

Public debate at Tetovo

On 18th November, 2008 in Tetovo a public debate *Social position of non-majority ethnic communities in Tetovo* was organized by Foundation Open Society Institute - Macedonia in cooperation with NGO *Common Values* with 27 participants – 3 representatives of the local government, 14 representatives of NGOs and 4 representatives of media. Debate aimed to assess the current social situation of the ethnic communities in Tetovo, to improve the communication between involved parties in the local community, and to raise citizens' awareness about rights of ethnic minorities in the social sphere.

Hajrije Ahmed from the partner NGO *Common Values* opened the debate and presented goals and activities of the project. Introductory speeches were given by: Arjeta Aliu, Center for Social Care Tetovo, who gave a short overview of the activities and the function of the Center; Adnan Nuhi, President of the Commission for Inter-Community Relations in Tetovo, who spoke about the structure and activities of the Commission underlining that regular meetings of the Commission for solving problems of minorities are held; Nadir Rexhepi, Association for Development of Roma Community *Sonce* – Tetovo, who pointed out the current problems of Roma in Tetovo, the exclusion of Roma from decision making processes and the existence of 3 ghettos of Roma community in Tetovo; Branka Markovic, Citizens' association *Happy Life*, Tetovo, who spoke about the social and economical status of Serbian community in Tetovo and underlined that there is none Serbian employed on high position in local institutions; and Nebojsa Zaharievski, NGO *Youth Alliance*, Tetovo who explained that after the Framework Agreement, employment of Macedonians in municipality decreased and Macedonian community is inadequately treated in realization of their rights. Moderator of the public debate was Lulzim Haziri, from NGO *Association for Democratic Initiatives* - Gostivar.

After the discussion about the situation of minorities, especially Roma, regarding social status and social aid, debate ended with the conclusion that social position is the most important topic that affects all non-majority communities in Tetovo.