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International Assistance for  
Women's Organizing  
in South Eastern Europe:  
From Groups and Initiatives to  
NGOs

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## I Introduction

.... there is something which, beyond any doubt, has had a tremendous impact on women's situation, even in countries under extreme difficult economic and political conditions: the activity of the NGO sector, and particularly of women's organisations. (...) Whatever has been achieved, little or much, is due to these groups, whether in terms of dealing with victims of domestic or sexual violence, on providing legal assistance to women who are discriminated against, providing shelter and a new chance at life to returned trafficked women, or undertaking all efforts to educate on family planning. (Women 2000:19)

(...) It is also worth noting that international organisations, governmental and non-governmental, have been of great assistance in most of the countries, assisting local NGOs, providing both know-how and financial support. (Women 2000:19)

The tribute paid to women's organizations, to their contributions towards the improvement of women's situation in countries that became perceived as one region only because until recently all of them claimed to build a socialist system[1], is a tribute that many among the participants and observers in feminist organizing worldwide would consider well deserved and justified. Women's organizations are still those that are at most interested in improving socio-economic and political conditions for women in various contemporary societies. They are also seen as the primary advocates of gender equality and initiators of public debates on gender issues. Supporting development of women's organizations, therefore, can be perceived as one of the crucial mechanisms in promoting gender sensitive, more inclusive societies.

The assistance offered by international organizations, however, would suffice to mention without calling it 'great'. Its record could be more accurately described as 'controversial'—the consequences of international assistance on development of women's organizations and their capacity to work on gender equality and gender issues still need to be researched more thoroughly. While there are individual agencies' evaluations and assessments of their own programs (Duffield 1996; Peck 1998; Rodenberg and Wichterich 1999; Kumar 2000; Woodford-Berger 2000), that knowledge is seldom produced by those who have been targets of the international assistance, it is also rarely subject of discussion in the recipients' communities.[2]

My initial interest in the topic stems from personal involvement in feminist activism and the need to understand how it has happened that the most prominent form of activism became 'project proposal writing'. [3] In the course of the research I have realized (got reminded, not discovered), that, while valid under particular circumstances, the claim I wanted to understand represents only one of the possible claims in the field and it is by no means the most dominant one. My interest shifted subsequently towards understanding the process of relationship building between 'donors' and 'recipients'.

The major methodological problem I have encountered has not been so much in 'entering the field of inquiry' as it was 'exiting the field'; or, more precise, reconceptualising it as a 'field of inquiry' instead of 'field of action'. The 'field' can

be described as 'the place where we do our work but we don't live there'. The field for a Western consultant or a researcher may be visiting offices of various organizations in a country that is not his/her own, while for those working (as activists or researchers) in the same offices, 'the field' may represent rural communities they are visiting occasionally (Roma settlement that need to be visited, refugee camps where the self-help groups are being held). What counts as a field depends on the position of the researcher, not on some kind of objectively defined reality.

In my research I have combined several lines of data collection and analyses: first, materials produced by women's organizations during 90s themselves and an analysis of their self-representation; second, interviews and personal conversations with feminist activists and members of women's organizations; third, participant-observation of women's organizations in Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosova since 1989.

The focus that emerged during the research has become the process that resembles at most an attempt in building inter-organizational alliances between two sets of actors: international aid organizations as 'donors' and various forms of local women's organizing as 'recipients'. 'Donors' and 'recipients' appear here under quotation marks because the division that seems simple at the first glance—'donors' as those offering financial or some other kind of support, and 'recipients' as those that are using the resources provided by the 'donors'—is not a simple one when faced with specific cases. 'Donor'-'recipient' appears as only one among many of the features displayed in the process of relationship building. Encounters of 'donors' and 'recipients' are happening simultaneously as encounters between local, regional and global, between the margin and the center, at the intersections of non-translatable and multiple languages/codes.

In their portfolios, 'donors' emphasize 'regional' or 'global' approach while at the same time claiming an impact on 'local women'. This emphasis gets reproduced by myriad of intermediary organizations and individual actors that, while perceived as 'local' by their own 'donors', in another context figure as having 'regional' or 'global' perspective.

Though 'marginal' in their own social context, encouraged with the outside intervention in the form of international assistance, the 'recipients' begin to reconsider their potential to reach the mainstream, street protesters may enter the parliament and parliament representatives may join the street action. The intervention from the outside reconfigures the boundary between the 'margin' and the 'center'. Recalling 'foreign experiences' may serve as an argument in advocacy for social acceptance of marginal identities (as well as an argument against it). Encounters between 'donors' and 'recipients' are made possible by those who are able to operate in multiple codes, skilful translators (not just in terms of language) who can make incoherent life experiences appear as a coherent text, as purposeful, goal-oriented activities.

In the first part of the paper I'm trying to set the scene by mapping the current field of women's organizing in the region, including a brief overview of the historical background and the current political context. The first part concludes with remarks on an increased trend of NGOization as influenced by international assistance. The second part offers an analysis of the reflections by participants in the feminist

movement and members of women's organizations. The third, final part looks at the relevance of the analysis for policy-making in the field of international assistance to women's organizing.

The task of this paper is to discuss the ways in which international assistance has influenced development of women's movements in the post-Yugoslav region, by looking at the ways in which the influence has been conceptualized by feminist activists and members of women's organizations in the region. International assistance in various forms has had a profound impact on the organizational development, agenda, and in some instances even emergence of women's organizations in the region. The major outcome of this research is revealing the most important controversies raised by the international assistance in the field of women's organizing. It is my hope that by identifying the controversies, the contradictions inherent in the process itself, this research may contribute to more reflexivity in future policies of all actors involved.

## II Setting the scene

The examples I'm using to illustrate process of relationship-building between 'donors' and 'recipients' are taken from the countries I have had most access in last several years, that is Macedonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia and Croatia. What do these countries have in common? Apart from their recent history as constituent republics of the socialist Yugoslavia, which led to term them nowadays as post-Yugoslav countries[4], they all share the experience of war, although from differing positions and to various extents. Much of the women's organizing through 90s and the international assistance associated with it has been affected by war and its consequences are felt in the post-conflict period as well. In all of the post-Yugoslav countries, the 90s have brought proliferation of women's organizations, partly due to the new political environment that has encouraged free association of citizens, partly due to the often-observed phenomenon of women's organizing as reaction to the crisis situations.

### 1. Current political context

Current political and socio-economic situation within the region differs sharply from one country to another. Republic of Macedonia is the only post-Yugoslav state whose official name maintains precise description of the way it has been constituted. As the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, until recently it was considered as the only one among the Formers[5] that seceded from the socialist federation without a war. Although the establishment of the state and its recognition by international community in 1991 has not been accompanied by armed conflicts, Macedonia felt consequences of the wars in other parts of former Yugoslavia. The most difficult for the country's devastated economy (since it was heavily dependant on the Yugoslav market) has been an influx of some 360,000 refugees from Kosova during the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia in spring 1999 (Karatnycky et al. 2000: 425). In addition, the tensions between Albanians and Macedonians as the two major ethnic communities, successfully held under control without violence for almost a decade, have recently transformed into armed conflict, which was temporarily halted primarily thanks to the support and pressure by international community. Despite the agreement signed at the beginning of August by the four governing parties (two ethnic Macedonian and two

ethnic Albanian), and the subsequent NATO deployment, the country remains deeply divided along the ethnic lines.

Federal Republic Yugoslavia claimed until recently to be the only legal successor to the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The union of Serbia and Montenegro, under the common name of FRY since April 1992, has never been a stable one and it is very likely on the way to dissolve completely. In fact, since the NATO's bombing campaign against FRY during the spring 1999 and the settlement that ended it in June 1999, FRY has been functioning as three different political entities: Kosova (under NATO military control and UN-led civil administration, although the agreement recognizes Yugoslavia's territorial claim to sovereignty over Kosova), Montenegro and Serbia (including Vojvodina as the other FRY's autonomous province). International economic sanctions have been lifted only a year ago, after Slobodan Milosevic was forced by mass protests to accept the outcome of the elections held in September 2000. The initial enthusiasm over the change of government, due to the persistent economic crisis and the inability of the governing coalition (consisting of 18 parties and a trade-union, ideologically very diverse and united primarily in the opposition to the Milosevic's regime) to produce visible improvements in the life of ordinary citizens, has faded.

Among all of the post-Yugoslav states, Bosnia and Herzegovina has been most deeply affected by the war. The Dayton Peace Accords, signed at the end of 1995, provided for the division of the country into two entities, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (divided within itself into predominantly or exclusively Croatian cantons and Bosnian/Muslim majority) and the Republika Srpska (Serb Republic). Large international presence, with NATO leading the military force and OHR mandated by the UN Security Council to oversee civilian aspects of the Accords, in addition to numerous other international organizations gives grounds to perceive post-Dayton Bosnia and Herzegovina «de facto if not de jure, an international protectorate.» (Karatnycky et al. 2000: 139) Difficult economic situation, with unemployment as a major problem, resulted in large numbers of educated young people leaving the country.

Compared to other post-Yugoslav countries, Croatia is economically, together with Slovenia, far better off. The parliamentary and presidential elections at the beginning of 2000, signified a political shift in Croatia. The decade of the authoritarian rule of the Croatian Democratic Union, however, left the new government (led by social-democrats) with numerous problems to be solved, ranging from mismanagement of privatization process to social policy reforms, all of it accompanied with the attempts to decrease potential for social unrests, very often incited by the right-wing parties. Only recently the public started to deal with crimes committed by Croatian side during the war period between 1991-1995.

The political and economic environments in each of the countries have directly influenced the emergence of the particular type of women's organizations and the nature of their activities. Also, in most of the post-Yugoslav countries, the state structures have themselves adopted 'gender-mainstreaming' rethorics under combined pressure from international and domestic actors.

