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## announcements

KWN Members  
Meeting  
**September 7**  
**11:00 am**



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

By *Flaka Surroi*

## A Fighter for Equality

I had first met him 15 years ago. Then, he had already been chained to his wheelchair for 15 years, after surviving a serious traffic accident. As he described it, this was the moment when his whole life was broken – a successful engineering career, the perspective of a youngster still not thirty years old, and all of his dreams and plans were shattered at the moment when he was told that he would no longer be able to walk.

Those that knew him longer than myself spoke with great admiration on how he had managed to bounce back from this heavy depression, caused by an instant of de-concentration during driving. I was told how he, aided by his close relatives, had replaced all home appliances so that he could fetch them himself, while he could manipulate his wheelchair with movements that resemble those of an artist. He learned how to cook, clean and wash – without asking for help from others. He rightfully said: "If I am unable to walk, as long as my brain continues to function, I can't say that I'm unable to do everything else." And it was from him that I learned that people that had the bad fortune of being unable to move their limbs, whether caused by accident of disease, were not disabled; they were persons with limited abilities.

The day I met him, before going to the field together, he came to the meeting point with his red "Mazda." He parked the car with the experience of a seasoned driver. He opened the door, brought out the wheelchair from the back seat and placed it in front of his

door so that he could carry his body to it. He carried his legs and placed them in the bottom wheelchair stand, he displaced himself from the vehicle in order to lock the door. He turned towards us, greeted us all with his beautiful tenor and a smile that eliminated the roughness of his heavy mustache that had already started to show a slight grizzle. Probably accustomed to being asked, he started to tell us that he had decided to overcome his fear by starting to drive again. "I knew that if I managed to treat this trauma, I would be able to achieve any other objective that I impose on myself. When I learned how to drive using my hands only, I understood that, with little support, I would be able to confront all barriers presented by life. And who would know better than people like myself how difficult these barriers can sometimes be."

He had established the Paraplegic Association and opened a small office in "Dardania." He had two or three friends that helped him in his endeavors to support those forgotten by the society. He had the fortune of meeting the leaders of "Nëna Terezë" association, in special with the heads of this association's Health Care Services. If nothing, now there was someone to open his door and ask how he felt. It was this contact that initiated our common field visit that day. Since he couldn't speak English, he communicated with potential donors through a translator. But he had many advantages in communication – his plea for help



was clearly elaborated by presenting it in three main points. He was asking for help in establishing a data-base of all persons with disabilities, regardless of the nature; in structuring regional centers that would provide these persons with necessary care; and, at the same time, in compiling a list of basic equipment necessary for these persons to be as independent as he was.

In his lonely efforts, he had managed to identify some of those that needed support. With help from his friends, he would occasionally provide a wheelchair and take it along in his field visits. On that day, he had brought one along. "Just in case, we'll take it along," he said. We travelled to a village close to Skenderaj. He asked me to hang on to the wheelchair tightly, while he carried his body to it from the jeep. Furthermore, he honored me by allowing me to push the wheelchair uphill – he would usually refuse help also because he had to exercise his arms and hands, to protect them from muscular atrophy. It was the same reason

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## Humanitarian Action "Follow Your Heart" Donates a Kitchen to the Open Door

The Open Door women's center in Prishtina has accepted a donation from the Food Industry Podravka in Koprivnica, Croatia, on 31 March 2009.

This donation is based on Podravka's humanitarian campaign "Follow Your Heart," organized between 15 December 2008 and 15 January 2009, through the web-page coolarinika.com. Mr. David Habijan, the Marketing Director for Podravka Kosovo, gave the valuable kitchen appliances to the head of the organization, Belgjyza Muharemi.

Along with the donation to Open Door in Prishtina, Podravka donated kitchen appliances to the Safe House in Vukovar, Croatia; SOS children's village in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina; Safety Oasis, in Kragujevac, Serbia; the children's home 'Mladost' in Montenegro; and Crisis Center 'Nadez', in Skopje, Macedonia.

Through these activities, Coolarinika added approximately 1,500 recipes, around 12,500 photographs and over 56,000 comments and 18,000 writings to this forum. Thus, Coolarinika contributed to the fulfillment of the action's purpose – to make donations where they are needed most. All of these activities have contributed to Coolarinika's stated end-objective of collecting 100,000 hearts.

