



Kosovar

November 2013

Women's Voice

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

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KWN Annual Meeting 2013,
7 Dec., 10:30 – 15:15, Sheshi 21

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KWN, AH Release “Where’s the Money for Women’s Rights?”

The Kosova Women’s Network (KWN) and Alter Habitus – Institute for Studies in Society and Culture launched the report *Where’s the Money for Women’s Rights? A Kosovo Case Study*. This event brought together more than 40 participants (donors, non-governmental women’s organizations and other civil society representatives) to discuss the findings and recommendations of the nine-month study.

In her presentation, KWN’s Nicole Farnsworth said, “organizations for women’s rights play an important role in supporting and developing democratic institutions, promoting women’s rights human rights, shifting gender norms, raising public awareness, providing services to marginalized groups (especially when they lack support from the state), and seeking accountability from the government through advocacy.”

The research examines the importance of supporting women’s organizations in relation to social change processes; funding trends between 2000 and 2013; decisions to fund women’s organizations (or not); the sustainability of women’s organizations; and opportunities for collaboration among women’s organizations and donors in creating collective resource mobilization strategies and funding mechanisms for women’s rights organizations. The report makes recommendations for all stakeholders: government, women’s organizations and donors regarding the best ways for improving women’s rights organizations’ access to resources towards promoting gender equality.

Participants unanimously agreed that better coordination among donors, women’s organizations and the government would help

advance women’s rights. Moreover, the KWN [Kosova Women’s Fund](#), which combines small grants, intensive training and mentoring for organizations, was seen as a potential solution for donors who want to support small organizations. While small organizations may not have the capacity to compete with larger organizations, they carry out very important work with rural and marginalized groups.

Also, women’s rights organizations requested long-term contracts with donors, which would enable organizations to implement strategies towards their long-term visions. For them, long-term support clearly impacts on strengthening the women’s movement in Kosovo and advances social change.

This research, supported by the [Association of Women in Development \(AWID\)](#) and [Kvinna till Kvinna](#), was conducted between January and September 2013. The report draws from 40 interviews with donors who have worked in Kosovo and a survey of 90 diverse women’s organizations.



Maria Melbing from the Swedish Embassy and Arsim Aziri from the Austrian Development Agency discuss research findings during the launching.

Young Feminists Strategize, Impress Officials

On 13-14 Nov., 40 young feminists from throughout Kosovo and neighbouring countries (e.g., Serbia, Macedonia, Croatia) gathered in Prishtina to spend two amazing working days. Organized by KWN and supported by Kvinna till Kvinna, the [2013 Regional Young Feminists Forum](#) involved young women in deliberating over domestic and global issues. The main issue raised by young women was access to education.

Young women from Kosovo and the region presented advocacy activities in which they are involved. They exchanged information and learnt from each other's experiences as well as struggles. Then they divided into groups to discuss issues raised during Young Women's Empowerment Initiative (YWEL) meetings held throughout Kosovo, advocacy strategies, feminism and women's participation in decision-making. They created advocacy strategies for the next day.

The second day, groups focusing on the need for psychologists in schools and access to education [met with officials from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology](#). Officials willingly responded to their questions and the ideas presented.

"I was amazed by the will of the MEST officials to answer our questions and give practical recommendations to us," said one young feminist. "The meeting lasted an hour more than was foreseen."

Another group [visited Mrs. Atifete Jahjaga, President of the Republic of Kosovo](#). They presented orally the main issues raised by young women during the Forum. The President was very attentive, engaging and supportive. She said that young women are the future of Kosovo, and they should have support. After the official meeting, the President continued the discussion with young women, exchanging ideas.

"The President of Kosovo warmly welcomed us, expressed interest about what we had to say and even hosted us for 15 minutes extra," said one young feminist. "Meeting the President is not something we can do every day, so it was special."

The "Media" working group focused on how to write a simple article and speak on camera. They also discussed how media portray women and girls with unacceptable language and unethical reporting.

