



Kosovar

# Women's Voice

Supporting, protecting, and promoting the rights  
and interests of women and girls in Kosovo

October 2012



Hundreds "Walk for Healing," raising awareness about breast cancer and demanding improved institutional response, organized by KWN member Kosova Center for Fighting Breast Cancer "Jeta/Vita" on 5 October.

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## KWN Launches New Women's Fund, Awards First Grants

Shifting aid priorities and shrinking budgets have forced many donors in Kosovo to close their grant programs or decrease funding for non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Others have funds available, but have difficult application procedures and/or only give sizeable grants (€50-100,000). Writing a proposal to obtain funds from the European Commission, one of the primary donors, is like "writing a master's thesis," women's rights activists complain.

Thus, women's groups with limited full-time human resources and English language skills face difficulties obtaining funding for their important initiatives towards gender equality and furthering women's rights. This issue was brought to the attention of the Kosova Women's Network (KWN) by its member organizations.

Therefore, KWN in close consultation with its 100 diverse members decided to establish a Kosovo Women's Fund. The Fund, generously supported by Kvinna till Kvinna, provides small grants (up to €1,000) for women's organizations that lack access to other sources of funding and who seek to further women's rights, particularly among rural, marginalized and/or vulnerable groups. At the same time, KWN is using this grant program to mentor its members in the grant-writing process, furthering their capacities to apply for funding from other donors in the future.

In total, 28 KWN members submitted applications to the Kosovo Women's Fund for its first round of grants. The Grant Review Committee, elected by KWN members, selected 12 grant recipients in October 2012:

1. "Women for Women with Disabilities" from Prizren received €960 for their project: "I love life as I am." The goal is to improve the health of women and the quality of health services available to women.
2. "Active Women of Gjakova" received €630 for "Educating Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Women of Gjakova." They seek to improve the quality of health care available to women.

## Quick Web Links



[Read](#) our new report on the costs of domestic violence in Kosovo!

## Join Us!



[On Nov. 3 in demanding justice and dignity before negotiations!](#)



[On our Facebook pg](#)  
[Our Facebook Group](#)



[Our E-News mailing list](#)

3. "Lepsa Buducnost" from Priluzje received €700 for their project "Stop violence." The goal is to prevent domestic violence and raise awareness about protection mechanisms.
4. "Visionary Women of the XXI Century" from Has received €975 for the "Presentation of NGO work in local media." They aim to sensitize local donors about women's and girls' needs.
5. The "Society for Blind People" from Prizren received €900 for their project: "Let's learn how to cook," which aims to teach blind women how to prepare food.
6. The pensioners' association VITA-JETA from Prishtina received €860 for "protecting women's health during the third period of life." They aim to identify and prevent osteoporosis.
7. "Ato" from Vushtrri received €895 for their "Campaign for women's health education," which aims to inform women and girls in rural areas about reproductive health.
8. The Initiative of Women Association from Dragash received €994 for their project "Breast cancer takes lives." They aim to increase awareness about this illness in rural areas of Dragash.
9. The Association for the Education and Care of the Family in Gjakova received €850 for their project "Reproductive health," which aims to increase the awareness of women and girls about their reproductive health.
10. The Center for Protection of Women and Children in Drenas received €620 for the "Identification of rape cases in Drenas region." They aim to support persons who suffered rape in integrating into society.
11. The Organization of Persons with Muscular Dystrophy from Prizren received €1,000 for their project, "We have rights, too." They aim to support and improve the living conditions of people with limited abilities.
12. Arta from Prishtina received €820 for their project to "Increase organizational capacity." They aim to empower women through traditional handmade products.

Congratulations and success to these KWN members. KWN hopes to support other member organizations in the future. Additional information about KWN grantees and the Kosovo Women's Fund will soon be available on our website: [www.womensnetwork.org](http://www.womensnetwork.org).



KWN and Sevdije Bunjaku, Grant Review Committee member, congratulate 12 KWN member organizations who received the first grants allocated by the Kosovo Women's Fund on October 24.