## 2. Women's organizing as a field of inquiry and action

What exactly is a 'women's NGO'? What seems obvious at first glance, an NGO that is run by women for women, seems less clear if we look at the activities, and sometimes even membership, of women's organizations. 'Women's NGO' is a term that illustrates at the very pragmatic level the heterogeneity of 'women' as a political subject, or subject at all: the term covers wide variety of activities and organizational forms, the attribution 'women's' always needs to be explored within a particular context in order to get a sense of what kind of subjects does the term imply. In counting women's organizations, I'm using the simplest nominal definition: organizations with mostly women members claiming to work in the interest of women (Richter 2001). Non-governmental organizations are often perceived as key actors in civil society building and that perception often serves as rationale for supporting them. The assumption is that strong non-governmental organizations will provide a space for public action and contribute towards social change, the function that overlaps largely with the function of social movements. Many of the women's organizations indeed do perceive themselves as belonging to the larger women's movement, both within national boundaries and globally. According to the model of the emergence and growth of women's movements by Janet Saltzman Chafetz, there are three most important conditions for a social movements to emerge: group-consciousness, resource availability and sense of efficacy (Chafetz 1990:167). Women's organizations in post-Yugoslav countries indeed do have a potential to create those conditions in the sense that by the very fact of organizing as women they contribute towards creation of gender-consciousness, the organizations themselves represent important mechanisms for mobilizing human and financial resources, and the achievements regarding women's status already under socialism have been such that they can continue forging sense of efficacy, that is potential for success in influencing and changing broader socio-political context.

## 2.1 Mapping the current field of women's organizing

The field of women's organizing in post-Yugoslav countries consists of several hundreds organizational entities that represent themselves as groups, initiatives and networks, as umbrellas, unions, even as organizations of organizations. Their activities range from self-help groups for refugees, displaced women, single mothers and lesbians, to political pressure groups, women's studies centers and cultural associations.

Macedonia: According to the Directory Of Women's NGO Movement (Adresar 2000) produced by the Research Gender Studies Center of the Euro-Balkan Institute, there are currently 69[6] women's organizations in Macedonia. What strikes the reader already at the first glance is that most of the organizations in the directory are members either of the Union of Women's Organizations of Macedonia or of the Association of Albanian Women. There are 23 organizations in the Directory that declare their membership in the Union, while the Union represents itself as consisting of 45 women's organizations. Most of the women's organizations in Macedonia are ethnically based, there are several claiming to be a continuation of the Conference for Social Activity of Women, mass membership organization from socialist times.

One of the criteria for classifying women's organizations by outside observers is their continuity with socialist organizations from the Yugoslav period. Authors of the

chapter on Macedonia in the Nations in Transit 1999-2000 differentiate between “holdovers from the Yugoslav period and organizations created since independence.” (Karatnycky et al. 2000: 428). There are two basic types of the organizations, “umbrellas”, mostly those that grew out of previous socialist organizations, which claim to gather large membership in few dozens of associated organizations and independent organizations, mostly founded during the last decade.

One of the former, the Organization of women’s organizations of Macedonia (OWOM) presents itself as “a legal follower of the first women’s organization in Macedonia, formed in 1944 under the title Antifascist Front of Women (AFW)”[7]. The membership includes “community women’s organizations”, “10 other associations as collective members”, and individuals, both women and men. The OWOM claims membership of over 65.000[8], both women and men (<http://www.oozm.org.mk/index-e.html>). Another one, The Union of Women’s Organizations of Republic of Macedonia (UWOM), founded also in 1994, describes itself as “a multiethnic network of Macedonian, Albanian, Roma, Serbian and Vlach Women Associations”. To its collective members the UWOM counts 46 local associations, representing single mothers, elderly women, and other women’s associations organized along special interests (<http://www.sozm.org.mk/index-e.html>).

One of the largest among the new, ethnically defined women’s groups is the League of Albanian Women[9], headquartered in Tetovo but with branches throughout the regions predominately inhabited by Albanians. It claims to have 10.000 members. (<http://www.sazm.org.mk/index-e.html>). The main objectives are the work on emancipation of Albanian women, the campaign for coverage of women in the educational system and the health education for women in rural areas.

It is not uncommon for women’s organizations to emerge directly from international NGOs. The Association for Emancipation, Solidarity and Equality of women (ESE), for instance, started as a project of two international NGOs, Dutch Interchurch Aid and the Ecumenical Women’s Solidarity Fund and in a less than a year “has grown into an Association” (<http://www.esem.org.mk>).

The Centre for Gender Research, formed within the OSI supported Euro-Balkan Institute, seems to be somewhat dissociated from the women’s movement; in fact, its individual associates are rather skeptical of the movements’ existence in Macedonia at all. Women associated with the Gender Research Center are mostly young academicians who often do identify as feminists although the space for their activism they find primarily in other areas such as environmentalist or animal protection groups. The reason for their hesitance to get involved in the work of existing groups they describe as unwillingness to participate in hierarchical structures that too often resemble former socialist organizations (Personal conversation, March 2001). In addition to the Research Centre in Gender Studies, founded within the EuroBalkan Institute, there is an alternative women’s studies program at the Women’s Resource Centre by UWOM.

Outside observers, however, despite their assessment of the Macedonian NGO sector as primarily donor-driven[10], consider women’s organizations as the most active part of civil society. The only organizations considered by the Nations in Transit 1999-



2000 as “the truly voluntary” are women run SOS Telephones for women victims of domestic violence in Skopje and Kumanovo; two Roma women’s NGOs in Kumanovo (Daja and Majka), the association of Single Mothers (Samohrani Majki) in Štip and the Organization of Macedonian Women in Gostivar. (Karatnycky et al. 2000: 427)

Observed in the larger context of the non-governmental sector, Macedonian women’s organizations serve as an example of successful advocacy and cooperation across ethnic division. ESE, described as “a small, vocal, and politically well-connected NGO”, successfully lobbied for changes in Macedonian’s legislation regarding domestic violence. Prior to the local elections in September 2000, a coalition of more than 50 women’s organizations has been formed to lobby for an increased women’s participation in party structures and to mobilize women to vote (USAID: 2000 NGO Sustainability Index).

More recent phenomenon are informal networks, formed outside and regardless of the ‘umbrella’ organizations such as Antiko, that defines itself as “an informal group of women - citizens of the FYR Macedonia: Macedonian women, Albanian women, Roma women, Turkish women, Serbian women in Macedonia who live, work and commit themselves in the spheres of education, health, politics and social-economic reintegration” (Antiko. Draft Mission Statement). They represent kind of exception since they try to develop horizontal, non-hierarchical links among women who are already active in some branches of the large ‘umbrella’ organizations.

There are attempts by various international NGOs to increase organizational capacity of the women’s organizations. One of them, initiated at the beginning of 2000 as a two-year program by the Macedonian Center for International Cooperation (in cooperation with Christian Aid from London) aims at institutional strengthening and sustainability of women’s NGOs in promoting gender concepts, development and health education, with the special emphasis on women in rural and suburban areas (<http://www.mcms.org.mk/programa-e.htm>). The other one, organized by the FOSI Macedonia in 2001, is run by the Belgrade based team of trainers in co-operation with feminists from Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, with the purpose to model inter-ethnic co-operation and bring to Macedonian women experiences of feminist organizing from other post-Yugoslav countries.[11]

There is a general agreement between outside observers (Karatnycky et al. 2000; USAID: 2000 NGO Sustainability Index) and the women involved in Macedonian NGOs that without international donor support, the local NGO sector would be unable to survive. Women’s organizations are no exception.

Serbia: In the introduction to the collection of articles about women’s organizing in Serbia, Marina Blagojevic emphasizes the three most important factors that have directly influenced the growth of women’s movement: 1. war, whereas the movement became highly visible as one of the key initiators of antiwar activities (e.g. Women in Black); 2. transnational women’s network, which succeeded to cross the borders despite the international isolation of Serbia; and 3. strong theoretical grounding in feminist initiatives preceding the disintegration of socialist Yugoslavia (Blagojevic 1998b: 20).

The website maintained by the Info Centre of The Autonomous Women's Centre in Belgrade lists 46 organizations in Serbia proper[12]. The introductory text, somewhat emotionally loaded, describes well the context out of which they have appeared:

Long time ago, in former Yugoslavia some women dreamed of women's phone lines, women's centers, women's shops, women's shelters, theatres, cafes... For less than twenty years most of feminists' dreams came true. Hundreds of women groups are founded in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Kosovo and Slovenia.

From 1991 till now more than fifty women groups are founded in Serbia, Vojvodina and Montenegro. This web site presents some of the activities of women's organization in these regions. In small places as well in great cities women more and more often feel the need to organize themselves. Foundation of each women's group is a historical moment, based on passion for justice, hard work and vision of the world without discrimination of women. (<http://www.womenngo.org.yu>)

What draws attention here is that the editors refer to the organizations listed as 'groups', and many of the listed use the term self-referentially. This is in sharp difference towards the Macedonian usage of the word 'organization'. Definitely, such usage of the term is strongly influenced by the presence of feminist discourse in the recent history, as well as in the most current developments of the women's movement in Serbia.

When claiming a history, participants in the women's organizing in Serbia are more likely to emphasize the continuity with autonomous feminist initiatives from the 70s than with the Conference for the Social Activity of Women. E.g. Association for Women's Initiatives, registered formally under its current name in 1997, considers itself to be the continuation of the feminist group *Žena i društvo*, founded in 1979 (<http://fly.to/AWIN>). Most of the groups are still based in Belgrade.

Feminist scene in Belgrade is rich and vibrant, it encompasses wide variety of activities ranging from the very first Centre for Women's Studies in the post-Yugoslav countries (founded in 1992) and publishing (most notably Feminist Publishing House 94) to organizations dealing with special forms of violence against women (in addition to the SOS telephone line, there is an Incest Trauma Centre and the Autonomous Women's Centre against Sexual Violence.) In difference to Macedonia, where issues of sexual orientation are not on the agenda of women's organizations, there are also various lesbian initiatives and a lesbian group *Labris*.

By the end of 1994, with many new groups emerging also outside of Belgrade, Women's Network has been formed that consisted of "all the women's groups, initiatives, sections and individuals working against violence against women, militarism, nationalism and for feminist education and publishing." (Hughes et al. 1995). There are currently several networks of women's organizations and groups, some of them issue-specific such as Network Against Male Violence towards Women or Group for Promotion of Women's Political Rights, while the others are regional as Vojvodina Network of Women's Groups, or aim at more general forms of mutual support and experience sharing such as Women's Movement – Women's Network and Women's Forum (NGO Atlas of Serbia 2000: 61). The donors' demands and

willingness to support networking have also been perceived as one of the reasons for the increased number of networks (Blagojevic 1998b: 27).

As most of the non-governmental sector in Serbia, women's organizations survive from one project to another, and the criteria in designing the projects often seem to be set up mostly according to the external and not the internal, local, needs assessments. Although the foreign funding is very often perceived by local women's groups as the confirmation of the international women's solidarity, competition over the resources has led to the decrease of solidarity on the local level and to difficulties in relationships among the local women's organizations (Blagojevic 1998b: 32-33).

