002, the Committee for Constitution, Parliamentary Rules of Procedure and Political System adopted a conclusion that all parliamentary political parties receiving funds from the state budget are obliged to submit annual financial reports to the Committee. Their conclusion followed the provisions of Law on Political Parties. Having in mind that GONG strongly supports transparency of political party financing and feels that it is one of the crucial questions in Croatia today, we tried to advocate for the Committee's session on the topic to be open to the public. That sort of session was never proscribed in the Parliamentary Rules of Procedure, and it was left to the Committee members to decide if there was a need to make the session public. Unfortunately, during 2002 the Committee did not receive the annual financial reports from all of the parties that were required to do so. As a result, no such session has been held.

► **Initiative for amending Parliamentary Rules of Procedure** - Croatian Parliament's Secretary General invited GONG to provide support in the creation of Parliamentary Rules of Publicity. Those Rules contain detailed information on how citizens and NGO representatives can attend Parliament, as well as regulations for citizens' tours of the Parliament. All those regulations were encouraged by GONG's Open Parliament Project. A procedure that will lessen the complicated application requirements for entering the Parliament will soon be introduced. Also, we encouraged the inclusion of an article that would enable citizens to have access to session and committee archives that come in written and audio form, by submitting a request to the Secretariat. The proposed Rules of Publicity have not yet entered the procedure.

b) Other GONG's Advocacy Initiatives:

► **Motion for review of constitutionality of all existing election laws and the Constitutional Law on Constitutional Court of Republic of Croatia** – The “Election package” working group, which worked on recommendations on the election laws and Law on State Election Commission as a permanent body, concluded that some of the existing provisions of the election laws, concerning the protection of voter's rights, conflict with Constitutional Law on Constitutional Court of Republic of Croatia. After discussing this matter with experts on Constitutional Law, we decided to submit a ***Motion for review of constitutionality of all existing election laws*** and Constitutional Law on Constitutional Court of Republic of Croatia to the Constitutional Court of Republic of Croatia regarding provisions proscribing **the right of petition and appeal due to election irregularities**.

In the existing election laws, the right of petition and appeal is granted exclusively to political parties, independent lists and candidates. On the other hand, Constitutional Law on Constitutional Court grants the right to appeal to political parties, candidates and 100 voters or 5% of voters from an electoral district. Therefore, the provisions of election laws are in conflict with the provisions of Constitutional Law. Moreover, these provisions of both the election laws and Constitutional Law should be regarded as unconstitutional, as they do not comply with article 45 of the Croatian Constitution (which grants free and equal active and passive voters' rights) as well as with the articles of the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights (which grant free and equal active and passive voters' rights along with the obligation to establish an effective legal remedy for protection of this right). In the Croatian election laws and Constitutional Law, there is no effective legal remedy for the protection of voters' rights that every voter can exercise.

► **Initiative on amending Law on Local and Regional Self-government with the provision that all sessions of local bodies are public** - After establishing connections with the Committee for Local and Regional Self-government and monitoring a few of their sessions, we decided to address a proposed amendment to the Law on Local and Regional Self-government in order to introduce a provision which clearly states that all sessions of local bodies are public and citizens are able to attend them. The proposed written amendment was presented and the importance of such a provision was explained as a means for dealing with problems that occurred with local bodies during the last year. The Committee members were positive about this initiative and promised to propose this amendment to the Law as a Committee amendment according to the Parliament's Rules and Procedures.

► **Initiative to enable GONG to become an organization open for civil military servants** - GONG filed a request to the Ministry of Defense to be accepted to the Institutions and Organizations Register

that would enable us to accept civil military servants. As the new Law on Civil Service entered Parliamentary procedure only at the beginning of 2002, our request has been put on hold until the new Law is passed by the Parliament.

