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Kosovar Women's Voice

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

KWN Director in 1325 Advisory Group

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Igbalje (Igo) Rogova, [KWN](#) Executive Director, was recently invited by UN Women, New York to become a member of the High Level Expert Advisory Group for the Global Study on the 15-year implementation of UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325. The study fulfills UNSCR 2122, which calls for the UN Secretary-General to undertake a high-level review of women, peace and security by Oct. 2015. The study will examine the impact of work in this area during the past 15 years, including successes, challenges and recommendations for implementing UNSCR 1325. [Radhika Coomaraswamy](#) will be the primary author.

Adopted in 2000, UNSCR 1325 was the first UN resolution to address the impact armed conflict has on women. It calls for a gender-based perspective in all post-conflict processes, UN programming and Security Council missions, as well as gender-based training in UN peace operations. It requires equal participation of women in all efforts to further peace and security.

Rogova has been an international and domestic advocate for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 since its adoption. She used the Resolution to demand more meetings between UN officials, international decision-makers and women in Kosovo immediately after the war in Kosovo. Rogova also was instrumental in establishing the Women's Peace Coalition that united women from Kosovo and Serbia in demanding a role in the negotiations between their countries as per UNSCR 1325, as well as the Regional Women's Lobby for Peace, Security and Justice in South East Europe.

Rogova has advocated for more than a decade for the enforcement of this important Resolution within the country. In 2014, the Assembly of Kosovo officially adopted a National Action Plan for implementing UNSCR 1325. The action plan obliges the Agency for Gender Equality in the Office of the Prime Minister to create and lead an Inter-institutional Secretariat to ensure the Resolution's implementation.

Under Rogova's leadership, KWN has published several reports on UNSCR 1325. In 2011, KWN released a comprehensive publication called *1325: Facts and Fables*, a collection of stories and facts on the

implementation of the Resolution in Kosovo. The innovative publication has been used by KFOR, among other local and international actors in raising awareness about UNSCR 1325. KWN also was involved in the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office's monitoring of UNSCR 1325 implementation in Europe.

The upcoming Global Study will build on earlier high-level reviews, including the tenth anniversary review of UNSCR 1325 in 2010 and the 2002 Secretary-General's Study on Women, Peace and Security. The study aims to synergize with other major UN initiatives, including the 20-year review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action from the Fourth World Conference on Women, as well as the formulation of the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

The Journey Back Home

By Shqipe Malushi

Hundreds of women from [KWN](#) member organizations and their beneficiaries joined workshops and individual coaching on “Resilience and Wellness of Being” in villages and cities throughout Kosovo from 4 Jun. through 1 Sep. 2014. Workshops helped women reflect on the past and find new ways of moving forward. The journey for women was painful. Memories of war were still very fresh in their minds, and no one had really helped them heal or given them tools for releasing their pain and nightmares in order to find forgiveness.

In the city of Gjakova, women held pictures of sons and daughters missing since the war. They cried for hours for the injustice done, powerlessness and lack of support. After hours of mourning, release came by remembering victims in light of the living: by bringing out their values and qualities, not their loss; by focusing on their contribution, not their disappearance.

“For 15 years I have never felt lighter than today,” said one mother. “You are late. We needed this 15 years ago.”

In another village where many women had suffered rape, they called themselves “faceless women” without hope. There were many heartbreaking stories. One mother was gang raped by nine soldiers. She swore to fight this evil act for the rest of her life to protect her daughters. She encouraged other women to stand up and be proud for being survivors. She asked them not to carry the burden of shame because they were not guilty for this act. Together we managed to build a bridge of hope, a net of support through positive thinking and a new vision for life. In Prizren many young people with disabilities joined the workshop, finding hope for their future. A blind girl, the first in Kosovo to study for her master’s degree in Law, expressed a desire to study psychology in Turkey. We connected her with a Turkish university that expressed a desire to offer her a scholarship.

In the village of Krusha e Vogel, where almost all the men were killed, half the village had moved forward. From a single sewing machine gifted to her in 2003, one woman now had 10 machines and employed many women as successful tailors.

KWN members considered the workshops a breeze of fresh air. They gave me an opportunity to connect with people’s pain, and together we turned pain into hope. We created a platform of positivity where women could identify their pain, commit to healing and release their pain. Workshops helped women bond, forgive and let go of the past. New critical thinking and communication tools were taught. Many women regained their self-confidence in creating a better life. For me, this journey back home was very insightful. I was able to reconnect with my own land, my own

people; to remember my heritage; and to discover some of my own shortcomings that I, too, had to forgive and let go. Love is in every heart of my people who need healing in order to move forward and regain all of their values, which were stripped away from them. I am committed to raise my voice to all professionals, artists and humanitarians to ask for helping my people heal and build a new vision of hope.

