

Croatian Youth Network

**Youth and the Millennium Development Goals in Croatia**

The Croatian Youth Network (CYN) is a non-profit, non-government organization founded in 2002. It gathers 39 national and local youth organizations in Croatia. It acts as a National Youth Council aiming to represent views and interests of young people in Croatia and to create an equal partnership with the government in implementing public policy for youth. As a national umbrella organization, the CYN primarily focuses on national level but it also gets involved locally when required, especially when local youth movements or local governments seek its assistance. The overall vision of the CYN is to strengthen the participation of active young people - through their youth organizations and by other means - in the creation, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of the efficient and effective Youth Policy, including the partnership-building with government institutions at national and local levels.

The report “Youth and the Millennium Development Goals” has been prepared with support of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in Croatia.

We would like to thank all participants in the workshops, without whose contributions this project would not be successful.

The authors would like to extend their warmest gratitude to partner youth organizations that assisted in the organization of regional workshops: Akcija za civilnu transparentnost – ACT [Action for *Civic Transparency*], PRONI – Centar za socijalno podučavanje [*Center for Social Instruction*], Hrvatska udruga za oboljele od HIV-a – HUHIV [*Croatian Association for HIV*], Udruga mladih Korak ispred – UMKI [*‘Step Ahead’ Youth Association*] and Klub mladih Šibenik [*Šibenik Youth Club*].

Publisher: Croatian Youth Network (CYN) / Mreža mladih Hrvatske (MMH)

Authors and editors (in alphabetical order): Vlatka Matković, Dražen Puljić, and Tomislav Tomašević

Proof-reading (Croatian text): Kata Fišter

Proof-reading (English text): Apostrof

English translation: Apostrof

Design and preparation: Teodor Petričević

Printing: Tiskara Printex, Čakovec

Zagreb, 2005

CONTENTS

**FOREWORD..... 4**

**THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS..... 6**

    Global Millennium Development Goals and Targets ..... 6

    Croatia’s Millennium Development Goals ..... 7

**YOUTH CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN CROATIA..... 10**

    Why are the Millennium Development Goals relevant to youth?..... 11

    Why is youth relevant to the Millennium Development Goals?..... 11

    How does youth contribute to the achievement of the MDGs? ..... 11

**EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICES ..... 14**

    FOOD, NOT BOMBS..... 14

    GREEN ACTION - Activist Section ..... 14

    TESTING AND COUNSELING CENTER ..... 15

    E-student..... 16

**CONCLUSION..... 18**

**YOUTH RECOMMENDATIONS..... 19**

    Recommendations for the Government and international organizations:..... 19

    Recommendations for youth: ..... 19

**REFERENCES ..... 21**

## FOREWORD

This report is the result of the *Involving Youth Organizations in the Millennium Development Goals* project, implemented by the Croatian Youth Network (Mreža mladih Hrvatske - MMH) in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Croatia. The project aimed to inform youth organizations about, and engage them in the process of achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in Croatia. Croatian youth is already active in promoting socio-economic development, but many of these activities have been unknown within the context of the Millennium Development Goals. Programs and projects conducted by youth organizations (including youth associations, youth initiatives, and youth wings of political parties) frequently and directly fall within the areas of the MDGs, however, due to a lack of awareness and the knowledge about the ways to achieve them, many youth organizations are not aware that they have been engaged in the achievement of Croatian MDGs. This lack of awareness extends beyond youth organizations and resonates with many more civil society organizations in Croatia, as well as the Croatian public in general.

This project's principal objective was to raise awareness of the Millennium Development Goals among youth organizations. Youth activities in the fields of HIV/AIDS education, informal education, the reduction of youth unemployment, and alike, greatly complement Croatian efforts in achieving the MDGs. The project's second objective was to investigate how and to what extent youth in Croatia have actively been involved in the areas of the MDGs. Finally, the project's third objective was to motivate youth organizations to start (upon obtaining more information) new initiatives and contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in Croatia.

The project was implemented in several phases:

1. Familiarizing youth trainers with the Millennium Development Goals,
2. Organizing and implementing regional workshops as well as gathering relevant information from workshops,
3. Writing the report "Youth and the Millennium Development Goals in Croatia".

In the first phase, UNDP Croatia familiarized four members of the MMH on the Millennium Development Goals and their global and national significance, in order to equip them with knowledge required by future MDG trainers. In the second phase, local partner organizations organized five regional workshops in Rijeka, Zagreb, Vukovar, Šibenik and Čakovec for the purpose of educating young people about the MDGs and gathering information on youth activities that complement the Millennium process. Seventy-four representatives of youth organizations from all Croatian counties were trained during regional workshops. The emphasis was placed on local problems viewed through the prism of the Millennium Development Goals.