► **Novine Narodu Initiative – part two** - In 2001, GONG undertook a very successful initiative “Novine Narodu!” (Newspapers to the People) after which the public company “Narodne Novine d.d.” (People’s Newspapers - Publisher of Croatia’s Official Gazette) dropped their decision to charge for internet access to the official state newspaper, leaving the search part to be charged for. Therefore, we made our search engine and put it on our web page. At the end of the 2002, the public company “Narodne Novine d.d.” decided to enable free Gazette searching for governmental decisions. After that, GONG decided to stop the initiative “Novine Narodu!” by which we made free search engines of laws and other regulations published in the Gazette. After a few days, we received dozens of messages from citizens, firms, companies asking us to put the search engine back on-line because “it’s much better than one made by Narodne Novine”. We returned search engine to our website.

F. LEGAL AID SERVICES

In October 2001 GONG established legal aid services open to all citizens during our working hours. Citizens use this service either by visiting our office in person, making a phone call or simply by sending an email. GONG directly replies to their queries, or in the cases where we don’t have the competency to provide legal advising, we simply encourage citizens to contact state institutions that can help them (Governmental Office for Human Rights, Office of the Ombudsman etc), or other NGOs that could provide help on certain issues.

! In 2002, GONG dealt with **78** legal queries, 19 with finding specific laws or regulations, 17 with election law or procedure violations, 11 with local and community self-government, 5 with civic initiatives, 3 with state institution’s violations of law, 3 with civil army service and the remainder miscellaneous.

3. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

A. TRAININGS AND CONSULTATIONS

GONG held numerous trainings and consultations for similar organizations from South-East Europe and Russia. Apart from providing training on election monitoring and campaign management, most of these organizations asked to be educated about the Parliament Program, other activities and organizational management and development.

► **CDHRF - Council for the Defense of Human Rights and Freedoms, Kosovo**

Four CDHRF representatives visited GONG in February 2002. As a part of their training program they were introduced to the history, development and structure of our organization, communication procedures, donors and volunteers, as well as elections campaign management and education activities. While participating in our Parliament Program trainings, CDHRF representatives had an opportunity to visit the Croatian Parliament and meet some of the MPs. They also participated in a GONG volunteers’ meeting and visited our regional office in Slavonski Brod. While there, a meeting with local politicians, NGO activists and the media was organized. We also presented our materials and held a video presentation of our activities.

► **MOST, Macedonia**

In June 2002, Ivna Bajsic and Biljana Jelinic held two-day training for MOST activists on volunteer recruitment strategies during their election observation campaign. In addition, between January and June, we provided consultations and materials to Vladimir Pran who worked with (C4C, later MOST) under NDI/GONG contract.

▶ **Study Visit Program: Building domestic observers' network in Russia**

At the beginning of April, GONG hosted a 16-member group of Russian NGO leaders for a week, as a part of an international program called “**Building a Network of Domestic Election Monitors**”. When the public bidding for this program was announced by AED Moscow, GONG won the contest among numerous NGOs from the region.

The goal of the program was to educate NGO leaders on the topics of election campaign management, election monitoring, civic education on election laws and procedure, activities focused to increase transparency of state institutions and efforts to build communication between citizens and elected representatives. Bearing in mind that both parliamentary and presidential election will take place in Russia next year, Russian NGOs wanted to prepare themselves as much as possible for the upcoming campaigns. Participants used only the highest grades in evaluating the agenda, organization of the seminar and experience acquired.

▶ **Young activists in Bosnia and Herzegovina – Democratic Leadership Development School, Bosnia and Herzegovina**

Vlatka Svedruzic was invited to present our activities and hold a workshop entitled “Development of democracy and civil society”. The event took place at the NDI School in Sarajevo during May, which gathered numerous political party youth representatives and NGO activists.

▶ **Center for Civic Initiatives – Bosnia and Herzegovina**

The Center for Civic Initiatives from Bosnia and Herzegovina contacted us on several occasions in order to get advice and exchange experiences on election monitoring campaigns for General elections in Bosnia. In June, Igor Stojanovic and Ljubo Janjic visited GONG in person. They were very interested in our parallel vote tabulation experience, as well as collecting minutes from each polling station.

