

**Civic Forum Albania**  
**Citizen Group Opinion Survey**  
**Tirana-Durres-Kavaje**  
**2002**

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**National Democratic Institute for International Affairs  
Civic Forum/Albania**

**Findings of 2001 Survey  
*Tirana-Durres-Kavaje***

**SUMMARY**

In August 1999, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) began the Civic Forum program in Albania. Civic Forum provides technical assistance to citizens in three districts of central Albania (Tirana, Durres, and Kavaje). Through regularly conducted Civic Forum discussion groups, citizens develop the knowledge, skills and values of democracy needed to become active, involved citizens in Albania's transition to democracy.

In summer 2001 NDI developed a quantitative evaluation tool to gauge how effectively Civic Forum's educational component was changing participants' attitudes towards and knowledge of democracy. Through the resulting questionnaire, NDI surveyed the opinions and attitudes of 703 citizens from 33 villages in the districts of Tirana, Durres, and Kavaje. This survey questionnaire was also fielded in Kosovo, where NDI has a separate Civic Forum program.

This report provides a look at Civic Forum Albania members' opinions six months ago when the survey was fielded. Future surveys intended for administration on a yearly basis will record how participants' attitudes, knowledge, and behavior change as a result of continued participation in Civic Forum.

Results of the first survey administration revealed that Civic Forum participants are eager for information about the principles and components of democracy, and cite gaining an understanding of these principles and components as a primary motivation for their participation in the program, along with improving their communities. Surveyed citizens overwhelmingly identified the primary benefit of the Civic Forum program thus far as gaining knowledge about democratic principles and processes and showed a high level of understanding as to knowledge of a democratic political system that citizens should have. Participants also recognized the link between gaining knowledge and increasing their involvement in community affairs, demonstrating a conviction that "knowledge is fundamental to promoting... participation in the democratic process." The survey also showed that, as citizens participate in discussion groups, their understanding of their roles as citizens continues to broaden beyond that of merely voting.

The survey found that Civic Forum predisposes participants' attitudes and actions towards greater participation in their communities. The vast majority of participants report that they themselves are interested in becoming more active in their communities, and overwhelmingly feel that Civic Forum participants are generally more likely to become more involved in improving their communities. The longer citizens stay engaged in Civic Forum, the more people they can envision bringing into community action. According to the survey results, participants anticipated bringing in a collective minimum total of 2,700 other citizens into community action. Over time, participants showed higher rates of community involvement, including attending local government and community meetings and engaging local politicians.

NDI plans to administer a Civic Forum evaluation survey on an annual basis, which will help identify the degree to which participating in Civic Forum is changing citizens' knowledge of and attitudes about democratic processes, principles, and the structure of the Albanian government and attendant institutions. From this knowledge, NDI anticipates the findings of the surveys to reveal a changing behavior on the part of citizens who participate in Civic Forum activities for an extended period, as knowledge combines with a change in values and skills sets. The results of this initial effort, as well as subsequent efforts, also permit NDI to assess the progress of the Civic Forum program in a more rigorous way.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The survey questionnaire was designed and the results evaluated in consultation with Dr. William Millsap, who has over 25 years of experience in evaluating development programs throughout the world, including participation in the USAID R4 process. NDI staff in Kosovo, Albania and Washington, D.C. contributed to the design and implementation schedule of the survey (Annex A).

Through the survey NDI sought to answer three questions:

1. What attitudes have changed or are changing about democratic processes among Civic Forum participants?
2. Have Civic Forum participants gained knowledge that enhances their understanding of the country's and local community's political processes?
3. To what extent have Civic Forum participants increased their willingness and sense of ability to initiate and participate in local community activities?

Each survey includes 90 data points<sup>1</sup> that have been coded and entered into a database for analysis. (See Annex A for the full questionnaire) The survey data was reviewed by Dr. Millsap and entered into EpiInfo, a statistical package designed by the Center for Disease Control and available without cost as shareware.

Civic Forum Field Coordinators were responsible for administering the survey during the summer and autumn of 2001, beginning in Tirana and Durres in August then in Kavaje in September and October. In Albania, Field Coordinators administered the survey to 51 discussion groups (43 in Tirana-Durres and 8 in Kavaje), resulting in 516 completed questionnaires. At the time the survey was administered, Civic Forum/Albania had 60 discussion groups with 703 citizens participating. Hence, 73 percent of all Civic Forum members contributed to this survey.

Over time, the survey will help identify the degree to which participating in Civic Forum is changing citizens' knowledge of and attitudes about democratic processes, principles, and the structure of the Albanian government and attendant institutions. From this knowledge, NDI anticipates survey findings to reveal a changing behavior on the part of citizens who participate in Civic Forum activities for an extended period, as knowledge combines with a change in values and skills sets.

The results of this initial effort also permit NDI to assess the progress of its own programs in a more rigorous way. Moreover, the survey findings represent a valuable reference for

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<sup>1</sup> Data points are the actual answers to the evaluation questionnaire, which are then coded as part of the evaluation.

