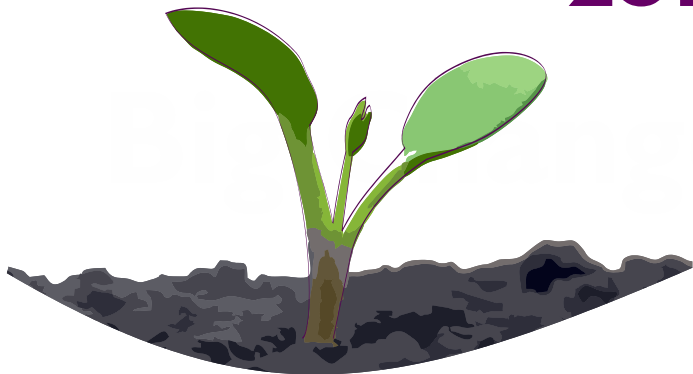




Kosovo Women's Fund

Little Grants,
Big Changes
2014



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Introduction

Since fall 2012, the Kosovo Women's Network (KWN) has provided 54 grants, totalling €133,009, to its member organizations through the Kosovo Women's Fund. By the end of 2014, these initiatives had **directly benefited a total of 6,551 diverse people**, including women with limited physical abilities, from rural areas, of various ethnicities (e.g., Turkish, Gorani, Serbian, Roma, Ashkali, Egyptian, and Albanian), men, youth, and pensioners. In addition, **1,832 women have participated in politics and decision-making processes**, many for the first time.

Starting in 2014, member organizations had the opportunity to apply for two different kinds of grants: Advocacy grants for a single organization with the maximum amount of €3,000; and Networking for Change Grants where two organizations could apply for a joint initiative up to €8,000.

These little grants have achieved big changes in a short period of time. This booklet tells some of their stories.

"This was the first time that we advocated to institutions. We are very happy about our collaboration with KWN staff."

- Fikrije Ferizi, NGO ATO

A Brief History of the Fund

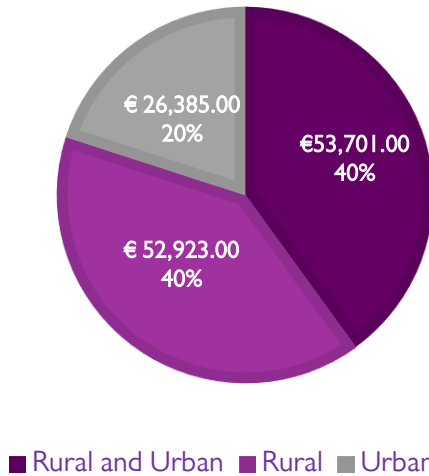
With generous support from Kvinna till Kvinna, and later the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) and Ipko Foundation, KWN established this Fund to provide small grants to women-led organizations that lack access to other sources of funding.

The Kosovo Women's Fund was established following a series of consultations in 2012 with KWN's member organizations regarding their needs and vision for the Fund.

The Fund meets a crucial need to support grassroots women's organizations amid shifting aid priorities in Kosovo. Shrinking budgets have forced many donors in Kosovo to close their grant programs or decrease funding for non-governmental organizations. Other donors have funds that are extremely difficult for local organizations to access. Women's groups that have limited English language skills struggle to obtain such funds.

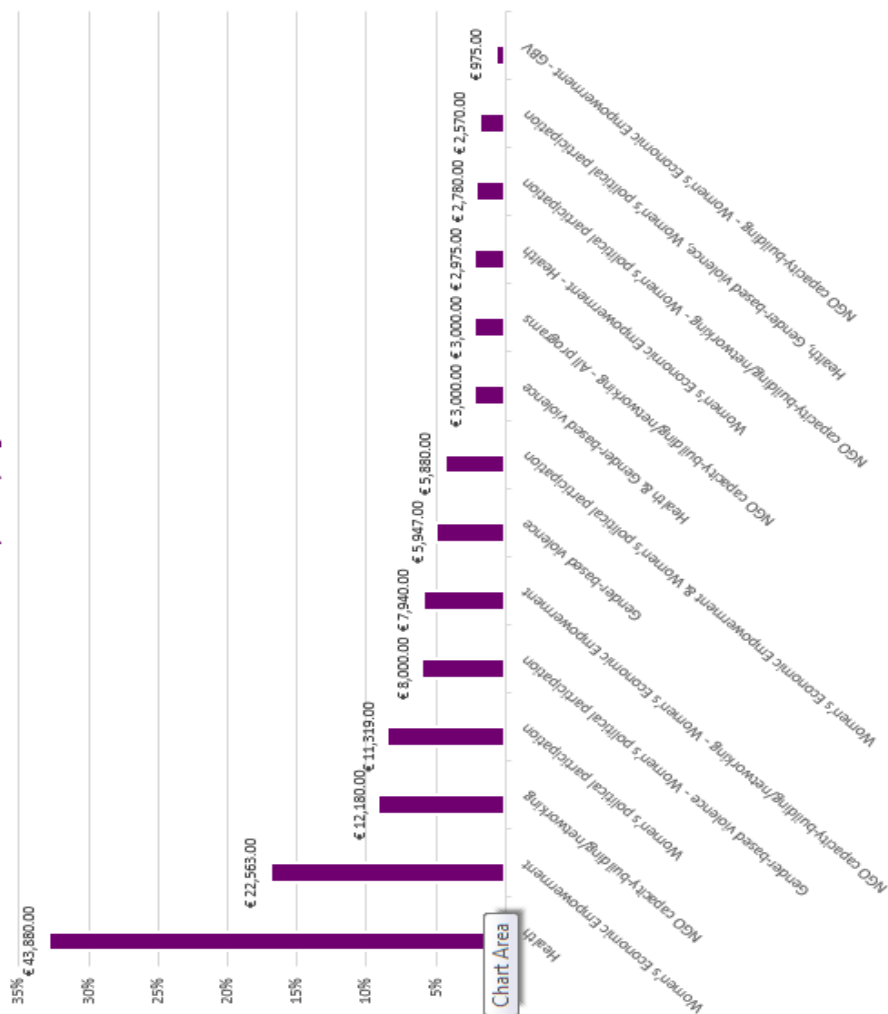
Yet, women-led organizations are well-placed to undertake very efficient and effective initiatives towards gender equality and women's rights at the municipal level, as our Kosovo Women's Fund has illustrated. Through the Kosovo Women's Fund, we seek to ensure that their important efforts continue receiving support.

Funds distribution by targeted groups 2012-2014



As the graph above illustrates, 40% of projects funded in 2012-2014 were implemented in rural and urban areas, 40% only in rural areas, and 20% only in urban areas.

Funds distribution by KWN programs 2012-2014



Funds distributed for 2012-2014 include initiatives for five KWN programs. In several cases, initiatives of KWN members consist of two or more programs, as shown in the above table. Projects with higher funding value include the Health program where 33% of funds were allocated, following the program of Economic Empowerment with 17% of funds allocated, 9% for NGO Capacity-building, and 9% for Decision Making and Political Participation, while the remaining of funds were allocated in the combined programs.