▶ **Young candidates at general elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina - “This is our future” seminar**

Vlatka Svedruzic took part in a Konrad Adenauer Foundation seminar held in Mostar during July. The goal of the seminar was to provide education to young candidates at the general elections on the topics of Election Law, election campaign, media presentation and public relations, election marketing, relationships with voters and experience from nearby countries. Vlatka conducted “Relationship with voters” workshop, which resulted with an action plan. Her presentation, as well as her working group was ranked with highest grades.

▶ **Study Visit Program: Macedonian MOST in GONG**

After Macedonian elections, MOST director approached GONG with a request to conduct a study visit program in GONG about Parliament program and other GONG activities. We responded immediately and offered agendas with trainings and lectures about organizational development and our programs, initiatives, visits of the Parliament, “I vote for the first time” workshop, “Citizens’ hour” and regional offices. We continued with communication and encouraged them to apply to Freedom House Budapest who immediately showed interest for such an exchange visit. The visit took place at the beginning of December and was highly appreciated and useful for both organizations.

▶ **NGO Public and Media relations training of Montenegrin NGOs**

Upon an invitation from ORT, international training organization, under the USAID/ORT Montenegro Advocacy program, GONG representative Aleksandra Kuratko provided one-day training on NGO Public and Media Relations. The training took place in Podgorica with 5 organizations: Association of disabled students of Montenegro, Association of paraplegics of Montenegro, Illiyricum, Open-air market sellers’ association and SOS telephone for women and children victims of violence.

B. ENEMO (European Network of Election Monitoring Organizations)

Since the September 2001 **ENEMO Constitutional Assembly** in Opatija, organized with sponsorship from the Croatian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where 11 organizations signed the Constitutional Protocol and elected CeSID as the first Secretary General of the network, only one meeting of ENEMO

members has happened. The ENEMO meeting took place in Belgrade at the beginning of 2002, where minor changes of Constitutional Protocol were adopted.

Unfortunately, with the exception of the GONG and CVU initiative for a joint mission during the Ukrainian Parliamentary Election, nothing else has happened or has been organized. Given the unfortunate inactivity of the Network, GONG has often been in the position of providing information about ENEMO to international community representatives.

C. INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES, SEMINARS AND VISITS

▶ *January 2002* - Masa Kovacevic participated at the second regional meeting of the Centers for Pluralism in Romania.

▶ *February 2002* - Suzana Jasic and Ivna Bajsic represented GONG at second ENEMO gathering in Belgrade. GONG representatives used this opportunity to inform all ENEMO members about GONG international activities.

▶ *March 2002* - Ivna Bajsic participated in an e-mail Forum organized by Freedom House Budapest that enabled several regional NGOs to discuss the planning, development and implementation of different youth and democracy initiatives online.

▶ *March 2002* - "New European Challenges for Croatian NGOs" was an international seminar organized by the Institute for International Relations and Friedrich Naumann Stiftung in Zagreb. The seminar gathered distinguished guests and lecturers from both Croatia and EU countries. Ivna Bajsic represented GONG.

▶ *March 2002* - Vanja Skoric represented GONG at an inter-regional conference on "Voters' Register" in Podgorica, Montenegro, which was organized by the domestic non-governmental organization CEMI.

▶ *March 2002* - Masa Kovacevic represented GONG at the »Civic Initiatives and Elections« conference that Open Society Institute organized in Ohrid, Macedonia.

▶ *April 2002* - Ivna Bajsic and Vanja Skoric took part in an international seminar called "Harmonization of Parliamentary practices on the way to the EU" that was organized by the Croatian Parliament, Parliamentary Delegation to the Council of Europe and the International Institute of Democracy.

▶ *April 2002* - Vanja Skoric attended an inter-regional conference on "Financing Political Parties" in Podgorica, Montenegro, organized by the domestic non-governmental organization CEMI.

▶ *May 2002* - The Croatian Parliament organized an international conference called "Democracies opposed to terrorism-National strategies". GONG Parliamentary interns Marta Krizmanic and Igor Miskulin provided support in organizing the event.

▶ *May 2002* - GONG representative Vanja Skoric was a guest at the "Financing political campaigns" conference that took place in Kiev, Ukraine. The conference was sponsored by IFES and USAID, gathering numerous experts and NGO activists.