USAID and others to benchmark the progress of Albania's democratization at the most fundamental level, namely that of the individual citizen. Finally, NDI plans to administer this survey evaluation on an annual basis as a fundamental component to its monitoring and evaluation system in accordance with USAID/Albania's own Performance Monitoring Plan for Strategic Objective 2.1 "Increase Civil Society in Political Decision Making," and more specifically to IR 1.1 "Improved citizen awareness and participation in community democratic processes."

As with many first attempts, especially at something as rigorous as applying a quantitative tool over an inherently qualitative program such as Civic Forum, there were bound to be gaps between planning and implementation. NDI will address these shortcomings in future administrations of this survey and for the USAID Performance Monitoring Plan. However, for the purposes of this evaluation, we must accept the limitations of the data and account for them in our analysis.

- Many Albanians take extended holidays during August. As a result, the survey response rate may have been lower than if the survey had been administered in September after the school year had begun.
- There was no control group in this survey, as only citizens already engaged in Civic Forum were sought out. As a result, it is impossible to measure or assess how Civic Forum citizens respond differently than citizens who do not take part in civic education or civil society building programs.
- Some citizens may have provided responses that they believed to be "correct" answers, rather than their own opinions. While NDI is confident that the Field Coordinators administering the survey helped to reduce this reflex, the Institute can only assume that some of this may have crept into these survey results.
- The database software selected by the consultant, EpiInfo, has proven too rigid in terms of cross-referencing data for evaluation purposes. Subsequent use of the survey and the data those administrations yield will be managed through Microsoft Access, which is both more flexible and more widely used.

## **CIVIC FORUM PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

Civic Forum is implemented in four distinct phases, each centered on a discussion group (Civic Forum Group or CFG) of roughly a dozen individuals. The first phase is to create the group. Considerations are given to balancing gender and other demographic variables. The second phase is to educate the citizens in democratic principles and processes. (A complete list of the curriculum is in Annex C.) The curriculum balances theoretical principles with the actual development of laws and institutions in Albania. The education phase represents an investment in the citizens and has required up to 18 months to complete satisfactorily. The third phase is to activate the citizens and begin moving them towards taking organized action to address shared challenges in their communities. The fourth phase of the CFG is to advocate for change in the local community. This step in the project sees the groups fledging into their own. It is characterized by a coming together of the new knowledge, skills and values these citizens, or more accurately a core group of these citizens, have internalized and are using. The final step in the project occurs when a core group of citizens have internalized new knowledge, skills, and values to the extent that they begin to apply them independently to achieve their community priorities.

Civic Forum groups in Tirana and Durres have been active since April 2000. Since an expansion of the program in July 2001, communities across Kavaje have joined Civic Forum. All discussion groups are facilitated by Albanian Civic Forum Field Coordinators who are from the regions in which this program takes place. These Field Coordinators are simultaneously receiving training in democratic principles and transparent approaches while they are convening and leading the discussion groups. On a biweekly basis, groups gather and explore one of 18 distinct themes (see Annex B) during an extended education phase of the program. As discussion groups complete that curriculum, the Field Coordinators introduce organizing and advocacy principles and techniques so that citizens are able to address priority concerns in their own communities.

## **SURVEY FINDINGS**

### **Who are Civic Forum Citizens?**

The citizens coming to the Civic Forum process are not unusual or somehow different than their neighbors from a demographic perspective. Yet they differ from the vast majority of Albanians in that they are seeking out and committing to a process of education and, later, political engagement.

#### Gender Balance

Overall, male participation generally outpaced female participation, although efforts have been made to ensure a gender balance within districts. In Tirana and Durres, where Civic Forum programs began first, 53 percent of CFG members were male, and 47 percent were female. In Kavaje, 74 percent of respondents were male, but discussion groups had only commenced a month or two prior to the survey.

Traditionally, Albanian women stay within the home and have limited participation in public affairs. The gender parity in Tirana and Durres reflects a conscious and active effort on the part of Civic Forum Field Coordinators to recruit women to the project and to encourage active participation of women in local community political processes. An equal effort is

underway in Kavaje and we expect that future administrations of the survey will reveal the results of those efforts.

### Youth Participation

The mean age of Civic Forum participants in Tirana and Durres was 40 years, with a range from 12 to 78 years of age. Those in Kavaje differed only slightly with a mean age of 42 and an age range of 16 to 72 years. This is substantially higher than the national average of 27, which reflects the high birth rate in Albania as well as the concentration of Civic Forum efforts on citizens, i.e. those old enough to enjoy the franchise.

Civic Forum is working with older children in secondary schools. These youths will be old enough to vote within the timeframe of the Civic Forum project, and therefore will be able to exercise their knowledge at the polls within a year or two. In addition, these young people are acting as ambassadors of the new democratic knowledge, skills and values into their communities, bringing new thinking to people of all ages.

### Education

Universal education under communism is reflected in the numbers of those with basic and secondary education. Twenty-nine percent of participants had completed elementary school and another 43 percent finished or attended some high school. Twenty-four percent had completed or attended some college while three percent attended vocational or trade school. This high rate of literacy speeds the diffusion of Civic Forum information, especially the Civic Forum newsletters and the other curriculum materials developed for the project.

