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Kosovar

Women's Voice

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announcements

- KGSC Gender Studies Reader released at City Library...
.....31 March, 15:00
- KWN meeting at HCIC.....
.....4 April, 11:00
- Launching of the "Women's Voice" Report.....7 April

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GRAVE TË KOSOVËS



KOSOVA WOMENS
NETWORK

www.womensnetwork.org

90 KWN Members and Partners Attend Annual Meeting

Kosova Women's Network (KWN) held its second Annual Membership Meeting on December 4, in Prishtina. At the meeting, KWN presented its annual report, both narrative and financial, and Strategic Plan for 2005 - 2008.

KWN members also elected two new Board members and reelected two other members. The KWN Board members for 2005 are: Delina Fico, Marta Prekpalaj, Luljeta Vuniqu, Naxhije Buçinca, Vjosa Dobruna, Belxhyzare Muharremi and Behar Selimi.

The meeting concluded with a theatrical presentation from



Vjosa Dobruna, KWN Board member, presents information about steps towards developing a Kosovar Women's Fund at the KWN annual meeting in Prishtina.

the "Know Your Rights!" To Speak", which KWN members and guests attended. campaign, entitled "They Dare

KWN Cooperates with Other Women's Networks

Macedonian Women's Network

KWN in cooperation with the Macedonian Women's Network "Together" and the Friedrich Nauman Foundation organized a two-day workshop called "From Conflict Management, towards Communications and Cooperation". The workshop took place on October 25-26 in the Grand Hotel, Prishtina.

KWN representatives presented their work on the topics: Women's Role in Civil Society Development; and Kosovo after the Elections and Future

Challenges in the Region. The Macedonian representatives presented their network "Together", and discussed work in Macedonia after the conflict and challenges facing Macedonia since the referendum. During a work group session, participants drafted a list of common issues and recommendations for the networks. Participants also met with the President of Kosova's Parliament. The two networks have plans for future cooperation and communication will be maintained.

Bosnia and Herzegovina Women's Network

A delegation of 12 women from Bosnia and Herzegovina visited Kosova for a three-day workshop on November 28 - December 2. During their visit, they met with several NGOs and women's groups throughout Kosova. On November 29, KWN arranged a meeting between them and Serbian NGOs in Gracanica. On November 30 they met with KWN members and partners in Prishtina. On December 1, they met with the Women's Network in Prizren, after which they visited the Roma Women's Center.

The main topic discussed was "Communication and Emotional Investment / Search for Common Grounds". The workshop provided an opportunity for women from Bosnia and Herzegovina to exchange experiences with Kosovars about peace building activities and women's issues.

This visit was financially supported by Kvinna till Kvinna.



Representatives from KWN and the Macedonian Women's Network met with the Chair of the Kosovo Parliament in October.

Kosovar Women's NGOs Help Prepare for Beijing +10

Kosova Women's Network sent three women to participate in the NGO Forum for the UNECE Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Beijing +10 Review in Geneva on December 12 and 13.

The main themes for the Beijing +10 review were: women in the economy, institutional mechanisms to promote gender equality, trafficking of women in the context of migratory movements, and emerging issues.

The Beijing +10 conference will take place at the United Nations in New York in March. During the two week session, women's NGOs from around the world will gather in New York to pressure their governments to reaffirm the Convention for Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), a convention that governments agreed to at a conference 10 years ago in Beijing.

CEDAW specifies benchmarks that governments should meet regarding women and health, the economy, security, etc.

CEDAW was adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly. Consisting of a preamble and 30 articles, it defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination.

The participation of Kosovar women in the preparatory meeting in Geneva was financially supported by the United Nations Development Program.

For more information, go to www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/index.html.

www.womensnetwork.org

"Know Your Rights" Explains Legislation

Mechanisms for gender equality exist, but how much do citizens know about them?

The women's movement in Kosova has a long history that predates the recent war and international presence in the region.

In the last few years, politicians have become more active in publicly supporting the women's movement and increasingly recognize the importance of establishing gender rights legislation. The National Action Plan, Gender Law, Anti-discrimination Law and Family Law are huge accomplishments for gender equality and facilitate the promotion and protection of human rights in Kosova.

However, social problems such as violence against women, trafficking for prostitution, low enrollment of girls in schools and at the university, a high fe-

male poverty rate, gender discrimination in the business world and lack of women's representation in politics still plague Kosova. While gender mechanisms on the political level exist, many men and women remain unaware of their rights or how to access the protection newly provided by law. As few people truly understand their rights or how to utilize the services of the ombudsperson, it remains difficult to implement the laws and fully realize the potential for social change under the current political situation.

The Kosova Women's Network Know Your Rights campaign aims to inform citizens about their rights, and the existing gender mechanisms. Five famous performers: Safete Rogova, Sheqerije Bucaj, Teuta Sadiku, Edona Reshitaj and Nora Mehmeti told stories that described the situation of women in Kosova. The performers utilized popular culture including theatrical plays and

songs as an education tool in the hopes of better reaching the average Kosovar. The actresses used monologues and dialogues to interact directly with the audience and to draw the audience into their situation.