▶ *May 2002* - The Croatian Ministry of Defense invited us to take part in a two-week international seminar "To Secure Peace: Civil - Military Cooperation in Modern Peacekeeping" in Vodice. Interns Violeta Liovic and Tamara Horvat were the only NGO representatives at that event.

▶ *June 2002* – GONG's Internship Program Coordinator and 5 interns took part in the «EU Enlargement» seminar organized by APD Romania. The event gathered representatives and interns from Slovakia, Bulgaria, Romania, Czech Republic and Ukraine.

▶ *September 2002* - GONG representative Aleksandra Kuratko participated in the OSCE 2002 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in Warsaw. Aleksandra Kuratko made a speech and submitted the written statement that was later included in the official conference document which can be found at:

▶ *October 2002* - Vanja Skoric represented GONG at the international conference "Regulating Lobby Activities in Central and Eastern Europe", organized by the Transparency International Hungarian Chapter in Budapest. The main goals of the conference were to define the purpose of regulating lobbying activities, to receive reports from each of invited countries, as well as to answer what are the most effective legal tools for ensuring transparency of lobbying activities.

▶ *November 2002* - Suzana Jasic participated at the Central European Initiative International Seminar within the framework of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe "Public Diplomacy and Media" in Dubrovnik. The organizer, the Diplomatic Academy of Croatian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, invited GONG to hold a presentation on "How public diplomacy could support civil society".

▶ *December 2002* - GONG's representative Vanja Skoric participated in the Conference of the Council of Europe, within Programs for Democratic Stability, on the "Development of Democratic Citizenship and Responsive Leadership at Local Level", from 12-14 December 2002 at Fuerteventura, Canary Islands. More than 160 representatives from 36 European countries participated, including representatives of national and local governments, research institutions and non-governmental organizations.

4. ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A. COOPERATING WITH INSTITUTIONS AND REPRESENTING GONG

a) Conferences, seminars and public happenings

▶ *January 2002* - Regional office Zadar took part in a meeting with AED taking place at the town library where self-sustainability of NGOs was discussed.

▶ *January 2002* - Regional office Rijeka started cooperating with the RI-Center working group on drafting a Charter that would determine the cooperation between the town and local NGOs.

▶ *February 2002* - Ana Zunic, Zadar regional office coordinator, was invited to a Governmental Office for NGOs seminar to discuss models of cooperation between NGOs and state institutions. Numerous representatives came from different ministries as well as local governments and donors were present at this seminar.

▶ *March 2002* - Suzana Jasic held a presentation of GONG activities at the European Commission Ceremony in honor of NGOs that won their financial aid.

▶ *April 2002* - Suzana Jasic held a presentation of GONG activities for Rotary Club Zagreb-Gradec.

▶ *April 2002* – Regional Office Zagreb organized an info desk marking Earth Day, in cooperation with NGO Green Action.

▶ *April 2002* - Masa Kovacevic took part in the European Commission's presentation of their Youth programs.

▶ *April 2002* - Ivna Bajsic, Vanja Skoric and Masa Kovacevic visited ELSA moot Parliament that took part in the Croatian Parliament.

▶ *May 2002* - GONG representatives (Aleksandra Kuratko, Suzana Jasic, Vanja Skoric and Ivna Bajsic) were present at the liberal parties' round table "Election Law that is needed for Croatia" organized by NDI and Friedrich Naumann Stiftung where they presented Election Package Project.

▶ *May 2002* - Regional office Slavonski Brod presented GONG at NGO Days in Slavonski Brod.

▶ *May 2002* - Regional Office Zadar took part in Volunteer Days in Split, informing the citizens about GONG activities via an info desk.

▶ *June 2002* - GONG and NDI hosted CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency) representatives in GONG Head Office and presented programs and activities.