Kosovo Women's Fund Key Achievements

- 6,551 diverse women and girls (and some men) have benefitted since fall 2012
- 1,832 women have participated in decision-making processes, some for the first time
- At least 11 public policies changed to better meet the needs of women and girls, as a result of grant recipients' advocacy initiatives
- Increased KWN members' capacity to plan projects and write proposals. As a result, diverse KWN members, including rural and minority groups, have applied and received funds for the first time from different donors
- Municipal Gender Equality Officers and officials for gender equality were involved in KWN members' initiatives
- KWN members gained advocacy skills via a "learning-by-doing" approach and some undertook advocacy initiatives for the first time
- KWN members provided substantial co-financing for their initiatives
- Three KWN members have started undertaking advocacy initiatives at the central level for the first time
- KWN members have gained knowledge in creating and maintaining databases for monitoring and evaluation

How Does the Fund Work?

KWN's diverse member organizations are encouraged to submit applications for initiatives that would contribute to realizing Strategic Goals identified in the KWN Strategic Plan for 2011-2014. KWN members themselves selected these goals through a consultative process. They include:

- Strengthening KWN and its members
- Furthering women's participation in politics and decision-making
- Improving women's access to quality healthcare
- Combating domestic violence and trafficking in persons
- Women's Economic Empowerment

Women's organizations can apply for funding in the Albanian, Serbian, or English language, using the Application Form available on KWN's website www.womensnetwork.org.

In order to apply for a grant from the Kosovo Women's Fund, an organization must be a KWN member; plan and implement activities in accordance with their own organizational strategy; undertake activities that contribute to the KWN Strategic Plan; reach grassroots and/or vulnerable persons and groups; and lack other opportunities to secure funds.

The Kosovo Women's Fund Grant Review Committee, elected annually by KWN members, decides whether grant proposals meet the aforementioned eligibility criteria and to award grants using a points-based system.

Beyond Grants...

KWN also provides capacity development opportunities for grant applicants and grant recipients to strengthen our member organizations and our network.

KWN offers hands-on workshops, as well as individualized mentoring in grant-writing, project cycle management, and financial management, furthering organizations' capacities to apply for funding from other donors in the future.

"From this project, I learned the procedures affiliated with writing project proposals. KWN's advice was very useful since I did not have sufficient knowledge about writing project proposals before."

**- Fetije Mehmeti, NGO
Contemporary Woman**

KWN support for grant recipients does not end once a grant is given. We continue providing one-on-one mentoring for each grant recipient throughout their initiative and often beyond. This includes site visits, skills-building in financial management, assistance with organizational management, advice in effective advocacy strategies, facilitating networking with government officials, and problem-solving.

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

For more information about the Kosovo Women's Fund, visit our [website: www.womensnetwork.org](http://www.womensnetwork.org). KWN staff members can provide additional information via e-mail at grants@womensnetwork.org or by phone at +381 (0)38 245 850. Please contact us if you or your organization is interested in supporting the Kosovo Women's Fund.

How Do Others Evaluate the Fund?

This year, the Kosovo Women's Fund underwent an external Midterm Review of our project supported by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) and an External Evaluation supported by Kvinna till Kvinna. Elida Metaj, who carried out the *Mid-term Review of Project "Supporting, protecting and promoting the rights and interests of women and girls"* supported by ADA, concluded:

Overall, it is assessed that good progress is made towards three expected project results which contribute to the achievement of the project purpose that women's participation in local decision-making is increased and improved through capacity development of GEAGs [Gender Equality Advocacy Groups] and women CSOs and its overall goal that women's and girls' rights and interests are supported, protected and promoted throughout Kosovo. This assessment is supported with evidence from the project reports, interviews with the project staff and project beneficiaries and external stakeholders.

You can read the [Midterm Review](#) and the [External Evaluation](#) on KWN's website. We will take into consideration lessons learned and recommendations made in the review and evaluation in improving the Fund in future years.

"It is assessed that KWN staff's commitment, expertise, professionalism and flexibility to support KWN members and GEAGs have been key to the progress made to achievement of ERs, project purpose and overall project goal."

- Elida Metaj

OPDMK Advocates for Accessibility Ramps for Institutions in Prizren

Persons with disabilities do not enjoy opportunities equal to the rest of the population in Kosovo. In many cases, they remain isolated from society.

In order to address this, the Organization for Persons with Muscular Dystrophy in Kosovo (OPDMK) held roundtable discussions with representatives from responsible institutions, other non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and media. During meetings,

OPDMK advocated for persons with disabilities to have access to public institutions. They also raised awareness among responsible institutions about the importance of actively engaging all stakeholders to respect the rights of persons with disabilities.

Representatives of the local assembly promised greater engagement and proposed that a regulation would be initiated, which would better regulate issues faced by persons with special needs.

“We achieved for 27 out of 50 points of access to public buildings to be accessible for persons with muscular dystrophy,” stated Antigona Shestan from OPDMK. “This was



OPDMK marks sidewalks in Prizren regarding their accessibility for persons in wheelchairs.

realized through close cooperation with the Public Services Department of our Municipality.

In total, the initiative directly benefitted 139 people. However, indirectly many more people with limited mobility and parents with strollers also have benefitted from improved access to public buildings in Prizren.

Another achievement is that a representative of OPDMK was proposed to become a member of the Municipal Council for Community Security. Within the council, she will be able to continue advocating for the rights of persons with disabilities.



To address the isolation that many people with disabilities face, OPDMK also gathered people with special needs from throughout Kosovo so they could socialize and discuss issues of mutual interest. They held electronic and regular wheelchair races at a local private high school, "Loyola".

Women's Initiative Association Supports Women's Advocacy

In the Municipality of Dragash, historically few women have been employed. This is a consequence of unwritten rules that suggest that women's contribution at home is sufficient and they need not enter public workplaces, which are reserved more for men.

The Women's Initiative Association, however, soon found that amid these conditions, organizing professional courses for women was the right move at the right moment. In doing so, they supported women in gaining skills that would soon enable them to find jobs.

From June 2012 through July 2013, the Association received a Kosovo Women's Fund grant (€3,000) that enabled them to organize sewing courses in Dragash in Bresane villages. The course was held six times a week and lasted five hours, benefitting 33 young women. During the course young women learned skills that would enable them to be employed in the textile factory soon to open in Dragash.

*Young women
participate in
sewing courses
organized by the
Women's
Initiative
Association in
June 2012 – July
2013 in Bresane
village, Dragash.*



Meanwhile, the Women's Initiative Association cooperated with Mrs. Lindita Kozmaqi-Piraj, Municipal Official for Gender Equality, to organize a meeting between young women from Opoja and Mr. Salim Jonuzaj, Mayor of Dragash Municipality. During the meeting, young women had the opportunity to voice their needs and priorities to the Mayor. For several young women, this was the first time that they ever spoke with a public official. They requested support for continued sewing courses, support for illiterate women to attend literacy courses, and for securing jobs at the new factory.

As a result of their meeting, the Mayor agreed for the municipality to cover expenses for continued vocational training and transportation for young women to continue secondary school. However, he said that he could not interfere directly with the hiring process of the new company.

Soon after, the company opened and young women applied for the new jobs. Almost every young woman who applied was hired, has signed a contract, and has begun working at the factory. Following advocacy by the Women's Initiative Association, 24 women have secured employment.