For example, the Family Law theatrical play revolved around a woman suffering from domestic

abuse. The play documented her initial frustration and feelings of helplessness as an abused woman, education on the options provided by the Family Law and an eventual visit to the ombudsperson. It concluded with her situation improving.

Dialogues dramatized women's experiences, using conversation between actors to explain situations in which gender mechanisms could be used. The stories told were taken from women's true stories.

Each play in the campaign included a song that explained a particular law or promoted gender equality. The campaign included three songs.

"Do we have rights?"

B. B. Poqi and Teuta Kurti asked in a wonderful ballad composed by Nexhat Macula with lyrics by Virtyt Kelmendi.

"You Don't Know How Strong I am"
Alba Loxha sang a rhythmic song composed by Andin Randobrava with lyrics by Aida Baraku.

"Speak out!"

The play's final song calls upon women. The upbeat song was composed by Armend Rexhepagiqi with lyrics by Aida Baraku, sung by Teuta Kurti, Alba Loxha and Edona Reshita

The campaign was launched on November 29, in Prishtina, marking the International Day against Violence against Women. The performance was repeated in Prizren on December 2nd and in Mitrovica on December 3rd.

RTV 21 was the media sponsor, and the campaign was financially supported by UNIFEM. The campaign will continue in 2005 with performances throughout Kosova.



BB Poqi and Teuta Kurti sing "Runaway Eyes" at ODA Theater in Prishtina. The music video is now playing on television stations throughout Kosova.

Kosovar Women Representatives Attend Regional Workshop on Implementing UN Resolution 1325

Following initial discussions in February in Prishtina, a Regional Workshop was held in October 2004 in Sarajevo. The workshop was conducted in partnership with and funded by UNIFEM and

Kvinna Till Kvinna. Women from Kosova, Serbia and Montenegro, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia discussed the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325.

The meeting resulted in a joint letter to the UN Security Council, expressing the participants' support for implementing UN Resolution 1325.

Women Form Groups, Provide Support

The "Women to Women Support Groups" project has attracted the attention of 393 young mothers and mothers-to-be since it began in October 2004. The project has offered trainings, counseling, home visits and phone calls to mothers throughout Kosova, including those at home, working, rural, urban, Roma, Bosnian, Albanian and others. The project has been especially successful for mothers ages 20 to 25 and mothers-to-be.

Kosovar mothers face great cultural expectations from both their families and their communities. They carry more responsibility for the emotional development of their children than do fathers, brothers and sisters. Most of these mothers breastfeed their children.

Mothers are faced with advice from all directions: their families, promotional products, pediatricians and maternity personnel. Women to Women Support Groups were one more voice contributing to the cacophony. Thus, the project faced some challenges, mostly due to stereotypes, culture or innovation. For example, most young mothers have begun

using formulas due to media promotion. They need more information about breastfeeding to increase their interest and understanding of the true value of breastfeeding.

"Women to Women Support" groups hope to spark mothers' interest in breastfeeding by providing this information. For example, mothers who do not breastfeed their children increase their risk of breast cancer. Women who do not breastfeed or who breastfeed for less than three months can be subject to early menopause. This has happened in Ferizaj. If women with children lactate for 24 months or longer, they can reduce these risks. This is especially true for women who first lactate at an early age.

The Women to Women Sup-



The local coordinator from Peja, Ardita Bala, promotes the women to women project on the local radio station Dukagjini.

port Groups have provided non-stop information, support and inspiration to breastfeeding women. Through the project, counselors and local coordinators have also offered their opinion, suggestions, information and ideas on how to expand this project and to raise awareness about breastfeeding throughout Kosova. We hope to reach 4000 mothers by the end of the project.

This project is financially supported by UNICEF.

KWN Meets with Urgent Action Fund

Representatives from the Urgent Action Fund (UAF), Executive Director Julie Shaw and Consultant Jane Barry, accompanied by well known women's rights activist Marta Drury, met with KWN representatives and partners on December 16 in Prishtina.

UAF is an international organization focusing on women's rights. The organization cooperates with women activists to build peace in three main situations: armed conflict, violence escalation, and politically unstable places. UAF has supported women's organizations and activists in Kosova and Southeast Europe since the mid-1990s and continues to support them today.



Urgent Action Fund Executive Director Julie Shaw, left, provides advice for Kosovars to start their own rapid response grants program. To her right, Marta Dury and Jane Barry (far right) listen.

UAF is eager to support local activists in creating and managing their own rapid response grants program, which could provide financial support for immediate, strategic interventions by women human rights activists.

In this meeting UAF presented their report entitled "Rising Up in Response: Women's Rights Activism in Conflict", and contributed to discussions on establishing a Kosova Women's Fund, by sharing their knowledge and experience.