▶ *June 2002* - Vanja Skoric and Ana Zunic represented GONG at a conference organized by the Governmental Office for NGOs where issues of the new Charity Organizations Law, Code of practice and standards of receiving state funding and Croatian Lottery's funding were discussed. These issues

will be further discussed in working groups that will be formed for different issues. The conference also gathered various USAID, ICNL (International Center for Not-for-profit Law) and NGO representatives.

▶ *June 2002* - Vlatka Svedruzic took part in a meeting organized by the Croatian Esperanto Association in order to discuss options for building a Youth Organizations Network.

▶ *September 2002* - Vanja Skoric participated in a seminar organized by the Friedrich Naumann Stiftung in Trogir, on "Law on Political Parties and Relations of Public towards Politics", where GONG's recommendations were a part of the official working materials distributed to members of political parties. Goran Cular, a member of GONG's Election package working group, was one of the two main speakers of that seminar, presenting GONG's recommendations.

▶ *October 2002* - GONG participated on Radio Blijesak panel on *the role of NGOs in local democracy development* where 3 other NGO representatives also took part. A city representative, who could not come to the show although he had promised, gave a statement in which he stressed the important cooperation with GONG in the Parliament program.

▶ *November 2002* - Suzana Jasic and Vanja Skoric attended the round table «Human resources in Croatian politics and Public Administration» organized by the Friedrich Naumann Stiftung and Europe Circle.

▶ *November 2002* - Vanja Skoric participated at a seminar organized by Governmental Office for NGOs in Begovo Razdolje. The following issues were discussed: Office Report about Annual Call for Projects, Office Report about NGOs evaluation, Office report about Cards Programs, Advisory Board for Civil Society Development Report, National Board for Volunteerism Development, Codex on positive practice and standards for financing from State and local budgets, Law on National Endowment for Civil Society and Law on Public Benefits Organization.

▶ *November 2002* - Internship Program coordinator Masa Kovacevic presented GONG's Internship program to the Rotary Club Zagreb-Gradec because that Club nominated her for a Study Exchange trip to USA.

▶ *December 2002* - Regional office Zadar supported a fund-raiser humanitarian action organized by "Our children" association. The Zadar Office coordinator was invited to support the action and sell Christmas cards on the street among some quite prominent local officials and famous persons. This event received significant media attention.

b) Meetings

All GONG offices held numerous meetings with Governmental and Parliamentary representatives, local elected representatives, international community workers, political party officials, media, private businesses, NGOs and other institutions.

Also, many international delegations visited GONG over the course of the year: Patrick Merloe, Election and Political Processes director at NDI, Rob Benjamin, NDI Regional director for Central and Eastern Europe, House of Lords Delegation from Great Britain, UN representatives, World Bank officials, Freedom House officials, Olof Palme Institute officials, MOTT officials, representatives of Canadian NGO Parliamentary centre and Strategy NGO from Saint Petersburg, a delegation from the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office and many more.

Among others, GONG representatives were welcomed by the Vice-president of the Croatian Government, Ms. Zeljka Antunovic, Parliamentary Secretary General, Ms. Danica Orcic, Cabinet members in Ministry of Education, USA and Great Britain Ambassadors in Croatia, the Department for Educational Development and Improvement of Ministry of Education, State Department representatives, State Election Commission and Ministry of Justice, Administration and Local (regional) self-government officials...

c) Project Cooperation

▶ GONG finished its software application for NGO management called «**NGOffice**» that was initiated with the cooperation of Microsoft Croatia and Governmental Office for NGOs. As a part of the Project, citizens will be able to access a regularly updated web site with information on all NGOs in Croatia, ministries and officials responsible for NGO issues, as well as database of legal regulations that tackle the work of NGOs.

► In June, Maureen Taylor, lecturer in the Communications Department at Rutgers University, visited GONG as a part of her research project that aimed to find out and evaluate citizens' opinions about NGOs and the media, donors and NGOs in both Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. As she conducted similar research during the 2000 parliamentary elections in Croatia and GONG offered her technical support in interviewing the citizens, Ms. Taylor wished to renew our cooperation. GONG managed to collect 400 questionnaires, also offering additional questions to the list of existing ones, including *Which NGO is in your opinion very a) active, b) influential and c) which NGO do you trust most?* The answers to all three above questions were very favorable for GONG, which was often on top of all the answers: a) 110, b) 46 and c) 58 citizens replied GONG.