In the third phase, the trainers summarized the information obtained at the regional workshops into this report, which has more than educational character; it also presents critical thinking and the ideas of youth activists from the entire country. Brainstorming, individual and group work, discussions, and analytical work on case studies were all utilized at the workshops. Youth contributions – most clearly shown through the examples of good practices - are at the heart of this report. The release of the report coincides with the fifth Millennium Summit (held in New York in September 2005), during which the world leaders discussed the progress made in the global achievement of the MDGs, five years after their inception.

We hope that the main message of this report is clear - youth must be a vital partner to governments in achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

## THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The Millennium Declaration was ratified at the 2000 Millennium Summit held in New York by 189 United Nations members. The Declaration was operationalised at the global level through the formulation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which many signatories endorsed as an approach to reducing poverty. The idea underlying the MDGs is setting the measurable targets, which countries strive to achieve by 2015. Setting measurable targets and specifying problems proved to be a sound way to achieve development results. The Declaration calls for global cooperation in helping poor countries exit their extreme poverty by means of renewed aid commitments, fair access to trade markets and modern technologies, renegotiating debts, etc. Moderately developed countries, like Croatia, can also identify development areas requiring improvement within the context of the MDGs, while taking into consideration their current needs and development priorities.

The role of UNDP is to help integrate the MDGs into all aspects of UN's work in the countries where it operates, to assist countries in preparing national reports in cooperation with other UN agencies, to uphold the Millennium Project at the global level, and to raise public awareness.

The Millennium Development Goals are time-bound and measurable targets of the Millennium Declaration for combating poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation and discrimination against women. There are eight global goals with 18 targets and 48 indicators with the year 1990 set as the base year; the goals have to be achieved by 2015. The goals refer to sustainable development in economic, social, political and environmental sense. In Croatia, 32 targets have been defined in addition to eight specific national goals, as a result of the consensus reached at the national roundtables, which included government and civil society representatives, scholars, teachers and youth. These national goals reflect Croatia's specific development problems. The national MDG Report determined the status, trends and priorities within eight development areas: relative poverty, education, gender equality, child and maternal health and mortality, HIV/AIDS, environmental protection and global partnership for development.

The Government appointed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to coordinate the MDG process. Croatian MDGs were outlined in the National Millennium Development Goals Report (MDGR), which was released in September 2004. This report presents global MDGs, followed by the Croatian-specific ones. The Government is expected to release its first Country Progress Report on MDGs by September 2005.

### Global Millennium Development Goals and Targets

<b>Goal 1 – Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger</b>
➤ Halve, between 1990 to 2015, the proportion of people living on less than one dollar a day;
➤ Halve, between 1990 to 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger.
<b>Goal 2 – Achieve universal primary education</b>
➤ Ensure that by 2015, boys and girls alike will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.

<b>Goal 3 - Promote gender equality and empower women</b>
➤ Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and at all levels, no later than 2015.

<b>Goal 4 - Reduce child mortality</b>
➤ Reduce by two thirds the under-five mortality rate by 2015.

<b>Goal 5 – Improve maternal health</b>
➤ Reduce by three quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio.

<b>Goal 6 - Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases</b>
➤ Have halted and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS;
➤ Have halted and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases by 2015.

<b>Goal 7 - Ensure environmental sustainability</b>
➤ Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources;
➤ Halve by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation;
➤ Have achieved by 2020 a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers.

<b>Goal 8 - Develop a global partnership for development</b>
➤ Develop further an open trading and financial system that is rule-based, predictable and non-discriminatory;
➤ Address the special needs of the Least Developed Countries;
➤ Address the special needs of landlocked and small island developing countries;
➤ Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries through national and international measures to make debt sustainable in the long term;
➤ In cooperation with the developing countries, develop strategies for decent and productive work for youth;
➤ In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries;
➤ In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies - especially information and communications technologies.

### Croatia's Millennium Development Goals

<b>Goal 1</b>	<b>Reduce relative poverty</b>
<b>Status and trends<sup>1</sup></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 4.3% annual average economic growth from 1994 to 2002;</li> <li>➤ 6.2% real net growth in wages from 1995 to 2002;</li> <li>➤ High (14.8%) unemployment rate in 2002 (according to the International Labor Organization's definition);</li> <li>➤ 17.2% poverty rate according to the relative poverty line (based on EUROSTAT methodology for 2001) – HRK 17,965.52 annually per "adult equivalent."</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> The National Report on MDGs was completed in September 2004 and the data contained therein on status and trends date back to the 2001-2004 period.

