



September 2013

# Kosovar Women's Voice

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

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**KWN Retreat (members only)**  
3-6 Oct., Durres, Albania

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## Blind Youth Demand Braille in School

Gezim, an ambitious young man, met the Director of the Special School for the Blind and Persons with Visual Impairments to request additional Braille typing machines. He plans to be persistent until the school has enough machines for all students.

"I do not plan to quit until I achieve this goal," he said. "I don't care how many meetings it takes."

Gezim was among the blind and partially sighted youth participating in discussions for promoting usage of the Braille alphabet. The Committee of Blind Women of Kosova gathered youth on 14 Sep. at their new centre in Prishtina to inform youth about a new initiative and to collect their input.

Youth were excited to learn that the Committee of Blind Women will be collaborating with elementary schools and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology to introduce Braille boards for the first time. The Braille alphabet uses different combinations of six dots, each representing an alphabet letter. Braille enables blind persons to read by using their sense of touch, rather than their eyes. By introducing Braille boards in schools, the Committee of Blind Women will help blind and partially sighted students learn the Braille alphabet and thus learn to read. They plan to introduce the first boards at "Emin Duraku" and "Anton Z. Cajupi" schools in Prishtina this year.

The Committee of Blind Women also plans to involve youth in raising awareness among school directors, teachers and pupils about their needs and the importance of using the Braille alphabet.

"I need you to get

good grades at school and set an example of excellence for other students in order to

convince people to help us achieve our aim," said the Committee's Director, Bajramshahe Jetullahu.

The Committee's initiative encourages youth to advocate for their right to education.

"Our greatest need is to have the understanding of citizens," said a young woman who is participating in the initiative. "They need to understand that you can never know what life will bring you. Maybe one day they will become [blind] like us, and they will need somebody to help them."

The Committee of Blind Women's Initiative received support from the KWN Kosovo Women's Fund.



Youth read the Albanian language alphabet in Braille using a new Braille board created by the Committee of Blind Women.

## KWN, AH Present Initial Findings: “Where’s the Money for Women’s Rights?”

On Sep. 2, [KWN](#) and [Alter Habitus – Institute for Studies in Society and Culture \(AH\)](#) presented initial findings from their research: “Where Is the Money for Women’s Rights?” The research involved a survey of 90 women’s organizations and interviews with more than 35 donors. The resulting recommendations seek to further efficiency and effectiveness in funding for gender equality and women’s rights organizing in Kosovo, including recommendations for “the state, donors and women’s organizations.”

Around 90 participants attended the launching and discussion, including KWN members, board members, donors and KWN supporters.

“You have done a great job in a very short time and with minimal funds,” said Advije Gashi from [Norma Women Lawyer’s Association](#).

The survey’s initial findings suggest a clear decrease in overall funding available to women’s organizations between 2000 and 2013, with a brief increase in 2011. Other key findings include:

- Aside from a few Prishtina-based organizations, most women’s organizations encountered difficulties securing sufficient resources for their issues, target groups, and strategies.
- Very few women’s organizations received income from individuals, assets, membership fees or income generation activities, suggesting heavy reliance on international funding and insufficient diversification of resources.
- Insufficient resources led a majority of organizations to reduce staff, cut activities, and/or work voluntarily for long periods of time. More than one-third have been in jeopardy of closing their offices, and a few have closed periodically, often with dire consequences for marginalized groups, such as persons suffering from gender-based violence.
- Of the donors participating in this research, only five had earmarked funding for women’s organizations. Some had funding available through competitions (e.g. for grants or contracts), for which women’s organizations compete with other organizations or businesses. Donors tend to provide short-term, project-based funding.
- The vast majority of women’s organizations have never received core funding.

Following the presentation, participants provided feedback regarding initial research findings and recommendations. KWN and AH also used the initial release to encourage women’s organizations and donors to supply additional information, towards developing a more complete understanding of funding provided for gender equality and women’s rights between 2000 and 2010 in Kosovo. KWN and AH will incorporate their feedback in the final report, which they will present publicly in November.

“I think this is a very useful report and it comes at a very strategic moment, as well,” said Lina Andeer, Kvinna till Kvinna representative in Kosovo. “It makes me reflect about my own organization. We are right now in a strategic planning process and I definitely can use this report for our discussions internally. What I hope will follow is a profound discussion of what to do about this negative trend [...] to identify how civil society and donors can cooperate to try to change this negative trend.”

This research has received support from the [Association for Women’s Rights in Development \(AWID\)](#), as well as substantial in-kind contributions from KWN and AH.



