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spring 2005

Kosovar

Women's Voice

77

In April, the officially registered membership of Kosova Women's Network (KWN) reached 77 members. This makes KWN the biggest active network of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) not only

in Kosova, but in the entire region.

KWN's members represent diverse communities, geographic regions and target areas. Individually, they are working on issues, such as health; environmental protection; education; law; anti-trafficking of women; humanitarian aid; children and youth; women's rights; against violence against women; art and culture; conflict resolution; economic de-

velopment and job creation; and special needs services.

As a network, they have united to advocate for the passage gender equality mechanisms at the central level, raise the public's awareness of rights under this legislation, speak out against violence against women and much more.

For more information about KWN's members, please visit the KWN website: www.womensnetwork.org.

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announcements

Know Your Rights Concert in Prishtina.....**November 25**

KWN Bimonthly Meeting.....
.....**HCIC, 11:00, June 6**



KWN members at their last coordination meeting.

KWN Meets with the Prime Minister

April 6, Prishtina. The KWN Board and Director met with Prime Minister Bajram Kosumi. They discussed the government's implementation of the National Action Plan for Gender Equality, the Prime Minister's Office for Gender Equality and women's involvement in negotiating Kosovo's final political status.

KWN representatives began the meeting by reminding the Prime Minister that they were monitoring the government's steps towards implementing the National Action Plan for Gender Equality in Kosova. The plan, which the government adopted in June 2004, describes steps that the government must take on issues, such as education, health, the economy, culture, violence against women, and political in-

volvement. In addition to increasing gender equality in Kosova, the plan also contributes to the standards that Kosova must meet in order for its political status to be discussed. Therefore, KWN representative stressed how the government's commitment to implementing the plan directly relates to fulfilling standards.

The second item discussed at the meeting also relates to standards. One action the government must take towards standards is to implement the gender law. This law requires the government to establish an Office for Gender Equality within the Office of the Prime Minister. At this meeting, the KWN delegation suggested that the government establish this office as an executive agency within the

Prime Minister's Office and that the leading staff members be civil servants as opposed to political party representatives. In May the government will decide how the office will be established and who will lead the office.

Third, talks regarding Kosovo's future political status are set to begin in fall 2005. There has been discussion about the need to establish a forum to negotiate Kosovo's final political status. According to United Nations Security Council resolution 1325, women should be involved in this delegation. In their meeting with the Prime Minister, the KWN delegation emphasized that women must be present on this council, so that all of Kosova will be represented in the final status talks.

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KOSOVA WOMENS
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February KWN Meeting Notes

- An article in "Lajmi" newspaper slandered the work of the "Safe House" in Gjakova without evidence. "Lajmi" had requested an interview eight times, but the "Safe House" did not grant interviews to protect the anonymity of the safe house and women sheltered there. The newspaper published an article anyway. KWN and its partners reacted by sending a letter to all media and the Media Commissioner. "Lajmi" publicly apologized. Thanks to local and international organizations for showing their support and signing the letter.
- "Women with Disabilities" from Prizren wanted to organize an event for March 8th, but needed €200. KWN members showed their solidarity by making donations during the meeting.
- "Women Propose" seeks to link elected women representatives and citizens. The campaign reached more than 1,000 participants.
- The Kosovar Gender Studies Center invited members to use the recently launched *Directory of Women's NGOs in Kosovo, Annotated Bibliography on the Women's Movement in Kosovo*, and *Gender Studies Reader in Albanian*.
- The Law on Urban Planning for Kosovo was approved in September 2003. According to the law, municipalities must prepare plans in the next few months. To ensure that citizens participate in this process, UN HABITAT plans to organize meetings with NGOs in ten municipalities.
- Mental Disability Rights International is monitoring the situation of persons with limited mental abilities. Article 20 of the Family Law discriminates against persons with limited mental abilities by not allowing them to marry, and MDRI has requested that this article be changed.

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Has Resolution 1325 Been Implemented?

KWN Prepares International Conference on Resolution 1325 in Kosova

With support from UNIFEM, KWN and Zene Zenama (Women to Women) Sarajevo are writing a report on the degree to which United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security (SCR1325) has been implemented in Kosova and Bosnia. In October, the report will be presented to the Security Council on the fifth anniversary since the resolution passed.