"I am very happy for the success that we achieved," said Xhejrane Lokaj, Executive Director of the Women's Initiative Association. "I will continue to support women to achieve all their goals."



This young woman is among 24 employed by the new factory in Dragash thanks to the Women's Initiative Association's support.

Norma Advocates for Women's Right in Inheritance

All people, including women, have an equal right to inheritance according to the law, but in reality women rarely realize this right. Even though the Inheritance Law provides for women to be treated equally, the relevant provisions are not implemented in practice. In many cases patriarchal traditions, according to which men tend to receive the bulk of inheritance, are often stronger than the Law.



Valbona Salihu, Norma Executive Director, opens a discussion among civil society and institutions regarding women's right to inheritance.

The fact that women tend to be deprived of their right to inheritance perhaps is best illustrated by the fact that only 7.9% of property in Kosovo is registered solely in women's names.

Norma Association of Lawyers is seeking to address these issues by promoting "Gender Equality in the Right to Inheritance."

Norma received a grant of €2,810 from the Kosovo Women's Fund to monitor inheritance cases in courts in five municipalities: Prizren, Podujeva, Gjilan, Mitrovica, and Vushtrri. During visits to these municipalities, Norma also met the Heads of the Basic Courts.

Norma presented the findings and recommendations on 16 September 2014 during a roundtable that involved representatives from civil society and relevant institutions.

"The court cannot do anything alone in this direction," said a judge from the Appellate Court of Kosovo. "Women and also

men should receive information that traditions do not apply, but there is a law that should be respected.”

The meeting was very interactive and resulted in several recommendations, including:

- The Civil Registry needs to initiate ex-officio inheritance procedures, as anticipated by the Law. If this article is not respected, the person responsible should be penalized;
- The Kosovo Judicial Council should select specific judges to be responsible only for family inheritance cases, which would expedite the process.
- A wife’s inheritance should be differentiated from her family’s, as hers.
- There should be ex-officio registration of properties.
- Awareness-raising regarding this law is needed via public debates and brochures.

Norma’s full report with findings and recommendations will be available on the KWN website.



Norma Association of Lawyers organized a roundtable where they presented findings and recommendations resulting from their monitoring of inheritance cases in courts in five municipalities.

***Shqiponjat e Dardanës* Examines Women's Inclusion in Decision-making**

When it comes to decision-making positions, women are not represented equally in the Municipality of Gracanica. Several women also lack decision-making power within their families and society more generally.

All political parties in Gracanica are led by men. Women are included in party lists during the elections because the quota in the electoral law requires women's and men's 30% representation in party lists. However, in the past, most women on the lists have been family members of men political party leaders. This occurred again during the municipal elections in 2013. The possibility of a woman being voted into the municipal assembly seemed out of the question.

With support from the Kosovo Women's Fund (€2,804), NGO *Shqiponjat e Dardanës* organized meetings with women, including young women, in several villages in the Municipality of Gracanica (Kishnicë, Shushicë, Suhadoll, and Radevë) in order to inform women about their rights.

The organization also surveyed 120 randomly selected respondents regarding the role that women can have in politics. The respondents included men and women from Albanian, Serbian, and Roma backgrounds throughout Gracanica Municipality.

This was the first time the organization had carried out a survey to inform their advocacy efforts, and the experience enabled them to enhance their skills in research methods and data analysis, following individualized mentoring from KWN staff.

Once the research findings were finalized, the organization's staff met with the Municipal Officer for Gender Equality, Ms. Sunçica Trajković who simultaneously is the

Head of the Women's Informal Group in Gracanica. Marijana Simić and Nevenka Rikallo, members of the group, also participated. They informed *Shqiponjat e Dardanës* representatives that they can be part of the Women's Informal Group in the Municipality of Gracanica in order to better coordinate activities in the future.

"Based on our experience, we recommend that you invite media when you present the survey results," said Ms. Sunčica Trajković. "This will enable you to reach and inform as many people as possible. We can help you in that regard."

On 30 Oct. 2014, *Shqiponjat e Dardanës* organized a roundtable where they publicized the results of their research. According to their findings, 19% of respondents believe that women and young women need training on decision making, and 35% believe that the municipality needs to offer a separate budget line for women.

Skënder Thaçi, Officer for Culture, Youth, and Sports in the Municipality of Gracanica, and Marija Stanković, Officer for Human Rights, informed participants that the Municipality has, for the first time, ensured a separate budget line for women and women's rights, amounting to €5,000.

"Our next step will be to hold a meeting with many officials, where we will discuss cooperation with the municipality on future initiatives," said Havushe Bunjaku, Director of *Shqiponjat e Dardanes*.

Partners Kosova Advocates for Women's Property Rights

Many women in Kosovo continue to struggle in difficult social and economic situations due to failures in implementing crucial laws, including the Law on Gender Equality (articles 16.6, 16.7, 16.8) and the Law on Inheritance. Research conducted by the Norma Association of Lawyers has found that 41.5% of women respondents have property registered in their husbands' names. Moreover, 19.87% of unmarried women said that their property is registered in their father's name, and 19.7% of married women said that their property is registered in their father-in-law's name.



Partners Kosova organizes a meeting with municipal officials and NGO representatives, during which they advocate for women's rights to property and inheritance.

Therefore Partners Kosova (PK) began an initiative to help women advocate for their rights to property and inheritance. PK worked with different groups of women, young women, and youth in four municipalities: Skenderaj, Drenas, Lipjan, and Ferizaj. They cooperated with municipal officers for gender equality in selecting participants.

In order to organize these meetings, PK received support from the Kosovo Women's Fund, amounting to €2,880. Meetings were organized in cooperation with municipal and NGO representatives in the respective municipalities. PK also organized one day meetings during which project participants met different municipal institutions. Participants were diverse including women from rural areas, NGO activists, students, gender equality officers, youth working in the municipality, as well as representatives of relevant institutions, such as: cadastral officers, notaries, and courts.

In total, 109 women and young women, as well as 34 men and young men benefited from this project. Beneficiaries gained information on how to advocate for women's property and inheritance rights.

Pensioners Advocate for Free Osteoporosis Screenings

The Law on Health Insurance was approved by the Kosovo Parliament in 2014. The implementation of this law is expected to begin in 2015. In accordance with this law, check-ups for detecting osteoporosis should be free of charge starting in 2015. In 2014, however, check-ups to examine bone density cost €40 per person, including for pensioners. The Law for Pensioners has yet to be approved.

In the meantime, with support from the Kosovo Women's Fund (€2,812), the Association Vita-Jeta sought to help as many women as possible in detecting osteoporosis and seeking treatment. Vita-Jeta advocated to the Family Medicine Centre in Prishtina, the responsible health institution, to bring the machine for density check-ups to Vita Jeta's office. As a result, a specialist in rheumatology also was assigned to provide Vita-Jeta's members with check-ups.

Since most of Vita-Jeta's members are pensioners, they are particularly in danger of this disease. Only a few of the association's members can afford to pay for regular medical check-ups, which would make early detection possible.

Therefore, Vita-Jeta organized six monthly lectures by



Vita-Jeta provides free osteoporosis exams for its members.

the rheumatology specialist at their office. During the lectures, more than 500 women learned about this disease.

“We learned things we didn’t know. The doctor was very good and clear during the lecture,” said one participant.