*Ariana Qosaj-Mustafa, KWN Chair of the Board moderates the presentation of initial findings from the KWN and AH research: “Where Is the Money for Women’s Rights?”*

## Young Women in Prizren Passionate about Advocacy

Dynamic lifestyles sometimes make it difficult for young women to meet and discuss issues impacting their rights. The [Young Women's Empowerment Initiative \(YWEI\)](#) provided space for young women in Prizren to gather and strategize how to address some of the challenges they face in their municipality.

During the meeting, they developed an advocacy strategy for furthering women's right to education and towards reducing discrimination against women at work.

In discussing women at work, they realized that most of the work that women do is not considered "work", but rather "women's responsibility." As such, women do not receive any financial compensation for house work, childcare and caring for the elderly in their families, for example.

"The meeting helped us see things in a different perspective," one participant said.

Young women also discussed other issues they face, including access to education.

"A very concerning issue, for example, is when a young woman's family tells her that they have done everything for her, and education is not necessary for her," said a young woman. "In this way they decide for their daughter without giving her the possibility to decide for her own future."

After discussing these challenges, young women split into groups, creating strategies that they will use to advocate for changes within their municipality.

"This meeting is very interesting," a young woman said. "I have never experienced something like this before. In Prizren, there are a lot of activities organized for youth, but not specifically to empower young women to fight for their rights."

Follow young women's discussions and advocacy initiatives on the [Young Women's Empowerment Initiative Facebook page](#).



*Young women in Prizren strategize to address the challenges they face during a Young Women's Empowerment Initiative meeting.*

## Young Women in Gjilan Seek Psychologists in Schools

After the successful meeting with ambitious young women in Prizren, KWN met young women in Gjilan. They knew exactly what they wanted: psychologists in schools.

"It is very important to have a psychologist at school with whom we can speak freely about the teenage problems we face," a young woman said.

"We do not have the courage to share with our parents some of things that we can discuss with psychologists, since our parents are not patient to listen to us," a young woman from Ferizaj agreed.



*Young women discuss strategies for advocating for psychologists in schools.*

Together, young women plan to advocate for psychologists in schools via debates with teachers, community members, responsible institutions and media. They also want to organize campaigns for raising awareness among parents on how to speak freely with their teenagers.

The [Young Women's Empowerment Initiative](#) "began just at the right time," a young woman said. "Cooperating with each other makes us feel stronger in pushing forward this issue, as well as other issues that will make Kosovo society understand the importance of gender equality."

## KWN Recognizes Kelmendi, Gjakova as Role Models

KWN recognized Majlinda Kelmendi and Nora Gjakova with Certificates of Appreciation on 23 Sep. in Peja. The two young women represented Kosovo at the World Judo Championship, and Majlinda Kelmendi brought home the gold medal.

KWN members decided at their Sep. bimonthly meeting to recognize the young women's achievements, as they serve as role models for other young women in Kosovo.

As Majlinda Kelmendi said on national television, "It doesn't matter where you start, but where you go. With dedication, work and great will everyone can achieve their aims."

Further, as a world champion in judo, Majlinda Kelmendi is the first national heroine of Kosovo as a new state.

KWN members congratulated Majlinda Kelmendi and Nora Gjakova for their achievements and hope that they will empower many other young women in Kosovo to realize their dreams.

KWN also has invited them to join the Young Women's Empowerment Initiative.



*A KWN delegation presents Certificates of Appreciation to Majlinda Kelmendi and Nora Gjakova, two world judo champions.*

## Teenagers Promote Gender Equality through Graffiti

The campaign "Bonu cool, mos bjer shpulle" organized two more events in Sep. 2013. One of the events was a graffiti competition organized for teenagers ages 13-19.

The topic of the competition was "Gender Equality/Prevalence of violence in adolescents' relationships".

Teenage graffiti artists from Pristina, Pejë and Gjilan painted graffiti on one Prishtina street.

The painting of murals/graffiti is part of a public awareness campaign implemented by the Kosovo Gender Studies Centre (KGSC) through the project "Making Gender Awareness Part of Popular Culture," supported by the EU Office in Kosovo.

The other event was the public promotion of "Heart Speaks Right," a music video. The video also raises gender awareness by speaking against adolescent gender violence. The song was produced and sung by well-known Kosovar singer, Rona Nishliu.

The campaign "Bonu cool, mos bjer shpulle" aims to raise awareness through instilling gender sensitivity in urban culture.

For more information, visit the KGSC website: <http://kgscenter.net/>.

*This article draws from information provided to KWN by KGSC.*

