

# LEADING LIGHTS

## *A Report from the Field on Civil Society in Bulgaria*

The real stories are in the cities, towns, and villages across Bulgaria where citizen organizations are doing their work.

The term *civil society* refers to the community of organizations—separate from government—that citizens create to address problems, achieve shared goals, provide information, and give people a greater voice in public affairs. Since its beginnings in 1995, the Democracy Network Program of the U.S. Agency for International Development has invested about \$6 million in an effort to build civil society in Bulgaria by strengthening its citizen or nongovernmental organizations, often called NGOs.

From 1995-98, the Institute for Sustainable Communities, a U.S.-based international NGO that coordinates "DemNet" in Bulgaria, provided grants and other assistance—trainings, technical help, and operational support—to 129 Bulgarian NGOs working in the target areas of democracy building, social services, environmental protection, and economic development. With the NGO sector now steadily maturing, ISC has channeled its assistance under Phase II of DemNet through 13 *support organizations*: Bulgarian non-profits that themselves give the types of aid to other NGOs that DemNet I provided.

Through DemNet II, ISC is helping to build an in-country NGO support sector, not only granting funds but also teaching such vital skills as strategic planning and local fundraising—so that, in time, Bulgaria's citizen organizations can continue their work without foreign support.

After almost five years of the Democracy Network Program, it is entirely right to ask: *What has been accomplished?* How far have we come toward a self-sustaining NGO sector in Bulgaria?

### **Local Answers, National Impact**

These questions can't be answered simply with project data. The real stories

are in the cities, towns, and villages across the country where DemNet-supported organizations are doing their work.

In most cases, along with completing projects, DemNet grantees have begun building networks of community support—but this process, like the overall evolution of Bulgarian civil society, clearly has some distance to go. Yet even as this country struggles toward political stability, economic recovery, and a modern legal framework, its NGOs have begun to register some national, along with local, achievements. For example:

- The Bulgarian Charities Aid Foundation, a Sofia-based support organization, has surveyed companies nationwide about their giving practices, and is now very actively promoting the concept of payroll giving plans (see page 2).
- And in the small town Gorna Oriahovitz, the Center "Maria," Bulgaria's first support and service provider outside the capital for women and children victims of violence, helped create the National Network of NGOs Helping Women—which successfully advocated for a new national child protection act (see page 6).

"This Center is hope for many people in my situation," said a divorced mother whom the Center Maria helped.

### **A Voice for Citizenship**

Work like this matters—not only in the "big picture," but to uncounted thousands of real people. For many, these NGOs are providing not only service but a voice to say what they believe is important, and a real demonstration that conditions can improve. In a country that faces so much hard work ahead, Bulgaria's NGOs are becoming a leading light for sustaining and expanding positive change.



# Making Good Works Last

... and nurturing a larger community of NGOs

## Bulgarian Charities Aid Foundation

Among the 13 support organizations working with DemNet in this country, the Bulgarian Charities Aid Foundation stands out for the nationwide impact it has achieved—both in strengthening BCAF's own nonprofit partners and in helping them develop local support.

"Our overall mission is bringing together potential donors with nongovernmental organizations, and strengthening the

"When we started, we had applications that had problems with the 30% raised locally," he added. "It was quite difficult for them. In this third grant round, most of the NGOs have provided this 30 percent—and most have learned to communicate with companies in a more efficient way."

In the information campaign that precedes each grant competition, "we are trying to cover different areas, so that every town has a possibility to get some training in local resource mobilization," Zhechkov said. During the first two grant rounds, over 180 NGOs took part in the informational seminars, and 187 total proposals were submitted.

presentations focus on communicating with companies, municipalities, and citizens.

"We are teaching them how to approach donors in better ways," Zhechkov said—"how to create the win-win situation where businesses can also profit from giving."

During 2000, DemNet also funded publication of *Partners*, BCAF's new monthly newsletter for NGOs, companies, and municipal officials. *Partners* has reported on fundraising campaigns, described new giving models, and discussed such topics as NGOs and the media.