<b>Targets</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ From 1990 to 2015, reduce the number of people living in relative poverty from 17.2% to 8%;</li> <li>➤ Reduce the long-term unemployment rate from 6.2% in 2001 to 3.1% in 2015 (long-term unemployed are those unemployed for more than two years according to Labor Force Survey).</li> </ul>
----------------	--

<b>Goal 2</b>	<b>Guarantee education for all</b>
<b>Status and trends</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Participation of pre-school children in standard programs is 43%;</li> <li>➤ High rate of net enrollment in basic schools (97.13%);</li> <li>➤ Illiteracy rate in Croatia is 1.8% (2001).</li> </ul>
<b>Targets</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Align education with the standards of the European Union – the Bologna process;</li> <li>➤ Attain the foundations for a successful, knowledge-based participation in labour force, the economy and modern technology;</li> <li>➤ Organize services (e.g. democratization of educational system, decentralization, etc.).</li> </ul>

<b>Goal 3</b>	<b>Promote gender equality and empower women</b>
<b>Status and trends</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The share of women in Croatia's total population is 51.9%;</li> <li>➤ Women account for 59% of the totally unemployed;</li> <li>➤ The number of women entrepreneurs is low (30%). They rarely occupy leading posts in top management and supervisory boards;</li> <li>➤ Political participation of women has stagnated at 22%;</li> <li>➤ 75% women in leading posts in the Government (four ministers, six State secretaries, 29 assistant ministers and six first secretaries to the ministries);</li> <li>➤ Women account for only 13.38% in county assemblies, 14.27% in city councils and 6.94% in municipal councils (2001 local elections);</li> <li>➤ 71% women in the Administrative Court of the Republic of Croatia, 62% in the High Magistrate Court, 46% in the Supreme Court and 30.8% in the Constitutional Court.</li> </ul>
<b>Targets</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Introduce gender-sensitive education in educational curricula and programs;</li> <li>➤ Increase women's participation in political decision-making;</li> <li>➤ Empower women economically;</li> <li>➤ Combat all forms of violence against women;</li> <li>➤ Improve statistical monitoring and data compilation;</li> <li>➤ Increase media support for gender equality;</li> <li>➤ Align private and professional lives;</li> <li>➤ Reinforce institutional mechanisms;</li> <li>➤ Strengthen civil society.</li> </ul>

<b>Goal 4</b>	<b>Reduce infant and child mortality</b>
<b>Status and trends</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Stillbirth mortality rate of 5.7%;</li> <li>➤ Neonatal mortality rate of 9.5%;</li> <li>➤ 5.5% of pregnant women do not have regular medical check-ups;</li> <li>➤ Infant mortality rate of 0.7%. The most frequent causes are pathologies in pregnancy or birth, and congenital anomalies);</li> <li>➤ Child mortality at ages 1 to 16 is low (less than 25/100,000 children in 2000);</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The most frequent causes of child mortality are tumors, congenital anomalies, and accidents and injuries.</li> </ul>
<b>Targets</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Reduce the rate of perinatal and infant mortality;</li> <li>➤ Improve antenatal care;</li> <li>➤ Improve postnatal care;</li> <li>➤ Reduce “avoidable” deaths caused by perinatal causes and evaluate perinatal and child mortality at the national and regional levels;</li> <li>➤ Reduce child mortality rate;</li> <li>➤ Reduce accidental deaths and evaluate the implementation of the prevention programs for the purpose of reducing childhood deaths caused by accidents at the national and regional levels.</li> </ul>

<b>Goal 5</b>	<b>Improve maternal health</b>
<b>Status and trends</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Maternal mortality is low and usually involves sporadic cases;</li> <li>➤ There were 12,000 legal terminations of pregnancy in 2002 (7.8% girls under 19 years; 35.6% women aged 20 to 29);</li> <li>➤ Protection of women’s health: chlamydia infections up to 21% in adolescent girls;</li> <li>➤ Other causes of women’s mortality: malignancies, injuries and circulatory diseases.</li> </ul>
<b>Targets</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Maintain a low level of maternal mortality;</li> <li>➤ Preserve and improve reproductive health;</li> <li>➤ Further reduce abortion rate, particularly among adolescents;</li> <li>➤ Reduce most common causes of women’s mortality during their childbearing years.</li> </ul>

<b>Goal 6</b>	<b>Combat HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and other diseases</b>
<b>Status and trends</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Low HIV infection rate – 0.01%;</li> <li>➤ Declining incidence of tuberculosis (33/100,000 in 2003);</li> <li>➤ Priority health problems are chronic non-contagious diseases: cardiovascular disease (causes death in 52% of cases) and malignancies (cause death in 24% of cases).</li> </ul>
<b>Targets</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Maintain the current level of HIV/AIDS infection in Croatia;</li> <li>➤ Reduce the prevalence of tuberculosis;</li> <li>➤ Reduce mortality caused by chronic non-infectious diseases in persons aged 0 to 64.</li> </ul>

