



# Kosovar Women's Voice

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

## Join Us!

### One billion rising

14 Feb., 17:00, Near Grand Hotel, Prishtina

### Protest "We Are With You"

8 Mar., 12:00, City Square Ibrahim Rugova, Prishtina

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## Activists Congratulate Kosovo's First Woman Mayor: Kusari-Lila

For the first time since Kosovo's Independence citizens have elected a woman to serve them as Mayor. A Kosova Women's Network (KWN) delegation visited Mrs. Mimoza Kusari-Lila, the new Mayor of the [Municipality of Gjakova](#) on 20 January.

"Mrs. Kusari-Lila is legendary," activists said. "She broke the ice by becoming the first woman mayor of a municipality in Kosova."

During the meeting they discussed strategies for economically empowering women in the [Municipality of Gjakova](#); reviving the professional theatre Corps of Gjakova; preserving the cultural heritage of Gjakova; encouraging women to participate in annual craft fairs; ensuring gender responsive budgeting; and supporting women's organizations in the Municipality of Gjakova.

The Mayor expressed her appreciation for KWN's work and her readiness for future cooperation.

"I will ensure women in the Municipality of Gjakova play a greater role in decision-making and are included in various spheres of life, especially business," said Kusari-Lila.

KWN also asked when the "Museum House" of the Qerkezi family would be officially recognized (see below). Kusari-Lila already had a plan in place.

"In addition to declaring it a museum, this house also will have a person who will maintain it and will serve as a tourist guide," said Kusari-Lila.

After meeting Kusari-Lila, the KWN delegation met representatives of the Association Mothers' Call (*Thirrjet e Nënave*) at the museum house of the Qerkezi family in Gjakova. They recognized the loss suffered by this family during the war, when 11 men were taken by

Serbian forces and remain missing today. KWN and

Mothers' Call discussed organizing another joint action with regard to missing persons. Together, the two organizations will undertake a street action on 8 March 2014 to call once again for progress with regard to missing persons in Kosovo.

Despite dozens of protests and hunger strikes, more than 17,000 people remain missing since the war. Mothers' call is an organization of women with missing family members, still tirelessly advocating for their loved ones to be found.



KWN visits the new Mayor of the Municipality of Gjakova, Mrs. Mimoza Kusari-Lila on 20 Jan.

## Kosova Women's Fund Reviews Key Achievements

Following a series of consultations with KWN's 100 member organizations, the [Kosovo Women's Fund \(KWF\)](#) was created to meet a crucial need in supporting grassroots women's organizations amid shifting aid priorities in Kosovo.

With generous support from [Kvinna till Kvinna](#) and later the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), KWN established this Fund to provide small grants to women's organizations that lack access to other sources of funding.

While KWN is seeking additional funding and plans for the continued growth of KWF, we want to reflect on and share our achievements and challenges so far.

Since fall 2012, KWN has provided 34 grants, totalling €66,671, to its member organizations through KWF. These initiatives directly benefited 2,039 diverse women including women with limited physical abilities, from rural areas, of various ethnicities (e.g., Turkish, Gorani, Serbian, Roma, Ashkali, Egyptian and Albanian), youth and pensioners.

More than 1,500 people within their communities benefited indirectly. These little grants (up to €3,000) have made substantial changes in their lives.

Among KWN's five strategic goals as a network, most Fund-supported initiatives focused on capacity building for KWN members, health and women's economic empowerment.

Projects have informed women about cancer and helped marginalized women afford at least one gynaecological visit to the doctor. Other recipients economically empowered women by teaching business techniques and providing access to new markets.

The greatest challenge for some grant recipients has been learning to manage a project according to recognized best practices, including creating financial systems. KWN continually provided one-on-one mentoring for each grant recipient throughout their initiative, and often beyond. This was crucial since for most organizations this was the first time that they had managed a project.

This included site visits, skills-building in financial management, assistance with organizational management, advice in effective advocacy strategies, facilitating networking with government officials, and problem-solving. In 2013, KWN provided more than 300 such mentoring sessions for its members via phone, e-mail, or personal contact.

We also supported our members in thinking proactively about sustainability, which included planning initiatives and gaining community level support that will enable their initiatives to continue beyond the life of these short projects.

### Kosovo Women's Fund Key Achievements

- More than 2,811 diverse women and girls have benefitted since fall 2012
- Increased KWN members' capacity to write proposals
- Diverse KWN members, including rural and minority groups, have access to funds
- Municipal Gender Equality Officers and other institutions involved in KWN members' initiatives
- KWN members gained advocacy skills using a "learning-by-doing" method
- KWN members provided substantial co-financing for their initiatives
- KWN members and beneficiaries have undertaken additional initiatives on a voluntary basis after their initial projects ended
- KWN members are more visible to the public via television, online media, newspapers, the KWN website, and Facebook
- High demand for continuation of Kosovo Women's Fund

## Individual Member Innovative in Supporting KWN

Did you find 5 cents on the street today? There is a place for that. Consider storing all your extra coins in a jar for KWN. This is what Iziar Mujika from the Basque Country and her family are doing. In addition to joining KWN as an [individual member](#) last year, Itziar and her family have found another way to continue their support year-round.