### Employment

Forty-four percent of Civic Forum Group members were employed. In Tirana and Durres, 39 percent had full-time jobs, while six percent reported part-time employment. In Kavaje, the number of those with full time jobs was 45 percent, and another 17 percent had part-time work. Of those who reported they were unemployed, Tirana and Durres stood at 24 percent compared with 29 percent in Kavaje.

For those respondents outside of the labor force, 13 percent said they were retired, another five percent said they were students, and four percent said they were at home raising a family.

Unemployment rates in Albania were officially put at 15 percent at the time of the survey. Unofficial estimations put that figure at nearly two to three times that. It is interesting that roughly half the Civic Forum Group members already hold full or part-time jobs or are raising families and yet they still manage to find to time to participate in bi-weekly discussions. Clearly, these individuals are making a conscious decision to budget some of their time to understanding the principles that shape their new political system, in spite of the difficult living conditions.

## **The Civic Forum Groups**

### Reaching Out

At the time of the survey, Civic Forum Groups were located in three districts of central Albania. In Tirana and Durres, 29 percent of the respondents lived in a municipality, 33 percent in a commune and 37 percent in a village. This is in contrast to Kavaje, in which four percent of respondents lived in a municipality, 48 percent in a commune and 48 percent in a village. In total, 33 villages, 11 communes and 12 municipalities were represented in the

three districts. Although 703 citizens came to the discussion groups on a regular basis, they were representative of a much larger population of 250,000, estimated conservatively. This data point will become more important over time as these citizens assume a larger role in community action and information sharing, a trend already emerging in the data below.

#### Number of Civic Forum Groups

Even before the addition of Kavaje as a program site, the number of Civic Forum Groups constantly fluctuated as some groups were created and others, though fewer, withered. At the time of the survey, 60 discussion groups were active. Each of those had, on average, twelve members.

#### Regular Meetings

Civic Forum Group members demonstrate a commitment to the Civic Forum process in the way they participate in the discussion groups. In Tirana and Durres the number of meetings was much higher than in Kavaje due to the way the project has been developed. The participants surveyed in Tirana and Durres were for the most part mature and committed participants of Civic Forum. Only nine percent of respondents were attending their first Civic Forum meeting, while the average number of meetings attended for the remaining 91 percent of respondents was 18. By comparison, Kavaje participants had attended fewer meetings, averaging approximately four meetings prior to the administration of the survey.

According to the results of the survey, an overwhelming majority of Civic Forum Groups meet on a biweekly basis (92 percent), as is logistically most feasible, while an additional eight percent meet on a weekly basis. Combined, these findings reveal that the average Civic Forum Group member had consistently participated in discussions for nine months prior to the survey.

#### Recruit or Volunteer

Close to half of the respondents (47 percent) in Tirana and Durres reported joining Civic Forum on the referral of a friend (21 percent) or a community group (10 percent), because they heard about it through informal lines of communication (7 percent), or because an organization in which they were active was participating (9 percent). Over half of the participants in these two districts (51 percent) were personally recruited by the local Civic Forum Field Coordinator. Similarly, in Kavaje a total of 48 percent of respondents joined Civic Forum on referrals, informal communication or organizational association. As in Tirana and Durres, 51 percent of the respondents were recruited by a Civic Forum Field Coordinator.

NDI anticipates that over time, the number of those who cite friends, organizations and word of mouth as the vehicle for their participation will grow. This anticipated trend will be an indicator of program success, as a decline in recruited Civic Forum Group members juxtaposed against an increase in the number of members who approach Civic Forum unsolicited by Field Coordinators, will reflect a rise in the awareness of Civic Forum and the perceived relevance of the program to the lives of residents in Civic Forum communities.

### **Grasping the Fundamentals of Democracy**

What the survey showed is that most Civic Forum Group members were not satisfied with the kind of “democracy” they have seen in the last ten years and were aware that Albania has room for improvement, which is predicated on a solid understanding of democracy and the active role of citizens in making it a reality.



### Knowledge of Political System is Valued

The survey revealed a high level of understanding among CFG members as to the kinds of knowledge citizens in a democracy should have. For example, 96 percent of respondents in Tirana-Durres and 97 percent of respondents in Kavaje agree or strongly agree that citizens in a democracy should know the role of elected officials. They also overwhelmingly agree (97 percent in Tirana-Durres and 95 percent in Kavaje) that citizens should know who their elected officials are. And respondents are in strong agreement (95 percent in Tirana-Durres and 87 percent in Kavaje percent) that citizens should know the structures and functions of government. These numbers are consistent in the longer-term and newer group members' responses.

<b>Item</b>	<b>Tirana/Durres</b>	<b>Kavaje</b>
Citizens should know the role of elected officials	96	97
Citizens should know who their elected officials are	97	95
Citizens should know the structures and functions of government	95	87

There is near unanimous agreement in what citizens should know to claim the mantle of knowledgeable citizen. A large majority (88 percent) of longer-term Civic Forum participants responded positively to the idea that “knowledge is fundamental to promoting your participation in the democratic process.” And the newer Civic Forum Group members in Kavaje believe this more intensely, with 91 percent identifying knowledge as an influence in their participation.