## Justice for Raped Women Priority for Kosovo Negotiations, Activists Say

At least 96 cases of rape committed during the 1999 war in Kosovo were documented by Human Rights Watch, and other sources estimate that between 10 and 45 thousand women and girls were raped. "Rapes were not rare and isolated acts committed by individuals, but rather were used deliberately as an instrument to terrorize the civilian population, extort money from families, and push people to flee their homes," [Human Rights Watch](#) reported back in 2000. Yet not a single person has been convicted of sexual violence or rape by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). Nor has the Government of Serbia officially recognized and apologized for this crime.

"Justice is needed," said Igballe Rogova, KWN Executive Director, at the [International Women's Summit](#) in Kosovo on 4-6 October, hosted by President of Kosovo Atifete Jahjaga with featured guests including Madeleine Albright. A resulting conference recommendation included: "Confirm that conflict, post-conflict and transitional justice processes and institutions are gender sensitive and that they acknowledge the legal status of rape victims, publicly recognize the magnitude of their experiences, compensate them for their injuries and prosecute the perpetrators."

Women in Kosovo have yet to see any form of justice for the crimes committed in Kosovo during 1998-1999 and the decade prior. War crimes, including rape, do not seem to have been brought to

the table by Kosovo negotiators, who have had their tail between their legs in pleas for international recognition of Kosovo's independence, declared in 2008. If such demands for justice ever were made, this information was not passed on to the public.

Negotiators seem to have ignored the crucial point that "summary executions, mass murders, destruction of civilian property, and other war crimes," documented by [Human Rights Watch](#), among others, occurred in Kosovo. Further, clear violations of Albanians' rights to education and work during the 1990s have had a long-term negative impact on the population's economic wellbeing.

With negotiations heating up, Kosovar women's activists are [calling for](#) negotiators to ensure justice and retribution for the atrocities carried out against Kosovar Albanians, particularly war rape committed against women and girls. KWN is also part of a regional initiative calling for justice for war rape and other crimes committed against women during the 1990s.

### Groundbreaking Research Released on Costs of Domestic Violence in Kosovo

KWN and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Kosovo released in October a report on the costs of domestic violence to the state. *At What Cost? Budgeting for the Implementation of the Legal Framework against Domestic Violence in Kosovo* uses a macro-level gender-responsive budgeting approach to examine the costs of preventing domestic violence, protecting victims, prosecuting perpetrators and supporting their rehabilitation and reintegration, as per the applicable laws and policies in Kosovo. It also analyzes Kosovo's national mid-term and recent annual budgets from a gender perspective. The report is available on KWN's [website](#) in English, Albanian and Serbian.



### Jeta-Vita Involves in Hundreds in March against Breast Cancer

The Kosova Center for Fighting Breast Cancer "Jeta/Vita" organized a "Walk for Healing" in Prishtina on 5 October. Prominent guests included Ulrike Lunacek, member of the European Parliament and rapporteur for Kosovo and various ambassadors to Kosovo. Hundreds of citizens participated in the event in solidarity with women survivors of breast cancer. The walk aimed to raise awareness among women and society about breast cancer, which is believed to be increasing in Kosovo where conditions for early detection and treatment are limited. The same day they launched a petition initiated by Women's Center



Hundreds gather to raise awareness about breast cancer, demand institutional response.

Prehja in Skenderaj that requests that radiation equipment sitting in the basement of the Oncological Institute be used. KWN members continue to collect signatures within their communities, and the petition can be signed by contacting KWN at [info@womensnetwork.org](mailto:info@womensnetwork.org).

The march was among various events organized during October, the International Month against Breast Cancer. Two private clinics also offered free mammograms this month: the American Hospital and Aloka.

The Group of Women Deputies raise awareness about the Month against Breast Cancer through a poster hung on the parliament building.



### Ministry of Health, UNFPA, KWN Strengthen Health Workers' Response to GBV

As part of a UN Kosovo Team effort to increase the capacity and financial sustainability of domestic violence protection mechanisms, KWN is collaborating with UNFPA and the Ministry of Health to build the institutional capacity of the health sector to address gender-based violence. The Ministry of Health Working



KWN experts explain legislation on combatting domestic violence to civil society, police and other institutions in Gjilan on 22-23 March.