SCR1325, adopted in 2000, made gender and women's rights a priority for all efforts focused on conflict prevention and resolution, peace-building, peace-keeping and rehabilitation.

Two years ago, the idea originated to organize a network of women from the region to work on implementing SCR1325. The belief was that by working together, women

could have a stronger voice in implementing SCR1325. The first meeting was organized in Prishtina in 2004, with support from UNIFEM.

UNIFEM sees [the] importance in facilitating local efforts to monitor current progress and to develop concrete plans to advance the resolution's full implementation," Osnat Lubrani, Regional Programme Director of UNIFEM for Central and Eastern Europe, said in an official letter. In March 2006, KWN will organize an international conference in Kosova to discuss how women in the region have worked on implementing SCR1325. Kosovar women will invite other women from post-conflict countries around the world. Kosovar and Bosnian women will provide information about SCR1325, lessons learned from their experience and advice as to how women from other post-conflict countries could begin working to implement the resolution immediately. The women who attend the conference will leave with a draft workplan for implementing SCR1325 in their own countries.



KWN, Zene Zenama, Antico and UNIFEM discuss the report on progress made towards implementing SCR1325. Angela McKay moderates the discussion.

KWL Demands: Involve Women in Status Talks

The Kosova Women's Lobby (KWL) wrote a letter to the government and parliament demanding that women take part in negotiations on Kosova's final

political status, set to begin in fall 2005 (please see the letter below).

The Prime Minister replied that the cabinet and ministers are aware of the importance of co-

operating and consulting with civil society actors, especially to gain from their previous experiences. He promised that the Kosovar government would consult and work closely with KWL in discussions regarding Kosova's independence.

"Your suggestions are always welcome," he said in a letter to KWL.

KWL previously sent a letter to the government and UNMIK, requesting to be part of the Belgrade-Prishtina dialogues. While some women have been involved in the process so far, KWL is requesting that the government further involve and consult with women.

KWL is a group of women leaders in politics, civil society and the private sector that engage in and support constructive critical thinking, as well as strategic and progressive actions on important issues of political, social and economic development in Kosovo, in particular those of interest to women. Membership in KWL is on an individual basis, and the members do not officially represent the institutions where they work.

Dear Sir,

We recently learned about your initiative to establish a forum responsible for negotiating Kosova's final status. We support this initiative and we consider it a very important step towards involving all key political actors in making decisions on a highly important issue for all of us.

The solution of Kosova's status is a vital issue for all Kosovars and will strongly affect the political, economical and social advancement of our country. Women, who comprise half of Kosova's population, are interested and have the right to fully and actively participate in the negotiations process on final status. Furthermore, women have always been and still are very important actors in all aspects of Kosova's efforts for freedom and independence, especially during the last fifteen years. Thus, women can and should bring their ideas, experience and their energy into this very important process of decision making for our common future. At the same time, the involvement of women in talks for the final solution for peace is a basic provision of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, which is also applicable in Kosova.

For these reasons, the Kosova Women's Lobby requests that you and the political institutions that will decide on the principles and the concrete mechanisms for establishing the forum on the status talks, create opportunities for and ensure the equal and effective involvement of women within these structures.

We appreciate highly your continuous support for the initiatives of Kosovar civil society and we count on your energetic support for ensuring the equal participation of women in the critical process for deciding the final status of Kosova.

Kosova Women's Lobby welcomes a meeting or a working dinner with you where we could further discuss the concrete steps for involving women in this process.

Jeto Jetën Says, "Allow us, please."

KWN member organization "Jeto Jetën" (Live your Life), an association of women with limited abilities, has started an advocacy project called "We too, have a right in decision-making." They are advocating for the Ministry of Transport and Post-Telecommunication to change the policy (Administrative Regulation 2002/G-3) on licensing driving schools in Kosovo. Jeto Jetën has suggested that the ministry add a clause that requires driving schools to have at least one specialized vehicle that people with limited physical abilities can drive. The absence of this clause in the current regulation deprives persons with limited physical abilities of the right to appropriate vehicle training and driver examinations.