### A Campaign for Corporate Generosity

In 2000, BCAF commissioned the nation's first survey on corporate philanthropy and business attitudes toward giving. It has followed up by promoting a payroll-giving plan among Bulgarian companies. About half a dozen companies are so far involved.

"We can't just go and say, 'We will support philanthropy in this country; give us \$5 a month,'" Zhechkov said. "We have to provide them with specific and concrete causes."

Also, a year ago BCAF began bringing together government officials and experts from financial companies, to draft legislative changes that would better encourage corporate philanthropy.

"Obviously, we have had some success in stimulating local giving," said Zhechkov. "Our main challenge is to keep this going—to work on the sustainability of these NGOs and their projects. We know the foreign dollars are not going to be here forever."

"We are teaching [NGOs] how to create the win-win situation where businesses can also profit from giving."

role of NGOs," said Penka Tzvetkova, BCAF's knowledge coordinator.

As BCAF works to build support for NGOs among local government, businesses, and individual donors, "the challenge is to convince them that the organization is fair, it's honest and it's accountable—that the money will be spent on the right causes, in the right way," said BCAF grants manager Rouslan Zhechkov.

In its first two DemNet grant rounds, BCAF supported 21 NGOs around the nation. For all grantees, "one obligatory component is requiring that 30% of any project's budget be provided locally, through donations, volunteer work, or in-kind contributions," said Zhechkov.

### Building the Capacity to Succeed

Grant applications are reviewed by an independent, multi-disciplinary panel, with final decisions made by the BCAF Board of Directors.

"We have very strict process, and it's very transparent. We provide consultations for everybody, including those who fail," said Zhechkov. "We have many cases where organizations failed in the first round, and came back to win grants in the second."

For all NGOs, BCAF provides free financial and legal consultations, along with courses and seminars on "hot topics" such as financial management and tax reporting. For grantees, BCAF

# Open Society Club— Varna

The appealing city of Varna is the cultural, educational, and entertainment center of its seaside region. It is also becoming home to a growing sector of nongovernmental organizations—thanks in large part to the Open Society Club, a locally based support organization.

The club was created in 1992 by the Open Society Foundation. In 1995, Varna journalist Stoyan Nikolov became the club's director, and began broadening its services to NGOs—in the city and around the region—and its fundraising, both internationally and locally.

The Open Society Club of Varna has brought in support from DemNet, the European Union's PHARE program, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the Open Society Foundation, UNDP, and UNICEF. No single source, however, provides more than 25 percent of its budget. The club also raises about 15 percent of its budget from community sources.

"We started this work little by little," Nikolov said of the local fundraising, "because we wanted to teach people that giving to charities, to local initiatives, is something they also benefit from."

## Local Funds, Visible Changes

At Varna's prominent lighthouse, the club raised local funds to replace an unloved monument to a Stalinist leader with a large mosaic of St. Nicholas, patron of sailors. It also raised \$18,000 here, mostly in small donations, to put

up a bell tower at the city's landmark Church of St. Atanas, built in the 15th century when Bulgaria's Ottoman rulers forbade churches to rise higher than mosques.

The club titled its DemNet grant program "Establishing a Network of Vital and Sustainable NGOs." "We not only fund these organizations and monitor their projects," said Nikolov, "but we also try to teach them how to work, to be accountable to their funders, to do their strategic planning, to manage projects."

Sixteen NGOs have so far won support from the program, which operates twice-yearly grant rounds. The club's Board appoints a review committee of independent experts, from the local area and Sofia.

"The process has to be completely transparent and independent," Nikolov said. "Then we work closely with the organizations we fund." Free trainings are led by volunteers who themselves have been trained by the Open Society Club.

## Informing & Advocating

Every workday, Open Society Varna operates a drop-in organizational center, offering free assistance to the region's NGO community. "Anyone who comes in can see information about what funding programs are available, and what are the requirements for applications, deadlines, and potential partners," Nikolov said. Last year, a total of about 7,000 people visited the drop-in center, which also offers information about educational programs, both in Bulgaria and abroad.