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why he strongly objected to motor-aided wheelchairs, except in cases where there was no alternative. On our journey uphill, we came close to a house. Some four or five children were playing in the garden. One girl, then twelve years old, was sitting by the window. Her face radiated sorrow. Some time had passed since she started to lose power in her legs, making it impossible for her to go to school every day. She was the best in class, and now she was losing her only remaining joy.

He noticed her first. He asked me not to help him any more. Pushing on the wheels, he approached the window and started to talk with the little girl. While his laughter became more frequent the girl's face got a new glow, her eyes were glaring and she kept her hidden joy in the shadow of her teardrops. The children stopped playing and two of them went into the house. Slowly, the girl started to move away from the window, while he turned towards me asked me to bring from our car the wheelchair we had brought along "just in case." The girl came out of the house on the shoulders of her brothers and approached him, while he had already placed the wheelchair out and was demonstrating how it was fixed and stabilized. "Now you have no reason to

miss school any longer," he said. Amazed, the girl sat on the chair, turned towards him and asked him: "Is this real, sir? Is this really a gift to me?"

Halit Ferizi was serious. The girl continued her education, thanks to her friends that helped her move through the rough terrain in the wheelchair he had given her. But the wheelchair was not the most valuable thing. The most valuable thing was Halit – a symbol of hope. Of possibility. The example that he was showing and the message he was passing to people with special needs was that they should not give up. Haliti, whom mastered English within two years from this visit. Halit, with his huge heart, emotional power, open mind, could overcome all barriers, break of taboos...

Halit's early death represents

the loss of a great man that will have the most impact on the people he worked with for decades, because it was Halit - with his work and support from his associates - that offered to persons with disabilities what institutions that are mandated couldn't. The negligence, also reflected in yesterday's commemoration, held without the presence of institutional representatives, represents an offense undeserved by either Halit nor persons with limited abilities. And it is an offense that can't be washed away by any delayed expression of appreciation.

Fortunately, there were many of those that, instead of appreciation, brought along their sincere feelings in honoring the memory of Halit Ferizi, a genuine fighter for equality.



## KWN Attends International Women's Colloquium

On March 7th-8th, KWN Board member and Executive Director of the Gender Training and Research Center, Arjeta Rexhaj, attended the International Colloquium on Women's Empowerment, Leadership Development, International Peace and Security in Monrovia, Liberia led by Presidents Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia and Tarja Halonen of Finland. The colloquium brought hundreds of activists and governmental offi-

cialists from all over the world together to discuss the empowerment of women in the political, economic and social arenas.

Activists gathered to share their experiences and learn from those of others on topics such as women's role in leadership, gender-based violence, the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, Millennium Development Goal #3 on promoting gender equality and empowering women, the effect of the global economic crisis on

women, women's sexual and reproductive status, climate change and migration.

The event culminated in the adoption of the Monrovia Declaration on March 8, the UN-designated International Day for Women. The Colloquium also established a mechanism for the sustainability of its work in creating the Angie Brooks International Center on Women's Empowerment, Leadership Development, International Peace and Security.

## Security Begins at Home – Impacting the Law

In March 2008, the government of Kosovo adopted the Kosovo Program for Gender Equality (2008-2013). The program, which was drafted by the Agency for Gender Equality (AGE), called for the creation of legal mechanisms necessary for the protection against domestic violence and violence against women. In preparation for drafting the Law on Domestic Violence, the AGE and Kosovo Women's Network worked together, with the support of the UNDP's project, Women's Safety and Security Initiative (WSSI), to conduct comprehensive research on domestic violence. The resulting research was published in the report *Safety Begins at Home: Research to Inform the First National Strategy and Action Plan against Domestic Violence in Kosovo*. The report made a startling observation: 46.4% of all women responding to its survey claimed to have experienced violence in their own homes.