Following lectures, women who could not otherwise afford an exam were eligible to receive a free exam.

Vita-Jeta is waiting for such check-ups to be free starting in 2015, as per the Law. If they are not, Vita-Jeta plans to advocate for its members’ right to free check-ups. Vita-Jeta already has informed its members about this right and how to advocate for their rights.

Further, Vita-Jeta has proactively involved its members in signing a petition, which demands that the Ministry of Health offer free testing to diagnose possible cases of osteoporosis and for the Law on Health Insurance to be applied. It also calls for the Law on Pensioners to be approved. As of October 2014, 500 women had signed the petition. Vita-Jeta will deliver the petition to the relevant authorities in 2015 should its members’ rights not be respected.

The process of signing a petition involved more women in making their voices heard, requesting that officials address their needs, and demanding their rights. For many Vita-Jeta members, this was the first time that they became aware of their rights and involved in advocating for their rights.

FED Advocates for Free Transportation in Novo Brdo

For citizens living in rural areas of Novo Brdo, public transportation was free until the end of 2013. Then, citizens were required to pay for public transportation. This caused serious problems for inhabitants of this region.

Residents of Novo Brdo felt neglected and forgotten. Therefore citizens organized in an attempt to resolve this issue themselves. However, this was done without support from the local authorities and without any concrete action plan for influencing municipal officials.

With support from the Kosovo Women's Fund (€2,630), the Foundation for Education and Development (FED) organized trainings on how to advocate to local institutions. Inhabitants from three communities in Novo Brdo attended. Following the training, citizens formed an action group to advocate on this issue. The advocacy group included 21 people from three ethnic groups.

"During the training we learned how to advocate and became empowered to advocate," stated one of the participants. "Now we are looking forward to future actions."

In these trainings, they discussed the possibility of coordinating future actions, as well as methods for advocating more generally for issues related to improving the lives of citizens in this region.

After the training, the group collected 500 signatures from citizens and submitted it to the local assembly. The group continued to advocate directly to the Mayor. He later made public transportation an issue in the list of municipal priorities. All residents of Novo Brdo will likely benefit from this starting in 2015.

Active Women of Gjakova Informs Citizens about Domestic Violence Law

Despite the many mechanisms created by the Kosovo Government towards addressing domestic violence, many women still suffer from domestic violence. KWN's 2008 research found that approximately 46.4% of women have experienced domestic violence in their lifetimes. Prevention of future violence requires awareness-raising among the public, including with regard to the Law on Domestic Violence.

Active Women of Gjakova received support from the Kosovo Women's Fund (€2,780) in order to raise awareness among women and youth, primarily via schools. They raised awareness in rural and urban areas of the Municipality of Gjakova about Law Nr. 03/L-182 on Protection against Domestic Violence. They also worked with stakeholders responsible for the implementation of this law, such as prosecutors, judges, and police. Together they discussed how to better protect persons who have suffered domestic violence and how to decrease violence.

The organization also organized information sessions on domestic violence. In total, 413 persons attended these trainings, including women and young women from Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities.

"Something that surprised us during the school sessions was that students had no awareness about the 16 days of activism against gender based violence," said Valbona Rizvanolli, Executive Director. "They also lacked basic knowledge about the existence of a functional coordinating mechanism on domestic violence in Gjakova."



Active Women of Gjakova organizes an information session about domestic violence at a local school.

As a result of this initiative, the number of reports filed regarding domestic violence has increased, according to Active Women of Gjakova. The initiative also has contributed to improving efficiency and accountability on behalf of the coordinating mechanism responsible for assisting persons who have suffered domestic violence in terms of prevention, protection, and reintegration, they said.

Hendifer Advocates Successfully for Two Mammography Devices

Women from rural areas in particular lack information about the importance of early detection and regular medical check-ups towards preventing the spread of breast and cervical cancer. Regular check-ups can allow early diagnosis and successful treatment.

With support from the Kosovo Women's Fund (€2,630), Hendifer took the initiative to address this issue in five villages of the Municipality of Ferizaj (Balaj, Nerodime, Greme, Komoglave, Zaskok, and Slivove). In cooperation with heads of villages and directors of schools, they secured venues for women's participation in lectures and trainings. For women in rural areas, such special spaces for women can be important for enabling them to leave their homes and gather together to discuss issues of importance to them.

During trainings, 205 women had the opportunity to ask questions related their health condition and concerns. For women worried about a dangerous mole, the doctor examined them during the training. The doctor also showed women how to carry out self-exams for breast cancer at home.

As a direct result of this awareness-raising initiative, 105 women visited doctors and carried out tests.

"Unfortunately, we have two women that were diagnosed with cervical cancer, but they found out in time and now they are receiving treatment," said Fazile Bungu, Executive Director of Hendifer. "Their life is no longer in danger."

Women from seven villages of the Municipality of Ferizaj (including Jezerc, Cernille, Zllatar, and Koshare, among others) have sent written requests to Hendifer, requesting that they continue organizing these trainings in their villages as well. This motivated Hendifer's staff to initiate something more

sustainable; they convinced the Health Department of the Municipality of Ferizaj to advocate for a mammography unit for the municipality.

With support from the director of this department and the Kosovo Women's Network, Hendifer sent a request directly to the Health Department. The request was accepted. As a result of this initiative, the hospital in Ferizaj now has two mammography machines. Now women from Ferizaj and the region have better access to check-ups.



Hendifer informs women from Dremjak village about breast and cervical cancer.

Association Raises Students' Awareness about STDs and Drugs

Students in Kosovo do not receive sufficient information about sexual and reproductive health in school. This has several negative implications. Young women and men lack basic understanding of issues related to Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs). This makes youth more susceptible to STDs. Further, due to the lack of specialized centres dealing with STDs, there is insufficient data regarding the STD occurrence rate in Kosovo, especially HIV/AIDS. Moreover, the cultural context in Kosovo has led to the stigmatization of persons suffering from STDs.

At the same time, drug abuse among youth seems to be on the rise. This simultaneously can contribute to increases in the number of youth affected by STDs.

To address these issues, the Association for Education and Family Care organized an awareness-raising campaign, supported by the Kosovo Women's Fund (€2,390). The main activity consisted of awareness-raising workshops with students. These workshops focused on the dangers of HIV/AIDS and drug use.



The Association for Education and Family Care (SHEPF) organizes an awareness-raising workshop with pupils about the risk of HIV/AIDS and drugs.

Moreover, a quiz was conducted with young women and men. During this activity, they had the opportunity to learn while having fun. After the quiz, the winning groups received books as awards.

“The quiz was not only creative and fun, but it helped us achieve the goal we had set: to analyse how many students had understood the issues raised during the workshops,” said Bahrije Deva Vehapi, Executive Director.

The project’s findings and results were shared during a roundtable discussion. Attendees included representatives from two municipal directorates (education and health), as well as representatives from the Institute for Mental Health.

The roundtable participants discussed issues related to HIV/AIDS and drug abuse. The representative from the Directorate for Education announced that the Directorate would begin pilot projects in some schools in the Municipality of Gjakova. The pilot will introduce “health education” as a separate school subject.

“We will continue our advocacy by monitoring the pilot project to include health education as a separate school subject even after our project officially ends,” said Deva-Vehapi.