Born in Peja, Kosovo, Shqipe Malushi has lived in the U.S. since 1980. A woman’s rights activist, she has worked in New York and travelled the world, providing mentoring, healing and empowerment to women and men. This summer, after many years away, she returned home to Kosovo.



KWN Work Highly Relevant, Effective, Review Concludes

KWN recently underwent a successful independent [mid-term review](#) of the [Kosovo Women's Fund \(KWF\)](#) grant scheme and support for municipal [Gender Equality Advocacy Groups \(GEAGs\)](#). The project that underwent review, supported by the [Austrian Development Agency](#) and [Kvinna till Kvinna](#), seeks to increase and improve women's participation in decision-making at the municipal level. [KWF](#) provides grants to KWN members, enabling them to further their organizational and advocacy capacities while undertaking initiatives tailored to addressing challenges in their municipalities and beyond.

The midterm review assessed KWN's work to be "highly relevant" to Kosovo's development needs, and based upon a well-researched and highly evidence-driven understanding of the country's current position. The project also was considered highly relevant to KWN's [Strategic Plan](#) for 2011-2014. Further, the report found that the project has made strong progress on all of its expected results, and therefore is on track to achieve its expected results and overall project goal. It assessed the achieved results thus far as very likely to be sustainable even after project completion.

Good progress, according to the report, has been made towards the goal of establishing five new GEAGs and supporting the work of the remaining eight. As of now, three new GEAGs (in Dragash, Drenas/Gillogovac, and Podujevo) have been established, and the Groups have strengthened their capacities with KWN's support. They have undertaken several successful advocacy initiatives at the municipal level towards furthering gender equality.

With regard to KWF, the report found that the project already has brought about "visible positive changes" on both the individual and organizational level. Individually, it was found that representatives of KWN members and project beneficiaries have been empowered with skills, knowledge from training and events and networking contacts, among others, as a result of the project.

On the organization level, KWN members displayed stronger development capacity (particularly with regards to project cycle management, project implementation, reporting, fundraising and advocacy) and improved internal processes and procedures. During interviews with grant recipients, many emphasized the on-going support they received during implementation, which they believe helped them complete their projects successfully, acquire new skills and strengthen their organizations overall.

The full report can be [read online](#).

Dokufest Participants Discuss Gendered Professions

On 21 Aug. 2014, [the United Nations Development Programme \(UNDP\)](#) organized a roundtable titled "Professions have no Gender" at [Dokufest](#) in Prizren. The discussed how different stakeholders can concertedly and comprehensively shape perceptions on gender equality, especially with regard to employment. The discussion was moderated by Donjeta Morina, Gender Project Assistant at UNDP. People shared their ideas and personal experiences. The discussion surrounded the results of the UNDP Public Pulse Report on Gender published in July 2014. The report recommended more awareness-raising activities, which led to this discussion. They noted how society creates and continuously reproduces social norms that limit career choices, based on a person's gender.

Debate surrounded UNDP's recent film, "Professions have no gender", which depicted the career aspirations of girls and boys. The conversation touched upon the effect of family, media and school on limiting the career choices of boys and girls, by imposing on them certain gender-specific norms and values.

"I am satisfied with this discussion, and I learned a lot from everyone present," said Donjeta Morina.



On 21 Aug, 2014, UNDP organized a roundtable titled "Professions have no Gender" at Dokufest. Photo: Haris Alija

Film Presents “Different Life” of Persons with Disabilities

Three hours before the movie began tickets were sold out. This amplified audience members' curiosity about the film to be screened at “*Kino në Lum*” (Cinema in the River) on 20 Aug. at [Dokufest](#) in Prizren. Ticket-holders watched the film from seats within the cinema, while others tried to watch from a distance.

The film, *Fotografia: Një Jetë Ndryshe* [*Photography: A Different Life*], was produced by the [Organization of Persons with Muscular Dystrophy of Kosova](#) (OPMDK) and directed by Galdim Vagangjiu. The film told the story of a photography workshop that changed the lives of a group of people with disabilities. The film was produced without any funds, on an entirely voluntary basis.

The Executive Director of OPMDK, Antigona Shestan, said that the special thing about this movie is that, despite their physical difficulties, the members of the organization that participated in the photography course led by photographer Nafis Llokvica completed this course. “We worked very hard to finish this film, and I didn't expect so many people to show up and support us,” she said. “I am so glad that so many people came to see our movie.”