#### Bosnia and Herzegovina

In a country heavily dependent on international funds, the activism related to gender issues is almost 100 per cent reliant on foreign donors. In my assessment, the donor record concerning anything to do with serious civil society-initiated repoliticizations based on critical research and challenging (re)visionings of society and community in Bosnia is appalling. (Husanovic 2001: 129)

Most of the existing NGOs in Bosnia-Herzegovina emerged either during or after the war. Estimates of their number range from 250 to 500. The 1999 ICVA Directory lists 112 local organizations mentioning 'women' as their target group, but only 56 include women's issues in their mission statements (Walsh 1999: 4). Some estimate that only half of them have some activities, while the others have been founded only with the purpose to 'pick up the foreign money' and dissolved very soon after the donors realized what they are about (Milojevic 2001). There are no statistics about women's involvement in the NGO sector, the general impression is that women are in majority and women lead many of the organizations.

It is assumed that women got involved in large numbers in work in NGOs simply because there was nothing else they could do. Politics is dominated by men as well as economy, banking, and state institutions. Where there is money and power, there is 'stronger sex' as well, especially on key positions and in decision-making bodies. Long term goal, however, of the women's nongovernmental sector is to change this traditional scheme' (Milojevic: 2001).

Within the non-governmental sector women's organizations appear to be among the strongest in financial and organizational terms. Some of the organizations emerged as spin-offs of international agencies, such as Bospo, which originated from a project of the Danish Refugee Council or Bosfam that even in its name kept the link with Oxfam. Medica-Zenica, initiated in 1992 by a German gynecologist and feminist Monica Hauser out of the need to demonstrate solidarity with women traumatized by war, very soon became one of the strongest therapy centers in the region completely run by Bosnian women. There are also organizations founded specifically with the aim of improving status of women in the society, through various educational events and by encouraging women to take more active role in politics (e.g. *Žene ženama* from Sarajevo and *Udružene žene* from Banja Luka). Dependency of the whole NGO sector on the international funding (in fact, in Bosnian case this dependency extends to other sectors as well) is shared by women's organizations as well.

The role of international assistance, which goes beyond functional relationship of financing and heavily influences the activities of women's organizations, has been somewhat simplistically but still rather accurately stated by one of the women's leaders in the following way:

The kinds of projects we are working on depend most often on politics, but fashion as well, which is dictated by donors. For one period it was fashionable to work on psychosocial programs, it was very easy to obtain funding for them so everybody was working on it. Then education became fashionable, now it is trafficking, and it seems to me that in future the best chances will have projects for peace- and trust building in Bosnia-Herzegovina. (Milojevic: 2001)

Despite the number of women's organizations and variety of their activities in the field ranging from humanitarian work to political empowerment of women, all of which Jasmina Husanovic terms 'admirable grassroots gender practices', there is an 'acute silence of gender-focused voices in public and/or political discourse' (Husanovic 2001: 124). The phenomenon is very well described as 'practice without language', that is the practice that follows the guidelines of the 'request for proposals' and 'logical frameworks', the practice of transferring skills without the ability to articulate the position from which it seeks to change the existing gender arrangements. Bosnian women's scene seems to perceive itself primarily as a service-provider (Husanovic 2001: 124), and not as a movement with the potential for social change.

Croatia: Similar as in other countries, the 90s have been marked by proliferation of women's groups. Thanks to the international donors' support what have been only ideas circulating around for years became organizations. In Croatia, for instance, in 1989 there was only one organization, SOS telephone line[13], which can be considered as women's only organization providing direct help to women. At the time it performed functions that are nowadays carried by a variety of women's organizations: work on violence against women is performed today by several organizations such as Autonomous Women's House, Center for Women War Victims, O-zona, Zenska linija, recently founded Center against sexual violence against women. Work on legislation issues and women's human rights regarding lobbying is most visible done by B.a.B.e., Women's Human Rights Group. The few books grew into libraries at the Women's Infoteka and Centre for Women's Studies.[14]

The Directory of Women's Groups from 2000 lists 49 organizations, 16 of them located in Zagreb as a capital city. The list includes groups with wide variety of activities, ranging from feminist publishing and education to women's economic empowerment and lesbian issues (<http://www.zinfo.hr>). The address list of the Women's Network of Croatia (initiated in 1995 and functioning primarily through regular gatherings aimed at exchange of experiences, without formal coordination) counts to its membership more than 60 groups and organizations, some of which are peace or human rights groups that include women's issues into their agenda.

The most recent phenomenon are feminist action groups initiated by young women with no intention (as of now) to formalize their structures and register as organizations. One of them, Anarchofeminist Action (Anfema), emerged out of Zagreb Anarchist Movement (ZAP) and the other, NEO AFŽ[15] describing itself as

‘a group of radical feminists for subversive, theoretical and activist work’ just issued the first fanzine publishing texts by feminists from various generations (NEO AFŽ October 2001).

## 2.2 Formation of the field: how did the current map come about?

There is a general agreement that the Yugoslav society did differ from other Eastern European countries for its openness and free flow of ideas that allowed for new social movements to emerge in 80s. Feminism grew independently from the official socialist women's organizations, and in the opposition to it, although the first debates on feminism have been initiated already in 1976 by Croatian and Slovene Marxist centers at the conference in Portorož (decision very much influenced by the International Year of Women in 1975). In the periodization of the Yugoslav feminism by Jill Benderly there are, different in goals and strategies, three main periods: 1. 1978—1985, the period of feminist discourse; 2. 1986—1991, the period of feminist activism; 3. 1991-1992, the period of feminist opposition to the war (Benderly 1997: 184).

The year that marks the beginnings of the new feminist movement in former Yugoslavia is 1978, when the international feminist conference 'Drug-ca žena: žensko pitanje – novi pristup' (Comrad-ess Woman: Woman's Question – New Approach) was held in Belgrade. It initiated formation of feminist discussion groups, most notably 'Žena i društvo' (Woman and Society) within the Croatian Sociology Association in Zagreb, and another one under the same name within the Students' Cultural Centre in Belgrade (Papic 1997; Feldman 1999; Benderly 1997). Many among participants in the conference and in the groups inspired by it are still active in women's organizing, some as leaders and some as supporters.

In the mid and late 80s, new generation of women became more interested in direct social activism, so that first SOS hotlines for women have been opened in Zagreb, Belgrade and Ljubljana. Yugoslav Feminist Network has been formed 1987, with the purpose of exchanging experiences from the work on the SOS hotlines and to raise public awareness on violence against women. There were first lesbian groups formed in all of three cities. With the first multiparty elections in 1990, feminists actively engaged in various political parties. In Serbia, they even founded a woman's party ŽEST.

The outbreak of the war in 1991 has been preceded by various women's peace actions. Yugoslav Feminist Network had its last gathering in March 1991 in Ljubljana. The events as they followed brought divisions, both among feminists from the-states-to become as well as within the states. From now on, the history of feminism in Yugoslavia cannot be described without describing particularities of the each of the new states. Though, despite the divisions, many continued to cooperate across the borders and the feminists formed the core groups of the antiwar movements both in Croatia and in Serbia.

The feminist opposition to the war extended well beyond the 1991, however, despite the attempts to maintain the links across the borders, the goals and strategies of feminism in each of the observed countries became so different that they would need a periodization of its own, more congruent with the political context of the new states.

In addition, as it has become clear from this brief overview, Yugoslav feminism was a matter of three urban centers: Zagreb, Ljubljana and Belgrade (although there were individual participants from Sarajevo, Skopje and other parts of former Yugoslavia).

Preceding the new feminist initiatives at the end of 70s, that developed after the conference in Belgrade, and continuing parallel to it have been various forms of socialist women's organizations most notably Conference on Social Activity of Women that grew out of Antifascist Women's Front (AWF). As a mass organization directly linked to the Communist Party, it functioned primarily as the mechanism of women's mobilization on the part of communist elite, however, for many women it did provide the space of emancipation from traditional roles. Especially in rural areas and small towns, 'Aktivi žena' (Women's Active) provided opportunity for women to participate in some form of local politics, and very often to engage in some sort of humanitarian work.

There are two major 'traditions' of the women's organizing in former Yugoslavia (through feminist initiatives and through socialist women's organizations) that are important as points of reference for the groups emerging in the 90s. While in Croatia and Serbia (more precisely, in Zagreb and Belgrade) the organizations refer to the feminist initiatives as their immediate 'foremothers', in Macedonia the most visible are still those claiming the continuity with the Conference for Social Activity of Women although emphasizing that under 'the new system' they are independent from any party and the associated ideology. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, most of the currently operating organizations emerged directly as projects of international organizations. The phenomenon of international 'spin-offs' is present in all of the observed countries, although to various degrees. While in Croatia, to my knowledge, there is only one organization[16] founded through 'localization'[17], in Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina there are many more. One of the reasons that in Serbia, as of now, there are no such phenomena may be attributed to the recent arrival of the large international NGOs.

### 3. International assistance

International assistance can be seen as a process of transferring financial or technical aid from 'donors' to 'recipients' with the purpose of changing the status of 'recipient' from the one perceived as insufficient, lacking, in need, into more desirable, in accordance to the standards prescribed by a 'donor' and apparently wished-for by the 'recipient'. The relationship of 'donor' as the one who is giving of his/her own will, without strings attached, to the 'recipients' who is in need, for altruistic reasons, or out of solidarity, has been slowly transformed into contracting relationship between the 'donor agency' and the 'recipient'. Simple division on 'donors' and 'recipients', however, makes invisible the role of hybrid, intermediary, organizations that are at the same time recipients of aid and donors themselves.

International assistance can be conceptualized as input of resources created from the outside of a particular nation-state. In many instances the process is more appropriately described as transnational in the sense that the actors involved are different from the nation-states. International (and transnational) assistance to women's organizations has taken many forms, the purpose of the assistance included humanitarian aid, civil society development, democratization, women's political

participation, minority women (such as lesbians, handicapped women or single mothers). The keywords indicating the main purpose of assistance often overlapped.

According to the level and area of operation, the major international donors in the post-Yugoslav countries can be divided into six major categories (Stubbs: 1998):

At the supranational level, there are World Bank, IMF and various UN agencies such as UNDP, UNHCR and UNICEF. Most of them have been providing assistance to humanitarian work of women's organizations during emergency crisis, while UNIFEM, a UN agency specializing in women's issues, became involved in the region only recently.

On the regional level, the most visible as a donor has been European Commission, mostly through its offices in individual countries.

Bilateral governmental donors, such as USAID, CIDA or SIDA appeared primarily as donors to NGOs from their own countries operating in the region, although sometimes they did provide direct assistance to local organizations.

