



Kosovar

# Women's Voice

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

November 2012



*More than 1,000 citizens march and approximately 5,700 sign petition for "Justice and Dignity before Negotiations". Protesters placed their demands for justice on the Government's doorstep and in the hands of international officials.*

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## Citizens Demonstrate for Justice and Dignity; 5,700 Sign Petition

About 1,000 people participated in the protest, "Justice and Dignity before Negotiations," organized by the Kosovo Women's Network (KWN) and *Thirrjet e Nënave* ("Mother's Call"). Since then, approximately 5,700 people have signed a petition with the same demands as those made by protesters: an apology from Serbia for crimes committed in Kosovo during the 1990s, the return of missing persons, justice for rights violations and compensation for moral and economic damages.

"Without meeting these requirements, any negotiation with Serbia is unacceptable. These are the legitimate demands of a people against whom genocide was exerted," said Nysrete Kumnova from Mother's Call during her speech at the protest.

Protestors requested that these criteria be met before Kosovar leaders sit at the table to negotiate with Serbian officials. The protest took place in the context of recently announced continued negotiations between Kosovo and Serbia.

"We should remind Serbia that they owe us," KWN Executive Director Igballe Rogova shouted from the podium during the protest. "Transitional justice is not achieved only through negotiations. There are conditions that we seek: apology and justice for war crimes."

"Together we have requested justice, requested dignity, both from the government and from international institutions," said Selatin Kaçaniku, a protester. "As long as Serbia remains unconvinced of what they have done, until they admit it in public, we do not have any reason to negotiate with them," he said.

During the peaceful protest, participants wore red to symbolize the blood of victims murdered by the Serbian criminal leadership during the 1998-1999 genocide in Kosovo. At the end of the protest, demonstrators placed a banner with their demands on the Government's doorstep. KWN and Mother's Call also sent letters containing these demands to U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, EU Foreign Policy Chief Catherine Ashton, European Parliament Rapporteur for Kosovo Ulrike Lunacek, Kosovo President Atifete Jahjaga and Prime Minister Hashim Thaci.

Approximately 5,700 people from around the world, including Serbia, have signed the petition. The [Women's International League for Peace and Freedom](#) (WILPF), among others, has endorsed it.

"These are not such big demands," said Fëllanza Berisha, another protester. "These are the most modest and rightful ones... but only for those who have ears and a soul."



*A man shows respect to mothers of missing persons during the protest on 19 November. An estimated 1,765 people remain missing.*

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*Women in Black Serbia support Kosovars' demands for justice during demonstrations in Belgrade in November.*

## Women, Girls Displeased with the 2013 Budget of the Republic of Kosovo

Following the first reading of the budget in the Assembly of Kosovo, KWN issued a [statement](#), delivered to all parliamentarians, key government officials and media, which read:

"We, as citizens of Kosovo, deplore the government's and Parliament's recent initial passing of the Budget of the Republic of Kosovo for 2013. We disagree with the ways in which our elected officials have decided to spend our tax monies. We do not believe that this budget represents the best interests of the citizens of Kosovo. Additionally, it largely fails to meet the specific needs of women and girls, despite Minister Kusari-Lila's recent public commitments to gender responsive budgeting.

*"We do not believe that this budget represents the best interests of the citizens of Kosovo."*

We are gravely concerned that capital expenditures comprise 41% of Kosovo's central budget. Do we need so many more government buildings? How does a one million-euro White House for the Presidency benefit average Kosovar citizens? Further, we are outraged that more than 22% of our budget has been allocated to roads (€267,700,000). Are roads more important than the wellbeing of Kosovars? And how will these investments sustainably contribute to human development – for both women and men? We do not believe that the implications of these investments on short- and long-term human development in Kosovo have been adequately assessed.

*"We are outraged that more than 22% of our budget has been allocated to roads."*

Meanwhile, departments that hold real potential for investing in economic development and social welfare for the many Kosovars trying to make a living in rural areas remain under-funded (e.g., Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Rural

Development, €23,359,230; Department of Rural Development, €109,050).

While education is crucial for ensuring that Kosovars can compete for jobs in local and global markets (e.g. towards continued remittances on which many Kosovars depend for survival), we do not believe the government has invested sufficiently in ensuring access to quality education. Half of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology's €44,679,592 budget will be spent on capital expenditures (€22,650,000), which will not necessarily enhance the quality of education available.

Expenditures related to the rule of law receive a meagrely 10% of the 2013 central budget, threatening the ability of police and judiciary to ensure the rule of law. Meanwhile human development and social welfare arguably remain under-funded. Healthcare receives only 8.85% of the budget and the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare 18.4%.

