



Kosova Women's Network

Serving, Protecting and Promoting the Rights of Women and Girls

Making the Case

Why support women's rights organizations?

Women's rights organizations have an important role to play in social change processes. They support the establishment of democratic institutions, further women's rights as human rights, transform gender norms, raise public awareness, provide services to the most marginalized (particularly in the absence of state services), and hold governments accountable through advocacy. All of these activities require commitment and resources.

Common Concerns

However, some donors have expressed their hesitation to support women's organizations due to some organizations' weak capacities, inadequate long-term strategies, and insufficient issue-based expertise. Some donors lack information regarding the achievements and impact that women's rights organizations have had in prior years.

Making the Case

Women's rights organizations are diverse. While some may lack capacities, others have decades of experience in their area of expertise. Several arguments exist in favor of supporting women's rights organizations:

- € Gender equality is crucial for EU Accession and guaranteed in accordance with Kosovo's national legislation. Therefore, supporting the development of Kosovo's institutions involves financing efforts to further gender equality. The *Paris Declaration and Accra Agenda for Action*, as well as OECD encourage donors to support the development of local capacities, including women's rights organizations.
- € Simultaneous support of private, public and civil society sectors is crucial for transformative change to happen. Just as funding civil society alone will not ensure institutionalization of policies towards gender equality, funding the government alone does not ensure implementation.
- € Women's rights organizations can make several crucial contributions to furthering gender equality and women's rights as human rights, including particularly via advocacy and awareness-raising.
- € Organizations can be more efficient and effective than for-profit bodies.

Key Contributions Made by Women's Rights Organizations

- € Pushed successfully for a 30% quota for women's and men's participation within the electoral law. Women's rights groups collaborated with other CSOs to defend the quota twice when it came under threat. The quota has contributed to women's increased participation in decision-making processes.
- € Advocated successfully for the establishment of the Agency for Gender Equality at the highest level of government, within the Prime Minister's Office (and not as a separate ministry).
- € Conducted research that informed and advocated for several new laws and policies related to gender equality and women's rights (e.g., Law and national action plan on Protection against Domestic Violence; Law on Gender Equality and National Program; National Action Plan for the Implementation of UNSCR 1325).
- € Assisted the integration of women who suffered sexual violence during the war. Put this issue on the agenda of the government and international bodies after 14 years of silence.
- € Empowered hundreds of women who lost men during the war to learn to drive, start their own businesses and live independently.
- € In the absence of state services, sheltered and assisted thousands of women and children who suffered gender-based violence.
- € Enabled thousands of rural and marginalized women to access healthcare through mobile clinics in collaboration with state institutions.
- € Furthered thousands of women's levels of education through life-long learning and supporting girls' access to higher education in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and UNICEF.
- € Pushed for enhanced government action on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) rights, leading to the establishment of a governmental coordination group on the issue.

Key Achievements of the Kosovo Women's Fund

Established in 2012 with support from Kvinna till Kvinna and later the Austrian Development Agency, the Kosovo Women's Network Kosovo Women's Fund offers a unique opportunity for donors to support grassroots women's organizations. The Fund enables donors to support smaller groups without the paperwork required for providing micro-grants.

The Kosovo Women's Fund is **unique** among local foundations in Kosovo. Beyond providing financial support, KWN seeks to further the capacities of both grant applicants and grant recipients using a "learning by doing" approach. All grant recipients receive tailored support based on individual needs assessments in developing their systems for financial management, organizational capacities and advocacy abilities, among others. The Fund seeks to empower and strengthen women's rights organizations so they can secure support for carrying out effective advocacy towards women's rights in the future.

KWN member organizations developed the grant criteria and application during a participatory process and members elect the Grant Review Committee. The Committee meets at least three times per year to select grant recipients using a points-based system. Organizations that do not receive grants still qualify for mentoring towards building their capacities for applying for funds in the future. The Fund thus seeks to foster solidarity (rather than competition) in building a strong and sustainability women's movement in Kosovo.

Small Grants, Big Changes

The Kosovo Women's Fund already has had a significant impact, particularly within rural areas where small grants (up to €3,000) can go a long way. Here are just a few examples...

Empowering women to prevent breast cancer

Few rural women can afford or access preventative screenings for early detection of breast cancer. Therefore Women's Centre "Prehja" taught women in Skënderaj how to conduct self-exams independently. For women from Syrigane village, this was the first time that they had ever gathered together outside their homes. It provided a space for sharing experiences about cancer within their families. The discussion also empowered women to organize a joint trip for their first professional medical check-ups. NGO Mundësia in Mitrovica, a KWN member, supported their transportation and access to the hospital in Prishtina.

Supporting rural women to market their products

In a village near Lipjan, several rural women left the

confines of their homes for the first time. NGO Parajsa Jonë gathered them in discussing strategies for growing and marketing plants. Afterward women sold their products for the first time in fairs organized in Prishtina. Others felt empowered to start their own organizations, joining KWN. This enabled their access to information about emerging opportunities, as well as facilitated communication with officials supporting agricultural development.

Securing institutional support, empowering women who suffered domestic violence

Cooperation with the Municipality of Gjilan resulted in NGO Gruaja Hyjnore (Divine Women) receiving a free venue for their activities. This enabled them to cut operational costs, contributing to the organization's sustainability. In addition to developing their advocacy skills, the organization collaborated with the shelter in Gjilan, involving women who suffered domestic violence in their activities. Sheltered women made handcrafts and learned about their right to inheritance. This inspired them to become independent in providing for themselves.

Empowering women lawyers to assist citizens

NGO Venera involved young women lawyers in offering marginalized people (especially women) in Peja free legal services. Women practitioners who often lack access to jobs had the opportunity to further their skills, while citizens received free assistance. In 17 cases, Venera helped beneficiaries address various institutions (e.g., courts, police, municipality, banks).

Supporting women's collaboration with institutions

The Foundation for Education and Development involved rural women from Novo Brdo in acquiring skills for preparing food and other products. They now sell these products at a kiosk near the Information Center in Novo Brdo. This has enabled women to develop relations with municipal officials and women assembly members. Now they voice their needs directly to officials. They also generate their own income.

Introducing Braille in schools

The Committee of Blind Women introduced students, teachers and school directors to the Braille alphabet in two Prishtina schools. They displayed Braille billboards in corridors, raising awareness among students and teachers about blind students. This instigated discussion about a subject little considered previously. The Committee also met officials from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology introducing this positive example and encouraging them to install Braille billboards in other schools.