Among international foundations and trusts, there are both state connected organizations (such as German foundations linked to individual political parties) and private donors such as Open Society Institute or Global Fund for Women.

Larger international NGOs, such as CARE, AED, International Rescue Committee, World Learning or Kvinna till Kvinna.

Small, solidarity-based international organizations, such as various women's groups or networks (e.g. Network of East West Women).

Not all of the donors belong to only one category. Some of them, as for example Kvinna till Kvinna, started as a solidarity based group of Swedish feminists involved in peace work and later on grew into the organization contracting with SIDA. In addition to the classification according to the level and area of operation, it is important to distinguish between two major groups of donors: those that support exclusively women's projects (e.g. Kvinna till Kvinna, MamaCash, The Global Fund for Women, UNIFEM) and those that support women's organizations within some larger framework of support for civil society and NGO development (e.g. European Commission for Human Rights, Heinrich Boell Stiftung, International Rescue Committee, Open Society Institute, Westminster Foundation for Democracy, various embassies). The modes of operation—and the subsequent influence on women's organizations—are different according to whether the funder is a foreign state agency, foreign private donor, an international NGO tied to the home state funding or private funds.

The major advantage of the intermediary organization is their 'presence in the field'. That presence makes possible for them to reach also those segments of society that have no capacity to reach out themselves, such as rural and poor women, or simply those who do not have skills necessary to communicate with the internationals (language, education). The 'external' intermediaries eliminate in that way the need for 'internal' intermediaries, either by co-opting them as employees of their own organizations or undermining their potential to influence their own community. The boundaries between 'local' and 'international' become even less clear. 'External intermediaries' on the personal level are those who, due to their own interest (education, personal history), are entering into a society or a community different

from their own. 'Internal intermediaries' are those who, again due to their education and personal history, are able to talk in a language understood by the 'external' ones. On the organizational level, the 'field offices' of international agencies represent 'external', while the larger local organizations often play the role of 'internal intermediaries'. Conceptualization of the needs and priorities that receive funding most often gets articulated between these two groups.

The process of establishing donor-recipient relationship in the post-Yugoslav context resembles the process that Janine R. Wedel, when looking at the Western assistance to Eastern Europe, divided into the Triumphalism, Disillusionment and Adjustment phase (Wedel 2001). Since it is difficult to ascribe any feeling of triumph to the time when most of the donors approached women and women's organizations in the post-Yugoslav countries—that is, the time of war and large-scale humanitarian crisis—more appropriate name for the first phase in this context would be Great Expectations. The first phase is marked by highly set and more than often unspoken expectations among all actors involved. The phase of disillusionment brings the first frustrations and resentments, when the expectations are found not to be fulfilled so easily, or when in the process of getting to know each other, 'recipients' realize that the rationale for giving is not purely altruistic, while the 'donors' have to face the fact that the proclaimed needs on the part of the 'recipients' are more than often just desires with no capacity to implement the programs and projects drafted in the haste. The adjustment phase is the one in which an awareness of contractual nature of the relationship becomes predominant, opening up the possibility of partnership instead of dependency.

If we conceive of 'local' and 'international' as separate spheres that do not necessarily interact with each other, as an 'outside' and an 'inside', we may identify three main points of entrance for an outside intervention in the form of assistance: 1. Supporting the existing structures (organizations, groups, sometimes individuals) without the intention to change them. In this case, there is a trust in the capacity of the structure to influence the change in its broader environment. 2. Supporting the existing structures with an intention to change it. This is a case when assistance is provided under requirements of modifying the existing structures, since there is no trust in its current capacity to influence the change in the broader environment. 3. Initiating completely new structure. This mode of intervention may include looking for 'novelty' projects within the existing organizations or setting up completely new organizations.

#### 4. NGOization

There have been very many non-governmental organizations formed and now everybody is saying that that is the civil society. There are foundations financing non-governmental organizations and most often the most financed are those that are formed following the pattern as the state apparatus. That means, there is a director, there are people who are working, there is a hierarchical structure, which is a formal structure in the mainstream society (English in the original). And then it appears NGO management /sic!/, all of that terminology which is common in the world of business and in some kind of bureaucratic world starts to reflect itself in the NGO world. (Vanja Nikolic in Barilar et al. 2000:181).



Women's scene became rather fragmented, and that fragmentation caused decrease in solidarity. (...) I think that this NGOish way of working, applications, fund-raising (in English in the original), implementing programs, all of that has eaten us up. We spent and waste lot of time and energy on securing basic economic conditions. We have somehow forgotten each other as persons who exist regardless of the immediate, pragmatical function in an NGO. (Vesna Jankovic in Barilar 2000: 71)

At the end of 2001, there have been several hundreds of women's organizations in Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia and Macedonia. How 'genuine' they are and how many of them would have not emerged without the international assistance, regardless of whether the assistance has come associated with the war as primarily humanitarian aid or as transition? There is definitely no way to answer that question accurately. According to the participants in the feminist movement, interviewed for this paper, the estimate is that up to 80 to 90 percent of them would have never appeared without the foreign financial assistance, if they would, their development would have been very different than it has been. The concepts of genuinity and authenticity are often invoked as values disrespected on behalf of those intervening through the assistance.

General trend of NGOization of the women's movement has been observed in various parts of the world. There are two meanings the term NGOization may imply. The first one can be described as increasing tendency of the state to contract non-governmental organizations for working on various social problems that the state feels unable or is unwilling to address. The other meaning refers to the process of transformation of social movements into professionalised organizations. The two processes are of course interconnected. In Western Europe, the phenomenon of NGOization has been described by Susan Lang for Germany (Lang 1997). Sonia E. Alvarez explores 'the NGO boom' in the Latin American context (Alvarez 1998), which seems strikingly similar to the processes that may be observed in all of the post-Yugoslav countries. The major similarity can be seen in the fact that, in difference to Germany (and most likely other Western countries) where the state appears as the major 'donor', in Latin America and the post-Yugoslav countries the most important role is played by international donors.

In terms of strategies and programs, NGOization leads to issue-specific interventions and pragmatic strategies with strong employment focus instead of establishment of new democratic counterculture. In terms of ideology, 'traditionally' complex feminist agenda of emancipation and equality gets translated into specific single issues with state-oriented focus (the recent trend in post-Yugoslav countries is an increased pressure on the third sector to cooperate with government). In terms of structure, professionalized (and decentralized) small-scale organizations, with more hierarchical structures, become dominant, and replace over-arching movements focusing on politicization and mobilization of feminist public; feminist organizations building and institutionalization replace movement activism (Lang 1997:102-103).

The process of NGOization has been fostered through various practices. Along with a variety of measures designed to increase 'organizational capacity-building', most prominent and explicit among them being transfer of NGO management skills, there are also others, more subtle and therefore sometimes more effective means. The one that is so obvious that it may seem trivial to mention it, has been the very condition of having to have formal registration, in order to receive direct financial assistance.

The concept of capacity building often resembles compliance building in the sense that the knowledge and skills gained through the training consist primarily in increasing the capacity of participants to comply with the requests by others. The self-representation in accordance to the (perceived) requests by donor agency (e.g. a group that claims to offer service for offenders while hardly having capacity to work with victims as it claims to be doing in the mission), learning to present its activities in a specific form, according to the specific model (log frame). While the training is provided under the assumption that strengthening the NGOs will contribute towards strengthening civil society, the backside of it is that participants involved often equalize well-run NGOs with social change activism[18]. The idea of 'a small group of citizens that can change the world', very often gets lost in the process of 'strengthening organizational capacity.' In addition, the concepts of 'civil society', 'NGO', 'women's' or 'feminist movement' undergo transformations according to the specific local contexts which are often not taken into account by those who intervene from outside.

The pressures from donors have changed the working style of many organizations. For instance, many organizations did not have hierarchical structure prior to the receipt of a significant grant. The grant application forms, however, often requested roles such as president or vice-president and, even if a group decided to delegate that role to one of their members for that particular occasion, if the grant has been awarded, the 'hierarchy-for-the occasion' very often turned into the real one creating new relationships—not necessarily harmonic ones--within the group.

Decisions on conduct and agency lead to the specific group processes, organizations and forms of institutionalization that in turn shape and influence conduct and agency in a new way/Initial decisions on conduct and agency lead to the specific group processes that influence forms of organizations and institutionalization. Once established forms of organizations subsequently influence conduct and agency of all the participants in the organizations (Lang 102).

While one of the common developments of social movements, emerging in a particular socio-political context in an attempt to raise public awareness about deficiencies perceived by the movement initiators, is transformation of at least parts of the social movements into organizations, the outside intervention in the context of post-Yugoslav countries seems to have worked from the other end: organizations are being supported (sometimes even created) with the idea that they will incite and sustain the movement.

The question that foreign donors should consider is justification of the concentration on women's NGOs as primary vehicle in achieving gender equality. The effects are ambiguous: the support offered is too short for the organizations in question to reach full sustainability and therefore, the constant pressure to keep the organizations running decreases capacity of the organization (and women involved) to mobilize broader public for the feminist agenda of social change. Whether the movements can indeed be strengthened, even created, through strengthening of the organizational development skills remains to be seen.

III Encounters as told: From solidarity-based 'gifts' to 'implementing contracts'

Fund Heinrich Boell gives me solidarity aid of 100 German marks to survive through the NATO bombing...[19]

That is how much there was in a white unsealed envelope that I received. In gratitude I recited to her a biblical sentence by Boell /.../. I didn't look into the envelope immediately. I have postponed my joy for the privacy of my own room. She didn't understand anything, she was just a treasurer of that fund and some other funds.

There are few descriptions of aid relationship that are so telling as a piece of writing by a poet of Croatian origin living in Belgrade, Štefi Markunova. 'The 100 German marks' received by a representative of a donor whose funding portfolio consists of about half 'women's projects' worldwide (Rodenberg and Wichterich: 1999), and that in its earlier incarnation, as FrauenAnStiftung happened to be one of the first to support independent women's groups in post-Yugoslav countries, can be taken as an illustration of the most common way the assistance has initially arrived to the women's movement(s): small amounts of money under the circumstances of extreme need, primarily as expression of transnational women's solidarity. No service, or anything else, has been required in return. Gratitude for receiving has been met with gratitude for the ability to give, 'thank you' got exchanged for 'nothing at all', the simplicity of verbal interaction corresponded to its nature: the money got transferred from one person to another as a (small) 'gift'. The process that followed can be described as transformation of the relationship between those on the giving end and those on the receiving end from the simple one of gift giving to the more complex contractual relationship.