According to Jeto Jetën, ap-

proximately 140,000 people with limited abilities live in Kosovo. They all must deal with the absence of adequate laws and regulations. They also face many obstacles in realizing basic human rights.

Jeto Jetën was formed in February 2001. It aims to empower and support the independence of women with limited abilities.

The Foundation for Democratic Initiatives financed this project through the Kosovo NGO Advocacy Project, which is supported by East-West Management Institute and the American people through USAID.



Waiting at the base of the steps to the Decan Municipal building - in Kosova, approximately 140,000 people with limited abilities face obstacles in realizing basic human rights.

Thousands of Women Gather for Beijing +10

March 4, New York. The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) reaffirmed the Beijing Platform for Action following a two-week conference that drew thousands of representatives of governmental and non-governmental organizations from around the world. The outcome of the Ten-Year Review and Appraisal will be presented to the 60th session of the General Assembly and will inform the millennium review in September.

The Kosova delegation included: Luljeta Vuniqi, Igballe Rogova, Sevdie Ahmeti and Femije Gashi from the Prime Minister's Office for Gender Equality.

During the event, KWN representative Igballe Rogova also spoke at four side events. First, Urgent Action Fund launched its report,

written by Jane Barry, entitled "Rising Up in Response: Women's Rights Activism in Conflict" at a NGO side event and at the United Kingdom Mission to the United Nations, an event attended by delegates representing six countries in the United Nations. At both events, Igballe Rogova spoke about how international organizations treat women and local activists. She also presented Kosovars' experience implementing Resolution 1325, which calls for the involvement of women in peace-building activities.

Second, the Open Society Institute held an event entitled "Advocacy Efforts for Beijing +10 Countries in Post-socialist Transition."

Third, Women Waging Peace organized a discussion in which Ambassador Anwarul K. Chowdhury spoke. He said how impressed he was with Kosovar women. He told about his



Ambassador Chowdhury

experience in Kosova in 2001 as the head of a UN Security Council delegation. At that time, the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) said that the Security Council delegation did not have time to meet with Kosovar women, but he demanded a meeting. Ambassador Chowdhury, who was very involved in pushing for the passage of Resolution 1325, said he was impressed to find Kosovar women already using the resolution.

Igballe Rogova applauded Ambassador Chowdhury, not only for advocating for the approval of this resolution, but also for his dedication to seeing it implemented, as demonstrated by his consultations with women in Kosova.



Women from post-socialist countries speak about their experience at an Open Society Institute event in New York.

April KWN Meeting Notes

- The Head of the Division for Gender Equality at the Prime Minister's Office for Good Governance, Equality Opportunities, Human Rights and Gender Equality reported on Kosovar women's meeting with the Special Representative to the Secretary General. In the meeting, they discussed the establishment of an Office for Gender Equality.
- The second phase of the UNIFEM-funded "Know Your Rights" campaign began in March with performances in 20 municipalities. The campaign will conclude on November 25 with a huge concert featuring famous artists from the region.
- "Reforma," a NGO coalition that advocated for changes to the electorate system in 2004, reunited. KWN, KIPRED and the Council for Protection of Human Rights and Freedoms are drafting a two-year action plan with technical support from the National Democratic Institute and UNIFEM. They will present the plan at a press conference.
- The results from KWN members' annual evaluations were presented. Members voted to continue with bimonthly meetings in Prishtina.
- An Albanian women's NGO has started in Croatia with support from Be Active Be Empowered (B.A.B.E) in Croatia. KWN sent a letter of support.
- A Gender Unit was established within the Ombudsperson's Office.
- "Women with Disabilities" from Prizren thanked KWN for the money they donated at the last meeting for the NGO's March 8th event.
- The Kosovar Gender Studies Center asked NGOs to support their research on the history of Kosovar women in civil society.
- Mental Disability Rights International announced the establishment of a support group for mentally challenged people in Prizren and asked KWN members to start similar support groups in their municipalities.