November Coordination Meeting Notes

At the KWN bimonthly meeting on November 1, the following points were discussed.

- "Get out and Vote" Campaign: Lumnije Decani, Women Wellness Centre - Peja, gave an overview of what the center did in Peja municipality for this campaign.
- "Women Propose" Campaign: Violeta Selimi, Campaign Coordinator, discussed the project. Please see page 4 for more information.
- "Women to Women Support Groups": Laura Ruhi, Campaign Coordinator briefed participants on project activities. Participants questioned if the statistic that only 12% of Kosovar mothers breastfeed their children is valid. A UNICEF representative was also present, and he addressed some of the issues raised by participants.
- Joint workshop with Macedonian Women NGOs Network: Marte Prekpalaj - Motrat Qiriaz, briefed participants about this meeting. Please see page one for more information.
- Workshop in Sarajevo on Resolution 1325: Igballe Rogova - KWN. Please read more about it on page 2.
- "KWN Annual meeting": Delina Fico, KWN Board member, explained that preparations for the annual KWN membership meeting had started. She asked KWN members to send 3 nominations for new Board members. Participants also chose a date for the meeting: December 4.
- KWN members provided information about their individual activities. Please contact KWN for more information.

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KWN Concludes Women Propose Campaign

During the "Women Propose" campaign, Municipal Gender Officers supported local coordinators by organizing meetings between voters and women candidates. Knowing that Municipal Gender Officers can support women representatives in the Parliament, KWN organized a meeting to discuss the work finished



Naxhije Buçinca expresses KWN's gratitude to the most successful local coordinators

during the campaign's first and the second phase as well as possible ways to cooperate in the future. The meeting was held on December 22nd in Hotel Iliria.

Participants gave positive feedback for the campaign. They said that both phases were well organized and well planned. The first phase sparked women's interest in raising issues that they face within their municipalities. The second phase made it possible for women and men voters to meet with women candidates to discuss what role women should have in parliament. For the third phase, participants met with women parliamentarians to create a joint action plan. Together, KWN, Municipal Gender Officers and women parliamentarians planned the best way to interact.

At the end of the meeting, KWN expressed its gratitude to the three local campaign coordinators for a job well-done and to the journalist and camerawoman from TV 21 who did an excellent job during the campaign's first two phases.

Since it started in 2003, the campaign has shown that women are very eager to participate in Kosovo's political life. They only need the opportunity, support and space, which this campaign provided.

This campaign was financially supported by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Swiss Corporation and Development Office, with technical assistance of STAR Network of World Learning and UNIFEM.

Network Member Informs Advocacy through Research

The Kosovar Gender Studies Center in Prishtina is finalizing research that KWN members and partners may find useful for planning their activities, informing their advocacy efforts and awareness-raising.

First, *How Do Women Vote?* will be released in April. It analyzes women's voting patterns, preferences for political leaders and level of political awareness; how their voting behavior is influenced; and what women want from politics. It segregates data according to age, geographic area, education, employment and marital status.

"We expect to collaborate with the network" said Luljeta Vuniqi, the center's Director. "The findings can be used for the Women Propose Campaign - to mobilize women to vote in the upcoming local elections and to support women in politics."

Second, *Kosovar Women in Civil Society, 1980 - 2004* will document how women's civil society groups affected political, economic and social chan-

ges in Kosovo. The research will examine women's experiences, challenges, achievements and methods. Third, project on the role of women in politics will be started in March. The final published books will be used to educate young Kosovars, university students and the international community as to the role that women have played in Kosovo over the last 25 years.

In addition to research, the center is working with students to advocate for a policy against sexual harassment at Prishtina University. It has also published an updated Kosovar Women's NGOs Directory; a multi-disciplinary Gender Reader in Albanian with gender studies and feminist theory articles; and an annotated bibliography of all literature focusing on women's issues in Kosovo from 1999 - 2004.

The center also hosts a library and resource center that is open to KWN members, free of charge. The library includes Albanian, Serbian and English texts on existing gender legis-

lation, gender-related research in Kosovo, other Kosovar statistics, feminist theory, NGO contact information and much more.

The Kosovar Gender Studies Center reopened its doors in December 2004 with a new vision "to mainstream gender in all sectors of Kosovar society by increasing gender awareness, increasing focus on gender issues in Kosovo's educational system, developing gender studies and ensuring the inclusion of gender sensitive policies in all sectors of life."

Kosovo Foundation for an Open Society, Open Society Institute Network Women's Program and Kvinna Till Kvinna have made the center's activities possible.



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How can
we Sleep?

Shqipe Malushi, Executive Director of Albanian American Women's Association Motrat Qiriaz, addressed the UN Security Council during an area meeting with NGOs on "Women, Peace and Security" on October 21 in New York. Please see her speech inserted within this issue of Kosovar Women's Voice.