In this section I attempt an analysis of the 'aid encounter stories' following the major themes that have emerged in the course of interviewing nine members of women's organizations and/or participants in the feminist organizing. The interviews have been conducted as semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions covering four broadly defined topics: general assessment of the international assistance influence; more specific influence on the organization of the respondent (or on organizations in which the respondent has been involved with in the past); memories on women's organizing prior to the encounters with the international assistance; and reflections on future sustainability of women's organizations (and women's movement(s))[20]. The excerpts from the interviews have been finally organized into the following sub-themes: 1. classifying the donors, 2. positive assessments 3. negative assessments 4. (reflections on) learning process and memory, 5. strategies of influencing the donors, 6. future sustainability. The sub-themes have been selected for their potential policy relevance to which I will turn in the final section of the paper. The interviewed women represent, except for two representatives of donor agencies, a kind of 'feminist elite' in the sense that all of them play important roles both in their respective communities and the transnational feminist networks. All of them have had direct experience in negotiating with donors, some of them are members in advisory boards of international donor agencies, and most of them have participated in the feminist organizing prior to the transitional period, dissolution of Socialist Yugoslavia and the wars that followed.

#### 1. Classifying 'donors'

In asking for the general assessment of the international assistance, I didn't try to elicit responses about specific donor agencies or a specific donor category as described in the section on international assistance. Instead, I wanted to arrive at the classification that emerges out of the perception of those on the receiving end and which is different from the classification that those on the giving end may have about themselves. The terms 'donor', 'funders' or 'foundations' are often used interchangeably, covering wide variety of organizational forms involved in transferring international assistance. From the position of women's organizations 'in the field', distinction between a 'donor' and an 'implementing agencies' seems to be irrelevant since the major characteristic through which donors are identified as donors is simply their willingness to provide direct financial assistance[21]. While there is awareness that technical assistance through various educational forms (seminars, workshops, training) or consultancy also represents a form of assistance, organizations that are primarily operating in that way are often perceived not as much as playing a 'donor' role as implementing their own programs.

There are two major criteria the interviewed women used in their classifications of the 'donors': 1. Assumption about shared solidarity base (women as primary target group vs. women included into some larger issue) and 2. Physical presence vs. absence in the field. The criteria of classification involve at the same time an assessment to which I turn in the following two sections.

The first to come have most often been feminist groups, their 'gifts' being based on the idea of international women's solidarity. The most commonly referred to during the interviews have been women's foundations whose primary target group are women's groups.[22] Their advantage, in the perception of those on the receiving end, is primarily in their 'genuine interest for the cause'.

The international assistance regarding women's organizations was more piecemeal, not really big. There are, however, different organizations involved, one should single out those really feminist organizations, those who are really doing it from their hearts. They are doing it because they really believe in it. (Respondent 3)

There is a big difference between women's funders, women's organizations, such as CEPTA (a U.S. based NGO) or UNIFEM, and various embassies or European Commission. They do have some big plans that do include women, but I find that they are just working on it, without great love and interest. (Respondent 5)

There are some feminist organizations that I really want to single out. For example, German FrauenAnStiftung, by feminists from Green Party, who really helped us when we had most difficult time, when we didn't expect, when we were under sanctions, that means it was impossible, it was difficult even to come here, and nobody really showed interest to come. They did come and brought some little aid, but that meant a lot to us. It may be that it has meant a lot to us because they have not been themselves in some very good material state, but still... They really did help us, sisterly, in a feminist way. Then, women from Sweden, Kvinna till Kvinna, that was the same. So these are two points of light, two organizations that have really helped us from their hearts, helped us because they believed in women's movement and because they know that it has to spread everywhere and to every place. (Respondent 3)

Presence in the field has usually been achieved either through setting up so called field offices or through the presence of the 'donors'' representatives without an office infrastructure, mostly through regular visits lasting from few days to several weeks.

The assessment of the presence—which does have a potential for developing personal contacts—is contradictory. On one hand, the presence seems to offer easier accessibility. On the other, the presence in the field and the personal contacts that it enabled, often posed a challenge to the perception of the objectivity in grant-making process.

I had much better experience with foundations that didn't have their offices in Zagreb, objectivity was greater, criteria seemed more simple to me, sometimes they were very bureaucratic, but somehow they were much more clear in advance. (Respondent 9)

The funders appearing as 'distant bureaucratic structures' may look as 'money-saving' since they do not need to fund offices in the country, and therefore they are less subjected to the critique of those on the receiving end. On the other hand, all the expenses associated with the operation from the distance remain hidden from the recipients, although they may be higher than of those with field offices or representatives. From the perspective of an intermediary organization, 'move to the local level', closeness to 'the ground', seems to offer more equitable and efficient use of resources:

I started with big ethical dilemma about the cost. I learned two things. Once we are on the ground, we can provide money to groups who do not know they can look for grants... We end up with less people supporting us from abroad, we moved financial management to the region, some of the associated costs come down when you move to the local level... (Respondent 8)

When staffed with local women, field offices may lose the characteristic of being foreign, especially so if the representatives are perceived as personally committed to the same cause as the 'recipients':

You know why I treat it as a local? Our women are in it. That's the reason I really consider the Fund for Open Society as the local one. Now, if the situation with persons would change, most likely everything would be different. As of now, it is as it is. We received great help from the Fund for women's projects, for things that have been important to us, and that is small, newly founded, powerless women's groups that need to move on and get strengthened. (Respondent 3)

## 2. Negative assessments

Solidarity-based donors, while initially offering money without a lot of bureaucratic requirements in terms of project proposal writing and reporting, required on the other hand a different type of additional energy in terms of time-consuming meetings, emotional investment into developing friendships, occasionally even love relationships. There is no reason to doubt sincerity of feelings, there is, however, reason to doubt whether the mixture of personal friendships and emotional attachments, coupled with dis-balance in financial power always had the most beneficial outcome on the use of resources. The first enthusiasm over the shared

beliefs and vision, has often faded under the pressures of limited (no matter how huge) resources and the external bureaucratic requirements for financial transfers.

... we have not been aware that they are part of some strange political game in which they do not have possibility to influence, so I do not see as a major problem conflict of interests but conflict between two concepts of power. They come before us as persons who would prefer horizontal power of cooperation, but they are themselves part of a hierarchical, I would call it trans-state or maybe state power, and that is where the major conflict emerges. We didn't get it at the beginning. I remember exactly when one of them came to us and said they got the money and all of what has been written we will be able to change according to our needs and then it became clear that we don't have a chance to change anything, that at least one third of that money will go back to some American funds... (Respondent 9)

The memories about the first encounters are impregnated with feelings of not being listen to and not being understood.

I always had the impression that this was similar to some, let's say, English charity missions coming into India, you know... and then there are some natives there who cause wondering by being able to speak Latin, that is English... So they come and they don't listen to you at all. You can talk, endlessly... They have a system, they mostly send some very young women and men who went to some schools which are probably good schools, but they do not have an idea about where they are coming to... what is it here, how... Then they tell you some stories about the Iron Curtain, about the Eastern Bloc, some nonsense... you know. We lived here under the circumstances that were different from those they saw in movies, in their own American movies about Russia. They come with James Bond stories. So it takes time before you can explain it to them... You can explain yourself to death. They can't really get it. The best is if you don't explain anything. You let them to tell their story and you see what they want. If there is some common point we can find, so that it suits us and it suits them, fine. If not, then ciao. We say bye to each other, exchange our business cards, and that's it. (Respondent 3)

They /international organizations/ didn't have any knowledge or sense about what has been perception of money under socialism, what did money mean for women, for women's organizations, for civil initiatives which did exist under socialism, it is not accurate to say that there was nothing. They just threw that money onto our heads and we had to find the ways to come to terms with it, I felt extremely uncomfortable when the Center for Women War Victims, half a year after it got founded in December 1992, suddenly had a half a million German marks, that was extreme burden at that time, that was the first 'big money' that a women's organization in Zagreb got by then (Respondent 9).

These are descriptions of personal contact in which 'the foreigner' and 'the native' mutually produce each other as 'the foreigner' and 'the native'. While 'the native' perceives 'the foreigner's' understanding as mediated (and therefore biased) through cultural production (James Bond movies), her lived experience appears to her as non-mediated. The idea that someone distant may indeed know more about us than we know ourselves, at least in terms of ability to articulate that knowledge, seems to be

frightening and to cause resentment. Therefore, an attempt is made to dismiss the knowledge (good schools) on the grounds of immediate experience.

An ubiquitous accusation of inability to differentiate the post-Yugoslav context from the rest of Eastern Europe—relying very much on the popular self-image of 'Yugoslavs' as being different than the rest of the socialist world—is counterbalanced at the same time with an awareness (achieved in hindsight, though) about isolation from the experiences of women from other regions exposed to international assistance.

What I can see now is that we lived in some kind of complete isolation, not just from foundations, I think that in 91 and 92 we would tremendously benefit from the experiential knowledge of women from the Third World and we didn't have absolutely no contact with them, we didn't know what has been happening to them, and all of those stories have already happened 10, 15 or 20 years earlier, like the story with micro-credits and the story with a cow and milk in Asia, all of that was clear, and there has been attempt to transfer all of those things mechanically, especially to Bosnia, I read all of that later and I think that type of experiential knowledge would really help us at the time. We didn't know how to negotiate at the time, we didn't have negotiation skills, we actually didn't know whether we are allowed to negotiate at all in the whole story. We didn't know whether the funders are partners to us, collaborators, or they are our superiors, all of these things have never been clear. I think that it came to collusion of different images and different expectations and different perceptions and we didn't have knowledge that could help us at the time, especially regarding negotiations (Respondent 9).

Exchanging experiences with other parts of the world that have been exposed to international assistance could have enhanced the learning process. This should not be confused with using examples from development manuals designed for the underdeveloped countries, but in terms of reflecting on power relationships, so that the question that could have been discussed at such an encounter would not be 'how did you organize work with women war victims' but 'how did you negotiate the roles between your organization and the donors', 'how did you influence their agenda, if you did at all...'