During election season, the club organizes local forums for discussions with candidates. Also, adds Nikolov, "every now and then we organize

meetings with our MPs, on issues that are important to the town." When reconstruction of a bridge over Varna's harbor was unfinished after five years, the Open Society Club led the effort that won national funding to complete the work.

Finally, every year the Open Society Club stages a community-wide party on the Day of Saints Cyril and Methodius, the nation's most important holiday. It presents awards for civic participation, for the Teacher of the Year, and for the local Donor of the Year.

Overall, said Nikolov of the club's work, "It's terribly busy. But it's worth it—and it's fun."

"We not only fund these organizations ... we also teach them how to work, to be accountable, to do their strategic planning, to manage projects."

# Access to Opportunity

## *A Self-Help Project for the Disabled Makes a Difference*



The NSRC works to bring equipment, training, transport services, and human aid to disabled Bulgarians, and to change public attitudes about the rights and potential contributions of disabled people.

### NGO Grantee

#### National Social Rehabilitation Center, Bourgas

In Bourgas, the country's second largest Black Sea port and a gateway to the seaside region, a first-floor office on a cobbled side street has a simple ramp up to an entrance door that is extra-wide, for wheelchairs. Inside, a narrow reception room and a storage room in back are stocked and stacked with crutches, canes, wheelchairs, an exercise bike, and the appliances of accessibility.

This is the Bourgas bureau of the National Social Rehabilitation Center, one of the most accepted and respected NGOs in Bulgaria. With seven bureaus around the country, plus three centers for children and young people with disabilities—including a new one here in Bourgas—the NSRC works to bring equipment, training, transport services, and human aid to disabled Bulgarians, and to change public attitudes about the rights and potential contributions of disabled people.

Here in Bourgas, a project funded by DemNet through the Bulgarian Charities Aid Foundation gives a strong, though just beginning, example of what disabled people can do together with just a little help.

The story began in 1998, when the Bourgas bureau used funding from a U.S. foundation to organize visits by volunteers and social workers to disabled people who were isolated around the community.

"Our customers said, 'We are happy that you visit us—but we would be happier if we had more contacts among one another,'" said Marionella Stoyayhonova, the bureau manager.

So in February 2000, the bureau launched a self-help and support group that continues to bring together a dozen elderly disabled people, with a social worker and volunteer, at a local club for discussions, presentations, and fun. This prompted the bureau to think about a similar group for younger disabled residents—and that led to the partnership funded by DemNet.

"The project that Marionella and her colleagues prepared involved us. We started working together," said participant Kolio Todorev, who was just out of the army and beginning a new job in 1984 when a wagon roof fell on him and he lost the use of his legs.

### Opening Opportunities—& Sidewalks

Launched in November 2000, the Social Integration Program for Young People with Disabilities began with 20 people, 18-45 years old, all of whom have movement problems. They meet monthly. They discuss the issues and challenges they face; they advise and encourage each other; and they participate in a series of art studios. Participants have learned to do painting on silk, tapestry, embroidery, folklore crafts, and the lacquering of designs made from bits of metal on wood.

"We hope the people will continue making these art objects, and be able to sell them," Stoyayhonova said. "Many tourists come to this region—there are many hotels and souvenir shops."

"In this way, people will learn to become entrepreneurs," added Valco Valchev, NRSC's Bourgas region manager.

The self-help group has also become an advocate for local accessibility.

"As we discussed their problems, they all agreed that one of the reasons to be



isolated, apart from the suffering that they each have, is that the environment is not accessible,” Stoyayhonova said.

The group wrote to Bourgas’s deputy mayor, and listed seven city crossroads as critically needing wheelchair ramps from street to sidewalk. Two locations now have those ramps, and Deputy Mayor Venelin Todorov said he is advocating for the rest.

### “We Already Have Results”

“We are very grateful to the city. Our partnership started a short while ago, and we already have results,” said participant Todorev, who enrolled in college with the bureau’s help, and now nearly has his degree.

He said the members will advocate for more accessibility measures downtown, “so we can more easily go in and out.