### **Citizens' Understanding of the Elements of Democracy**

#### Individual Rights and Responsibilities

In addition to what citizens should know, respondents recognize the basic freedoms afforded by a democratic system. Civic Forum Group members noted their understanding of which freedoms are inherent in a democratic system:

<b>Item</b>	<b>Tirana/Durres</b>	<b>Kavaje</b>
Speech	97	97
Right to Vote	95	94
Media (Print and Broadcast)	89	83
Religious Worship	88	91
Participate in the Political Process	88	82
Assembly	80	76

It is interesting to note that citizens make a distinction in their responses to the notion of participating in the political process and the notion of voting, a difference that is even greater among the newer participants in Kavaje<sup>2</sup>. As the survey reveals, there is also a difference in the passive knowledge Civic Forum Group members have related to democratic principles and the actual manner and extent to which they take part in community and political affairs. This serves to contrast the passive sense of democracy, whereby civic duty is fulfilled

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<sup>2</sup> It is important to note the definition of political participation. In many transition countries, the common understanding of political participation is limited to voting and election activities. Civic Forum views political participation as a more dynamic experience, requiring knowledge, skills and values for each citizens as well as involving citizen-driven activities such as community advocacy and watchdog efforts.

through voting, and the active sense of democracy, where citizen participation takes on a more dynamic role through activities like community advocacy.

### Rule of Law

The survey delved into Civic Forum Group members’ understanding and valuing of the rule of law and the institutions and offices linked to the law. Here again, all surveyed Civic Forum Group members demonstrate a high level of understanding, regardless of their tenure with the project. For example, 94 percent of respondents in Tirana/Durres and 97 percent of respondents in Kavaje agree that “a nation’s Constitution establishes the supreme law of the country,” and this in a country whose Constitution is just three years old. Ninety-four percent of respondents in Tirana/Durres and in Kavaje agree with the statement “the rule of law is a fundamental principle in any viable democracy.” A similar percentage (96 percent in Tirana/Durres and 92 percent in Kavaje) agrees that “in a democracy, the rights of the individual are guaranteed by law.” Just as 93 percent in Tirana/Durres and in Kavaje also agree with the statement “judges should be free of political influence to assure the independence of a society’s legal system.”

<b>Item</b>	<b>Tirana/Durres</b>	<b>Kavaje</b>
‘A nation’s constitution establishes the supreme law of the country.’	94	97
‘The rule of law is a fundamental principle in any viable democracy.’	94	94
‘In a democracy, the rights of the individual are guaranteed by law.’	96	92
‘Judges should be free of political influence to assure the independence of a society’s legal system.’	93	93

### Free Speech and the Media

Albania’s media – print and broadcast – is polarized by political forces. Only a few publications and broadcasts are deemed independent, with the overwhelming majority attributed to one political party or another. The responses to the statement “an independent media is an essential element of a viable democracy” reflect the relative ambiguity Civic Forum Group members feel toward media. For example, 78 percent of Kavaje respondents agreed with this statement, although 90 percent of those in the longer-term groups in Tirana and Durres agreed. In theory, there is a shared agreement as to the freedom of media and an even higher value of free speech; however, the current situation of the media does make some citizens question the role that media should play in a democracy, as the Albanian media tends to be biased, inflammatory and as a vehicle for promoting political agendas.

### Political Economy

Citizens make a distinction between the political side of democracy and the economic benefits of the new system. In a nation of rampant corruption, in which bribes and “extra payments” are needed to secure electricity, water and jobs, this is not surprising. A minority of respondents agreed with the statement “in democratic societies, wealth tends to be more equally shared between all economic sectors of society.” In Kavaje, a scant 25 percent agreed with that statement, while citizens in Tirana and Durres agreed at nearly twice that rate (48 percent). In part this reflects the absence of investment, national or otherwise, in the Kavaje district as compared to the significantly higher rates of investment and access to goods, services, and economic benefits along the Tirana-Durres corridor.

## **Patterns of Community Participation**

To what extent do Civic Forum citizens have a pattern of more active engagement in their local communities – be it in civic or political ways – or is the connection to Civic Forum itself creating a change in behavior? This survey reveals some initial findings, but this question will be answered more definitively over time as this survey is administered again to the same citizens.

By disaggregating the data for Tirana and Durres from the Kavaje responses, the survey reveals that the longer citizens commit to and participate in the Civic Forum program, the more the roles they see for themselves as citizens increase in size and scope. Citizens increasingly view themselves as participants in community improvement and change, reflecting a subjectivity that heretofore was extremely rare in Albania.

### Why Civic Forum?

Civic Forum Group members divided their reasons for participating in Civic Forum fairly evenly across four provided responses: to gain participatory skills (56 percent), to cooperate with people holding different political views (48 percent), to understand how democracy works in a community (64 percent), and to contribute to improvements in my community (73 percent). Indeed, 93 percent of respondents in Tirana/Durres cited “gaining knowledge” as the greatest benefit in their participation in Civic Forum. Only one percent cited a “changed mentality” as the greatest benefit, yet other survey findings do indicate a changing mindset among Civic Forum Group members.