Presence of the 'local' vs. 'foreign', as well as implied women's solidarity, does not necessarily bring positive assessment:

It is good to have local stuff, but not the local stuff that is at the same time financing themselves. In my opinion, that is completely inadmissible, both legally and morally. You cannot apply with your own projects and the projects of your own company. It should also be necessary that that shouldn't be an NGO where some of your relatives are working, or your former group, or whatever. There should be some kind of code of conduct, but Soros for instance, they haven't done it. There are plenty of frustrations in connection with that. I think that Soros is everywhere notorious for its nepotism. (Respondent 1)

The reasons for the absence of field offices or donors' representatives differed from one country to the other. The absence didn't prevent them or the potential recipients to establish personal contacts that, combined with both unsafe and restrictive financial

environment, often created ground for mutual suspicion and have been perceived as biased.

The funders were often absent only because we have been country under embargo, so because the regulation in their own country they couldn't open an office in Belgrade or anywhere else in Serbia, they worked from the distance, through e-mail and so on. Also, they didn't have insight into the situation, they would see a woman from Belgrade at a conference, they would, let's say, like her and asked a project from her, so it would turn out her organization would get financing. While some other organizations, maybe stronger, maybe better, wouldn't get finances. Somebody was simply at the right place at the right time. The money couldn't have been transferred simply to the bank account, so it was given in cash. So, did the woman to whom the money was given and she brought it in her pocket (or, as we used to say, in a 'left sock'), give all of it to her group? We don't know that. There has often been suspicions on whether somebody put some money 'on the side', whether somebody will use the money for this or that. The groups where women spoke English, had computer skills, e-mail communication, they usually did the best. (Respondent 1)

What was not good, what I have never liked, have been two things (when I happened to be on that side). That was when somebody there, in some other country, on some other continent, imagines what would that be now that we would need to do in Serbia, for instance, and then they send to us, for instance, their guidelines and there it stands: we finance this and this and this. So we start somehow to adjust to it. In order to get the bread/money, the groups often did what they would have never been doing, simply because the funders will finance that. Instead of the other way around, that the group does something genuinely, because there is a need for that and because they know that, they have some human resources, they have some experience... Very often there was jumping from one theme to another. That means, now for three months we shall be doing a project, let's say, on conflict resolution, and after that we'll work on, I don't know what, combat against violence against women, then afterwards we'll do some publishing... Something like that... So, now all of us know everything, and in fact nobody knows anything. And so we remain amateurs in all of that. (Respondent 1)

Women's foundations that have been coming here very often felt that they have to invent something new, that they have to create something new, so they did try to create something new, very often they didn't have an interest in motivations of those women or whether these new organizations make any sense, their mission has often been to create something new, something that would give them some kind of legitimacy, so very often they didn't have a feeling for already existing organizations, they didn't want to listen to their needs, they didn't want to finance something that was grounded/founded, what was genuine/authentic, what made sense within a certain context. (Respondent 9)

...sometimes our wishful thinking was that people will really go into direction they said they will go. We didn't come with donor's experience in being realistic in implementing. So there was a lot wishful thinking (Respondent 8).

We are activists too, we come from the same mind frame, so when we heard about evaluation we also said, oh, we don't need that, that's so bureaucratic... also with needs assessment, we thought, oh, we know what women need... (Respondent 8)



The criticism of personal relationships as key factors in obtaining grants, lack of transparency, unclear roles and lack of the accountability to the communities they are working in, that is directed towards donors is still to the large extent mirroring the negative features of women's organizations themselves. Personal relationships, friendship as the basis of establishing the group and/or organization is still the most dominant way the groups operate, the recruitment of new women is still predominantly through personal 'initiation' and examples of employing women through an open competition are rare.

### 3. Positive assessments

The overall assessment of the international assistance is by no means a negative one. There is an acknowledgement that the need that existed in times of humanitarian crisis has been partially alleviated by international assistance. The assistance did encourage women's initiatives, and many of the ideas that have been floating around since the beginnings of (neo)feminism in this region have been offered a chance to develop into specific projects, programs and, in many instances, new organizations.

...international foundations did have a positive role in the sense that they brought humanitarian aid under war circumstances (it is a different question how and where did they bring humanitarian aid). Second—they did encourage some women, that is some women's groups, in the sense that they supported some of their initiatives, some of their beginnings...(Respondent 9)

Although the money has been coming in a rather bad, irregular ways, it was still the money that stimulated many movements, many moves within the women's movement. Many projects have started, many groups have started, and that was good. (Respondent 1)

There have been positive outcomes on the personal level in terms of increased knowledge and skills that are transferable to other sectors (including specific managerial skills, such as conflict resolution, strategic planning, evaluation skills; and more broadly applicable interpersonal skills). While this kind of personal (and personnel) development can be regarded as an indicator of the capacity of women's organizations to contribute to the wider society, its backside manifests itself in the trend of women leaving their organizations for better-paid or more prestigious jobs in governmental structures or international organizations. The non-governmental sector also seems to offer potential for development of more inclusive structures in terms of non-discriminatory organizational cultures reflecting themselves, among other spheres, in gender-sensitive language usage as well.

Large number of people got trained in various things. We went through incredible large number of educations and training. I wouldn't be able to count it all, but it seems to me that for a certain period of time, let's say in 92, 93, 94, we have been sitting in classrooms and learning something. When I compare ourselves with people who are working in various ministries, we are much ahead of them. /.../

Another thing, people in NGO sector are much more politically correct, they are much more gender sensitive, in using language for instance. Also, some kind of nationalist,

racist way of behaving is being avoided, at the moment you get out of that circle of nongovernmental organizations, it hits you in the face.

Then, the whole range of technical skills, some learned to make photocopies, to send a fax, to drive, to use various computer programs, some learned variety of interpersonal skills, many people learned how to run a meeting, how to talk in public, how to conduct evaluation, how to do needs assessment, how many things are being done that are needed in this country. So it is no wonder that many of those people from the nongovernmental sector partly entered into governmental bodies, not yet enough since the salaries are still not attractive, more people are going into international organizations, so as long as they will last...(Respondent 1)

The assessment of transfer mechanisms according to the criterion of transparency is crucial in attributing positive, as well as negative, outcomes of the assistance. Public calls, clear conditions (in terms of the amount, time, reporting requirements) are singled out as preferred modes of identifying possible grantees. Securing wide participation has been achieved by relying on 'local' women as advisors, either through local and regional advisory boards that meet regularly or communicate with each other from distance...

As a symbol of fair play I could single out STAR. They made a public call, specifying conditions very clearly, they were clear about the amount they have at their disposal, what is the time period the activities need to take place, how should all of that look like: project proposal, interim report, final report. That was the kind of transparency I liked very much. I think other organizations should use it. That is, not that I should know the boss of the organization so and so, and I'll make her somehow to give the money for my group, but the organization should make a public call once a year, or for any other time period, and clearly give conditions for grants, afterwards it should publish list of those who got the grants, so everybody can see who got it, for what, for what kind of activities. So, there are no any ideas about some hidden thoughts in there. In that case, no criteria are difficult. STAR has been very demanding, regarding reporting and everything, but that has been part of the transparency of their work and some kind of fair play. (Respondent 1)

When I look at the Global Fund for Women in the last few years, I think that the way they are functioning quite transparent, I consider them to be one of the most interesting women's foundations... because they don't give a lot of money, because they rely on a large women's network worldwide, they have a large number of advisors who are doing it voluntarily, that means they want to hear many diverse opinions to make a decision on whom to finance, so they do not go around the world, they want to hear opinions of women who live in that part of the world. (Respondent 9)

Sincerity of interest, even love, are often invoked as elements that make difference between the donors that are perceived as those making real contribution and those that are 'just pursuing their own interest'.

Possibility to engage in direct dialogue, having a space for negotiation and influence, along with flexible requirements and permission to change and learn from mistakes is especially appreciated.

I have a positive example, although they stopped financing this region, we had two year cooperation with Prowid, they didn't just ask us so that we would then set up priorities, but within the project they gave us absolute flexibility to change things, you plan something, you put something on the paper, then you start working and you see that you made it wrong, so we changed, they gave us absolute freedom, it really turned to be a beautiful project, at the final evaluation of all the projects in Washington D.C. we could have said what was good and what it wasn't, everything was fantastic, unfortunately they don't come to this region anymore. (Respondent 5)

#### 4. Learning process and memories

The encounters definitely have incited some kind of learning process, both among the 'recipients' and among 'donors'.

The situation is completely different depending on whether that is the first foundation that appears or whether is the tenth. If that is the first one, then it has great expectations towards the scene and the scene has great expectations towards the foundation. I would say there is some kind of idealistic confusion here on both sides, and since the expectations are great, the frustrations are great as well... I think disappointments will decrease along with the expectations and the roles are becoming more transparent... (Respondent 9)

The learning process has been, however, at the same time hindered and enhanced by memories of the participants involved in the relationship building. In the course of the last decade, through each of the encounters, memories of the women on the 'recipient' side collided with the memories of those on 'donor' side. While there is widespread idea among international researchers that the socialist system in general, if it did allow them at all, primarily used civic associations as a means of social control instead of individual empowerment, the testimonies from feminist activists under socialism demonstrate that there has been a space for debating and challenging socialist solution to the «woman question». Although the first feminist voices have been publicly accused of introducing bourgeois ideology, most of their activities have been financed either directly (meeting space) or indirectly (system of social security provided first activists with enough free time for their volunteering activities) by the state.

The system completely softened some time in the 80s. We had some discussions on TV with those women, what was their name, Socialist conference of women. We went to TV, they were telling their ideological story, we were telling our story. And that was o.k. (Respondent 3)

There was an interest to finance something that has been perceived as socially valuable, it has not been a problem to find free space, if you had an idea you could do something. /.../ The whole story revolved around some of our ideas, phantasies and some desire to change something, to have an influence. I do think it was partly connected with the self-management story, self-management did in some strange way open up the space, I wouldn't say that was so much in terms of activities, but for the feeling that you can influence something, you could discuss endlessly, everybody had a right on their opinion and the only question was whether you want to channel it somehow, whether you have an interest. In general, I don't think one could have done

it within the structures of work or structures of authorities, the rules have been very clear there, but the fact or illusion that you can do something, that you can have your own opinion and that that is all right, I think that did influence some of the possible organizing at the very beginning. At that time we financed ourselves in various ways, that means we invented for ourselves our own membership fees, I remember section Woman and Society, we have been giving membership fees regularly, from some kind of pocket money, even women who have not been working, they have been able to contribute and that was considered completely normal because it has been extremely important what we have been doing (Respondent 9).

Reflections on the learning process, as well as the memories of the respondents on the time 'before internationals arrived', may offer direction for devising guidelines for more beneficial ways of developing relationships. The learning process is also closely interlinked with the strategies of influencing the donors.