<b>Goal 7</b>	<b>Ensure environmental sustainability</b>
<b>Status and trends</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ According to data from 2001, the status of forests and forests ecosystems is good;</li> <li>➤ The number of protected natural assets has increased from 371 to 427 (2001);</li> <li>➤ Development of the National Environmental Network has commenced;</li> <li>➤ Considerable infrastructure problems have been identified: there are only 10 landfills with legal status (Croatia generates a total of 4 million tons of waste annually, while legal landfills take in only 50,565 tons or 1.25%).</li> </ul>
<b>Targets</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Incorporate the principle of sustainable development into national policies and programmes and halt the loss of environmental resources;</li> <li>➤ Reduce the number of people who do not have adequate water supply</li> </ul>

	and sanitation; ➤ Improve waste management and reduce the quantity of waste.
--	---

<b>Goal 8</b>	<b>Develop a global partnership for development</b>
<b>Status and trends</b>	➤ Youth (aged 15 to 29) account for 20.25% of the total population, while the unemployment rate for persons aged 15-24 is 34.4%;
<b>Targets</b>	➤ Devise and conduct strategies for decent and productive work for youth in cooperation with developing countries; ➤ Gather data on the advantages of new technologies -particularly information and communication technologies—in cooperation with the private sector.

## **YOUTH CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN CROATIA**

Although it may sound like a cliché or a cheap election campaign slogan, youth can truly be considered as a key factor in decision-making and human development. Youth plays a special role in achieving the MDGs. Youth<sup>2</sup> today accounts for almost one half of the world's population and the achievement of global objectives would be unthinkable without the mobilization of their potential. This potential does not only pertain to their quantity, but also to their creativity, enthusiasm and initiative. The problems that MDGs bring into focus directly bear upon the quality of young citizens' life. Furthermore, individual problems faced by youth - such as unemployment - are among the greatest development problems confronting the world today.

A group of young leaders gathered in New York in 2004 at the 12<sup>th</sup> United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development asked Jeffrey Sachs, the director of the UN's Millennium Project, how young people can contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. His response was: "You tell us!" Consequently, international youth experts initiated the creation of the global report 'Youth and the Millennium Development Goals' which was published in April 2005. The report provides best practices on how youth, throughout the world, can join the MDG process and describes some of the best examples of how youth contributes to the achievement of the Goals. The 2005 Croatian National Human Development Report - dedicated to, and written by youth - was one of the first positive examples described in the global youth report.

Due to the above, the participation of youth in formulating development policies and the MDG process is absolutely vital to achieve the Goals and garner public support. Governments and relevant institutions must take the first step in engaging youth in the formulation of development policies, but not only in those policies that strictly pertain to youth. It is rather imprudent and unrewarding to argue that "youth must first engage themselves before they can be engaged by decision-makers," because youth has already become active in many development areas. Youth exhibits the know-how and expertise, which should be consulted and utilized. Ignoring this potential can be perceived as ignorance and incompetence of authorities that are expected to open 'space' for youth activities. The problem of 'unopened space' is present in developed democracies as well, but it is particularly evident in a relatively young democracy such as Croatia. However, through various models of extra-institutional

---

<sup>2</sup> Persons younger than 24 years of age according to the UN.

activities, youth is finding its own way to bring forth ideas and advocate for their interests to the benefit of society as a whole.

The (self) involvement of youth is perhaps best reflected in a discourse on the MDGs, in which there is both, a great deal of relevance for youth, as well as relevance of youth for MDGs.

### **Why are the Millennium Development Goals relevant to youth?**

On a fundamental level, they are relevant because the MDGs bear upon youth and the achievement of the Goals, while the quality of their achievement largely impacts on the quality of youth lives. The MDGs are a long-term approach and pertain to long-term problems that will primarily impact youth and future generations. The MDG implementation strategy, which is the responsibility of the Government and relevant institutions, demand a high-degree of youth involvement, because the young are not only observers or monitoring agents, but also active participants, the agents of change, guides and co-managers of the development processes that impact them. Youth is directly encompassed by Croatia's MDGs, particularly within the context of gender equality, children's health, the Bologna Declaration, and youth unemployment. Thus, youth should consistently be involved in providing solutions to these problems.

