

# **BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA YOUTH VOICES GROUP**

## *Progress Report for Fiscal Year 2005 (FY '05)*

This report summarizes the main activities of the Youth Voices Group (YVG) established in the World Bank Country Office in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BH), during the FY '05.

The main focus of the YVG during this FY was on the following areas:

- **Education and employment;**
- **Health care and risky behavior; and**
- **Youth policy development**

Working groups were organized to discuss the priorities in each of the above mentioned areas and provide feedback to respective World Bank teams.

### **Brief evaluation of YV working groups activities**

#### **Working group - Education**

Members: Amela Mulahalilovic, Sanin Ramezic, Senad Sinanovic, Vesna Jakovljevic, Amir Alic and Paula Pranjic

- The group provided comments on the Project Appraisal Document for the Education Restructuring Project, as agreed with the World Bank Education Team.
- Promotion of informal education was high on the list of priorities for this group. In this regard, the group is continuously cooperating with the Bank teams in an attempt to ensure greater emphasis on informal education as a tool to increase competitiveness of young people in the labor market. Round table discussion about informal education was organized with representatives of different organizations involved in informal education in BH. The objective of this event was to gather all relevant representatives who were working on informal education and to collect relevant information on this issue. Inputs were forwarded to the World Bank team with recommendations on how to improve and support informal education in our country.
- The group also focused on very important issue in our country, reform of the system of high education. In this regard, the group conducted interviews with students, deans and professors from the country's universities. Presentation of the findings will be made during the round table discussion that will be organized in early FY '06. Provisions of Bologna Declaration had not been implemented, but members of the group initiated a dialogue with student associations and professors to accelerate implementation of this declaration.
- The group also became familiar with, and provided feedback to the World Bank financed microfinance operation in BH (LIP II) as an important instrument in the country's labor market.

### **Working group - Youth policy**

Members: Jasmin Salkic, Vedad Durakovic, Dalibor Ninkovic, Bojan Golic, Emina Trumic and Gordana Drakul

- A database of youth associations involved in developing and influencing youth policy in BH, was developed by the group in November 2004.
- Meetings with the Roma youth associations were held in November 2004 and January 2005. The group was working on Roma's inclusion in the World Bank financed projects and programs. Members of the group held several meetings with Roma associations, visited Roma community in Kakanj municipality (the municipality with the country's largest Roma community).
- Members of this working group had several meetings with officials responsible for the Youth Commission in BH, a body which became operational only recently. The group provided recommendations related to selection of members of the Commission and related to its future activities.

### **Working group - Health and risky behavior**

Members: Elis Hrkalovic, Borisa Goronja, Barbara Putica, Merima Baralic, Mili Sestic and Alija Pandur

Priorities for this group included:

- Regular dialogue with the World Bank health team.
- Brief survey about priorities among youth associations dealing with health issues. Report summarizing findings of this brief survey is currently being finalized and will be presented to the World Bank health team. Recommendations for participating youth associations would also be provided upon completion of this survey.
- The group participated in the field work with NGOs that were working on HIV/AIDS prevention and protection. The group developed a data base on capacity of these organizations for the purposes of the Health Sector Enhancement Project.

### **Other matters of interest**

#### **Meeting with Mr. Shengman Zhang, Managing Director of the World Bank**

In July 2005, right after its formation, the group had an opportunity to meet with Mr. Shengman Zhang, Managing Director of the World Bank. During the meeting, members of the group informed Mr. Zhang about challenges that young people of BH are facing with particular emphasis on education and employment.

#### **Youth, Development and Peace Conference - September 5 - 7, 2004.**

Three representatives of the YVGroup participated at the Youth, Development and Peace Conference that was held in Sarajevo on September 5 – 7, 2004. At the same time, all other members of the YVG assisted in the preparation and organization of this event. The presence of the highest officials of the World Bank and local authorities, as well as the presence of representatives of organizations active in the youth sector made this event a big opportunity for the YVG members to learn about the youth problems in the whole world.