Group, including a KWN representative among other experts, has nearly finalized the curricula for training healthcare providers on recognizing signs of and treating persons who have suffered gender-based violence. KWN also has trained NGOs in three pilot municipalities (Gjilan, Gjakova and Dragash) to address and advocate for improved institutional response to gender-based violence.

## Child Marriages Continue in Kosovo

Child marriage continues in Kosovo, but is not a priority for Kosovo's government or institutions. Police and prosecutors do not always enforce the law, which outlaws marriage before age 16 and restricts it until age 18. Instead, they attribute it to "cultural norms". While child marriage has been reported among all ethnic groups, child marriage appears more prevalent among Roma, Ashkali, Egyptians and Gorani (despite insufficient statistical data).

These were among the conclusions of a United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Fact Sheet, released on the first annual marking of the Day of the Girl Child, October 11.

"He beat me up twice. I remember the first time was because I didn't charge his phone," a child spouse told UNFPA. "I didn't know anything about contraceptives or condoms. Otherwise I wouldn't get pregnant, and I wouldn't get married. Nobody taught me that stuff," another child spouse said. Evidence suggested that early marriage can place child spouses, particularly girls and young women, in unequal and sometimes violent home situations.

In some instances, legal gaps may allow for the rights of child spouses to be violated. According to the report, written by independent researcher (and KWN member) Nicole Farnsworth, the Family Law fails to define whether a child becomes an adult following marriage. Nor does it define the members of the "custodian body" to whom courts turn for professional advice on whether children are fit (mature) to wed. Regarding healthcare, parents may be involved in child spouses' reproductive choices, such as how many children couples have. This impacts the rights of child spouses to decide on the timing and spacing of their pregnancies.

Better access to information about reproductive rights, a review of the Family Law, clearer institutional procedures on the issue and ensuring all children complete mandatory primary and lower secondary education are among the recommendations made.

The Fact Sheet will soon be available in English, Albanian and Serbian at: [www.unfpakos.org](http://www.unfpakos.org).

## Sustaining the Movement: KWN Members Seek to Involve Young Women Activists

More than two decades of struggling to make their voices heard has worn on the energies of women activists. Most women activists in Kosovo have been organizing since the 1990s, if not earlier. The leadership of Kosovo's women's movement is aging. A tough but little talked about truth is that the leaders of most women's organizations in Kosovo are more than 45 years old. To discuss this important issue and how to involve more young women in Kosovo's women's movement, KWN held a three-day workshop entitled "Sustaining Women's Organizing in Kosovo" in October 2012 in Durres, Albania.

The event focused both on sustaining activists' activism and involving young women in women's organizing. KWN created a safe space and relaxing environment for discussing these challenging issues. Members discussed how to include young women in the movement; mobilize new activists; build their leadership skills; and further internal organizational democracy. A unique and lively session led by KWN's new member organization, Art Police, involved other members in role playing, demonstrating challenges to democracy within organizations, as well as some solutions.

In the evening, KWN and Kvinna till Kvinna hosted leisure-time activities for activists, including yoga and a party, contributing to the wellbeing and energy of activists.

"I thank you very much for these three wonderful days of work and pleasure," a KWN member said. "If we work together, we can overcome barriers."

## Oral History Initiative Seeks to Document Lives of Kosovo Women

During the summer, KWN launched a new initiative to document the life stories of diverse women in Kosovo. Three interviews were completed with women activists and additional interviews will be conducted. The initiative also involves documenting the lives of women who participated in the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), and supporting them to produce a book about their lives before, during and



Gjejrane Lokaj, KWN member, presents issues faced in preventing early marriage in Dragash municipality at a Day of the Girl Child event, organized by UNFPA.

since their involvement in the KLA. It is especially important to understand the role women played in the 1998-1999 war due to the lack of public recognition for this particular group, and subsequently their lack of visibility in the post-independence nation-building project. Interviews began in August and will continue until all willing women have participated. To date six women have shared their stories. Other women interested in sharing their stories can contact [info@womensnetwork.org](mailto:info@womensnetwork.org).