### **Why is youth relevant to the Millennium Development Goals?**

Because youth is able, willing and already working on achieving the MDGs; their evident social marginalization is overcome by their mobility in this field. However, youth should not simply be perceived as some sort of an "instrument" or "resource"—because people are not merely "living materials"; rather, they must be given the opportunity to prove themselves as partners and experts, which is what they are. It is particularly important to "open space" for youth activities whereby they can fulfill their potential and prove themselves - through their enthusiasm, ideas and initiative - as drivers of human development - going beyond the common national frameworks. Unfortunately, in today's society and particularly from the standpoint of government institutions, youth is looked upon as a social problem rather than a social resource. Most frequent perceptions in this context are<sup>3</sup>:

1. Youth bear the principal blame for all major traffic accidents with fatal consequences;
2. Youth abuse various types of illegal drugs;
3. Youth are a group particularly prone to violence.

Effort has to be made to develop a different context of youth perceptions in which youth is a (self) actualizing resource, which should be given the opportunity to prove itself, eliminating perceptions of youth as social problems that require solutions. If youth is not given opportunities, negative trends in the achievement of development goals can only grow, while the key problem - youth unemployment - can only exacerbate the existing and provoke further problems in social cohesion.

### **How does youth contribute to the achievement of the MDGs?**

---

<sup>3</sup> These three perceptions are based on authors' experience, accumulated with many years of activism in the youth sector. The authors have found evidence for this hypothesis in media reports and in communications with government institutions over the past several years.

Although the problem of poverty is exceptionally complex and demands a systematic approach, the activities of individual youth organizations propose specific models to partially solve this problem. For example, the Youth Center from Čakovec organized the children's show presentation in order to collect clothing, footwear and toys for Caritas, while the Social Democratic Party Youth Forum collected schoolbooks, food, clothing and footwear in cooperation with the Red Cross.

The problem of education, although presented mainly from the institutional viewpoint in the Croatian MDG Report, is the focus of many youth organizations working informally through various programs and projects. This includes, for example, IT education for youth by means of workshops, round table discussions and seminars on democratization, human rights, non-violence, volunteerism, youth-oriented policies, etc. Informal education is a very valuable supplement to regular education, unfulfilled by secondary school or university. The work of two groups, the Domaći Association of Karlovac and the Zagreb Volunteer Center, stand out in this regard. As for the impact of modernization on the formal education system, a very small number of youth organizations have been active. In higher education, the situation is unclear regarding the umbrella association which should represent the interests of students in educational reforms, although, recently, certain positive changes have occurred in the Student Assembly reform, while an increasing number of youth organizations are becoming involved in education reform projects such as the Bologna Process.

Youth is active in promoting gender equality and has given a series of examples regarding changes in the Statutes of many organizations for the purpose of adopting gender-sensitive terminology. A relatively larger number of women in youth associations has also been observed and a correspondingly larger number of women in administrative functions. Many youth associations have been organizing public forums and round tables on the topics of gender equality and violence against women. The situation has been changing slowly yet thoroughly in the youth wings of political parties which introduced quotas for women, although most parties currently have no quotas, deeming that the key criteria must be based on the 'quality of a person,' which naturally upholds the ongoing masculinization of parties and political culture in general.

The activities of youth organizations in educating and combating HIV/AIDS and the improvement of reproductive health are exceptionally noteworthy. This is understandable, since the problem primarily concerns the youth population; youth organizations use methods of peer-to-peer education and assistance. The activities of the student organization CroMSIC must be highlighted, because it – in addition to educating on the prevention from HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases - also conducts outreach programs for vulnerable and high-risk groups, as well as engages in the promotion of changes in risky adolescent behavior, contraception and responsible family planning.

Youth in Croatia displays above-average interest in environmental protection. Since Croatia has such an abundance of natural wealth, there is an understandably broad range of activities in this field. Outstanding in this regard are firstly, the recycling Vukomerić farm which operates under the aegis of the Green Alternative Group Network (Z.M.A.G.) and secondly the Barbarinac Association, which ran as a candidate in the 2005 local elections and won, forming the local government in Vranjic, near Split. Their political engagement as the 'Little Greens' independent slate is essential, because they intend to address a key problem in their geographic area - asbestos poisoning and its causes - and they are planning different environmental activities such as landscaping the uninhabited islet of Barbarinac.

Several associations stand out with reference to unemployment - a key problem in Croatia, which impacts youth, aged 15 to 29 more than the rest of population. The ZUM Association from Pula is noteworthy, as it is involved in stimulating employment and professional training for young people. This association brings together employers and potential employees to work on joint projects, educational workshops (from writing resumes to preparing for interviews), and acquainting youth with local community activities.

## EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICES

The following initiatives are the examples of good practices within the MDG context in Croatia.