“In our meetings, we have come up with a lot of ideas that we hope to implement,” he said. “So far they are only ideas. Let’s hope they will be realized.”

The Bourgas bureau works with a half-dozen other local NGOs—and the city itself recently donated a property and

allocated over \$100,000, in partnership with a Belgian foundation, to build a bright new center for disabled children. Named for St. Nicholas, the “Miracle Worker,” the center is clean, colorful, and lively as young people work with social workers, educators, and aides.

“Many people in Bulgaria think the disabled must be outside the town, outside the city — but this is a very wrong means of thinking,” said Deputy Mayor Todorov. “These are our children, the children of Bulgaria, the children of Bourgas.

“If these children will in the future be architects, designers, and etcetera,” he added, “I will be very proud.”

**Opposite page: A member of a new self-help group for young disabled people enters the new center for disabled children in Bourgas. Below: Group members together learn to do artwork that the organizing NGO hopes will help them earn their livelihoods. Below right, participant Kolio Todorev, who leads one of the art studios, is shown at right, with a fellow member of the self-help group.**

“In our meetings, we have come up with a lot of ideas that we hope to implement. Let’s hope they will be realized.”



# Answering Abuse

## *Center Maria's Team Approach Counters Domestic Violence*

### NGO Grantee

Center "Maria,"  
Gorna Oriahovitza

An estimated one in four Bulgarian women is or has been the victim of physical or sexual violence, most often in her own home. In the town of Gorna Oriahovitza, a railroad junction in the center of the country, the Center "Maria," supported by DemNet and



several other Western funders, is the country's first multidisciplinary service provider and support center outside the capital city for women and children who have been victims of violence.

One of those the Center has helped is Kossa Vangelova. A slight young woman with short dark hair and large, soulful eyes, Vangelova was the victim of an attempted rape in her village, one night two years ago. Her assailant was a

serial rapist who had never been prosecuted. Because Vangelova, a teacher and primary-school director, turned to the Center "Maria," today she is in professional counseling, healing her emotional wounds—and her assailant is in jail.

### **"It Is Everywhere"**

With offices provided by a supportive municipality, the Center has assembled a team that includes a psychiatrist, an attorney, a psychotherapist, and 10 trained volunteers who run a telephone hotline. The team works with local authorities to respond to crises, protect victims, press for prosecution of violent crimes, provide treatment services, and gather information about a problem they say is epidemic at all levels of Bulgarian society. Two years since its creation, over 600 women and children have visited the center—and more come here virtually every day.

"Violence is overwhelming," said Stefan Manakov, a local attorney and Center Maria team member. "It's in the workplace, it's in the streets. It is everywhere."

Along with directly serving victims, "the Center Maria works to increase the sensibility of the public, and to change public attitudes about violence," said co-president Tania Roussera. "We would like this issue to be recognized as a form of violating the rights of women—

The Center  
helped promote  
the recent pas-  
sage of a national  
children's  
protection act.

and therefore, working with our partners and the media, we lobby, together with other NGOs in the country, for changes in the law.”

As a co-creator of the National Network of NGOs Helping Women, the Center helped promote the recent passage of a national children’s protection law. It continues to encourage the creation of similar centers in communities around the country.

## Listening—and Responding

All this is breaking new ground for Bulgarian society.

“A couple of years ago, before such centers existed, this topic was never discussed at all,” said Dr. Krassimira Alexandrova, a psychiatrist and Center co-president.

When women call the Center’s hotline, very often it is the first time they have admitted the violence they are coping with, usually within their own families, said Roumiana Todorova, an educator who is a hotline volunteer.

Of first importance, she said, is giving support—“to calm them down, so they can become stable emotionally. Then we try to plan the steps to solving the problem.”

In pursuing these steps, the Center cooperates with the the local police, the national investigation office, and the European Network of Policewomen—especially in dealing with cases of forced prostitution and international trafficking of women.

The Center has trained local police in responding to domestic violence, “and all the officers know about us and our address,” said Roussera. When police are called to a case of domestic violence, the officer on duty gives the

woman the address of the Center, and suggests that she come here.