With the creation of this necessary policy framework and analysis, the drafting of the Law on Domestic Violence (LDV) was entered in the government's annual legislative strategy. The inter-ministerial working group was formed in

March 2009 and prepared the first draft of the LDV. The Governmental Working Group was then formed, consisting of representatives of all relevant governmental institutions (ministries and agencies), civil society (NGOs and safe-houses), members of the judiciary (judges, prosecutors), and international agencies (EULEX, OSCE, UNIFEM). This working group of 20 members convened in four sessions, while two additional sessions were also organized with the participation of over 30 representatives of civil society, governmental and non-governmental organizations. The draft law was commented and drafted over a period of four months and is currently being commented on by the Agency for European Integration. With the assistance of the US Department of Justice ICITAP, the English version of the LDV also underwent editing and commentary. WSSI supported the entire process in a technical and advisory role, including support through an expert consultant. Overall, the drafting of the LDV came to be evaluated as a most participatory process, and this contributing to assurances of democratic practices in legisla-

tive reform.

In July through October 2009, UNDP - WSSI will also support a qualitative study on the Response of Justice Providers to Domestic Violence with the aim of supporting the Kosovo government and policy-makers in the preparation and implementation of the forthcoming mechanisms (National Action Plan against Domestic Violence and LDV). This research will also aid civil society actors in better understanding the current judicial environment in Kosovo with regards to domestic violence, including their participation in the civil-society monitoring and verification network that will be supported by UNDP - WSSI. These three documents and mechanisms will provide an important framework for measuring the success and obstacles of institutions and civil society to address broader issues of domestic violence. UNDP - WSSI will also continue its support of safe houses throughout Kosovo and the development of long-term, durable monitoring and verification structures rooted in Kosovo civil society. The latter will be particularly relevant towards the implementation of the LDV, including the mandates and responsibilities it envisions.

## "Voter's Voice" Publishes its Second Report

On 17 April, KWN published the last report for the "Voter's Voice" project, at the Grand Hotel Prishtina. In the presence of journalists, the event was opened by the United Kingdom Ambassador in Kosovo, who thanked and congratulated KWN for the work undertaken. The data from this report was made public by Ms. Igballe Rogova, KWN Executive Director. The project found that the main concerns of Kosovo citizens with voting rights are: electricity reductions, unpaved roads, corruption, unemployment, water reductions, poverty, inadequate water supply systems, inadequate health care services and environmental pollution. The

report recorded 1052 telephone calls at the toll-free number at citizens' service (0800 201 401), complaints received through the email address zerivotuesve@gmail.com, and meetings conducted in eight Kosovo municipalities.

To illustrate the concerns expressed with regards to inadequate health care services, one citizen says: "the health care function does not function properly, since civil servants and physicians are benefiting from this business." The citizen continues, "I know from personal experience that the management of Neurology Clinic sends their hospital patients to their private clinics,

where they are paid 35 euros from each visitor."

The report includes complaints from citizens from 28 municipalities, out of the overall number of 35 municipalities of Kosovo. The complaints are divided by municipality, similar to the recommendations for the respective municipalities, based on the complaints submitted by the relevant municipality citizens.

The report was also forwarded to the Prime Minister, and all Members of Parliament, ministry heads, Mayors, and Embassies and liaison offices in Kosovo.

For additional information on the "Voter's Voice" report, please visit [www.womensnetwork.org](http://www.womensnetwork.org).

## Kosovo Serb Women's Network has been Formed

Activists for Serbian women's rights in Kosovo have concluded that the work of Serbian NGOs fail to incorporate the voices of women and girls from Serb environments that deem integration and a better life in Kosovo a necessity. They have found that women from the Serb community belong to a rather sensitive group and are subjugated to play a very passive role in the process of transition and democratization. Their numerous attempts to bring about the inclusion women in further processes remained unsuccessful.

In line with its experiences, and aiming to entice their inclusion in the overall developments of the new Kosovo reality, fifteen NGOs have banded together to create a common network, in partnership and cooperation with UNIFEM. As a result of a year-long cooperation between Serbian NGOs, the Kosovo Serb Women's Network has been established as an integral part of the Kosovo Women's Network.

This past May, the Kosovo Serb Women's Network initiated the registration process, prepared all necessary documentation, and agreed on the functioning structure of the network and its mission, vision, and strategic goals for 2009.