## 5. Strategies of influence

Participants in feminist movements and members of women's organizations in the post-Yugoslav countries very often see themselves as objects of the donors' agendas, caught in a power relation where the only leverage on their part is most often an awareness that the 'other side' needs them as much—and sometimes even more—as they need the donors. They did, however, apply various strategies in order to influence the 'donors', sometimes thanks to their own initiative, sometimes primarily due to the readiness of the 'donors' to create a space for such an influence.[23]

Two most successful strategic tools appear to be clarity of goals and sufficient confidence in their own capacity, accompanied with the ability to take on donors' perspective.

First of all, you have to know exactly what do you want. Second, you have to be strong enough to position yourself as a political subject. In that case you have the right, if they need you, if they think you are the subject going into direction that is interesting to them, then you have all the creative capacity, you can do everything, as you want to do it. But first you have to decide for yourself on who you are, what you are, what do you want... Then you can negotiate with the donor. You can move a little bit here and there, but you have to keep your line. (Respondent 2)

My project proposals usually got accepted because I write them in studious way /.../ I also tried to imagine, at the time when I worked in women's movement, I behaved as if I would have been the donor, what are the things I would like to hear, what would interest me in connection with a project, so I wrote it, no matter that nobody asked me to write that. I guess that made good impact on the donors, so I had success. (Respondent 1)

Clarity of goals allows for move away from the opportunistic approach, even if the option chosen is simply refusal:

You can refuse, I remember that the representatives of the American embassy fell down when I said, no, although we know there is big money in it, we have our agenda that we deal with, we don't want to give up, we would rather not exist in that case, we

would prefer to put much more effort into dealing with the funder who is interested in giving us the money, you cannot always run after good opportunities, there is enough of that. (Respondent 5)

Direct involvement in creating donors' agenda is rare and appreciated opportunity:

As of now we have very good experiences with UNIFEM, let's say, they listen and they are willing to talk, recently I spent seven days with them, they have been doing their strategic planning for next two years and they invited us, few women for whom they thought that we are working well, from good organizations and they let us to set up priorities ourselves, so they will try to look for projects that fit those priorities, so there are those, fewer of them, who are going for a dialogue and conversation and ask you for an opinion.(Respondent 5)

Initiative seems to remain with the donor agency (they invited us, they gave us the absolute freedom, they invited those of us for whom they think that we are working good, that our organizations are good), although there is definitely an emerging awareness that women's organizations themselves do have possibility to take more active approach:

It would be good way that once all of us sit together, make an arrangement and to initiate contact with funders instead of waiting for the funders to come all the time to us (Respondent 5).

## 6. Future sustainability

The question about future sustainability is the one that usually comes at the end of the grant proposal guidelines. The potential 'recipients' are to offer some insight into their own future. Predictions by the interviewed women follow two main directions. First, they expect loss of the outside financial sources due to the re-allocation of international funding towards state (including loss of human resources, that is women seeking employment in state-sector or in international organizations) which may lead to disappearance of the organizations.

The funders are withdrawing and I think all of these states are impoverished and I think the organizations will be disappearing unless they find some new ways to finance themselves, some kind of their own income... (Respondent 5)

Genuineness of the interest, though being positively assessed in classifying the donors, doesn't seem to be perceived as a guarantee of organizational survival.

I think that the best groups, the strongest ones in the sense of being professional, they will survive. There is no strength in some ideological sense, some of 'the most fabulous feminists' will survive, some not... I think, that is not one of the criteria. Criteria include professionalism, respectability/reputation, quality of work... the most profiled groups will survive, those who are clearly recognizable to work on certain things... Second, the sources of financing will change. Instead of charities, those who were providing humanitarian aid, these are going to be some others, e.g. European union. What I want to say is that this will never stop. I can see that non-governmental organizations in the U.S. and Western Europe, they also need to compete for funding.

Any decent state will want to finance civil society. Of course, this state /Serbia/ is still far away from financial possibilities, not to mention decency, that's another story. (Respondent 1)

Second, change in the purpose from emergency to development phase may lead to the need for more professional organizations (subsequently NGOization), along with an increased reliance on state-funding[24]. The skills and knowledge obtained within the non-governmental women's organizations seem to have potential to be transferred into other areas.

I also think that the financial support that is coming for various educational and research projects, including some other activities, all of that will get reallocated from the non-governmental sector to the state sector. To the great extent, I would say that represents some kind of future, that people who have been running all of that, with all their numerous and rich experiences gained in the non-governmental sector, who have a decade of experience, that they should enter some ministries, some offices. We may think at the moment that we don't want to belong to any kind of state institutions, but in the future that may be the best way to apply our knowledge and to continue to receive international funding. (Respondent 1)

There is also awareness about the role of international feminist movement in pressuring individual governments and intergovernmental organizations to demonstrate gender sensitivity in resource allocation.

I believe that all that money that goes for women's projects, all of that is going under the pressure of some women's movements and associations on the global level, all of that is happening under some kind of pressure. So, if that's some kind of good image, the ruling establishment will follow it, if not, they won't. (Respondent 3)

There are also those who look at sustainability beyond financial and organizational ones, in terms of raised gender-consciousness that will guarantee women's involvement in the future, regardless of financing particular organizations or even generally difficult economic situation.

That network is most important to us, since that is the basis of the movement... When soon there will be no money, as it won't be, when the poverty increases generally, as it seems it will be, these women will already have some kind of consciousness, and they know what do we want. They won't get depressed and go back home, they will continue doing something (Respondent 3).

#### IV Relevance for policy making

... how aid happens—through whom and to whom, under what circumstances, and with which goals—determines not only the nature of what recipients actually get and how they respond to it, but its ultimate success or failure. (Wedel, 6)

In what way does the approach I have taken contribute to understanding the impact of the international funding policies on women's organizations? It gives a partial insight into perceptions of the policies (or lack thereof) from the perspective of those who are, in the evaluations conducted by international donor agencies, seen as 'target

group', 'beneficiaries', and sometimes as 'implementers'. Their perceptions and their understanding of the intentions—stated explicitly or induced from the practice—are crucial for the successful implementation of any policy the 'donors' may have.

International assistance can be conceived as intervention with good intentions that in the process of implementation may get outweighed by a range of unintended consequences. It can be perceived as a problem of dependency on the outside sources or as an indicator of the strength of the transnational solidarity of women's movement. The framing of the problem is only one of the factors influencing perceptions and behavior of the participants. Other factors that contribute are institutional and organizational constraints, cultural differences (and the process of negotiating the differences, process of mutual adaptation), not at least memories that the participants bring to their encounters and the process of relationship building.

International funding policies regarding gender issues in general, and women's organizations in particular, can be more appropriately conceived not from the perspective on policy as 'authorized choice', as from the perspective of policy as 'structured interaction' (Colebatch 1998: 102). While policy as 'authorized choice' assumes simple definition of policy as 'governments making decisions', following the straight line of defining the problem that needs to be solved, identifying possible options and establishing rational criteria for making a choice, policy as 'structured interaction' makes no assumption about single decision-maker and clarity of a policy problem. It allows for the emerging pattern of activity not to be seen as collective effort to achieve known and shared goals. There is no single decision-maker in the field of international assistance, no matter to which level do we focus our attention. There is a range of 'participants in the game' that have very diverse understandings of the situation and the problem.

There was no united set of agendas on behalf of 'donors', as well as there is no united set of agendas on behalf of women's organizations. To say that doesn't imply that there should have been such a set. In the period of emerging movements, in times of war and humanitarian crises, the immensity of the problem may function as the unifying factor. As soon as the tensions calm down, or as soon as the choices multiply from simple once of satisfying immediate needs of those affected, the agendas become (more or less) apparent in all its diversity.

All of the actors involved in the process of relationship building between 'donors' and 'recipients' are simultaneously actors in the policy making processes influenced by many other factors in their environment, most notably the socio-political context in which the relationships are being build. What kind of guidelines can be given for the policy-making process that as its goal has very general objective of achieving gender equality through women's empowerment?

All of the issues supported represent valuable causes: violence against women, economic empowerment, political participation and so on. They are usually interlinked in the sense that within one of the headings others can easily be subsumed. The simple question 'what is the most important issue for women in XY country today'—whatever the answer may be—cannot provide guidelines on how 'the most important issue' should be dealt with. If the answer is 'violence against women', it still doesn't let you know whether it is necessary to provide shelters (how many, who

should run them, what kind of support should be available in the shelter, how will the quality of support be assessed), to run public campaign or to educate policemen, social workers and health care providers on dealing with victims of violence. If 'the economic empowerment' gets set up as a priority, the questions that still needs to be answered are the same: what is the best way to achieve that? Even more important: is there a one best way? In search for 'best practices' and 'innovations', actors engaged in social change regarding gender equality often neglect local memories that may play crucial role in the success of the implementation of the model that may have been developed based on the success at another location.

In order not to foster 'practice without language', it is necessary to allow sufficient time for needs articulation, for a kind of 'incubation period' in which actors have an opportunity to develop their ideas and adjust their perceptions without the immediate pressure to produce results. On a practical level, that would mean direct financial support for activities such as needs assessment, planning and cooperation development.

In addition, it would mean more attention to the question of how, that is to the ways and mechanisms for transferring financial and technical assistance.

## Appendices

### 1. Letter to the President

Women's Network of Croatia  
George W. Bush  
President of the United States

His Excellency Mr. Lawrence G. Rossin

United States Ambassador in Croatia

January 25, 2001

As women's rights activists and citizens of a country that has been exposed to various forms of U.S. international assistance, we want to express our deepest dissatisfaction and concern with the first foreign policy move of the recently elected President of the United States, Mr. George W. Bush. His decision to block funding for international organizations engaged in the field of family planning represents a serious attack to women's rights around the world as well as in the United States. We would like to express our strong support to all the organizations and individuals from the United States whose work will be directly affected by the President's decision.

We are not under the illusion that our concern will have an impact on the President's foreign policy decisions, nevertheless, we wish to make a statement. We have witnessed both positive and negative impacts of the U.S. foreign assistance. International funding for family planning provided millions of women, men and children throughout the developing world an opportunity to live their lives with more dignity and often it saved many women's and children's lives. If the intention of the



new administration is to redirect the taxpayers' money towards solving some of the problems within US society, it is disconcerting that the first presidential choice was not directed to cut various forms of foreign military assistance. Instead, the choice of the President was to undermine women's right to choose.

Although we are not U.S. taxpayers and/or citizens, we are deeply concerned about the global ramifications this decision will have on women. If this specific decision is an indicator of the future moves of the new administration to restrict reproductive rights of women as such, our concern is even deeper.