### **FOOD, NOT BOMBS<sup>4</sup>**

A volunteer organization dedicated to non-violence, *Food, Not Bombs* (FNB) is today an international movement that was established in San Francisco in the 1980s, within the context of anti-nuclear demonstrations. A similar group of activists operate in Zagreb, who, besides organizing and participating in anti-war demonstrations, organize campaigns to cook and distribute vegetarian or vegan food to the poor at the most-frequented public locations. In the markets, shops and food-processing plants, they collect food with a near expiration date, which is still suitable for consumption. They ensure that the “recycled food” used in FNB campaigns is organically grown, without the use of pesticides and artificial fertilizers. They also avoid using food made by companies that pollute the environment, as well as food that is detrimental to human health.

Due to its presence in public locations, the food reaches those who need it the most. Such campaigns relieve soup kitchens, which are often overburdened, but they also demonstrate that the city has hungry people and that society, due to its lethargy, allows surplus food to go to waste, while simultaneously spending enormous amounts of money on weapons. FNB uses such campaigns to show how young people can contribute to combating hunger and poverty in society. The large number of beneficiaries also indicates that there is a great need for such campaigns, particularly in new Croatian democracy, which participates in the free market, accumulates capital and is thereby confronted with growing consumerism.

### **GREEN ACTION<sup>5</sup> - Activist Section**

Croatia is a country abundant in natural resources, ranging from the immense quantities of drinking water and the Adriatic Sea, to its rich forests, fertile soil and biodiversity. Unfortunately, like most other countries in the world, Croatia is experiencing environmental degradation, largely due to poor waste management and unsustainable use of natural resources. Millennium Development Goal 7 aims to solve precisely this problem. Croatia is currently developing a national strategy for regional development in which the State, in cooperation with interest groups (including youth), will identify and prioritize sustainable projects within social, economic and environmental areas.

Youth in Croatia have responded to the challenges of sustainable development and environmental degradation by launching environmental protection programs or establishing non-governmental organizations to deal exclusively with this problem. In Croatia there are approximately fifty active environmental protection organizations, which are mainly led by young people and whose activist organizations are exclusively young. The oldest and best known environmental protection organization in Croatia, and in the entire region, is Green Action.

---

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.foodnotbombs.net>

<sup>5</sup> [www.zelena-akcija.hr](http://www.zelena-akcija.hr)

Green Action is not a classic youth organization, although the majority of its leaders and its 10 staff members are under 30 years of age. Green Action conducts numerous long-term environmental protection and sustainable development programs covering: nature protection (sustainable use of natural resources and oversight of national parks and nature parks), energy (renewable energy sources and climate change), education (seminars and workshops on various themes within environment and development), the Green Hotline (support to citizens in identifying and solving local environmental problems), water protection, non-GMO food, and sustainable tourism. Green Action is participating in creating a sustainable development strategy and numerous legal regulations, and its activities provide an oversight of public administration and responsible authorities. Most of their efforts are aimed at raising public awareness of environmental problems and advocating interests of general public before decision-makers.

All Green Action projects and activities are conducted in cooperation with the Activist Section - an autonomous group of about thirty young activists within Green Action who uphold its programs but also conduct independent activities. The Activist Section, as the very name implies, generally devises and conducts creative actions whereby youth influences public opinion and pressures institutions and companies to solve environmental problems. An example of such activity is a 15-minute construction of a small house in front of the Zagreb City Council with an aim to highlight the problem of illegal construction. Within the Activist Section, probably the most dynamic is the Bicycling Program, which advocates eco-transport, the construction of bicycle paths in Zagreb, the creation of on-ramps on sidewalks for the disabled and cyclists, etc. The Activist Section also conducts numerous educational activities on sustainable development, reduction and assortment of waste, and renewable energy sources.

Green Action primarily operates at the national level, and it has succeeded in halting certain large projects that contradict the concept of sustainable development, such as, the construction of a coal thermoelectric plant on the Adriatic coast, experimentation with genetically-modified seeds by large corporations, illegal gravel extraction on the Drava River, and the Družba-Adria pipeline for oil transport running through the Adriatic coast and Croatian territory).

## **TESTING AND COUNSELING CENTER<sup>6</sup>**

Although worldwide HIV/AIDS is one of the greatest threats to economic and social development, in Croatia the prevalence of HIV (based on blood and organ donors screening) in general population is still low - approximately 0.001%<sup>7</sup>. Such an outcome is due to, among other things, the enactment of the National HIV/AIDS Prevention Program and investment in prevention activities. Prevention of HIV/AIDS among youth has been set as a priority under the Millennium Development Goal 6. In Croatia, the greatest problems tied to this disease pertain to stigmatization and discrimination of persons with HIV/AIDS and their families. In 2003, the Croatian Association for HIV (HUHIV), in cooperation with the F. Mihaljević Infectious Disease Clinic, established the Testing and Counseling Center. This is the first model of cooperation with the government sector in Croatia. The Center is a key institution for problems associated with HIV/AIDS, both for HIV-positive individuals and for the general public.

