



PHOTO & CAPTION

Strengthening the Civil Society Sector



Photo: IKS

The National Foundation for Civil Society Development, established in November 2003, is reforming the system of financing Croatia's civil society. An independently funded organization established by the state, it combines revenue from government, international, corporate and local resources. Its programs include grant-making, the promotion of voluntary work and philanthropy, intersectoral cooperation, and local foundations development. As a result, the Foundation impacts the overall social and political positioning of civil society in Croatia.

A local NGO center that was severely damaged during the war in Croatia brings a youth club together to clear its yard.

USAID selected the Foundation to receive long term technical assistance over nearly two years to strengthen it and promote its sustainability. The assessment determined two priorities: the decentralization of grant-making and the regional development of civil society. The Foundation received broader USAID support including consultative services in designing its regional development plan and decentralization model, as well as the process of selecting regional partner organizations, which were then also offered assistance in carrying out their tasks.

Now, four regional foundations serve as the Foundation's grant-making partners, and five regional centers (comprised of four to five non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working closely as partners and operating in Croatia's five main regions) were supported to provide non-financial, advisory and capacity building support to local and regional NGOs. The regional centers operate as local and regional information and advisory focal points for the NGO sector, organizing workshops to address their beneficiaries' specific needs that to date have trained hundreds of NGO representatives.