Gora Economically Empowers Women

After numerous discussions between the Gorani community and NGO Gora, they mutually decided to initiate an activity that would help to involve Gorani women more in all areas of public life in Kosovo. With support from the Kosovo Women's Fund (€2,780), Gora succeeded in realizing this goal.

Their initiative included two trainings: one in Prishtina and one in Dragash with women who work in manufacturing traditional clothing. During the trainings, participants obtained fabric that they could use and also were trained in manufacturing clothes. Participants then had the opportunity to sell the clothes that they manufactured at a clothing fair in Prishtina. In total, 17 Gorani women benefitted from this project.

"As a result of this initiative we succeeded in motivating Gorani women to cooperate and work as a team," said Sevdije Ramadani, Executive Director of NGO Gora. "We also encouraged them to sell their products in the market, even

though generally men deal with business in Gorani communities, not women."

This initiative enabled Gorani women to participate in six additional fairs where they could sell their products. It also helped them understand that they can play an important role in



Gorani women participated in a fair in Prishtina where they sold products that they made during trainings organized by NGO Gora.

economically empowering their families.

Gruaja Bashkëkohore Ensures Medical Care for Women

Health care education is essential in preventing diseases and is key to personal and family healthcare. Hospitals in Kosovo do not fulfil all of the necessary technical requirements in terms of offering facilities for patients and especially people with disabilities.

To address these issues, supported by the Kosovo Women's Fund (€2,065), NGO *Gruaja Bashkëkohore* took the initiative to organize psychosocial trainings and fitness therapy for women in the Municipality of Prizren.

"Participants welcomed this training, especially middle age women who were sacked from their jobs after the war when social enterprises were privatized," said Fetije Mehmeti, Executive Director of *Gruaja Bashkëkohore*. "They're now in distress because they're not working, but they also are not of the right age to receive retirement benefits." Without jobs, women lack financial resources also to undertake regular check-ups towards safeguarding their health.

Therefore, *Gruaja Bashkëkohore* advocated to the Health Department and to the Family Medicine Unit for breast cancer and mammography screenings year-round and not only during the one-month campaign on breast cancer awareness. They also advocated to the Physiotherapy Unit to extend the length of time that therapies are offered.

Cooperation with the Health Department has resulted in the association's members receiving check-ups for breast cancer at the Family Medicine Unit. They receive free mammographies year-round, as needed. So far,

approximately 63 women have benefitted from healthcare check-ups that resulted from this organization's advocacy.

Through this initiative, *Gruaja Bashkekohore* also has established successful cooperation with the Physiotherapy Unit in Prizren's hospital. As a result, physiotherapy now will be extended to two months rather than 21 days, as it was previously.



NGO Gruaja Bashkëkohore organized psychosocial trainings and fitness therapy for women in Prizren. They then advocated successfully for them to receive physiotherapy for a longer duration from the hospital in Prizren.

Free Transportation Makes Attending School Possible in Vushtrri

The simple act of walking to school poses an enormous challenge in itself for students from the rural areas of Vushtrri Municipality. Lack of infrastructure and school buildings has rendered it impossible for students to attend mandatory primary and secondary education. In turn, this frequently leads students to drop out of mandatory education. This is a direct result of institutional failure to provide free transportation for all children living more than four kilometres away from school, a legal requirement.

“There are four young girls who have completed ninth grade with outstanding grades living in our village. However, they had to terminate school attendance due to their school being located very far away. Their families do not have the financial means to cover transportation costs,” said one village representative. Precisely for these reasons, the Women’s Center “ATO”, with financial support worth €2,850 from the KWN Fund advocated for free transportation for students from four villages in Vushtrri: Skrom, Ropic, Samadrexhë, Ceceli, and Sllakovc.

As a first step, “ATO” met with chairpersons of the five villages in order to inform parents about the Law on pre-University Education Nr. 04/L-32. Article 15, point 5 of this law, specifically states that it is the responsibility of each Municipality to organize free transportation for students living four kilometres away from their schools.¹ After receiving information about this law, parents decided to advocate to local institutions for implementing this law. A roundtable was

¹ Law Nr. 04/L-32 on Pre University Education in the Republic of Kosovo, 2011,

organized on 3 September 2014, where parents and village chairpersons raised many concerns and recommendations. Participants of the roundtable included representatives of the Municipal Assembly of Vushtrri, the Director of Education, the Director of Finance, OSCE representatives, and civil society representatives. During the round table, Municipal representatives showed their readiness to support the realization of requests made based on the law.

“Representatives from the municipality have always been aware of the existence of the law, as well as their responsibility to offer free transportation,” said Fikrije Ferizi, Executive Director of the Women’s Centre “ATO”. “Nevertheless, until now its lack of implementation has been justified by budget cuts,” she added.

“ATO” activists did not discontinue their activities after the first meeting, however. They organize 10 more advocacy meetings with the Mayor of Vushtrri, Mr. Bajram Mulaku, and the Director of Education, Mr. Musa Terbunja.

As a final result of these advocacy initiatives, municipal institutions agreed to offer free transportation for the students of the village Sllakovc, whereas for the four other villages transportation should begin in January 2015. Ultimately, 83 women, men, girls, and boys have benefitted from this initiative. An additional result of the advocacy meetings is the fact that the Directorate of Education also agreed to support the education of seven young girls from the village Skrom, who previously had no financial means to attend secondary school.

Women and Girls in Dragash Turn the Tables in Decision-making

The Association Women's Initiative has taken an important step towards mobilizing women for active participation in social and political life. This initiative came as a result of the lack of active participation of women and girls of Dragash in social and political life, particularly their absence in the Municipal Assembly and other decision making institutions.

Around 220 Albanian and Gorani women and girls, ages 16 to 50, benefited from the various meetings and six workshops organized within the scope of the initiative "Sharri women aiming to become involved in social and political life," supported by KWF in the amount of €3,000. Participants of the meetings included members of the KWN Gender Equality Advocacy Groups, assembly advisors, the Gender Equality Officer, as well as women representatives of municipal districts of Blaq, Bresanë, Pllajnik, Gllaboçica, and Restelica.

The meetings and workshops provided space for women and girls to receive information on the relevant legislation which pertains to their life inside and outside the family. This encouraged and motivated many women to address their requests to the local and central level, while partaking in important decision making processes. One such important decision making process was the planning of the municipal budget for the year 2015.

"The enthusiasm and willpower of women and girls towards improving their position in society has surpassed all our expectations," said Xhejrane Lokaj, Executive Director of the Association Women's Initiative. On 18 September, the Municipality of Dragash organized a budget hearing on the 2015 municipal budget. For the very first time in its existence, the Dragash Municipal Assembly saw 40 women and girls present at the meeting.

“For the first time, five women rose up, as concerned citizens of Dragash, and took to the podium to share their comments and proposals. They expressed their requests and opinions on the municipal budget for 2015,” said Lokaj.

Further, in order to successfully raise the awareness of citizens regarding the obstacles faced by women and girls in Dragash, the Association Women’s Initiative organized two debates in local radio in both languages (Albanian and Gorani-Bosnian).

“We tried our best to inform citizens on about achievements and impacts that the women and girls of Dragash have made on society,” said Vjollca Sejdiu, part of the implementing staff of the initiative.