### **First Retreat of the Youth Voices Group**

First retreat of the group was held on January 30 - 31, 2005. This was an important team building event but also an opportunity to summarize previous activities and develop plans for the second half of the FY.

The main objectives of the retreat were to:

- (i) evaluate the activities of the group during the period July 2004 – January 2005 and agree upon the future activities of the group; and
- (ii) finalize consultations regarding the World Bank Country Assistance Strategy for Bosnia and Herzegovina;

During the retreat, the group shared their general comments on the new Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) for BH with Mr. Dirk Reinermann, Country Manager and Mr. Goran Tinjic – Operations Officer who joined the retreat on January 31, 2005. The group made a presentation that summarized all of the thoughts and ideas, criticism and praises of the strategy (see presentation attached as Annex to this report). Since the CAS was prepared before the YVG was established, these comments could not have been incorporated. However, it was agreed that comments provided by the YVG will be taken into consideration during the implementation of projects projected for this CAS period. Assurances were also received that YVG will participate in reviewing progress in achieving CAS objectives and in consultations for the next CAS.

### **Meeting with Lord Paddy Ashdown – High Representative for BH**

The group had a chance to meet High Representative for BH, Lord Paddy Ashdown and to have an open dialogue about youth priorities. The group presented its vision and mission. Alija Pandur (the newest member of the group) was the person who made the presentation. After the presentation, the group had a dialogue which was based on earlier agreed questions among the group, including:

- From your point of view, what is the best and the worst-case scenario for BH?
- What is the future strategy of OHR in promoting tourism in BH? What do you think could be the role of young people in this?
- Are you familiar with the fact that only 1% of young people think that they can have an influence on political issues?
- There has been a lot of discussion in media about OHR being a cover up for political failures in the implementation of reforms. Can you comment this?
- Can you promise us that you will have at least 10 meeting with young politicians by the end of your term?
- How would you evaluate your work here, during your mandate?
- The latest information we have, confirmed that the corruption level has increased during the last year, while CAS states the levels have been decreasing. How do you comment this?

At the beginning of the meeting Lord Ashdown encouraged young people of this country to get much more involved in the political process and to vote. He stressed that this involvement is necessary for strengthening of democratic society in the country and also for BH to get into the EU as soon as possible. At the end of the meeting, Lord Ashdown pointed that the ultimate responsibility for reforms in BH lies

with citizens and their leaders, while the international community can only serve in a supporting capacity.

#### **Youth Policy Development – Video Conference**

On March 10, 2005 members of the YVG had an opportunity to attend very important event - GDLN Conference on Youth Policy Development. The objective was to connect youth stakeholders from various countries and regions. Beside youth participants this conference included representatives from government bodies working on youth policies. Seven members of the YVG attended along with representatives from different youth associations.

#### **Youth Open House event**

The World Bank Country Office in BH hosted a Youth Open House event on March 24, 2005. 23 youth representatives (including representatives of university and high school student associations, youth NGOs and members of the YVG), from different parts of the country attended the event. YVG hosted all participants and had a presentation of their work, including a constructive dialogue, which was mostly focused on education issues.

#### **Environment – Mostar petition**

Although environment is not among the declared priorities of the YVG, in cooperation with several local non-governmental associations the group organized signing of a petition named "Cista BiH - Zdrav zivot" (Clean BH - Healthy Life), on April 22, 2005 in Mostar. This event was organized as a part of activities to mark the International Day of the Planet Earth (April 22). Petition was signed by almost one thousand citizens of Mostar and all of them were supportive and encouraged with such an initiative.

#### **Small Grants Program**

This year, YVG was directly involved in Small Grants Program selection process. Six members were responsible for initial screening of applications for the Small Grant Program financing.

#### **Meeting with Mr. Paul Wolfowitz, President of the World Bank**

On July 10, 2005 five members of the group had an opportunity to meet Mr. Paul Wolfowitz, President of the World Bank who was visiting BH to attend the 10th commemoration event for the Srebrenica Genocide. During a four hour long discussion, President Wolfowitz and members of the group exchanged views on many important issues including peace building and reconciliation, education, employment and overall future perspective for young people in BH.