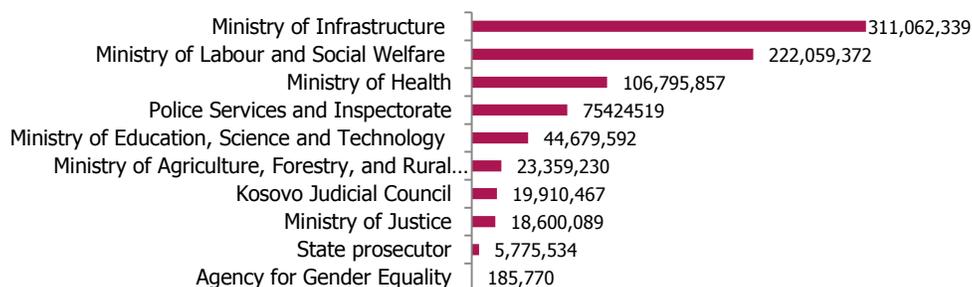
The budgetary choices you have made do not set aside sufficient resources for crucial programs towards furthering the wellbeing of women and girls, as well as citizens in general. The Agency for Gender Equality, at €185,770, remains under-funded, which impacts its ability to ensure that gender is mainstreamed at all levels in Kosovo as per the Law on Gender Equality. Other laws and programs towards gender equality, including the Kosovo Program against Domestic Violence and Action Plan, remain just as under-funded as they were in 2012, despite recommendations made by the Kosova Women's Network, among others.

*"Laws and programs towards gender equality ... remain just as under-funded as they were in 2012."*

In sum, we believe that this budget does not sufficiently address the priorities of the Medium Term Expenditure

Framework, which commits to economic development, rule of law, human development, and social welfare. We call on you to take immediate action to re-examine and revise the 2013 budget so that it better addresses the real, priority needs of women and men in Kosovo towards human development – not only towards the personal pet projects of a few government officials."

### Kosovo Central Budget 2013 Expected Expenditures in Euros



## Government Commits to Gender-Responsive Budgeting; Activists Demand Action

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Trade and Industry Mimoza Kusari-Lila, among other governmental officials, promised to further gender-responsive budgeting in Kosovo, during a conference on "Gender Responsive Budgeting: Practices and Challenges," organized by the Agency for Gender Equality (AGE) in Prishtina on 15 November.

"I'm committed both as a citizen of Kosovo and as a Minister," Kusari-Lila said. "We'll do our best to implement gender-responsive budgeting in our daily practice." Her commitment went so far as to sneak out of the room before the first plenary session. She missed the international best practices shared, as well as discussions concerning the way forward for Kosovo. If she had stayed, she would have heard concerns and key challenges voiced by the KWN representative during the post-plenary discussion, which included:

*"It's one thing to talk about gender-responsive budgeting. It's quite another to put it to practice."*

- **Budgeting towards gender equality in Kosovo is not a priority.** The Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) commits to the priorities of rule of law, human development and social welfare in theory. Yet, in practice, in the 2012 budget capital investments comprised more than 60% of expenditures. The MTEF foresees a continued focus on capital investments through 2014, which presents obstacles to gender responsive budgeting. Perhaps there should be a gender audit by AGE on how these funding choices in the MTEF have affected women and men differently.
- As the Assembly of Kosovo is about to approve the budget for 2013, KWN wonders **whether AGE conducted a gender audit** of this governmental policy (as per AGE's responsibilities under the Law on Gender Equality). If yes, did the Government of Kosovo consider any AGE recommendations when drafting the new budget?
- National Strategies and Plans in Kosovo, such as for gender equality or protection against domestic violence, have not had clear budget lines assigned to specific institutions. Future governmental strategies must better identify **which institution is responsible for budget allocations and the budget amount required**, towards implementation.
- Kosovo needs better data, particularly **gender analyses of the budget that inform budgetary decisions**. Beyond simply collecting data, in-depth analysis of how budgetary choices affect women and men differently is needed. AGE and gender equality officers in ministries and municipalities have important roles to play in ensuring that analyses inform future budgetary choices.
- The **Budget Circular does not specify how AGE and gender equality officers in ministries and municipalities will be involved in the budget process**. Their role should be made clear and mandatory as part of the process. Their responsibilities should be specified within their job descriptions and AGE should provide guidance regarding what exactly they should examine when assessing the gender-responsiveness of draft budgets.

These findings and recommendations were based on KWN's recent [research](#) on the topic.