In both the older and newer areas of programming, a slight preference was given to the final response, “to contribute to improvements in my community.” This response is interesting in that it indicates a personal willingness and sense of responsibility to contribute energies for the common good. Yet at the same time, that level of serving the broader community is not borne out in current rates of community participation through other institutions common in democracies, as indicated below.

### The Role of Citizens

Citizens who are newer to the Civic Forum process tend to see a limited role for citizens in a democracy. For example, the percentage of citizens who say that “the only role a citizen has in a democracy is to vote” tends to be higher for the newcomers (52 percent). For those citizens who work through the education phase of the project, the percentage of those who agree or strongly agree with that statement declines to 37 percent.

### The Power of One

There seems to be a correlation between the amounts of time spent as part of the Civic Forum program with the way Civic Forum Group members think about their own ability to make improvements in their community through more active participation in the democratic process. For example, 91 percent of longer-term participants from Tirana and Durres agree with that notion. In comparison, 80 percent of CFG members in Kavaje agree with it.

### Attributes of Involved Citizens

While CFG members do see their own capacity for action developing, they identify a set of qualities that citizens should have to help them move toward collective or community action. Again there is full agreement in the six key attributes that citizen activists should possess, although the percentages vary slightly as do the ranked order of preference. Those attributes

are: willingness to listen to others, tolerance of other opinions, desire to make positive change, ability to cooperate and work together with others, an ability to reach agreement with others, and a commitment to community.

Item	Tirana/Durres	Kavaje
Willingness to listen to others	85	86
Tolerance of other opinions	76	70
Desire to make positive change	78	69
Ability to cooperate and work together with others	80	78
Ability to reach agreement with others	73	58
Commitment to community	67	51

## **Citizen as Political Actor**

### As Voter

Albanians have been increasingly disillusioned with the electoral process. In the October 2000 local elections, which were marred by voting irregularities and other problems, 62 percent of registered Albanian voters cast their ballots in the first round, while only 47.4 percent voted in the second round. In the June 2001 parliamentary elections, which fared better but still had problems, 55 percent of registered Albanians turned out to vote. In comparison, 90 percent of Tirana and Durres Civic Forum members and 94 percent of Kavaje Civic Forum members voted in October 2000; and 87 percent of Tirana and Durres Civic Forum members and 93 percent of Kavaje members voted in 2001's parliamentary vote.

### Political Activism

Although a minority say they are actual members of a political party (40 percent in Kavaje and 37 percent in Tirana and Durres), many more Civic Forum Group participants are likely to speak with friends and family members about politics. In Kavaje, 67 percent said they engaged in such conversations, while in Tirana and Durres only 55 percent said they did. Other political behaviors identified by Civic Forum Group members included attending commune or municipal council meetings, communicating with local politicians or officials and serving on community committees.

Over time, NDI Civic Forum expects participation in these areas to increase, as citizens gain a deeper appreciation of the connection between their lives and the political and government institutions and officials. Disaggregating the data between Kavaje and Tirana and Durres confirms those expectations. For example, in Kavaje only 20 percent of respondents noted that they had communicated with a local politician or official at the time the survey was fielded, whereas 54 percent of their counterparts in Tirana and Durres had taken such action. Attending a commune or municipal council meeting had similar differences: in Kavaje, only 11 percent reported attending such meetings, whereas 33 percent of their Tirana-Durres counterparts had.

### Advocacy – Community and Political Action

As noted at the outset of this report, the Civic Forum program is rolled out in four stages. Much of the survey yielded findings for the first and second phases (create and educate), but it also provided an indication for future actions planned by the survey respondents. When asked what local priority issues Civic Forum Group members expected to work on, 86 percent of respondents identified infrastructure problems: water and sanitation – 41 percent; infrastructure – 18 percent; building schools, libraries and health care centers – 17 percent; local roads – 8 percent; garbage systems – 2 percent. The remaining priorities included

education programs (2 percent), and another 2 percent of issues such as tourism, telephone systems, employment, land ownership and welfare.

Clearly these issues will require a mix of community and political action. In taking these issues on, Civic Forum Group members will have to demonstrate an effective combination of their newly acquired knowledge, skills, and values. In subsequent administrations of the survey, NDI Civic Forum will track changes in these priorities as communities take on these challenges and the degree to which they are successful in making progress on resolving them.

## **Moving to Community Action**

### Community Activism

Few Civic Forum citizens have ventured out into community action in other ways prior to their participation in this project. In Tirana and Durres, 27 percent of respondents were members of another group, whereas in Kavaje that number was 17 percent.

These low numbers reflect the dearth of organized civil society and institutions such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or other community-based organizations (CBOs). The lack of these organizations is even more pronounced outside of Tirana, which is consistent with the survey findings for Kavaje. Indeed, in many villages and communities, Civic Forum is the only organized civil society activity.