As a result of the initiative, groups of women activists formed in six villages of the Municipality of Dragash. These groups will be invited to partake in meetings and other gender related activities that will occur within the Municipality.

Additionally, the Women’s Initiative Association has reached an agreement with the Mayor of the Municipality of Deçan, who agreed to support gender programs for the women of Deçan. Dragash activists will work with the same commitment and determination in Deçan, sharing their experience.



Around 220 Albanian and Gorani women and girls, ages 16 to 50, benefited from various meetings and six workshops organized in the scope of the initiative “Sharri”.

CPWR Continues Support for Survivors of Sexual Violence

Following the success of the 2012 initiative towards identifying women who have experienced sexual violence during the war in Drenas, the Centre for the Promotion of Women's Rights (CPWR) has continued with their second initiative, this time tackling the region of Skenderaj. For this initiative they received support from the KWF worth €3000.

Before officially instigating their initiative, representatives of CPWR met with the Officer for Gender Equality of the Municipality of Skenderaj, who showed great support towards this initiative, and recommended CPWR contact and cooperate with the Vice Mayor of the Municipality of Skenderaj. The Vice Mayor demonstrated support as well, and expressed his willingness to cooperate. Further, he voiced his backing in conducting research in the areas of Skenderaj, since the topic at hand is very sensitive and not much has been done in Kosovo so far.

CPWR organized various meetings in schools and personal visits to families, and succeeded in identifying 21 cases where women had experienced sexual violence during the war. CPWR continued to collect testimonies on these 21 cases, in order to ensure as much institutional support as possible for the prosecution of those engaged in these acts. They also referred many women for rehabilitation to the Kosovar Center for the Rehabilitation of Torture Survivors (KRCT).

"Through this project we gained a lot of information on the position of women in the Municipality of Skenderaj. During our meetings and visits with sexual violence survivors, we understood that their health situation is very fragile," said Kadire Tahiraj, Executive Director of CPWR.

Since many women were in very fragile health situations, CPWR continued its advocacy towards the Directorate of

Health in the Municipality of Skenderaj. This time, they advocated for free gynaecological examinations to be offered to survivors of sexual violence. The Directorate of Health ultimately agreed to this request, and 21 women received free examinations.

“It is important to mention that this service will continue to be free for all women who have experienced sexual violence during the war in the Municipality of Drenas,” said Syndyze Qorri, CPWR staff.

The road to these advocacy successes was paved with many difficulties and obstacle. Owing to the sensitive nature of the topic, CPWR very frequently faced hindrances from men and boys. More specifically, during the initiative they had to deal with one ex-KLA combatant who (unsuccessfully) attempted to interrupt meetings held in schools. Such actions arise from the fact that sexual violence during the war remains a taboo topic for public discussions in Kosovo, especially for men.

Ultimately, as a result of the success of this initiative, CPWR has succeeded in ensuring free medication for women who have undergone gynaecological examinations, and 92 women directly benefited from the initiative.

Municipality of Prizren Acquires new Gender Equality Action Plan

Since the expiration date of the current Gender Equality Action Plan 2012-2014 in Prizren was fast approaching, the association *Dora Dorës* (Hand to Hand) seized the moment to update this action plan for two more years, 2015-2017.

With financial support from KWF (€3,000), the Municipality of Prizren, and Swiss Caritass, *Dora Dorës* succeeded in drafting a new Action Plan in December 2014. After the compilation of the new draft, they created working groups with representatives of different fields of expertise, local institutions, and civil society. This cooperation enabled the continuation of efforts related to gender equality, by drafting new objectives for 2015-2017.

Ultimately, it was agreed for the new Action Plan to contain seven areas: education; health; economic empowerment; women's rights and gender based violence; women in decision making; improving the image of women in media and culture; and active participation of women and girls in sports and



Dora Dorës involved actors in drafting a new Action Plan in December 2014.

culture. Since the previous plan was not fully implemented, and requires more effort, five of the above mentioned fields are similar to those in the 2012-2014 Action Plan.

The new Gender Equality Action Plan 2015-2017 was published in four languages: Albanian, Serbian, Turkish, and English and will soon be available on the website of Dora Dorës. Dora Dorës staff strongly believe that through the new Action Plan efforts for achieving gender equality in Prizren will continue.

“The Action Plan will positively impact coordination and encourage better collaboration between stakeholders, especially between civil society and local political institutions,” said Vjosa Curri, Executive Director of Dora Dorës Association. “The main result for this initiative is the publication of the new Action Plan itself, as well as the commitments made by municipal representatives to implement it,” she added.

This initiative was fully supported by the Mayor of Prizren. Additionally, the Directors of the Directorates of Health, Labour and Social Welfare, Tourism and Development, and Agriculture and Rural Development made public statements, committing to plan annual budgets according to the Action Plan, so that the objectives can be realized.

In the end, all citizens of the Municipality of Prizren will benefit from the new Gender Equality Action Plan 2015-2017.

Venera Offers Legal Aid for Domestic Violence Survivors

Many previously unknown issues faced by women in Peja were revealed through the initiative “Women’s Advisory Office for legal-administrative and economic-financial procedures,” implemented by NGO Venera with support from KWF in 2013. Their prior legal work had revealed several cases connected to domestic violence and a consistent denial of women’s right to inheritance. Therefore, Venera instigated a new project in 2014, titled “Violence against Women is not a Family Matter”, and received KWF support amounting to €2,467.

The project directly benefited 27 women who received services including: drafting of complaints against court decisions, lawsuits, audits, drafting proposals for the execution of court



NGO Venera offers free legal aid for women survivors of domestic violence in Peja.

decisions, judicial counselling, other emergencies, and drafting other documents of legal-administrative nature. The number of parties who received or continue to receive legal aid is 35, 13 of which are new cases, while 12 are cases that are ongoing since their 2013 initiative.

In the scope of this initiative, 14 court proceedings were monitored: seven proceedings related to domestic violence, four to divorce, one to alimony, and two to proof of paternity. The monitoring of court proceedings was conducted in the Basic Court of Peja, as well as its branches in Klina and Deçan.

Another important activity of NGO Venera was the arrangement of three roundtables. Two were organized exclusively with women survivors of domestic violence, as well as women who have faced legal problems such as overly prolonged institutional and court procedures. Roundtable participants discussed the problem of the non-implementation of existing legislation.

Participants additionally received information on the procedures which domestic violence survivors ought to follow, and the institutions they need to approach. Further, Flora Memia, representative of the local Women's Shelter "Operation Recovery", was present at the roundtable and informed participants about the conditions of the shelter and the opportunities that it offers for women that have experienced violence.

Some of the main recommendations that resulted from the roundtable, and were addressed to the relevant institutions included: professional counselling for unmarried couples; drafting prenuptial agreements which would specify the personal assets of each partner; and awareness raising among citizens especially women, on the direct and indirect contributions made by housewives towards the economy.

Afterwards, NGO Venera organized a third roundtable, in order to publish the data collected during the implementation

of the project. Participants included representatives from the Office of Victim Protection in Peja, OSCE, the sector for violence victims, the Centre for Social Welfare, lawyers, a judge from the Basic Court of Peja, various economic and legal experts, civil society representatives and citizens.