Experts from Germany, Sweden and Albania shared best practices in gender budgeting from their countries. "Gender equality and economic growth go hand and hand," said Catharina Schmitz, Director of Indvelop from Sweden. Equal salaries can impact GDP positively. Setting specific goals towards gender equality is important, she said, and in Sweden gender-responsive budgeting has four aims:

- 1) Women have **equal access to power** as active citizens in society;
- 2) **Economic equality**: women and men have equal opportunities for paid work and economic independence;
- 3) **Equal distribution of work at home**: unequal compensation for work conducted at home is a factor underpinning why women tend to earn less than men on average. Balancing work at home can enable women to work outside the home towards increased income; and
- 4) **End men's violence against women**.

She emphasized the need for data analysis, particularly of sector programs and service delivery, to analyse who benefits from state programs and the impact of state funding allocations. Evaluating impact is important for evaluating the budget and making budgetary decisions. For example, Sweden is looking into whether state programs actually reduce inequality; why women tend to be home sick more than men; how tax deductions can support under-paid people, including women; and auditing parliamentary committees' proposed policy reforms from a gender perspective. Sweden also has established a fund for municipalities to pilot initiatives for gender budgeting.

In Germany, gender-budgeting is considered crucial to the budget process, and all finance officers are involved in gender budgeting. Based on the German experience, AGE's location in the Office of the Prime Minister is important for incorporating gender budgeting from the "top-down." Policies have sought to further gender equality by integrating men into foster care centres and other roles traditionally held by women, presenting youth with positive male role models; launching incentives to decrease unemployment among women; and establishing specific expectations for gender equality officers.

While it trails behind other European states, Albania has put in place some policies to ensure equal opportunities for women and men, as well as to further women's economic equality, stated Alida Tota from the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities in Albania.

*"Gender-budgeting is a right for women and for men."*

- Klaus Feiler, Secretary of State,  
Senate Department of Finance

## **KWN Welcomes 100th Member Organization: "Prehja"**

KWN welcomed its 100th member organization, "Prehja" from Skenderaj, in October 2012. Since its establishment in 2000, KWN has grown from its initial 36 members. KWN marked this momentous event by donating a computer to its newest member.

Prehja actively works to raise awareness and empower women. Founded in 2003, the organization focuses especially on providing support to women who suffer from breast cancer. They plan to use their new computer to facilitate this important work.

KWN is a leader among civil society organizations in Kosovo and the region, representing the interests of women's organizations of all ethnic groups from throughout Kosovo. Since its inception, KWN has held regular members' meetings, workshops and activities involving its members. They are informed about KWN activities, opportunities to develop their capacities and funding possibilities. Our 100 member organizations have the opportunity to meet many times during the year, share ideas, learn new strategies and initiate cooperative efforts.



*Ajnishahe Halimi from Prehja receives a computer as KWN's 100<sup>th</sup> member.*

## **Gender Equality Advocacy Groups Empower Women, Further Gender Equality Locally**

Eight Gender Equality Advocacy Groups (GEAG) are undertaking important actions to further gender equality within their municipalities, thanks to KWN support. GEAGs are comprised of women municipal assembly members, women in civil society, municipal gender equality officers and others who seek to further gender equality at the municipal level, including men. GEAGs also have received support from mayors.

It all started with KWN visiting women involved in politics and civil society within these municipalities, seeking to convince them that neither KWN nor they could achieve much without working together. Accomplishments resulting from positive cooperation between women parliamentarians and KWN illustrated how cooperation across sectors could be beneficial at the municipal level as well.

"An example of this cooperation at the central level, and a good example of advocacy, is the protest, 'We don't want flowers. We want justice!' on 8 March 2012," said KWN Executive Director Igballe Rogova. "Immediately the next day, the issue of rape perpetrated against women during the war was raised for the first time in the Parliament of Kosovo by women parliamentarians."

Visiting municipalities to foster coordination required extensive time and effort, according to Igballe Rogova, but eventually women were convinced that cooperation would achieve greater results than working independently. Now GEAGs have been formed in eight municipalities: Novo Brdo, Dragash, Prizren, Shtime, Gjakova, Mamusha, Gjilan and Mitrovica. GEAGs aim to achieve gender equality, especially by empowering women in politics and addressing other issues women face in their respective municipalities.

For example, in Dragash the GEAG has advocated successfully for public transportation. Previously, the absence of transportation primarily affected women who could not travel because they did not possess cars. When the GEAG brought this issue to the attention of the Mayor of Dragash, he immediately took action to address it. This GEAG is now advocating for the establishment of a kindergarten which would empower working mothers.

GEAGs have offered women in politics support from other women in politics and civil society within their own municipalities, as well as from GEAG members in other municipalities. As a result, women do not feel as alone when facing gender discrimination within their parties and/or municipal decision-making.