### Valuing Community Action

Although relatively few Civic Forum Group members were engaged in community organizations at the time of the survey, they do see the value of group action, albeit to varying degrees. Surprisingly, the newer groups in Kavaje have a higher rate of belief in the power of community action to solve community problems than do their counterparts in Tirana and Durres who have been part of the Civic Forum project for much longer – 94 percent compared to 90 percent. Looking more closely, however, the survey reveals that Kavaje respondents were more tempered in their responses, with 35 percent noting that community action would “always” solve problems, whereas 46 percent of their counterparts in Tirana/Durres thought this to be true.

### Expectations for Action

Citizens who take part in Civic Forum develop strong expectations for greater involvement in improving communities. When asked, “how likely are individuals who have participated in Civic Forum to become more involved in improving their communities,” there was little difference between those who had taken part in several meetings and those who had been part of the Civic Forum process for many months, as 93 percent in Kavaje and 89 percent in Tirana/Durres said somewhat or most likely.

### Emerging Core Group of Activists

When Civic Forum Group members consider their own future involvement in community activities, 85 percent say that they are interested in becoming more involved in improving communities. In addition, the longer citizens stay engaged in the Civic Forum process, the more influence they can envision having on bringing other people into community action. This influence goes beyond merely talking with people about Civic Forum or the principles and ideas that are shared in the discussion groups, although Civic Forum Group members do act as ambassadors of democratic principles and values to other members of their community. On average, Civic Forum Group members in Tirana and Durres have spoken about Civic

Forum to or shared Civic Forum information with 37 other people not currently part of any discussion group. In Kavaje, Civic Group members have spoken to or shared information with an average of seven people.

After only two months of engagement, 60 percent of Kavaje Civic Forum Group members thought that they could bring in six to 15 other individuals into community action as a result of their individual participation. Another 28 percent thought they would bring in one to five others. In Tirana and Durres, 36 percent of Civic Forum Group members also said that they would bring 6 to 15 people into community action and another 20 percent thought they would bring 1 to 5 others to the table.

The implication of these responses is that Civic Forum may directly engage a limited number of individuals, 703 at the time the survey was administered, but in reality, the program is becoming a vehicle through which Civic Forum Group members expected to bring in an additional 2,727 and 7,311 other community members through their efforts. In effect, some Civic Forum Group members are becoming increasingly activated, evolving into a local core group of informed and engaged citizens who in turn bring others into the local democratic process to address shared issues of concern.

## CONCLUSIONS

In spite of shortcomings identified in the methodology section of this report, the survey yielded data that is sufficiently useful for both program management as well as for monitoring and evaluation purposes. To conclude, let us return to the three questions this survey sought to answer:

### *1 What attitudes have changed or are changing about democratic processes among Civic Forum participants?*

Because this survey is an initial data collection event, it is difficult to answer this first question. By disaggregating the responses for the relatively new groups of Kavaje from the longer-term Civic Forum Groups in Tirana and Durres, however, we can see a change in some attitudes and responses in democratic processes. A key change is the perceived role of the citizens, moving from a largely reactive capacity as voter, to a role that is more dynamic and less episodic.

In addition, Civic Forum helps level the understanding of democratic principles and processes within communities, especially with regard to women and those participants at the far ends of the age range (both the older and the younger). The degree to which participation in Civic Forum activities promotes diverse participation from traditionally underrepresented groups such as youth and women will become more defined as the survey is administered over the coming years.

### *2 Have Civic Forum participants gained knowledge that enhances their understanding of the country's and local community's political processes?*

As to the correlation between gaining knowledge and enhancing an understanding of political processes, the survey yields more conclusive findings. The survey showed a high level of understanding of basic concepts such as the rule of law, the kinds of knowledge citizens should have in a democratic system and the basic freedoms of a democracy. The survey

findings also suggest that Civic Forum has had a role in making the abstract notions of laws, institutions and political offices more comprehensible and relevant to citizens. Participation in Civic Forum has helped cultivate an informed citizen able to link with local institutions, using the knowledge, skills, and values that the project nurtures.

3 *To what extent have Civic Forum participants increased their willingness and sense of ability to initiate and participate in local community activities?*

It is in response to this question that the survey yielded its most exciting data for the program. The citizens' responses to the number of people they anticipated bringing directly into community activities as a result of their own engagement with Civic Forum was larger than anticipated. These responses may be attributed to untested enthusiasm on the part of some respondents, and only time will tell exactly how many others are brought into the mix. Yet this question is intended to measure *willingness* and a *sense of ability*. There is no denying that these notions are taken to heart by the majority of Civic Forum Group members.

## **NEXT STEPS**

As with all good research and evaluation tools, this survey generates nearly as many questions as it does findings. Below are the key items that NDI Civic Forum/Albania will track or respond to as a result of this effort.

Key items from this survey are now the framework from which NDI Civic Forum will monitor program achievements and report on that work to USAID. Building from this survey, NDI/Albania has created a Civic Forum Citizen Engagement Index, an original effort that seeks to create a composite view of progress and change as citizens move through the four phases of Civic Forum and beyond.