“One issue that became apparent during our monitoring of court proceedings, was that during divorce settlements, fathers are almost always given custody of their children. This is a direct result of women’s economic marginalization, as in all instances the mothers were unemployed,” said Venera Gashi, staff member of NGO Venera.

On the other hand, in instances where mothers received custody of their children, the fathers rarely paid alimony, thus committing the criminal offence of “failure to comply with the order of the court”. However, to this day, no offender has been sentenced over this offence.

NGO Venera plans to continue offering free legal aid for women who have experienced domestic violence in Peja.

Women in Gjakova Successfully Advocate for Tax Reforms

Long administrative procedures and a lack of institutional support prevent women's economic empowerment, despite the desire and motivation of many women to become involved in business activities. Institutional support would be an important source for generating new employment possibilities and for creating stable family incomes, which in turn would be a key solution in alleviating unemployment in Kosovo.

Therefore, Top Radio, an organization in Gjakova, instigated a campaign advocating for exemption from taxes for women and girls establishing their own businesses.

"Until now there have been no initiatives that discussed, let alone received approval for tax exemptions in Gjakova," said Ardiana Dema, Director of Top Radio.

With support from the Gender Equality Advocacy Group, including women Municipal Assembly Members, Top Radio succeeded in proposing changes to the Tax Regulation. Receiving a majority of assembly member votes, this change was approved hence permitting exemption from taxes for one year. This decision directly obliged the Directorate for Finance, the Directorate for Economic Development, the Directorate for Urbanism, the Directorate of Cadaster, and the Directorate for Agriculture to immediately begin implementing it.

After this successful advocacy initiative, Top Radio continued with other activities in order to contribute to the sustainability of the initiative itself. They organized meetings with leaders of the municipal districts of: Rugova, Bec, Gjakova, Dol, Bërkoc, Racajt, Hereqit, Krelan, and Dobrosh, to inform them about the project and the importance of supporting women in business. Further, Top Radio organized trainings on drafting Business Plans.

During trainings, 213 women received information on mitigated tax procedures, as well as receiving crucial know-how in creating business plan. As a result of this initiative, five new businesses were opened by women who had attended the trainings.

Top Radio also informed women about application opportunities for various funds for opening their businesses, including one call for applications by the British Embassy in cooperation with NGO Kosovar Women's Initiative.

"Through the knowledge they gained during the trainings, women showed the necessary courage and abilities to apply for this call, where a business plan was requested. Some of them were successful, and secured funding for their projects," said Ardiana Dema, Director of Top Radio.



With support from the Gender Equality Advocacy Group in Gjakova, Top Radio succeeded in proposing changes to the Tax Regulation.

Women, Girls in Drenas Demand Quality Healthcare Services

Access to quality healthcare services regarding reproductive health in Kosovo is very limited. Lack of appropriate conditions, low quality prenatal care, pregnancy care, and abortion provision are often the main factors that lead to maternal death. According to the World Bank, the mortality of mothers in Kosovo is 43.3 deaths in 100,000 births, one of the highest rates in [Europe and Central Asia](#).² Additionally, traditional, social, and cultural norms impact women's healthcare practices quite substantially. Very often women hesitate to undergo routine gynaecological examinations, mostly because of the fact that most gynaecologists are men. This is a result of the lack of sexual education in schools, limited access to family planning, and lack of awareness about breast and endometrial cancer.

In order to tackle the aforementioned issues, NGO Bliri, with support from KWF worth €2,975, implemented the initiative "Improving women's access to quality healthcare". This project was implemented in five villages of Drenas: Tërstenik, Baicë, new Çikatovë, Shtuticë, and Polluzhë.

In cooperation with activists residing in those villages, medical centres in Drenas, and civil servants in the Directorate of Health, NGO Bliri organized workshops towards improving women's and girls' access to quality healthcare; trainings on early pregnancy prevention; and individual/group discussions with mothers and daughters on improving access to quality healthcare.

² Document version of World Bank For Official Use Only, International Development Association, the International Finance Corporation and the Multilateral Investment guarantee, State Partnership Strategy for the Republic of Kosovo, 2012, p. 8

Around 332 women in Drenas were direct beneficiaries of these activities. The knowledge they gained in the trainings was crucial, especially for women for whom this was the first time they received information on this topic. The young women participants stated that they feel more knowledgeable, as similar topics had never been discussed outside or inside the family, be it with parents, sisters, or brothers.

“The active participation of women and girls has led to them bringing up numerous topics related to sexual health,” stated Mahije Smajli, Executive Director of NGO Bleri.

This NGO also realized research in those five villages, which involved focus groups. The findings of the research were presented in a report during a roundtable discussion. Participants included all women and girls who participated in roundtables, different women-led organizations working in



NGO Bleri organized various activities including workshops on the improvement of women and girls access to quality healthcare.

Drenas, representatives from healthcare centres, as well as from the centre for social work.

Some of the report's findings include: women require more information on healthcare, including information on healthcare services provided by the state; relevant institutions have worked very little towards this issue; there is the need to build a hospital or at least to appoint one community healthcare centre or one gynaecologist who will offer services to women living in the areas around Drenas. Women and girl participants in the roundtables requested that the representatives of local institutions provide access to a mobile mammography machine, particularly for marginalized women.

As a result of this advocacy, the Mayor of the Municipality of Drenas promised that they will appoint one doctor that will visit villages and will ensure that the mammography machine will visit every corner of the Municipality of Drenas.

NGO Bliri will continue its advocacy towards the improvement of healthcare services in this municipality, until their requests are realized.

Open Door and *Ruka Ruci* Cooperate to Empower Women

The Republic of Kosovo has a very advanced legal framework. However, the implementation of this framework remains one of the biggest obstacles facing Kosovo. A substantial part of this problem is connected to the lack of implementation of legislation related to gender equality and women's rights.

Acknowledging the lack of knowledge and information that women living in rural areas have about gender equality and women's rights, the organizations Open Door and Ruka Ruci, cooperated towards implementing the project "Transferring knowledge and raising awareness on the Law on Gender Equality." This initiative was realized through a KWF Networking for Change grant amounting to €8,000.

The first activities of this initiative included the arrangement of six workshops where women received information about protecting their legal rights, including mechanisms and instruments tackling violence and discrimination.

"Cooperation between women of different villages, women of different ethnic backgrounds, and collaboration with representatives of municipal assemblies was encouraged during the workshops," said Belgjzare Muharremi, Executive Director



Open Door and Ruka Ruci cooperate towards empowering women.

of NGO Open Door. “We involved 213 women and girls, 54% of which are Albanian women, 43% are Serbian, 2% are Roma, and 1% are Gorani women.”

Additionally, three meetings with women and girls from the villages: Dobrotin, Ugljare, Gračanicë, Hajvali, Bardhosh and Slivovë were organized. During the meetings women’s challenges and problems were identified, with the objective of addressing them to assembly members. They sought to advocate for assembly members to voice their concerns in assembly meetings.

“There is a colossal need for women to become knowledgeable on the rights guaranteed to them by law. Its importance lies in that they can make use of appropriate mechanisms and instruments to protect their rights, only if they are aware of their existence,” said Nevenka Rikallo, Executive Director of Ruka Ruci.