Women's Network of Croatia

WNC is a network of over 40 women's organizations in Croatia.

## 2. Zagreb SOS line

The case of the Zagreb SOS line for battered women may illustrate one of the possible developments many of the feminist initiatives went through—or may be undergoing in the future—from the moment they received the first funding.

The SOS telephone line for battered women started in 1988, at the initiative of Women's Group Trešnjevka, in the space that belonged to the Socialist Youth Organization. It received occasionally small financial support through the State Lottery, which was used for office supplies and contribution towards public transportation expenses of the volunteers.

The first substantial amount of money from abroad was received in the fall 1989 from the Frauenhaus Mainz (Germany) thanks to the personal contacts established through student exchange between Universities of Zagreb and Mainz. The amount of 5.000 German marks did seem substantial at that time and the group collectively decided that the money would be set aside for the purchase of the house that will serve as a shelter.

The house was never bought. In December 1990, the volunteers of the SOS line (at the time already registered as citizens' association 'Women's Aid Now') squatted an apartment in the center of the town with the intention to pressure the city government to open a shelter for women victims of domestic violence. The action that was undertaken as an act of civil disobedience with the aim of making public pressure on the decision-makers ended so that first women who needed a refuge started to arrive and the shelter started to function in the apartment to which the group didn't have any legal rights.

The money for the house was spent on the honoraria for women who started to work in the shelter. Soon after the initial enthusiasm with finally having the space for the victims of domestic violence faded, it became clear that the work in the shelter couldn't be done on volunteer basis, as it was possible to organize the work of the SOS line. In spring 1992, women running the shelter separated from the Women's Aid Now and set up Autonomous Women's House Zagreb. In the subsequent years the shelter has been supported through foreign donations. In November of 1998, the shelter received for the first time financial aid from the state budget in the form of an award by the Commission for Equality for their work on violence against women.

Approximately 40% of the annual budget for the last two years comes from the local sources, combination from state and city budget.

One of the participants in the event, reflects in retrospect on the action of setting up the shelter and the subsequent development:

There was not enough time for questioning, discussing basic values, there was no structure and not enough communication. But we have to take into account that we were one of the first organizations of that kind. Or shelter was for a long time the only one on the territory of former Yugoslavia. We had to build everything by ourselves, trying it out, setting up rules and the way of working with women who stayed in the shelter and among ourselves at the same time. In that context I think we were good, we took the right direction somehow instinctively. We started all of it more with our hearts than our heads, at that time there were not so many contacts as there are nowadays. Nowadays the whole situation on the civil scene seems to be somehow upside down, all of it would need an evaluation now. It seems to me that the whole NGO scene took direction the funders dictate, and not so much according to our needs and the situation here. (Mica Mladineo in Barilar 2000:260).

This story could be told with many more details, but for the purpose of this text it is important to note the following: women have been able to organize around issues that mattered to them already before they received any training on NGO development. Another important point is that the first funding arrived through personal contacts and since it was a gift from one women's shelter to another one, it can be considered solidarity-based. In a similar way, the first funds received for new organizations dealing with war violence against women have been private donations that women's groups (mainly from Germany, Austria, England and Italy) collected in their communities. That was crucial for starting all the early projects, and it was a considerable amount. All the other money--governmental, international agencies, foundations--started coming much later.

### 3. Interviewees

Biljana Kašić, Centre for Women's Studies Zagreb, 18.11.2001.

Jill Benderly, STAR Network/World Learning, 17.11.2001.

Memnuna Zvizdic, Žene ženama, Sarajevo 5.11.2001.

Monika Kleck, Amica Tuzla/Freiburg, 29.11.2001.

Sanja Sarnavka, B.a.B.e. Women's Human Rights Group Zagreb, Croatia 2.11.2001.

Slavica Radošević, USAID, Croatia office, 6.11.2001.

Sonja Drljević, Association for Women's Initiative Belgrade, 06.12.2001.

Sonja Lokar, Gender Task Force, 7.12.2001.

Zorica Mršević, OSCE-Belgrade 4.12.2001.

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[1] Women 2000, a report by International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights deals with the status of women's rights in twenty-nine countries of Central and South-Eastern Europe and the Newly Independent States.

[2] Recent positive contribution towards assessing the role of international assistance from the perspective of recipients has been a comprehensive research, conducted almost exclusively by domestic experts, on the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Results

have been published both in English and Bosnian (Serbian, Croatian) language. See Bojicic-Dželilovic, et al: 2001.

[3] The original proposal submitted for the OSI IPF in December 2000, entitled 'Gender Issues in Southeast Europe', has been conceived as much more comprehensive research involving distinct set of actors on international and national level, both in the governmental and non-governmental sector. It also proposed comparative research of women's movements in several post-Yugoslav countries, along with the gender equality mechanisms on the state level. Very soon during my research fellowship I have realized that one person could not possibly conduct the project of that size during one-year time. I have also realized that for the approach I have taken, the focus on individual countries would hide more than they would reveal. In each of the countries there are considerable differences between rural and urban areas, to the extent that the women's organizing in urban centers in different countries has more similarities than women's organizing in rural and urban areas within one country only.

[4] Montenegro, Slovenia and Kosova are not included only because of time limitations. In terms of influence of international assistance on women's organizing, Slovenia is similar to Croatia and Serbia regarding early emergence of feminist initiatives within the new social movements during 80ies. It is different, however, since the organizations had to rely primarily on limited local financial resources. In Montenegro, although there has been no tradition of feminism, women's NGOs have spread thanks to the large presence of international organizations. In Kosova, currently under international administration, there are numerous forms of women's organizing on the grassroots level as well as women's organizations directly supported by international organizations.

[5] The Formers is a term sometimes used self-referentially by feminists from post-Yugoslav states. Clearly, I'm using it here to refer to all of the former Yugoslav republics.

[6] The Directory lists total of 71 organizations, including Help Centre for Mentally Disabled Persons 'Poraka' – Kratovo and Youth Council of Bitola. Descriptions of the goals and the most important projects don't give an explanation for their inclusion into directory.

[7] Prior to re-registration in 1999. the name was Organization of women of Macedonia. Directory of the Women's NGOs in Macedonia lists two 'Organizations of Women's Organizations', both active on local level, one in Krushevo municipality, and the other in Prilep.

[8] The numbers are considered by many to be largely exaggerated. Total number of women in Macedonia is 997,247 out of which 316,990 are of working age. (Women 2000:301)

[9] Appearing in the Directory as the Union of Albanian Women.

[10] "Nongovernmental organizations in Macedonia tend to have a very small core of activists and varying numbers of members who belong only on paper. The absence of

local funding sources means that there is little chance of serious organizational development and thus little chance of building capacity. Typically, an NGO will bid on a project proposal once it has discovered that funding is available from a certain donor. If such funding is unavailable, NGOs are often dormant.” (Karatnycky et al. 2000: 428)

[11] Author herself is involved in the trainers’ team.

[12] The website divides the region into Vojvodina, Serbia and Montenegro. Directory of Women’s Groups published by the Star Project of Delphi International and Autonomous Women’s Centre—Info Centre in spring 1999 listed groups in sections Serbia, Vojvodina, Montenegro and Kosovo/Kosova. The reason for omitting Kosovo groups from the website is lack of information after the NATO bombing.

[13] The SOS line has been established on March 3, 1988, as the initiative of the Women’s Group Trešnjevka, which functioned as a consciousness raising and an action group from 1986—1990. Appendix 2 provides an illustration of changes in funding sources from the initial stage of volunteerism and solidarity-based funding to reliance on international assistance and the most recently on the state budget.

[14] I do not want to give a wrong picture: the groups existing nowadays in Zagreb did not simply evolve out of the original SOS, but in almost every of the groups active nowadays in Zagreb there is at least one former SOS volunteer for whom the SOS line has represented a point of entrance into the feminist movement. The stories about creation of the groups are complex, they would involve description of the personal networks and personal relationships, to reconstruct them goes beyond the scope of this paper—what is important to point out is that the organizational growth would not have been possible without international assistance.

[15] AFŽ is abbreviation for the Antifascist Women’s Front, mass women’s organization that has been formed by the Yugoslav partisan movement during the World War II. The colloquial usage of ‘AFŽ’ may refer to any form of women’s organizing, even to simple gathering of women, and mostly has pejorative connotations.

[16] This is Stope nade from Split that emerged out of Mary Stopes International.

[17] The term is often used by international organizations’ staff in reference to the process of giving-over the organizations to the local community. It may involve procedures such as hiring more (or completely) local staff, registering as a domestic organization or setting up a new organization with the same mission. The term may have been borrowed from the corporate world, e.g. “Localization is the process of creating or adapting a product to a specific locale, i.e., to the language, cultural context, conventions and market requirements of a specific target market. With a properly localized product a user can interact with this product using his/her own language and cultural conventions.” (<http://www.localizationinstitute.com>)

[18] As one of the participants in the training held for Women’s NGOs in Macedonia answered to the question about the most important characteristics of NGOs/civil society groups ‘bank account’.

[19] Text by Štefi Markunova, published in Labris, lesbian newsletter, special issue No. 12, year VIII, Belgrade 2001. pp. 19-21.

[20] The interviews lasted from 40 to 90 minutes, transcriptions having from 6 to 12 single-spaced pages. Two out of nine interviews have been conducted in English, the remaining seven interviews have been conducted in Croatian (including Bosnian and Serbian) language.

[21] This can be seen also in lists of 'donors' in presentation materials (web-sites, leaflets etc.) by women's organizations.

[22] The following organizations have been most often mentioned: Kvinna till Kvinna, FrauenAnStiftung, Global Fund for Women, local foundations of the Open Society Institute, UNIFEM and STAR project (originally linked with Delphi International and nowadays with World Learning).

[23] An interesting example of the attempt to influence (or at least to make a statement about it) larger framework of foreign funding policy, instead of individual donor agencies, has been a letter by the Women's Network to the US President, protesting his decision to abolish funding for international organizations dealing with family planning (Appendix 2).

[24] In Croatia, in 1999, there was for the first time a public call for proposals on behalf of the newly founded Office for cooperation with NGOs by Croatian Government and some of the women's groups have been successful in obtaining the grants---for many among them this was the first money received from Croatian taxpayers. In 2000, 11.4% of the total of 22 million HRK (app. 2.75 million USD) distributed through the Office has been allocated for various women's projects (<http://www.uzuvrh.hr>). Approximately half of it went for work on violence against women and the rest for education, economic empowerment and health issues.