

The Republic of Macedonia is a multiethnic and multi-confessional society (64% of the population is comprised of Macedonians, 25% Albanians, 4% Turks, 3% Roma, 2% Serbs, 1% Boshniaks, 0,5% Vlach and 0,5% others) and since gaining its independence it has made progress in providing minority rights.

In 2001 Macedonia was affected by an armed conflict between the governmental security forces (army and police) and armed groups of ethnic Albanians (organized in the so-called National Liberation Army – NLA). The internationally-brokered Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA) put an end to the conflict. The purpose of OFA is to promote peaceful and harmonious development of civil society, with respect of the ethnic identity and interests of all citizens of Macedonia. OFA implementation includes several key elements: decentralization, equitable and proportional representation, protection of culture and identity of communities as well as establishment of special legal procedures, such as the Badenter's principle for the laws affecting the culture and identity of communities and establishing special Committees on Relations among Communities. OFA emphasizes that the agreement protects the interests of all its citizens. However, even nine years after its signing, the communities represented with less than 20% in the population (Turks, Roma, Serbs, Boshniaks and Vlachs) in Macedonia voice their dissatisfaction with the speed of exercising of their rights and the low political power vested in their representatives. This project was developed with an aim to examine the situation of these communities.

The overall objective of the project is to enhance the dialogue among all ethnic communities in Macedonia, with focus on issues affecting the non-majority communities in the spirit and context of EU integration, by establishing communication networks among the non-majority communities, civil society sector, central and local authorities and international factors. Specific objectives of the project are:

- To analyze the implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA) and its effects on confidence and dialogue building among the ethnic communities and to propose measures for improving the segments with deficiencies;
- To assess the situation of non-majority communities in political and developmental processes on local and central level, to propose measures for promotion and protection of rights of non-majority communities and to improve their integration.

Primary target group is the governmental institutions established for protection of the rights of communities on national and local level (Secretariat for Implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement – SIOFA); National Committee on Relations among Communities; local committees on relations among the communities; civil society organizations active in the field of minority

rights and international organizations. Target group is also the representatives of the political parties represented in the Assembly, local governments (mayors and councilors), media, etc.

The project will analyze the effects of OFA, especially in terms of confidence building among all ethnic communities in Macedonia, with focus on non-majority communities represented with under 20% in the population, normative acts adopted for protection of rights of communities, level of implementation of equitable representation on local and central level, role of institutions tasked for protection of rights of communities and their relations with the civil sector as well as the level of interethnic confidence among different ethnic groups. In addition to the interviews with the relevant actors, also a poll will be conducted on a representative sample in selected municipalities. The findings will serve as a basis for further discussions with the relevant actors and undertaking measures for improving the situation.

MCIC will also organize two roundtables. The first one on “Preserving the Cultural Diversity” will be realized for 15 representatives of the civil society organizations and will be focused on preserving the cultural identity of their communities. Citizens coming from these ethnic communities will be also invited to attend the event. The roundtable will assess the needs of these communities and their respective organizations (from sociological, cultural and economic perspective).

The second roundtable on “OFA Implementation and Role of Non-Majority Communities in Integration Processes” is intended for 20 representatives of SIOFA; National Committee on Relations among Communities; Agency for Protection of Non-Majority Communities represented with under 20% and civil society organizations active in the field of minority rights and conflict prevention. The roundtable will discuss the survey findings as well as the measures to be undertaken to improve the situation with non-majority communities. At the end of the project, a conference will be organized together with ADI in order to promote the report.

Direct beneficiaries of the project, the part implemented by MCIC (two roundtables) and the national conference in cooperation with ADI, are:

- 15-20 participants at the first roundtable, representatives of 5 to 7 civil society organizations active in the field of protection of the culture and identity of their communities;
- 20 participants at the second roundtable, representatives of SIOFA; National Committee on Relations among Communities; Agency for Protection of Non-Majority Communities;
- Over 70 representatives at the national conference to be organized together with ADI, with

participation of local and central authorities, representatives of international organizations (EU, UNDP, OSCE) as well as representatives of the civil society sector

Expected results of the project are: strengthened capacities of the National Committee on Relations among Communities, Agency for Protection of Non-Majority Communities and local committee on relations among communities in respect of their role in confidence building, improved cooperation of the civil sector with the relevant actors in this field, improved status and protection of rights of non-majority communities, including their respective civil society organizations.

The implementation period is January 1 – October 15, 2010.

The assumptions affecting the realization of project objectives are: readiness of local and central authorities to participate in all stages of the project; representatives of the other relevant civil society organizations and representatives of non-majority communities are willing to take part in the project; civil society organizations active in this field are interested for establishing a network through which they could address the problems of non-majority communities.

The activities will be realized in coordination with the participating civil society organizations, primarily with ADI. MCIC, in consultation with the participating organization, will be responsible for the decision making and project implementation. The project is complex and it involves heterogeneous beneficiaries, i.e. representatives of all sectors in the society.

The total costs of the project amount to MKD 1,400,000, whereas ADI participates with MKD 1,230,000, while the contribution of MCIC is MKD 170.000 and is intended for covering the costs for organization of roundtables on local level.

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