Moreover, we can back up those results with another poll that was conducted by the PULS Agency and B.a.B.e called "Perception of NGOs in Croatia". Answering the question what comes first to your mind when thinking about NGOs, 6% of citizens replied GONG. That was also the 4th reply out of 16.

► Care International, GONG and Zamirnet jointly started a project under The Sustainable Return of Refugees and Displaced Person Civil Society Project (SRRDP-CS), which is an integral part of the European Union CARDS 2001 national project. The aim of the Project is to provide support to the rehabilitation of the social structure in four chosen EUPOP municipal and town districts (European Union - Reconstruction for Return Project) in Croatia: *Dvor, Glina, Knin and Gracac*. The SRRDP-CS project consists of two main program components: strengthening the efficiency and development of organizations of the local authorities and civil society and strengthening the public participation and raising the level of information. Therefore, in this project GONG will conduct its usual projects with more emphasis on local issues. The projects that will be conducted are "Citizens' Hours", "Open Parliament" and "I Vote for the First Time"

► GONG representative Suzana Jasic took part in a working group that advised the Ministry of Labor and Social Care on financial support to NGOs. The group began working in November and met several times in order to recommend the distribution of 200.000 USD in financial support to the NGOs who applied under the "Social care" in the call for projects by the Croatian Government Office of NGOs.

d) Other activities

► Throughout August, we updated our archives and set up a new model of preserving our documents (finances, mail documents, promotional and training materials, press clipping, video and audio materials and photographs). We also gave some of our materials to the Zagreb City Archives and Croatian History Museum, upon their request.

► We created a new GONG web site that was officially presented to the public in September 2002.

► At the end of 2002, we printed new materials for GONG presentation: GONG bookmarks, paper blocks and calendars

B. MANAGING THE ORGANIZATION

a) GONG Assembly and Board of Directors

GONG's 6th regular Assembly took place in September 2002 and 46 out of 57 members were present. The Assembly adopted the annual report provided by **Suzana Jasic**, whose third and last mandate expired, and elected **Aleksandra Kuratko** as the new Executive Director as well as three Board Directors: **Veljko Kukulj** (*GONG volunteer and owner of software firm*), **Damir Sabol** (*founder of ISKON Internet, first private Internet provider in Croatia*) in second mandate and **Zvonimir Mataga** (*lawyer*) in first mandate. The Executive Director appointed two Board Members: **Goran Cular** (*Assistant at Faculty of political sciences*) in first mandate and **Sinisa Rodin** (*Professor at Faculty of Law*) in second mandate. The Board of Directors met at their Constitutional Session in October and elected Zvonimir Mataga as Board President, Sinisa Rodin as Vice President and Veljko Kukulj as a member of the Commission for employment.

Over the year the Board of Directors held 7 sessions –6 regular sessions and one constitutive. The Executive Director used all of those sessions to report on GONG's activities, plans and problems.

b) GONG Staff

16 persons are working in GONG on a full-time basis: 8 in the Head Office and 2 in each of the 4 regional offices. Apart from its employees, GONG cooperated with different external associates (trainers, members of various expert groups etc.)

GONG staff met on several occasions to evaluate and develop a working plan for the next period as well as to discuss new projects and future activities.

Staff education:

▶ *January 2002* - Izidora Tomljanovic, Regional office Rijeka assistant participated in the "Working with volunteers" workshop organized by Ri-Center.

▶ *March 2002* - All regional offices and trainers took part in a three-day education seminar for "I vote for the first time" Project that was organized by the Head Office.

▶ *March 2002* - GONG Head Office hosted Bojan Klapcic, IDS caucus secretary to hold a lecture and presentation of his research on "Investing in education in state administration".

▶ *May 2002* - Zadar Regional office coordinator Ana Zunic participated in a CARE International seminar on NGO self-sustainability that took place in Tribunj.