Kosova Women's Network

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Motrat Qiriazhi New York Awards Kosovars

During the Beijing +10 Conference in New York, Motrat Qiriazhi, an Albanian American women's association, organized an event for women to celebrate March 8th, International Women's Day. During the event, they presented letters of appreciation to different activists from around the world, including Sevdie Ahmeti and Igballe Rogova. The ceremony was followed by a dance celebration.

"Kosovar Women's Voice" was written by Elita Gota with editing and design by Nicole Farnsworth.

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Kosovar "Women's Voice" Released

April 7, Grand Hotel, Prishtina. The study, "Women's Voice" was launched on International Health Day. The full report is available on KWN website: www.womensnetwork.org.

Executive Summary

As Kosovan society is pushed and pulled along the difficult and bumpy road of transformation, what is women's role in the process? Are they allowed to lead or forced to follow? Are they empowered to make their own decisions about the course of their life and the lives of their families? Do they have equal access to education, work opportunities and health services to help them and their families get the most out of life?

The overall objective of the study was to find out from women themselves, women of all ages, all ethnicities and all walks of life, what are their major concerns, and in what aspects do they feel they are treated unequally or that their rights are not being respected. The study is particularly unique because it asks a broad cross-section of ordinary Kosovan women what they think. In doing so, it aims to complement and support the wide ranging work towards achieving gender equality already underway in Kosovo. More specifically, by compiling, comparing and analyzing women's views, this report aims to reinforce advocacy efforts associated with the Kosovo Action Plan

for the Achievement of Gender Equality, which was finalized and approved in recent months by a broad range of government and civil society actors.

Recognizing that civil society organizations are key driving forces of the substantial ongoing work on gender in Kosovo, the first step in this undertaking was to invite local women's NGOs to join the study so that they could provide advice and guidance on the approach, the research tools and interpreting the findings. Representatives of the Kosovo Women's Network, the Kosovo Women's Initiative, the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Women's Network and the Serbian Women's Network were all very involved and helpful at the conception stage of the study. The Kosovo Women's Network, in particular, has played a substantial role guiding the development of the survey questionnaire, the focus group and in-depth interview discussion guides and the development of this report. Index Kosova, a joint venture with BBSS Gallup International and a local research firm, were commissioned to develop the research instruments and conduct the data gathering and analysis for the study.

This report also aims to support the government and the people of Kosovo in working towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs are eight development goals that 189 countries have agreed to work towards by 2015. Promoting gender equality and empowering women is the third of these eight goals, which represents its significance in terms of contributing to the overall goal of improving livelihoods for all.

The methodological approach for the study was to conduct a desk review of relevant literature in March/April 2004, a quantitative survey using a questionnaire in April/May 2004 and qualitative analysis through fo-

cus groups and in-depth interviews in July/August 2004.

Recommendations for Role and Status

- Integrate a gender perspective into policies relating to all spheres of society.
- Use a gender requirement and if necessary other positive actions to increase the participation of women in decision-making positions.
- Modify the regular workday to designate the hours between 8am and 4pm as regular working hours.
- Empower women in all roles and at all levels in political parties.
- Increase the number of women in politics and in government.

Recommendations for Education and Opportunities

- Create an education and social environment that is free of gender-based stereotypes and discrimination, and that promotes equal access to education.
- Conduct public awareness activities especially targeted to primary school girls and their parents.
- Organize and subsidize transportation for rural children to ensure they can safely reach the nearest secondary school.
- Update the current curricula to meet the needs of the local job market and provide students, girls in particular, with counseling on their employment options.
- Increase women's access to credit, loans and scholarships.

Recommendations for Health

- Ensure equal access to health-care and social welfare services.
- Promote public education and research on health issues relating to women.
- Expand the "friendly center" concept and enforce regulations to guarantee women anonymity in their discussions with health-care professionals.
- Create incentives to keep qualified healthcare professionals in the public sector.
- Continuous development of health-care professionals in order to improve quality of health care for women.
- Setting and formulating standards in quality improvement in all levels of health care.
- Accreditation and certification of health facilities that providing care of good quality.
- Develop Reproductive Health Strategy.
- Develop national programs for routine screening of Breast and Cervical Cancer.