Since the survey was administered from August to October 2001, some citizens have been instrumental in starting new groups or are participating in more than one group. These citizens are sharing the knowledge, skills and values they are gaining from their Civic Forum participation with other parts of their communities. NDI plans to add a question to the survey to get a sense of how many of these citizens there are and the implications their behaviors have on emerging democracy in their local communities.

Another finding that emerges from this survey that demands close monitoring is the evolution of an activated core group of citizens that will spark action within their communities. Community engagement research in many democracies, including that in the United States, points to the presence of core groups as a key element needed for social and political change. Think for a moment of Margaret Mead's famous dictum, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

Another aspect of this survey that holds out considerable potential is that it was fielded in Kosovo as well as Albania. These two survey sets could be analyzed together to begin to build a composite image of citizen engagement in this corner of the Balkans. Indeed, NDI Civic Forum/Kosovo prepared a separate report for USAID/Kosovo in November 2001, which can be used in tandem with this report to begin generating such findings.

Finally, NDI will ameliorate the lack of a true baseline when this survey was first developed and administered. Field Coordinators will conduct focus groups of non-engaged citizens in the three districts in which Civic Forum programs occur to gain a better sense of what their views and opinions are. NDI Albania believes the findings that emerge from these focus groups will serve to further highlight the deep and true changes in attitudes and behaviors of the citizens willing and dedicated to commit time and energy to the Civic Forum process, first, and to their communities, next.



## Annex A – Survey Questionnaire



### NDI CIVIC FORUM ALBANIA CITIZEN GROUP OPINION SURVEY

#### QUESTIONNAIRE OVERVIEW

This questionnaire is part of an assessment being conducted by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) for the purpose of measuring the effects of the Civic Forum program on its participants.

We are particularly interested in your candid views about Civic Forum; the views you have about citizen participation, the information you have received in Citizen Groups, how it has improved your understanding of democracy, and how this knowledge is likely to be applied in your local community. Your responses will be kept strictly confidential and no individual will be identified in any report resulting from this survey. We are seeking answers to three general questions.

- What attitudes have changed or are changing about democratic processes among Civic Forum participants?
- Have Civic Forum participants gained knowledge that enhances their understanding of the country's and local community's political processes?
- To what extent have Civic Forum participants increased their willingness to participate in and initiate local community activities?

The questions below should take approximately 30-35 minutes to complete.

*Thank you for your participation in this survey*





21. How were you recruited to the Civic Forum program?

(Circle all items that apply)

- a. Referred by a friend ..... a
- b. Referral from other community groups ..... b
- c. Word-of-mouth/general communication ..... c
- d. By local NDI Field Coordinator..... d
- e. An organization you belong to is participating .....e
- f. Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_..... f

**ATTITUDES ABOUT DEMOCRACY**

22. Please respond to the following statements using the scale below. Put the number of your response on the line at the end of each statement.

1-Strongly Disagree	2-Disagree	3-Neutral
4-Agree	5-Strongly Agree	

- a) The democratic process in Albania is effective. \_\_\_\_\_
- b) The national government works for the people. \_\_\_\_\_
- c) The articles of the Albanian Constitution directly affect my life. \_\_\_\_\_
- d) Municipal/Komuna governments play more important roles in the lives of citizens than the national government. \_\_\_\_\_
- e) Citizens should know who their elected representatives are. \_\_\_\_\_
- f) The only responsibility a citizen has in a democracy is to vote. \_\_\_\_\_
- g) Citizens should understand the role of elected representatives. \_\_\_\_\_
- h) Citizens in a democracy should work together for the common good. \_\_\_\_\_
- i) Citizens should know the structures and functions of government. \_\_\_\_\_
- j) I feel the benefits of democracy in my daily life. \_\_\_\_\_
- k) I can improve my community by participating in the democratic process. \_\_\_\_\_

23. Do you believe that it is important that elected representatives are directly accountable to the people for their decisions? (**Circle only one item**)

- Always ..... 1
- In Most Situations ..... 2
- Sometimes ..... 3
- Never ..... 4
- No opinion ..... 5

24. Working with your neighbors, do you believe that many community problems can be solved through community action? (**Circle only one item**)

- Always ..... 1
- In Most Situations ..... 2
- Sometimes ..... 3
- Never ..... 4
- No opinion ..... 5

25. What do you feel are the important personal attributes that members of community groups should possess in order to carry out community projects? (**Circle all items that apply**)

- Willingness to listen to others..... a
- Tolerance of other opinions ..... b
- Personal connections with local officials..... c
- Self-motivation ..... d
- Commitment to their community ..... e
- Can make decisions all alone ..... f
- Desire to make positive changes..... g
- Ability to lead others..... h
- Can pressure group members to agree with his/her opinions ..... i
- Can cooperate and work together with others..... j
- Can reach agreement with others..... k
- Don't know ..... l
- No opinion ..... m
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_ ..... n

26. Do you believe that acquiring knowledge is fundamental to promoting your participation in the democratic process? (**Circle only one item**)

- No influence ..... 1
- Minor influence ..... 2
- Moderate influence ..... 3
- Major influence ..... 4
- No opinion ..... 5

**KNOWLEDGE OF DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES**

27. For the following statements, choose one item below which best fits your understanding of the democratic process and place that number on the line at the end of each statement.