▶ *May 2002* - Regional offices and "I vote for the first time" trainers participated in the three-day evaluation of the project that was organized by the Head Office.

▶ *June 2002* - Ivna Bajsic, alongside a Croatian Parliamentary delegation, participated in a study visit to the Canadian Parliament. The study visit, which was organized by NDI Croatia, enabled her to learn about Parliamentary procedures, communication between MPs and citizens, internship program, public hearings and many other Canadian Parliamentary activities in detail. Out of many meetings, we would like to mention the one Ms. Bajsic had with representatives of Elections Canada which is the non-partisan agency responsible for the conduct of federal elections and referendums.

▶ *August 2002* - Vanja Skoric had a one-month fellowship at ICNL (International Center for Not-for-profit Law) office in Budapest where she conducted work on several projects and research activities, all related to NGOs and legal work.

▶ *August 2002* - Ivna Bajsic won a Columbia Law School/COLPI Fellowship, which will enable her to spend a year of studies at Columbia Law School in New York City and intern in local NGOs dealing with legal aid. According to her contract and upon her return from USA, Ivna will continue working for GONG for at least one year.

▶ *September 2002* - Biljana Jelinic-Lakusic from Slavonski Brod Regional office participated in the workshop "Education for women self-strengthening" that was organized by Women's group Brod.

▶ *October 2002* - All regional offices and trainers took part in three-day education seminar for "I vote for the first time" Project in Stubicke Toplice that was organized by Head Office.

▶ *October 2002* - A three-day seminar with all GONG interns took place in Krapinske Toplice.

▶ *November 2002* - Alina Jurjevic from Zadar Regional office participated in a five-day seminar organized by CARE International in Begovo Razdolje. The topic of the seminar was «Organizational Management» where the following topics were discussed: introduction to organizational management, basic strategic planning, basic financial management and team building.

c) Volunteers

▶ **We celebrated 5 years of GONG:** GONG as an initiative was developed 5 years ago, in February 1997. We decided to mark our 5 years of existence on April 13, to remember the 1997 Local elections where GONG observers were not allowed to enter polling places. We celebrated this event in a working atmosphere, having info desks in all towns where regional offices are working and participating in numerous media appearances that we used to evaluate our activities over the period of 5 years. Also, we put an advertisement in all daily newspapers to sum up all our results and thank all citizens, volunteers and institutions that supported our work over the years. Without all those people, GONG would not have celebrated its 5th Anniversary in the first place.

Regional office Slavonski Brod took a step further by organizing an initiative "Disarm the children" as a part of their info desk. The aim of the initiative was to encourage all children to exchange toy weapons for candies in order to show an example to their parents to return real weapons that they might still

keep after the war period and receive sweets in return. The initiative got huge media coverage, attracting numerous citizens to the GONG info desk.

▶ **52 citizens** became GONG members, fulfilling the conditions of membership. In the GONG database there are **2.616** citizens that donated **7.983** volunteer hours to GONG in 2002.

▶ On December 5th 2002, all regional offices celebrated **Volunteer Day** by organizing receptions for their active volunteers.

d) Technical Development

During 2002 we improved our internal computer network and created an administrative office database. In addition, most offices received advanced Internet connections and an MS Back Office 2000 server providing permanent Internet connection was introduced in the Head Office. Among other applications, we created a new one to provide successful "Staff Management" where all data on working hours, holidays and similar employee-related issues has been accumulated. We made our anti-virus server stronger, ways of email communication in the organization have been advanced, and many software solutions have been adapted to help employees in the Head Office organize their work better (document sharing, network printing, office portal etc.).

The Head Office also purchased new photocopying machine, multifunctional computer service system and laser printer. All regional offices received new fax machines and photocopying machines, as well as computers where needed.

AT THE VERY END...

- ▶ We published our Annual narrative and financial reports for the year 2001.
- ▶ Web pages *Novine narodu* were ranked as **Top 50** among all Croatian web pages according to Bug magazine.
- ▶ Both national and local media (TV stations, radio stations, printed and Internet media) mentioned GONG several thousand times.
- ▶ We maintained very constructive and fair relations with all state institutions, political parties, NGOs and international organizations.