This movie is not about people with special needs but is for special people, said Galdim Vagangjiu. “Their physical difficulties don't stop them from being great photographers and to realize their own expectations. The main reason why I wanted to do this movie is because these people had a tragedy in their life once, but they didn't stop and they had the great will to continue with their lives.”

Active Women Advocate to End Domestic Violence

[Active Women of Gjakova](#) (AWG), an NGO and [KWN](#) member, is working towards implementing the Law on Protection against Domestic Violence. They are working with girls and women of different ethnicities, especially Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians, to ensure domestic violence is treated justly and as per the full extent of the law in Kosovo.

Although the [Law on Protection against Domestic Violence \(Nr.03/LI82\)](#) sets a fairly comprehensive framework for dealing with domestic violence in the country, it is not yet fully implemented. Women and youth still do not have equal access to protection against violence, and the system for providing information about the assistance available remains inefficient. This is especially salient for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians.

“We are aware that domestic violence does happen to well educated women, that stand well economically also, and we're willing to work with women from different communities and backgrounds. But, as we've noticed from our everyday work, the biggest number of women who seek help in our NGO for domestic violence issues belong to Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities; few have attended school, and they have bad economic conditions,” said Valbona Rizvanolli, AWG Executive Director. Thus, AWG has undertaken an initiative to provide information sessions on topics including domestic violence in general, the laws that pertain to domestic violence and strategies for monitoring Gjakova Municipality's implementation of the Law on Protection against Domestic Violence.

Additionally, they have worked on publishing a monitoring report on the implementation of this Law, including with findings and recommendations. “It's very important to have such lectures with women from our community, but also with their husbands, children and other family members,” said Tabe Maliqi, a member of the community. “Their family members should also be informed about the consequences they will face in case they carry out violence against others within their families.”

By organizing these activities, AWG aims to ensure that the existing laws for protection against domestic violence are applied and enforced in Gjakova. It also seeks to help women become more aware about the law and their rights under it.

“After the workshop, I will see the effect of the lecture,” said Sakibe Doli, Executive Director of the Safe House in Gjakova, which shelters women and children who have suffered violence. Previously, in other neighborhoods and villages where we have held such lectures, the effect has always been immediate. Their awareness was increased and they undertook actions to stop domestic violence perpetrated against them.”

AWG's work has been made possible through a grant from the [KWN Kosovo Women's Fund](#), supported by the [Austrian Development Agency](#) and [Kvinna till Kvinna](#).



Peace Corps Learn about Women's Rights in Kosovo

On 8 Aug., [KWN](#) Executive Director Igballe Rogova spoke to approximately 20 Peace Corps volunteers about the position of women in Kosovo. The volunteers are the first-ever group to volunteer in Kosovo. They underwent a three-month comprehensive cross-cultural, language and technical training before leaving for their specific regions across the country to teach English in primary schools.

"On behalf of our U.S. Mission, I am proud to support Peace Corps in opening its newest post here in Kosovo," said U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Kosovo Tracey Jacobson. "We are excited by the prospect of volunteers working with Kosovo's citizens and making significant contributions to communities throughout the country. The friendships they make will serve the people of Kosovo and the United States for years to come."

The [Peace Corps](#) Program in Kosovo was launched on 9 Sep. 2013 with an official signing ceremony at the Office of the President in Pristina. The Program was invited to start its work by Atifete Jahjaga, [President of Kosovo](#), who signed the agreement along with Helen Lowman, Peace Corps former Regional Director and current Associate Director of Volunteer Recruitment and Selection.

"With the great support of USAID and the U.S. Department of State, the Peace Corps looks forward to establishing a vibrant and enduring program in Kosovo," Lowman said following the signing ceremony.

Upon signing this agreement, Kosovo became the Peace Corps' 140th country of service since its establishment in 1961. It is also the organization's first entry into a new country since opening a program in Cambodia in 2007. Peace Corps staff visited Kosovo after the agreement was signed and worked together with Kosovo's government to identify the local communities that would be best served by the agency's volunteers.

On 20 August President Jahjaga [welcomed](#) Peace Corps volunteers.

Peace Corps volunteers are also encouraged to participate in community and school-based projects. This offers opportunities to share experiences, exchange skills and knowledge and establish increased understanding between volunteers and their host communities. The Peace Corps approach is built on the importance of people-to-people, grassroots exchange of ideas.

Since its founding by U.S. President John F. Kennedy in 1961, more than 210,000 Americans have volunteered across the globe. The Peace Corps' mission is to promote world peace and friendship by fulfilling three main goals: help the people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women; help promote a better understanding of Americans by the peoples served; and help promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans. Currently, volunteers are working in local communities in the focus areas of agriculture, community economic development, education, environment, health and youth development.