The ongoing Oral History Initiative has received support from the New School University, particularly Dr. Anna Di Lellio; PhD candidate Virginia Stephens from Goldsmiths University; filmmaker Kaltrina Krasniqi; and many other women activists, researchers and translators who have all volunteered their time for this important initiative.

### **Gender Equality Groups Advocate Women's Rights in Kosovo Municipalities**

Since June 2011, KWN has supported the establishment of Gender Equality Advocacy Groups in eight municipalities. The groups bring together women assembly members, civil society activists, gender equality advocates and other stakeholders to discuss challenges to gender equality and key issues facing women at the municipal level. Groups exist in Dragash, Gjakova, Peja, Mamusha, Novo Brdo, Gjilan, Prizren and Mitrovica.

Among the dozens of meetings organized with these groups in the last few months, the Gender Equality Advocacy Groups in Dragash, Mamusha and Prizren had the opportunity to meet Members of Parliament in Dragash on October 10. Women parliamentarians provided examples from their recent experiences crossing party lines to advocate for issues impacting all women, such as domestic violence, health and war rape. Municipal assembly members could undertake similar initiatives, they said.

To date, Gender Equality Advocacy Groups have undertaken various advocacy initiatives towards gender equality within their municipalities, many of which remain ongoing. For example, in Dragash, the Gender Equality Advocacy Group brought to the attention of officials that insufficient public transportation prevented women from traveling from Dragash to Prizren and other cities for work or education. The municipality has since installed a regular public transportation service.

KWN's work with Gender Equality Advocacy Groups currently receives support from the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and Kvinna till Kvinna. The initiative will continue in future years, towards furthering gender equality in all municipalities in Kosovo.



Dragash Assembly member Luljeta Berisha emphasizes the importance of childcare for women's economic empowerment; and encourages women voters to support women candidates.

### **Dera e Hapur Organizes Eighth Annual Artisans Fair**

Since 2005, KWN member organization Dera e Hapur (Open Door) has organized an annual Artisans and Cultural Fair in celebration of European Heritage Day. On 25-27 September, they organized the eighth such fair in Prishtina, in cooperation with the Ministry for Culture, Youth and Sport and the Mayor of Prishtina, Isa Mustafa. The fair offered 84 participating artisans from Kosovo, Albania and Macedonia, including the members of diverse women's organizations, the opportunity to showcase their products.

"The Artisans Fair is the biggest manifestation of artisans in our country and it offers a unique contribution to the cultural heritage of Kosovo," said Belgjzare Muharremi, Executive Director of Dera e Hapur.

Artisans used various materials including stones, textiles and wood. Visitors also had the opportunity to sample and purchase various traditional foods.

"This fair was successful for women's organizations," Belgjzare Muharremi continued. "They sold many products and identified new customers. This fair promotes their work and simultaneously helps them to generate income and improve their position in society."

Indeed, artisans reported generating thousands of euros of income through the fair this year.



## **KWN Members Discuss Financial Sustainability, Kosova Women's Fund**

Women's organizing in Kosovo faces several challenges. As most donors are set to withdraw from Kosovo or decrease their support, women's organizations face crucial sustainability challenges. Therefore, in July 2012, KWN with support from Kvinna till Kvinna held a two-day workshop on "Sustaining Women's Organizing in Kosovo" in Pristina. The workshop focused on the financial and economic sustainability of women's organizations.

Discussions revolved primarily around the idea to establish a women's fund to support KWN's member organizations. KWN members actively deliberated on eligibility, application procedures, criteria and the would-be members of the Grant Selection Committee. Together they drafted the plans for a fund that would serve their needs. They agreed that grant recipients' activities should contribute to implementing the KWN mission and strategy (created by KWN members).

As a result of this participatory process and with the generous support of Kvinna till Kvinna, the KWN [Kosovo Women's Fund](#) was established.

"We need this fund for the future of our organizations," a KWN member said. "I am so thankful to KWN because during this meeting we simultaneously had a good time and worked hard."



In October, KWN members and the Security Gender Group raised more than €500 for a baby to receive emergency surgery for water on the brain in Italy. The initiative was organized by Antonella, the owner of *Il Passatore* restaurant, saving the boy's life.