"A very important thing that we learnt was that in case we read, hear or watch inappropriate or incorrect news, we should report it to the [Press Council of Kosovo](#) or [Independent Media Commission](#), depending on the type of media," said a young feminist.

The next day, three young women put their new skills to use, appearing on RTV21's morning program to present issues discussed at the Forum.

Finally, seven young women in the working group focusing on "Art & Organizing" prepared a [Street Action](#), supported by Artpolis. It addressed "Discrimination at work – Promotion at work" for women. All Forum participants gathered in front of the National Theatre for the performance, which was later shown in most Kosovo media.

"The street action was a concrete example of what you can achieve by organizing and working in groups," said a young feminist. "We really passed the message to people passing by, as well as through all TV stations present there."

In the end, Forum participants reviewed the Forum Declaration, amended it and voted for its approval. The Declaration demands implementation of the 30% quota for women's and men's participation in decision-making processes; implementation of the pre-university education law; transportation and books for all students attending compulsory education; psychologists in schools; and implementation of the Code of Conduct for written and electronic media.

The Declaration was sent to Mrs. Atifete Jahjaga, [President of the Republic of Kosovo](#); Mr. Hashim Thaçi, [Prime Minister of the Republic of Kosovo](#); the [Ministry of Education, Science and Technology](#); the [Ministry of Finance](#); the [Agency for Gender Equality](#); the [Parliament of the Republic of Kosovo](#); the [Independent Media Commission](#) and the [Press Council of Kosovo](#).



Forum participants show their power, wearing T-shirts that state, "This is what a feminist looks like," at the 2013 Regional Young Feminists Forum, held on 13-14 Nov. in Prishtina.

Seven Organizations Receive Kosovo Women's Fund Grants

Seven KWN member organizations received grants from the KWN [Kosovo Women's Fund](#) on 22 Nov. totalling €18,509. Following an orientation session, they signed contracts and energetically set out to begin their initiatives. The Fund enables underserved smaller, rural and/or marginalized organizations to access funds for important initiatives at the local level.

"I am very happy that through the Network we can reach grassroots organizations, which we cannot do with our internal staff capacities," said Christian Geosits from [Austrian Development Agency \(ADA\)](#), which funded this fourth grant round. "I cherish the structure that we have created together with the Network because it works very well in reaching grassroots organizations."

Grant recipients and their initiatives include:

- The Organization of Persons with Muscular Dystrophy of Kosovo (OPDMK) will organize various activities for people with special needs from Pristina, Gjilan, Ferizaj, Mitrovica, Prizren and various rural areas. (€2,700)
- The Women's Initiative Association will train women from the village of Bresane in Dragash in tailoring, towards enhancing their employment opportunities. (€3,000)
- Contemporary Woman will organize health lectures, psychosocial training and exercises to replace physiotherapy, as well as advocate for the regional hospital in Prizren to offer better services to persons with disabilities. (€2,155)
- The Association for Education and Family Care will organize educational sessions for young people in the Municipality of Gjakova on the topic of "Protection from Sexually Transmitted Diseases." (€2,390)
- NGO Gora will work to economically empower Gorani women in Dragash by creating handmade products and selling them in fairs. (€2,780)
- *Hendifer* will organize gynaecological visits and trainings towards preventing breast and uterine cancer among women in villages. (€2,630)
- Alma will work on identifying women and economically empowering them in two communities in Peja Municipality: Lutogllava and Leshan. (€2,854)



OPDMK discusses their contract with KWN.

Through the Kosovo Women's Fund, organizations also receive mentoring and support in furthering their organizational capacities.

"I appreciate this session very much because we will need all this information when implementing our project," a grant recipient said.

During the orientation, organizations learned procedures for narrative and financial reporting, as well as monitoring and evaluation.

"Today they received so many forms, examples and advice on how to manage a project well," said Arsim Aziri from ADA, who attended the orientation. "It is a lot of work for such small projects, but definitely they will learn from this experience."

