



**Anti-xenophobia campaign:  
I am also the citizen of this town!**

Throughout Serbia, even today, especially in provincial areas, outside major cities, people are suspicious towards every foreign person, even every one from the same ethnic group who dares think, speak or behave differently compared to the surrounding. Pressure of tradition imposed to actual forms of behaviour has remained high.

The main problem we would like to relief or resolve with this project is the so-called rural xenophobia, i.e. antagonism of local population against the IDPs and the refugees. This problem implies others; such as hard integration of the IDPs and the refugees into the local community they found themselves in, not by their own will. Local population know almost nothing about IDPs and their problems, which results in lack of solidarity and good will to offer any sort of support to fellow-townpeople in need.

In 1999, in situations when the whole families spent days and days in local parks, nights under their tractors and trailers, there was no one, neither local, nor republic authorities, not a single soul asked at least a question of curiosity, or offered any sort of aid.

Great many IDPs were settled in village school houses around Kraljevo as it was time of school holidays. From there the IDPs had been forced out by local population, assisted by local and republic authorities, and put in shabby objects long out of use. One of the examples is the old 'culture house' at Vitanovac village where there are still 70 people with no chance to use water or have any sort of heating. Local people have been denying them connection to local water sully system for two years now. A man at a local football yard has been charging them have a bath there during summer season. Six months ago, humanitarian organization MSF had a well dug for these IDPs, but the villagers still do not allow them connection of their collective centre to the well.

In June 2000, at Lazac village, which is in Kraljevo municipality territory, the villagers, supported by local authorities, forced a group of 20 Roma IDPs of Islamic confession out of the old 'culture house' where they had been settled. The then Mayor said on the local TV that "at a Serbian village in the very heart of Sumadija (province in Central Serbia) Roma Muslims have nothing to look for"...

Regretfully, the new local self-management does not react to such events; on the contrary, by their behaviour and in addressing public they even spread animosity among local population towards IDPs.

The young and children IDPs regularly experience unpleasant situations in the town streets caused by domestic people calling them names and physical fights are quite often. There are young people gathering places where IDPs are not allowed. In a word, the IDPs in Kraljevo are absolutely excluded from the town social life with no chance to bring their problems closer to other Kraljevo citizens.

General impression is that this situation is going to last, contours of Milosevic's policy to remain as the main cause of such widespread xenophobia.

Except for a few reports about life stories of these unfortunate people broadcast on local TV Kraljevo (in summer 1999) and the UNHCR project (weekly broadcast on a private radio station where humanitarians participated as guests speaking of their activities), there have not been

other attempts to break down prejudices, stereotypes and mistaken attitudes about the IDPs and the refugees and to bring these issues closer to the general public.

This really is not an easy question to answer: how to fight against xenophobia as an extreme form of repulsing of other and different in circumstances like these?

Yet, it is necessary to act, even in hardest circumstances. By all possible means of democratic and civil struggle we have to promote a process of de-nazification and a special sort of de-collectivisation.

**Life with the different enables better understanding of our own selves said someone wise long ago.**

### **Aims**

The aim of this project is to, by denied activities, expose the problem of xenophobia and its causes. Achieving the aims would not solve the problem, but will reduce it. General aim, as project-defined, is to reduce xenophobic attitude of local population in the stated municipalities. We are convinced that the project realization would result in 'softening' of local community and revealing the sense of solidarity - contributing protection of the IDPs and the refugees from unpleasant and uneasy situations they encounter with on daily basis.

The particular project aim is to eliminate causes of the stated problem, one of which surely is insufficient information among local population about the IDPs' and the refugees' problems, as well as negative campaign by local authorities relating to the newcomers.

### **Target group**

As the described problem in Kraljevo Municipality is identical in the mentioned three neighbouring municipalities, the target group would be local population of all four municipalities: **Kraljevo, Krusevac, Trstenik and Vrnjacka Banja** (about 340,000 altogether). In these municipalities, according to UNHCR data, about 35,000 of IDPs and about 7,000 refugees are settled.

### **Activities**

Local population of the four municipalities would by our campaign, the motto of which is ***I am also the citizen of this town***, get information of real life circumstances of people from collective centres ( 39 c. centres at the territories of the stated municipalities). Stirring images of life in the collective centres and personal destinies of their inhabitants would give a human angle to the whole story and we expect higher level of solidarity of people in the four municipalities comprised by the project and their assistance in solving everyday problems of the IDPs and the refugees.

- **TV spots and radio jingles**
- **Posters**
- **Leaflets**
- **Guests on TV Kraljevo** once a month during the project realization, in hired time-terms, in duration of 60 minutes; TV Kraljevo covers (is seen and watched in) all the four municipalities comprised by the project.

TV guests-participants was recognized names of Yugoslav social scene. The issues were xenophobia, the idea of cultural identity, incidents of fascism in Serbia, etc.