The Center follows up, advocating for women in court and administrative proceedings. Stella Mincheva, a divorced mother who works for the railroad, had not collected child support from her son Tihamir’s father for more than four years. When she found the Center Maria, “it was a miracle, the attention and the respect I received—and the help. I’ve been getting the maintenance for half a year.

“There is not enough humanity to go around,” she added. “This Center is hope for many people in my situation.”

For attempted-rape victim Vangelova, the Center saw her case through trial. The rapist was sentenced to six months in jail—and his victims are still asking that he receive specialized treatment as a sex offender, believing that without it he will only offend again.

The Center Maria has been gathering information about such treatments, which are entirely new to Bulgaria. It is also developing a new focus on prevention, especially preventing crimes against children.

Meanwhile, Kossa Vangelova speaks out against violence, and told her story at the start and end of a national TV documentary.

“This is where I see my role, to respond as a citizen of the country,” she said. “I received help, and I try to help others as well. If we want to solve the problem of violence, we have to face the victims—and we have to face the criminals.”

“This is where I see my role, to respond as a citizen of the country.”

attempted rape victim Kossa Vangelova



**Opposite page: Dr. Krassimira Alexandrova, co-president of the Center “Maria,” answers a hotline call while volunteer Roumiana Todorova looks on. Above is Kossa Vangelova, a primary-school director whom the Center assisted after she was the victim of an attempted rape.**

# Speaking for the Seacoast

## *Citizens Setting Clean Up in Motion for a World Treasure*

### NGO Grantee

Friends of the Sea,  
Northern Black Sea Coast

The northern Black Sea coast of Bulgaria is one of Europe's most ancient settled regions. Evidence of human habitation here dates to the fifth millennium B.C., and the fertile plains just inland attracted trade and colonization by the Greeks, Alexander the Great, the Romans, and the Byzantines. Historical and archeological resources here have only begun to be appreciated, and could become a major tourist attraction.

But first, there are the issues that the Friends of the Sea insist that people and civic organizations here confront.

Formed in 1996 by a variety of area residents who care for the sea and this coastal region, the Friends used a DemNet grant through the Open Society Club of Varna to collaborate with an environmental group and a history/archeology foundation on a campaign that is forcing attention onto the neglect and pollution that mar this treasure of a coastline.

"This was a joint effort to locate problems which are truly a priority for local organizations," said Davina Ivanova, the president of the Friends, who is also Bulgaria's only female certified diving instructor.

The groups produced a poster; Ivanova calls it "the ugliest poster in the region." It features vivid color photographs that locate, on a large clear map of the area, such troubles as open garbage dumping, pipes emitting effluent into coastal waters, and neglected, deteriorating coastal structures, some historically precious, others simply dangerous.

"The main aim of the project is pointing out the problems—regardless of whether they are environmental, historical, or economic," Ivanova said. "Our objective is to make the local organizations act to resolve these problems."

### Asking for Public Action

To point the way and encourage civic groups to take action, the Friends of the Sea and its partners have already completed several mini-projects. In one, they worked with residents of the village of Shabla to improve the neglected area around a local lighthouse.

"Our idea was to show local people that if they have the will, they can start with a minimum of funds and try to do something for their town," Ivanova said. The Friends have also helped their partner organizations develop their missions and learn about fundraising, while they worked on locating problems that demand to be solved.

"Our project focuses not just on cleanup," said Penko Georgiev, an archeologist and

*Below: Davina Ivanova, president of the Friends of the Sea, describes the group's effort to stir coastal cleanup efforts while group member Penko Georgiev shows the poster the Friends created with two partner NGOs. Opposite: Ivanova, at right, and Stoyan Nikolov, director of the Open Society Club of Varna, show visitors a decrepit pier that the Friends of the Sea want converted into a reef.*







member of the Friends. "For some of the sites, we have shown comprehensive proposals for solution that concern the local authorities, the central government, and the military structures." For example, one hazardous, long-neglected pier may be beyond repair. The partners propose demolishing it and turning it into a shoreline reef.