Inspired Filmmakers "Tell their Stories" at Dokufest

During the vibrant international and multicultural film festival [Dokufest](#) in Prizren, one of many workshops organized was "Stories We Tell." It encouraged young filmmakers to share story ideas and to learn how to make documentaries related to human rights. Among them was [KWN's](#) Public Relations Coordinator, Donjeta Berisha. The workshop was led by director and cinematographer, [Richard Pearce](#) who directed "[Hearts and Minds](#)" and "[Road to Memphis](#)" among other films.

The intensive three-day workshop involved participants in group work, filming in different parts of the city.

"It was a wonderful experience," a participant said. "Sometimes when we couldn't go through with what we had planned and we had to improvise, it was amazing how dedicated we all became."

Participants explored the city, trying to find particular locations that they needed to film in order to finish their tasks. After filming during the day, they returned to discuss their work with each other and with Richard Pearce. He was touched by the creativity and great ideas that participants had. He promised that the cooperation would not end when Dokufest finished. He would continue to provide support.

During the festival, participants also had the opportunity to enjoy several films and develop their own ideas, which they presented to a jury. Jury members offered participants advice and strategies for overcoming challenges. Participants have one month to prepare their ideas and send them to the jury, which will select and fund eight films to be screened next year at Dokufest.



Participants discuss ideas at workshop "Stories we Tell" at Dokufest. Photo by: Patrik Gllozhani

KWN Thanks Our Stellar Interns



Every year, [KWN](#) offers internships for students from Kosovo and abroad. This summer we welcomed two interns from the U.S., Jennifer Davidson from Dartmouth College in Pennsylvania and Monique Nicole Morin from The New School in New York.

Jennifer and Monique worked during the summer at KWN offices and helped and made a huge contribution.

"I learned so much from my time at KWN about everything from how to write grant proposals to the impact of EU integration on women. The hands-on work really helped me grow, and I couldn't have asked for a more rewarding experience." - said Jennifer.



Jennifer and Nikki contributed to KWN in a myriad of ways, from contributing to our newsletter and public relations materials to drafting concept notes and project proposals to assisting KWN in carrying out research that we have always wanted to do but lacked the time. We thank them for their hard work and contributions!

If you would like to intern with KWN, please send your CV and a cover letter explaining your motivations, what you'd like to do and what you'd like to learn from the experience to info@womensnetwork.org.

Kosovo Young Feminists to Join International Caravan

After a slight summer hiatus, [the Kosovo Young Women's Empowerment Initiative](#) is renewing its activism, re-launched with an informal discussion that engaged a broader coalition of young feminists on Aug. 26 in Prishtina. Young feminists seek to broaden their coalition in advocating for issues of importance to Kosovo feminists in coming months.

The casual kick-off meeting had a special guest: Milena Abrahamyan from the Young Feminists of Europe Network shared information about the international "Feminist Caravan", which will take place from 8 Mar. through 17 Oct. 2015. In solidarity with the World March of Women, the Caravan will cross European (and perhaps other) borders. Its main theme is "Globalization of Solidarity", as Milena put it. The Caravan will seek to unite diverse feminists and feminist groups in different areas. It will bring to the forefront the different struggles that women in different areas face, identify similarities and encourage collaboration on combating issues of inequality.

The journey will be documented via a radio show, in collaboration with radio shows in each country, and as part a documentary film. The route of the Caravan is not entirely set yet. It will begin in either England or Turkey, and then will visit diverse countries in support of feminist events planned in those countries. The Caravan will definitely end at a larger event in Portugal. Feminists can join the Caravan for any part of the trip, or for the entire time.

A heated debate among the potential Kosovo participants surrounded the question whether men, and people who identify with other genders, can take part in the Caravan. The debate ended with the question whether this is "A feminist, or a women's Caravan?" Milena will bring this and the other issues discussed to the attention of the Caravan's organizers and a definitive answer will be provided on their website and/or Facebook page, where interested persons can also gather additional information about the Caravan as it becomes available.

Kosovo participants were eager to learn more about the Young Feminists of Europe Network and future plans for the Kosovo Young Women's Empowerment Initiative. In the next informal and fun meeting, scheduled for **Tuesday, 2 Sep.** at "Si n' Bahçe" in Prishtina, young feminists will discuss specific ideas, actions and goals for advocacy initiatives and empowering young feminists in Kosovo. Come join us!

P.S. Discussions will continue in other regions of Kosovo in the weeks to come – so if you can't make it to Prishtina, no worries – we'll visit your area soon!