---

<sup>6</sup> [www.huhiv.hr](http://www.huhiv.hr)

<sup>7</sup> Data from the Croatian Public Health Institute. The number of newly reported cases is 10 per million, per year.

The Center makes available complete medical and psycho-social assistance and support to HIV-positive individuals and their families through psychological counseling, social support and legal assistance. In this manner they secure a better quality of life, ease the stigma attached to HIV, and prevent further infections. The Center offers psychosocial assistance through individual sessions, group counseling (with families or partners), and a hotline where all information on HIV can be obtained.

The Center provides voluntarily, free and anonymous HIV testing, counseling before and after HIV testing and free condoms. They are available to all who were exposed to the risk of HIV infection and citizens who need advice on HIV/AIDS-related matters. Since HIV most often affects the working-age and sexually active population, young people are targeted by the Center's activities. Although a rare example, young experts are involved in the work of the Centre, thus representing a model for the work on this problem.

The Center is a bridge between HIV prevention and care, and support to patients and their families. International experience has shown that such centers are an important factor in promoting safe sex, prevention of HIV infection and integration of patients in their communities.

### **E-student<sup>8</sup>**

Youth unemployment is one of the greatest development problems in the world. A target of MDG 8 deals with youth unemployment and this is the only MDG target that pertains exclusively to youth. In Croatia, youth unemployment is probably the most acute problem burdening this social group, and according to some data youth unemployment is as high as 41.1%.<sup>9</sup> Solutions to unemployment problems are not simple and are required in the spheres of education, free enterprise, macroeconomics, fiscal policy, etc. The student association known as *E-student* is contributing to solving the problem of unemployment as well as the low quality of formal education (MDGs 8 and 2).

The association was established at the beginning of 2004 at the Faculty of Economics in Zagreb, and it gathers 250 of the best students from this institution. At the beginning of the academic year, E-student began to operate at the Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science as well, where it gathers 100 top students. In April 2005, the association was also established at the Faculty of Law, where their objective is to gather 150 top students. The association has been conceived primarily as a supplement to the education process for the best students at various faculties of the University of Zagreb, who have been neglected to a certain degree by the massive educational system. Additionally, the association forms a tie between the best students and most successful companies in Croatia. Due to the traditional manner of instruction at the aforementioned faculties, students do not acquire the necessary practical knowledge and skills needed in the business sector, thus the potential of such students remain untapped. Therefore, one of the goals of the association is to interact with businesses and offer crucial expertise and the necessary skills to the best students so that they can be competitive on labor markets.

In the past academic year (2004/2005), the members of the core *E-student* team at the Faculty of Economics have worked on seven major projects: the Business Plan Contest, Case Study

---

<sup>8</sup> [www.e-student.hr](http://www.e-student.hr)

<sup>9</sup> Unemployment rate according to the labor force survey in 2001, World Bank, *Mladi u Jugoistočnoj Europi: Od rizika do osnaženja* [Youth in South East Europe: From Risk to Empowerment].



Writing, International Cooperation, Summer Schools and Seminars, Practical Work and Internships, Lectures and Workshops, Student Mentorship and Virtual Mentorship. Support to all of these projects was provided by four main teams – PR and marketing, IT<sup>10</sup>, human resources, and finance and accounting.

Besides these principal projects, *E-student* has participated in various other projects and events in cooperation with leading individuals in the business world. Working together with the Croatian Employer's Association, the association's members have participated in the organization of the Small and Medium-size Enterprise Conference, which was held in Zagreb on 30 November 2004. *E-student* was also one of the co-organizers of the Job Fair<sup>11</sup> at the Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science together with BEST<sup>12</sup> and the SS-FER<sup>13</sup> held in May 2005. Additionally, *E-student*, in conjunction with well-known human resources firms (MojPosao, Electus and Ictinus), organized the first Career Day at the Zagreb Trade Fair in June 2005. Prior to its establishment, *E-student* consulted with a thousand of Croatian largest companies on the need for such an association. Besides employers, *E-student* has cooperated successfully with the administrations of faculties and the relevant government institutions, particularly the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports.

---

<sup>10</sup> IT – Information technologies; pertains to the use of information technologies.