Through Fund, KWN offers its member organizations new skills and experience from which they can draw in applying to new funders in the future.

Forum Theatre Empowers Women from the Region

Women from the region gathered in the beautiful city of Prizren on 8-11 Nov. for a workshop on "Using Theatre as a Tool for Empowering Women." Organized by KWN's member organization [Artpolis](#), this was the first regional workshop of its kind. The training involved Forum Theatre, an innovative and influential type of theatre created for teaching people how to change their world. It includes interactive sessions between players and audience. At the end of the play, the audience can discuss issues raised by actors and make suggestions. Using Forum Theatre, Artpolis aimed to empower women participants from Kosovo, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia. During the three-day workshop participants learned Forum Theatre. Via small groups, they created Forum Theatre plays on different topics. Debates followed, during which other participants shared ideas and experiences.

"I had a really good time," said Nadja Duhacek from Women in Black in Serbia. "We had the chance to exchange experiences with one another. I met old friends and created new friendships. The activity was all very practical and empowering."

In the evenings, participants walked around the historic city of Prizren and celebrated during a party on the third evening of the training. The workshop received support from [Kvinna till Kvinna](#).

"It was a very good experience and we had a great time together," said a participant.

University Establishes Centre for Gender Studies, Research

The Institute for Social Studies and Humanities (ISSH) of the University of Prishtina and [Gender Research Institute at Dartmouth \(GRID\)](#) College launched together the Centre for Gender Studies and Research (CGSR) at ISSH on 24 Nov.

Earlier in the day, ISSH and GRID organized a workshop, which resulted from one year's cooperation between ISSH and [Dartmouth College](#).

The workshop gathered representatives of civil society, Kosovo institutions, national and international agencies and academic staff in identifying the objectives of this initiative.

The Centre's goal is to provide a national body of scholarship and analysis that will help leaders in Kosovo and the Balkans as they implement policies that support gender equity. The Centre also will serve as a forum for events and programs designed to foster skills that prepare women for leadership roles. The need for such a Centre has been articulated by scholars in the region. The initiative to establish the Centre arose as a result of the President of Kosovo's International Women's Summit and its resulting "[Prishtina Principles](#)".

"This initiative reflects upon the responsibilities which we carry and which we must take upon ourselves in order to advance the position of women in our society, whether we are leaders of the public, political or academic institutions, members of the private sector or civil society, ordinary citizens," said Atifete Jahjaga, President of the Republic of Kosovo, during her speech at the Centre's official opening ceremony.

This Centre will address the aforementioned problems by conducting research and analysis that can be used to inform policy and create a core of scholarship that will serve the nation and the region going forward. The centre will also provide a forum where scholars can exchange ideas and partner with government agencies to move those ideas directly into action.



Participants celebrate the new Centre for Gender Studies and Research at the University of Prishtina.

Ikebana Functions Independently, Produces Teas

An interethnic group of women in Shtërpe always dreamed of forming an organization through which they could collect and market herbal teas. They aimed to prepare products with quality ingredients in an environmentally friendly manner. Some of medicinal plants with which they wanted to work are well-known in the pharmaceutical industry. With support from the Kosovo Women's Fund (from ADA) and Caritas Switzerland, they were able to realize their dream, opening their organization, "Ikebana."



Women members of Ikebana in Shtërpe dry teas with support from the KWN Kosovo Women's Fund.

However, establishing a new organization is no easy task. Ikebana members needed support in order to establish systems, policies and procedures for their organization to function independently. KWN staff members provided mentoring to support them in developing these. With KWN support, they also purchased machines for drying and producing teas. They began work, learning from each other. They also took part in trainings that equipped them with theoretical and practical information. They used their knowledge to begin collecting and producing teas in June. Although they began as a small group, with time their group has grown.

"We were constantly looking to find a way to start working, to show that we can work," said Ankica Zivkovic, the Executive Director of Ikebana. "Now with funds from KWN, we are showing our potential. We are very thankful to the Kosovo Women's Fund for this opportunity."