Looking ahead, "our main objective is to conduct a comprehensive study of the region," said Assen Salkin, an archeologist, diver, and president of the Little Skitya Foundation, one of the Friends' collaborators. (Little Skitya, or Skitya Minor, was this region's name as a province of the Byzantine Empire.)

The study, Salkin said, "would include documenting the environmental problems and the historical past—and how these sites can be protected.

"We are trying to unite the efforts of all NGOs and government institutions," he added.

### **"To Protect Whatever We Can"**

If those aims can be achieved, the partners foresee a new flow of tourism into the area, especially among visitors interested in history, archeology, and coastal diving. The coastline is rich with underwater treasures, said Salkin: "Our idea is to protect whatever we can before the treasure hunters get here and take it away.

"If the region becomes attractive," added Ivanova of the Friends, "that would create jobs for the local people. There is very high unemployment here."

Members of the Friends are historians, environmentalists, experts on various maritime subjects, divers, salvage experts, engineers, and underwater photographers. They first came together and formed their organization over glasses of beer, Ivanova said, after a traditional annual seaside regatta.

"None of us thought we would deal so seriously with publicly important activities," she said. "But little by little, we embarked on our way.

"This is a beneficial, favorable area to do a lot of work," the Friends director concluded. "We are a young organization, but already we have completed a couple of successful projects—always close to the sea."

The Friends titled their DemNet-funded, collaborative effort "Together On Board." Because they are encouraging local communities and citizen groups to get involved in solving the region's problems, Ivanova said, "we expect the results to continue long after the completion of this project."

**"This was a joint effort to locate problems which are truly a priority for local organizations ... Our objective is to make the local organizations act."**

# Connections for a Safer City

## *Partnership Builds Trust & Citizenship—and Fights Crime*

### NGO Grantee

Stara Zagora Charitable Association, Stara Zagora

Organized in 1990, the Stara Zagora Charitable Association has aimed since its beginning to engage local citizens in solving the problems of this south-

received eight tons of food for disabled people, for in those days there was a significant shortage. Only the police would help us with delivery.”

Later, when the Association began helping individual victims of violence, the police again assisted. Through this effort, Chikakchieva added, “our organization matured for more serious work.”

The next stages—culminating in a year 2000 project funded by DemNet—have brought the police, the Charitable Association, and the community together in newly creative, potentially influential ways.

### **The NGO as a Safe Channel**

In 1997 the Association and the police developed Project Network. Funded by the European Union, this effort sought to ease the discomfort many people felt about visiting the police station, whether from wariness of authorities or fear of reprisals by criminals. The Charitable Association installed a locked mailbox outside the city’s regional police directorate. Here people could leave reports, notes, and alerts for the police—and only the Association had the key.

The motivation was “to tell people they can effectively counteract crime, they can participate to protect themselves, by involving an NGO as an intermediary,” said Iomba Georgiev, crime prevention and public relations specialist with the police.

A high volume of messages in the mailbox during the project’s first years have lately decreased—and are now equalled in number by ordinary calls and visits to the station, Georgiev said. “This tells us that people are overcoming their fear of contacting the police.”



central city—to overcome the apathy and cynicism that can be a heavy legacy of the past five decades.

“In Bulgaria there used to be a very good tradition, before Communist times, of civic participation. Our main purpose is to revive this tradition,” said Doli Chikakchieva, a city librarian who chairs the Charitable Association’s Board of Directors. In this work, the all-volunteer group has developed a perhaps surprising partner: the local police.