<sup>11</sup> *Sajam poslova (Croatian)*

<sup>12</sup> BEST – the Board of the European Students of Technology.

<sup>13</sup> The Alliance of Students of the Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science.

## CONCLUSION

By ratifying the Millennium Declaration in 2000, Croatia has undertaken the commitment to implement the Millennium Development Goals, to define them within the context of Croatian needs as well as to attempt to achieve them. The MDGs are important to Croatia since they imply progress in the socio-economic sphere and the improvement of the quality of life of Croatian citizens.

When speaking of development, youth - as the social group - cannot be left out, given their size and human resource capacity. The possibility of youth involvement in setting priorities and conducting activities is a step toward achieving the MDGs. Without the involvement of youth, who make up one fifth of Croatia's total population, economic growth, the reduction in unemployment rates, and general social development will be achieved with difficulty.

In workshops held as part of this project, young people confirmed this statement. They expressed their desire to be actively involved in decision-making and the implementation of their ideas, which contribute to the achievement of the MDGs. This project, especially as a result of regional workshops, generated constructive proposals pertaining to the MDGs, which were then forwarded to decision-making authorities, international organizations and youth organizations in Croatia.

## YOUTH RECOMMENDATIONS

### Recommendations for the Government and international organizations:

- *Involve youth in formulation of strategies and projects, vital to the MDGs;*
- *Involve youth in monitoring and evaluation of the Millennium Development Goals Action Plan;*
- *Involve youth organizations and youth in general in the implementation of MDG projects and activities;*
- *Devise and finance a campaign to raise public awareness of the significance and importance of the MDGs;*
- *Inform civil society organizations of the importance of the MDGs and their role in Croatia's sustainable development;*
- *Continue to educate youth organizations about MDGs;*
- *Organize a conference for youth organizations which would support the creation of projects aimed at achieving the MDGs;*
- *Secure participation of youth delegations at the 2005 Millennium Summit in New York;*
- *Implementation of the National Action Plan for Youth at all levels with youth as partners;*
- *Formulate local programmes in relation to youth activities, action plans and financing systems;*
- *Set up business incubators for youth;*
- *Establish regional centers to assist and support youth organizations;*
- *Make available for youth and change the purpose of publicly-owned and abandoned properties, such as military facilities;*
- *Institutionally raise political awareness among youth and citizens in general.*

### Recommendations for youth:

- *Incorporate the MDGs into project proposals of youth organizations;*
- *Establish a network of organizations based on common interests and programs at the local and national levels for the purpose of reinforcing organizational capacity and advocating youth interests in development policies;*
- *Plan common activities to achieve the MDGs and jointly apply for funds;*
- *Secure transfer of know-how on the MDGs within individual organizations by means of instructional workshops for the purpose of enhancing capacity of youth and their organizations;*
- *Promote youth organizations and their efforts to achieve sustainable development by means of various events such as organization fairs, sport tournaments, and semi-annual presentations in cities and the wider region;*
- *Establish a mentoring system within youth organizations to facilitate a successful transition between generations;*
  
- *Improve cooperation with local authorities and the business sector;*
- *Mobilize new youth/volunteers and facilitate their involvement in organizations;*

- *Establish alternative educational/instructional centers and encourage teaching approaches such as radical pedagogy, drama-based pedagogy and legislative theater.*
- *Organize humanitarian concerts and collection drives for clothing, footwear and food items and secure assistance to high-risk groups who receive no formal aid.*

## REFERENCES

*Youth and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): Challenges and Opportunities for Implementation*” available at: <http://www.takingitglobal.org/themes/mdg/pdf/YouthMDG.pdf>

*Nacionalno izvješće o provedbi ciljeva Milenijske deklaracije Ujedinjenih naroda*, available at:  
[http://www.undp.hr/images/dokumenti\\_mdg/Nacionalno%20izvjesce%20o%20provedbi%20ciljeva%20Milenijske%20deklaracije%20Ujedinjenih%20naroda.pdf](http://www.undp.hr/images/dokumenti_mdg/Nacionalno%20izvjesce%20o%20provedbi%20ciljeva%20Milenijske%20deklaracije%20Ujedinjenih%20naroda.pdf)

*Milenijska deklaracija Ujedinjenih naroda*, available at: [http://www.undp.org/mdg/99-Millennium\\_Declaration\\_and\\_Follow\\_up\\_Resolution.pdf](http://www.undp.org/mdg/99-Millennium_Declaration_and_Follow_up_Resolution.pdf)

For more information about the Millennium Development Goals, see the website of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP):  
[http://www.undp.hr/hr/ciljevi/hr\\_goals\\_index.html](http://www.undp.hr/hr/ciljevi/hr_goals_index.html)