The Kosovo Serb Women's Network mission is to raise awareness on women's rights, initiate full application of legal remedies that protect women's rights, spread culture of peace, tolerance, dialogue, cooperation and agreement in solving problems it faces. The network will begin its work by strengthening its organizational capacity and creating the mechanisms of a functional network.

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was written and designed by  
Alba Loxha,  
with assistance from  
Tiffany Ommundsen.*

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## KWN Publishes Second Edition of Report Monitoring the Implementation of UNSCR 1325

KWN has released the second edition of "Monitoring Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 in Kosova" on 12 June 2009. The report focuses on issues of women, peace and security since the release of the first edition in 2007. It is important to note that, after Kosova's declaration of independence on February 17, 2008, the government of Kosova rather than UNMIK has become responsible for the implementation of UNSCR 1325.

The second edition of "Monitoring Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 in Kosova" provides a comprehensive analysis of the implementation of the resolution and is divided into two overarching sections.

The first section of the report provides an overview of the institutions in Kosova that are meant to actually carry out the implementation of the re-

solution. This includes international organizations such as NATO's Kosovo Force (KFOR), the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), the European Union Rule of Law Mission (EULEX), the International Civilian Police (CIVPOL), the Organization for Security in Europe (OSCE), and the UN Agencies for Development (UNDP), Women (UNIFEM), Children (UNICEF) and Refugees (UNHCR). Local institutions, including the government of Kosova, the Assembly of Kosova, the Agency for Gender Equality (AGE), the Kosova Police, the Kosova judicial system and legal code, and civil society in Kosova are also discussed.

The second section of the report provides a critical analysis of the progress of implementing three key areas of Resolution 1325 in Kosova. They are: the inclusion of women in all decision-making processes, the inclusion of a gender perspective in training procedures

for police and military units, and the protection of women's human rights in the areas of education, the economy and freedom from violence. The protection of the rights of women members of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian minority groups in Kosova is also addressed.

The drafting and publication of the second edition of "Monitoring Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 in Kosova" as well as its findings speak to the continued importance of advocating for the inclusion of women's voices in the arena of peace and security.

The report is dedicated to the memory of Dr. Lynne Alice, the lawyer, professor and human rights activist who authored the first edition of the report in conjunction with KWN. The report is available on the KWN website: [www.womensnetwork.org](http://www.womensnetwork.org).

## Norma on the Law of Gender Equality and Inheritance Rights of Women

KWN member organization and lawyers association Norma has concluded its project evaluating the implementation of the Law on Gender Equality with regards to the inheritance rights of women.

Norma began its project in December 2008 and carried out activities in all five districts of Kosova throughout the winter and spring of 2009. Norma lawyers conducted monitoring and research activities, visiting municipal courts and registry offices to gather documentation and evidence. Furthermore, Norma lawyers met with and interviewed judges presiding over inheritance cases. These interviews, combined with a thorough review of court records, produced data concerning the gender breakdown of such cases, including who is legally entitled to receive an inheritance and who

actually received the inheritance.

In their findings, Norma reported that the law regarding inheritance claims has been changed, so that registry offices are no longer required to inform the court of a death in order for inheritance proceedings to commence. As the law no longer requires this, the courts must now rely on the information provided by the claimants who initiated the proceedings.

Overall, Norma found that the legal system itself protects inheritance rights of all, regardless of gender. However, the organization ultimately concluded that gender inequality within inheritance exists. While the law protects the inheritance rights of women, tradition often maintains the gender disparity.

Norma conclude its project by holding a roundtable discus-

sion involving representatives of municipal courts, officials from all five districts of Kosova, and representatives of officials from the Royal Netherlands Embassy, Kosovo Agency for Gender Equality, Kosovo Women's Network, Centre for Gender Studies, Gender Training Centre, Statistical Office of Kosovo, UNIFEM, Law Faculty of Prishtina University, Office for Gender Equality, and the Kosovo Assembly's Commission For Gender Equality. At the roundtable, Norma offered its policy recommendations, including requiring judges to ensure that all those who are legally entitled to an inheritance are present at the legal proceedings, decreasing the cost of filing inheritance claims in court and advocacy for the registering of property under the names of the person that actually holds rights to said property.