“When our organization was making our first steps, often the police used to help us—with transportation, mostly,” said Chikakchieva. “For instance, we

Project Network gave rise to Security Network 2, a more ambitious effort funded in 2000 by a one-year DemNet grant through the Bulgarian Charities Aid Foundation. The project has achieved these results:

- It printed photographic business cards for the police department's 23 regional inspectors, who are assigned to serve local neighborhoods. Along with the inspector's photo, each card shows a neighborhood map and a phone number for the police—and it urges citizens to report crime and threats to their rights.
- The project also created a website for the Stara Zagora police. The site shows a city map, with neighborhoods in colors that, when clicked, bring up the right inspector's name, photo, and contact information. The site also shows graphs of local crime rates, and gives advice on preventing crimes of fraud and the sexual victimization of children.
- The project printed a brochure that tells how to contact the police and how to avoid common criminal problems—for example, by checking with police before renting to a new tenant.
- In June, the project hosted a day of children's events and competitions, introducing them to the police. It then organized a local Police Day, when it launched the website and invited citizens to an exhibit in the station lobby of historical information on crime—and of humorous cartoons about police work by a local officer.

Charitable Association volunteers helped with all phases of the project, whose impacts are already plain to the police, said Stefan Todorov, senior lieutenant of police inspectors.

"We now observe that people not only come for help, but they also come for advice," he said. "They have started inviting us to their homes," he added with a smile.

### **Sending Results Nationwide**

The police department has sent its inspector cards to every other regional police directorate in the country; one has responded with its own children's day, and others have shown much interest, said Georgiev.

For the Stara Zagora police, she added, "our greatest benefit from the project is a forthcoming seminar on first aid before the doctor comes, for policemen." Bulgarian police often lack this training. Because the planning session with a local emergency physician was not in the project budget, members of the police department decided to give up their coffee breaks for a time to help fund it.

Overall, said Lt. Todorov, the DemNet project has "helped us a lot to build our self-esteem. Somebody was finally paying attention."

The Charitable Association has also found local financial support. Volunteers convinced a local Internet provider to fund the website's completion and continuing updates. A local printer donated the printing of 400 extra police cards. And, having urged in the brochure that vulnerable citizens install eyeholes and chain locks on their doors, "we are looking now for a new partner, to install these for the poorest and the loneliest elderly people," Georgiev said.

"We are looking for *several* local partners," added Chikakchieva of the Charitable Association.

The motivation was "to tell people they can effectively counteract crime, they can participate to protect themselves, by involving an NGO as an intermediary."



*Opposite: Stefan Todorov, lieutenant of inspectors with the Stara Zagora police, talks with an elderly man who was a victim of crime. The man holds a brochure that the regional police published as part of a DemNet-supported collaboration with a local NGO. Above, is Lt. Todorov's new professional card; these cards were published for all the city's police inspectors, to hand out to residents of the neighborhoods they serve.*

The Institute for Sustainable Communities (ISC) was one of the first U.S. organizations to develop projects at the community level in Bulgaria and has managed seven projects there. ISC is an independent nonprofit organization with 10 years of experience providing training, technical assistance, and financial support to communities, NGOs, businesses, and governments. Since 1991, ISC has carried out more than 40 projects in 14 countries. All of ISC's projects emphasize public participation, leadership development, multi-stakeholder involvement, institutional capacity building, partnership, and collaborative decisionmaking.

Through the Democracy Network Program, ISC is helping to enhance the overall environment for civil society by:

- strengthening the capacity of support organizations;
- enhancing cooperation among support organizations; and
- promoting donor coordination.



ISC's mission is to help communities around the world address environmental, economic, and social challenges to build a better future shaped and shared by all.

**ISC Bulgaria**

4, Hristo Georgiev Street  
2nd floor, 15004 Sofia, Bulgaria  
tel/fax: 02/943-32-89, 943-44-75  
e-mail: [isc@isc-bg.org](mailto:isc@isc-bg.org)

[www.isc-bg.org](http://www.isc-bg.org)

**ISC Home Office**

56 College Street  
Montpelier, Vermont 05602 USA  
tel: 802-229-2900  
fax: 802-229-2919  
e-mail: [isc@iscvt.org](mailto:isc@iscvt.org)

[www.iscvt.org](http://www.iscvt.org)

Writer: Doug Wilhelm  
Photography: Todor Tzvetkov, Alden Pellett

*Printed on recycled paper using agri-based inks.  
September 2001*



*The Democracy Network Program is implemented in Bulgaria by the Institute for Sustainable Communities and funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development.*