"You have empowered me," a woman assembly member told KWN. "Until now I felt very lonely. However, now when I raise an issue for discussion at work, I feel like all women involved in these groups [GEAGs] are behind me."

At the same time, GEAGs have provided women in civil society with easier access to making their voices heard within municipal assemblies, enabling their advocacy for furthering women's rights locally.

"For me, the most beautiful part of this activity, and its greatest success, is that solidarity has been created among women. The effort and time required to convince women to cooperate has paid off," reflected Igballe Rogova, who has been leading this initiative. "Now municipalities that have not yet established these groups have heard about GEAGs from others, and they voluntarily want to start such initiatives in their areas."

Based on their requests, in 2013 KWN plans to support the establishment of GEAGs in five new municipalities: Podujevo, Decan, Viti, Glogovac and Suhareka, supported by the Austrian Development Agency. In 2011 and 2012, the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands kindly supported KWN's efforts to strengthen GEAGs.



*Women parliamentarians visit with Gender Equality Advocacy Groups from Dragash, Mamusha and Prizren, exchanging experiences and strategizing for furthering women's rights.*

## Reflections on 20 Years of Women's Organizing Amid the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Albania's Independence: Diversity, Solidarity and Activism Make a Women's Movement

Amid celebrations to mark the 100th Anniversary of Albania's Independence, the Albanian Association "In Favour of Albanian Women", NGO "Reflections" and the "Centre of Gender Alliance for Development" organized a series of activities under the motto, "100 years of women who have lived and contributed to Albania." These activities also marked the 20th anniversary of women's activism in the context of political change in Albania.

The conference "90 + 20, the Women's Movement in Albania - The Way Ahead" was the first in a series of activities organized in November. In addition to history and women's contributions to the advancement of Albanian society, the conference discussed lessons learned and strategies for the way forward. KWN Executive Director Igballe Rogova delivered the conference's closing remarks, identifying the main principles required to keep a women's movement alive:

1. **Diversity:** We women are different, but come together and become one for a purpose. If we do not accept our differences, then there can be no movement;
2. **Solidarity:** No matter the circumstances, we women should cooperate because we fight for common issues. We should avoid cases when women attack women. We need to support each other to achieve our goals; and
3. **Activism:** The movement cannot be alive without this element. Activism should be expressed on the streets, through statements or in other ways. For a movement to be alive, it should be visible.



*Silhouettes of women important to Albania's history stand before the museum in Tirana.*

Following the conference, participants attended an exhibition "100 Years of the Lives and Contributions of Women in Albania." Silhouettes of women important to Albania's history stood at the entrance of the museum in Tirana. Research in history archives informed their selection. Albania's 100th Anniversary and women's 20 years of activism in Albania also were marked by reading hours, panel discussions and screenings of the documentary, "Women Make History" on various Albanian TV stations. The activities concluded with a complete edition marking the most important women figures titled, "90 + 20, the Women's Movement in Albania - The Way Forward."

## KWN Mobilizes Young Women Activists in Prizren and Gjilan

Leaders of women's movements, including in Kosovo, are aging, and sometimes ageism has prevented the involvement of new young women activists into the movement. KWN member organizations have identified these as crucial issues facing the sustainability of women's organizing in Kosovo. Therefore KWN has set out on a new initiative to involve more young women in the Kosovo women's movement. To this end, KWN held its first two meetings with young women, would-be activists in October 2012 in Prizren and in November 2012 in Gjilan.

Through these and other meetings planned for 2013, KWN aims to increase the involvement of young women activists by giving them the opportunity to express their concerns and needs. During meetings, young women discussed the problems they face in everyday life: young women still are not allowed to continue their education, while men do not face this issue; they do not have space to speak because society considers that their priority as women should be to get married and take care of children; and leaders in NGOs and politics do not see young women as experienced enough or possible candidates for decision-making positions. Many young women believed that the first step to overcome these problems is to raise awareness about women's rights among young women, men and older generations.

These initial meetings were a first step in KWN's broader efforts to mobilize more young women to become involved in the women's movement, particularly outside Prishtina.

"I attended many trainings for young women, and I was expecting that this meeting would be the same," a young woman said. "But now that I'm here, I really found it useful and interesting. I couldn't stop listening." Young women were encouraged to continue thinking about ideas and solutions for solving the issues they face. Their ideas will be discussed during future meetings with KWN next year.

This initiative has received support from Kvinna till Kvinna and the Youth Initiative for Human Rights.



*Young women discuss issues they face and strategies for overcoming these issues during a consultative meeting with KWN in Gjilan on Nov. 20.*