<b>1--Yes</b> <b>2--No</b> <b>3--Not sure</b>
<b>4--Don't know</b> <b>5--No opinion</b>

- a) The basic principle of any democracy is that it is a government of the people, by the people, for the people, with the people choosing those who govern. \_\_\_\_\_
- b) In democratic societies, wealth tends to be more equally shared between all economic sectors of the society. \_\_\_\_\_
- c) The phrase, "One person, one vote" means that all votes (men and women, rich or poor, different ethnic groups) are equal in a democratic election. \_\_\_\_\_
- d) Regardless of ethnicity, religion, or political beliefs, every representative group should have the opportunity to participate in the democratic process. \_\_\_\_\_

28. Democracies claiming to be "free and open societies" usually permit the following freedoms: (**choose all items that apply**)

- a) Speech ..... a
- b) Assembly ..... b
- c) Religious worship..... c
- d) Media (Press, television, etc.) ..... d
- e) Right to vote ..... e
- f) Participate in the political process ..... f

29. Please respond to the following statements using the scale below; place the number of your response on the line at the end of each statement.

1-Strongly Disagree	2-Disagree	3-Neutral
4-Agree	5-Strongly Agree	

- a) A nation’s Constitution establishes the supreme law of the country. \_\_\_\_\_
- b) The Rule of Law is a fundamental principle in any viable democracy \_\_\_\_\_
- c) Judges should be free of political influence to assure the independence of a society’s legal system. \_\_\_\_\_
- d) In a democracy, the rights of the individual are guaranteed by law. \_\_\_\_\_
- e) An independent media is an essential element of a viable democracy. \_\_\_\_\_
- f) All persons are “equal” in the eyes of the law in a democracy. \_\_\_\_\_

**KNOWLEDGE TO ACTION**

30. Did you vote in the local elections held last year?

- Yes ..... 1
- No ..... 2

31. Did you vote in the national elections?

- Yes ..... 1
- No ..... 2

32. Are you active politically? List the activities in which you participate in your local community. **(Circle all items that apply)**

- Member of a political party..... a
- Talk to friends about politics ..... b
- Volunteer your time to a political party ..... c
- Serve as a poll watcher for a political party ..... d
- Attend political party functions ..... e
- Willing to run for a local political office ..... f

33. In your opinion, how likely are individuals who have participated in Civic Forum to become more involved in improving their communities? **(Circle only one item)**

- Not Likely..... 1
- Somewhat Unlikely.....2
- Neutral/cannot rate..... 3
- Somewhat Likely ..... 4
- Most Likely..... 5

34. If you have participated in Civic Forum, are you interested in becoming more involved the activities of your community? **(Circle only one item)**

- Yes ..... 1
- No .....2
- Not sure ..... 3
- Not at this time ..... 4
- No opinion..... 5

35. What community activities have you participated in or are you participating in now? **(Circle all items that apply)**

- Participating in local NGO activities .....a
- Participating in domestic monitoring efforts .....b
- Attending commune/municipal council meetings .....c
- Serving on community committees .....d
- Participating in an agricultural organization.....e
- Participating in the parent/teacher association..... f
- Talking to local politicians/officials .....g
- Writing to local politicians/officials .....h
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_ ..... i

36. **If you have participated in Civic Forum, ESTIMATE** how many persons you have talked with about the Civic Forum program and/or shared information or materials with:

\_\_\_\_\_ **(enter an estimated number)**

37. In your opinion, how many persons will become directly involved in some type of community activity in your community as a result of your participation in Civic Forum? **(Circle only one item)**

- None.....1
- 1-5 persons .....2
- 6-15 Persons .....3
- 16-30 .....4
- Greater than 30 persons.....5
- Have no idea .....6

38. List the up to two benefits your community has received from the Civic Forum program.



a. \_\_\_\_\_  
(Most beneficial)

b. \_\_\_\_\_  
(2nd most beneficial)

39. What local issues do you think your community should work on?

a. \_\_\_\_\_  
(Issue of greatest interest to you)

b. \_\_\_\_\_  
(Issue of lesser interest to you)

## **Annex B – Curriculum Themes**

1. Civic Forum Albania and What is a Discussion?
2. Elements and Culture of a Democracy
3. Rule of Law
4. Citizens and the Constitution
5. Structures and Functions of Government
6. Responsibilities of Elected Officials and Citizens
7. Decentralization Process in Albania
8. Role of NGOs in a Democracy
9. Stability Pact and Albania
10. Role of Political Parties in a Democracy
11. Role of Media in a Democracy
12. Elections
13. How to be an Informed Voter
14. Albanian Education System in Democratic Development
15. Human Rights
16. Role of Unions in a Democracy
17. Role of Women in Democratic Society
18. Fighting Corruption