“It’s a little box where we put money, coins usually,” she said. “But that’s how we save for the women of Kosovo, little by little.” Her family is also talking to friends, colleagues and neighbours, encouraging them to do the same.

We would love to have more members like Itziar! It’s simple to become a KWN member. Please visit our [website](#) for details. As a member, you will receive updates about KWN’s work and how we have put our members’ funds to good use. You also can feel proud that you part of a worldwide network of people committed to supporting, protecting and promoting the rights and interests of women and girls in Kosovo. P.S. You don’t have to be a woman to be a member. Several men support our cause!

## KWN Visits the Head of the Assembly of Gjilan



Valentina Bunjaku-Rexhepi in Gjilan is the first women Head of an Assembly.

Valentina Bunjaku-Rexhepi has been elected to head the Assembly of Gjilan. This is the first time that this post has been held by a woman within this Municipality.

KWN representatives visited Mrs. Bunjaku-Rexhepi on 27 Jan., to congratulate her.

“Mostly, I have been elected by women, and I will commit to furthering gender equality in our Municipality,” she said.

A loud advocate for women’s rights not just in the Assembly, but also outside, she received the most votes as a candidate in Gjilan, particularly from women.

Born in 1978 in Gjilan, Valentina Bunjaku-Rexhepi, professor of Mathematics, is also involved in activities outside politics. She is President of the women’s football club “Drita”. She feels honoured to serve as the head of the Assembly. She feels even prouder that she gained the trust of the majority of councillors from other political parties.

## Bent Plays in Prishtina Theatre, “Breaks Taboos”

Following its worldwide travels, people from Kosovo had the opportunity to see the play *Bent* by Marin Sherman in Prishtina on 21-22 Jan. The play, directed by Andrej Nosov, addresses the topic of homosexuality in Nazi camps. Its cast involves actors and human rights activists: Alban Ukaj, Branko Cvejic, Radovan Vujovic, Boris Ler and Drasko Adzic.

The play enticed a lot of emotions and captured the attention of Kosovo media. It has “broken taboos,” according to [Koha.net](#).

Spectators filled Prishtina’s Oda theatre, offering an elongated standing ovation following each performance.

“This play had a very good topic and performance,” commented Prishtina Mayor Shpend Ahmeti, who was among the audience members. “It deals with the persecution of people because of their beliefs and their sexual orientation. Therefore it talks about human rights, topics that usually are considered taboo. In this context, art can educate people,” he said.

The play was produced in cooperation with the Hartefakt Fund based in Belgrade and the LGBT advocacy group [Centre for Equality and Liberty \(CEL\)](#) in Prishtina.

After the play, [CEL](#) organized a discussion with journalists and audience members.

## KWN Contributes to EPLO Report on UNSCR 1325

KWN has contributed to a broader research initiative monitoring the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, published by the European Peace building Liaison Office (EPLO) in 2013.

Following its prior monitoring exercises, such as *1325 Facts and Fables*, KWN's most recent case study suggested that Kosovo has made "significant progress" towards implementing this Resolution since 2010.

"While Kosovo has yet to adopt a National Action Plan (NAP) on UNSCR 1325, the process of drafting a NAP has involved an inter-sector Working Group with representatives of key institutions and civil society," KWN's case study concluded. "The NAP's future implementation will depend on whether the Working Group is able to define more clearly institutional responsibilities for activities, budget allocation and monitoring."

## Members, Stakeholders Evaluate Positively KWN's Work

Another year was concluded with the traditional KWN Annual Membership Meeting, held on 7 Dec., where our members, among other activities, evaluated KWN's work. Each year members, partners and other stakeholders complete an anonymous questionnaire about the network's programs and services.

Respondents evaluated KWN's work during 2013 very positively. They found KWN's meetings and services "very useful". Respondents felt that KWN's biggest successes included implementing its strategy, awareness raising activities and the *Kosovo Women's Fund*. They also mentioned that with KWN support they submitted 121 project proposals to various donors last year.

"We are small organizations and lack experience in many fields," one member wrote. "KWN trainings helped us a lot."

"While applying for grants from the Kosovo Women's Fund, we learned how to write a project proposal. This is a very big thing for us," another member said.

Members think that KWF should be supported by local businesses and it also could be presented in other countries in order to find other possible funding.

Respondents also found KWN's electronic newsletter *Kosovar Women's Voice*, website and Facebook page "very useful".

While they said that KWN staff help them a lot, they would like staff to visit them more often. For this reason, KWN staff plan to organize more visits to members in 2014.



During the Annual Meeting, KWN members evaluate KWN's performance in 2013.

## Baroness Catherine Ashton Replies to Activists

Women's rights organizations from Kosovo, Serbia and Sweden, including KWN, *Mitrovica Women's Association for Human Rights*, *Women in Black* and *Kvinna till Kvinna* sent a letter to High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, *European External Action Service (EEAS)*, Baroness Catherine Ashton on 4 Dec. 2013.

In the letter, they said that United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security had not been implemented during recent talks between Kosovo and Serbia.

Baroness Catherine Ashton responded on 21 Jan. 2014. She thanked activists for their interest in contributing to the process of normalising relations between Belgrade and Prishtina.

"I look forward to meeting you in the course of my next visit to Pristina and Belgrade," she wrote.

Click [here](#) to view her letter.