! From April 11th to May 3rd 2002, GfK – Center for Market Research, Croatia, conducted field research about **citizens' attitudes towards NGOs** in Croatia. The survey was ordered by the Academy for Educational Development, Washington D.C. - AED Croatia.

On the survey question: «Please, list the names or titles of associations or NGOs that you can think of at this moment», respondents answered as following: **GONG (21%)**, HVIDRA – Croatian Invalids' Association from the Homeland War (15%), B.a.B.e. (6,7%), Caritas (5,3%), HHO- Croatian Helsinki Committee (3,5%), Udruzenje za zastitu potrosaca – Association for Consumers' protection (3,1%), Crveni kriz – Red Cross (2,8%) etc.

FINANCIAL REPORT FOR YEAR 2002

Average exchange rate: 1 USD = 7, 2 KN

Fiscal year starts January 1st and ends December 31st. Financial report includes statement of assets and liabilities, consolidated statement of income and expenditure by budget lines.

Balance Sheet		Consolidated Statement of Income	
Assets		Income	
Tangible Assets	134.078	Grants and donations	4.620.264
Cash & Cash equivalents	1.060.804	Revenues	308.212
Total Assets	1.194.882	Income from membership fee	1.970
		Income earnings	5.147
		Total Income	4.935.593
Liabilities		Expenditure	
Fund Balance	1.194.882	Services	1.476.163
Total Liabilities	1.194.882	Depreciation	47.033
		Tangible costs	119.412
		Other costs	612.238
		Costs for employees	1.509.872
		Total expenditure	3.764.718
		Income over Expenditure	1.170.875
Expenditure by Budget Lines			
Personnel Expenses		Other Costs	
Salaries	406.466	Accountant Services	25.670
Taxes from Salaries	309.620	Office Supply	119.412
Honorarium	793.786	Rent	65.738
Total Personnel Expenses	1.509.872	Utilities	51.699
		Communication	293.749
		Photocopying	3.999
		Advertising	249.551
		Printing Costs	189.387
		Travel Costs	399.288
		Accommodation	
		- seminars and workshops	144.556
		Other Services (Student service)	605.027
		Other Costs	59.737
		Total Other Costs	2.207.813
		Total Expenditures	3.717.685 kn

SPECIAL THANKS

GONG is a non-profit organization. We were able to accomplish our goals and tasks with volunteer work by over 2.600 Croatian citizens and with all of the generous support and donations received.

Financial support (in kn)

up to 2.000

IDEE-Institute for Democracy in Eastern Europe

up to 3.000

PriceWaterhouseCoopers, Croatia

up to 5.000

IFES-International Foundation for Electoral Systems

up to 25.000

GONG

Open Society Institute Croatia

up to 70.000

Olof Palme International Centre

up to 100.000

Freedom House, Budapest

up to 150.000

Governmental Office for NGOs

up to 200.000

Canadian Embassy in Zagreb

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Croatia

up to 250.000

AED-Academy for Educational Development

European Commission in Zagreb

Charles Stewart Mott Foundation

up to 500.000

NDI - National Democratic Institute for

International Affairs

up to 800.000

NED-National Endowment for Democracy

over 1,500.000

British Embassy in Zagreb

In - kind supporters (in kn)

up to 1.000

Velepromet d.o.o., Slavonski Brod

Kandit d.d., Osijek

Professional International, Slavonski Brod

Pizzeria Glembay, Slavonski Brod

Getro d.d., Slavonski Brod

Slavonijatrans d.o.o., Slavonski Brod

Town of Slavonski Brod

Aleksandar Radivojevic

up to 2.000

Argus d.o.o., Slavonski Brod

up to 10.000

Iskon Internet d.d.

up to 20.000

Local government and institutions (rooms for events)

up to 25.000

Microsoft Croatia d.o.o.

up to 100.000

Atrantic Trade d.o.o.

Local Media (announcements, radio panels)

up to 110.000

Organization for Democratic Society Zagreb

up to 400.000

Croatian Radio Television