After the initial meetings, a roundtable was organised with the slogan: “Together against violence towards women and girls”, with a total of 30 participants. In addition to women from aforementioned villages, representatives of the Agency for Gender Equality were present, as well as various NGOs working to defend human rights.

During the roundtable, women from Gračanica raised many issues and problems they face, emphasizing those related to infrastructure, especially difficulties regarding the lack of regular electricity, wastewater, and the lack of movement for women outside of Gračanica. Similarly, women from rural areas of the Municipality of Prishtina raised issues of infrastructure, and talked about the lack of implementation of the Law on Gender Equality. They emphasized issues related to women’s lack of security, limited freedom of movement at night, as well as abuse at home. Lastly, they presented recommendations to Kosovo institutions and civil society organizations, including the importance of raising awareness among women and other citizens about the Law on Gender Equality.

IAB Advocates for Implementation of the Law on Blind Persons

The Law for Blind Persons in Kosovo entered into force in June 2012. Nevertheless its implementation thus far has not been adequate. On paper, this Law guarantees the protection of blind persons from discrimination, exploitation, and abuse. It simultaneously guarantees their exception from taxes.

The Inter-municipal Association for the Blind (IAB) in Prizren has resolved to advocate for adequate implementation of this law, with a special focus on Article 13, which guarantees free urban transportation and a 50% discount on inter-urban transportation for blind persons and their companions.

With support from KWF amounting to €2,620, IAB instigated the project “The implementation of the Law on Blind Persons.” In the scope of this initiative they held six workshops in order to inform blind persons about the Law on Disabled Persons; the Law on Blind Persons Nr. 04/L-092; the education of blind persons; and the employment of blind persons. A total of 37 participants directly benefited from this initiative.

“We believe that lack of commitment is an important reason



IAB advocates for the implementation of the Law on Blind Persons.

for the failure to implement this law. However, blind people’s lack of knowledge about opportunities [provided by the law] and advocacy is also a reason,” said Miradije Buqaj, Executive Director of IAB.

As a result of the workshops, participants finalized the following recommendations:

- Municipal institutions should consider persons with disabilities (the blind included) whilst compiling of regulations. This recommendation was sent to the Office for Human Rights in the Municipal Assembly of Prizren
- The Law on Persons with Disabilities should be carefully implemented, especially Article 10 according to which the education of blind persons in preschool, primary, secondary, and tertiary level remains the responsibility of the Municipal Assembly and the Directorate of Education Science and Technology. Hence it should be implemented by these institutions. This recommendation was sent to the Directorate of Education, Science and Technology in the Municipality of Prizren
- Municipal institutions should Implement Law Nr. 03-019 on Disabilities, Rehabilitation, and Employment of persons with disabilities, particularly Article 12, points 1 and 2. Recommendations will be sent to the Office for Human Rights and the Director of the Employment Centre.

These recommendations were discussed more thoroughly during the last workshop where Mr. Lulzim Kabashi, Vice President of the Municipal Assembly was also present; Mr. Nexhat Qoqaj, Director of Education, and Mr. Zyber Rizanaj, Director of Health were present as well. The officials acknowledged that the recommendations are very important for the lives of persons with disabilities, particularly blind persons. They promised to take implementing these recommendations very seriously.

“The vice president stated that the municipal assembly will try to implement every Article of the legislation,” said Miradije Buqaj.

Motivated by this initiative and the support they received from officials, participants of the project were ready to continue their advocacy efforts. They believe that the implementation of these laws will open up new possibilities for their futures.

Deaf Women, Girls Receive Better Treatment at Medical Centres

Insufficient funding in the sector of healthcare in Prizren has negatively impacted deaf women and girls particularly. According to the Association of Deaf Women in Prizren, the lack of sign language interpreters poses an enormous problem in raising awareness among deaf women and girls about the importance of gynaecological exams and early detection of breast cancer.

This is a very complex problem, as on one hand deaf women and girls cannot speak nor hear, and on the other hand doctors do not understand sign language. Hence, doctors cannot understand their symptoms and have difficulties prescribing deaf women and girls remedies and drugs. As a consequence, giving wrong prescriptions to deaf patients can lead to different complications such as heart attacks, blood pressure increases, and breathing problems.

With KWF support worth €2,600, the Association of Deaf Women in Prizren set out to raise awareness among women and girls regarding their rights and how to advocate for better implementation of laws for deaf persons. They initially organized a workshop where they informed deaf women and girls about the Law on Healthcare Nr. 04/L-125, on persons with disabilities, and the deaf. After many discussions women and girls succeeded in identifying the main challenges: lack of identification cards for deaf persons through which they could receive many services for free; even through sign language is an official language, there is a lack of interpreters in public institutions, especially healthcare clinics and hospitals; misunderstandings between patients and doctors continue; and they lack access to rehabilitation centres.

Subsequently, the Association of Deaf Women organized another training where they offered guides on how to use hearing equipment, medical counselling, as well as psychological and social counselling. Additionally, they organized four more roundtables through which they managed to directly advocate to the Directorate of Health, the Directorate of Social Welfare, and the Ministry of Health to better implement laws on deaf persons. In general, all officials said they will engage in implementing the legal framework around the issue.

Representatives of the Health Directorate in Prizren promised that they will issue a special decision for the Family Medicine Centre and for healthcare centres, so that deaf persons do not have to wait for prolonged periods of time at counters, due to the staff not understanding sign language. Additionally, it was promised that a special training will be held for the staff, so as to make the treatment of deaf persons as qualitative as possible

“Another important promise from the Directorate of Health in the Municipality of Prizren was that whenever there is the need for interpreters in medical centres, they will call an interpreter which will attend to the needs of deaf persons,” said Krenare Hajredini, Executive Director of this organization. “Until now this service has not been offered, and nothing has really been done to alleviate the problem. Hence, this is a great achievement for everyone, especially for deaf women and girls,” she added.

In total, 54 deaf women and girls benefited from this project.

Serbian, Roma Girls Acquire Knowledge about Cancer

The social situation of women in rural areas remains heavily influenced by patriarchal norms, stereotypes and gender-based biases. Through their work in Prilluzha, the organization Luna has understood that women's rights in this region continue to be oppressed because of the widespread patriarchal mentality. In most cases, women do not have the courage or the option to protect their own rights, especially in relation to gynaecological examination and reproductive health. Personal health, especially regarding breast and endometrial cancer are among the main challenges women in Prilluzha face.

Therefore, the organization Luna with support from KWF in the amount of €2,410 enabled 93 Serbian and Roma women and girls from Prilluzha, Babimoci, Plemetina, Uglara and Fushe Kosovo, to become familiar with breast and endometrial cancer, and to advocate for better healthcare services.

They organized meetings with volunteers and with the women of Prilluzha. During the meetings, they discussed fighting biases and stereotypes in their communities. Participants also had the opportunity to speak with a gynaecologist, Ms. Minire Bunkaku Zuna, who talked about breast and endometrial cancer, as well as self-examination and preventive methods. Ms Bunjaku Zuna distributed brochures with information on these diseases and offered a total of 67 free ultrasound examinations for all the women who were present.

"After we learned to conduct self-examinations, women's attitudes towards facing cancer changed. They attained a more positive attitude and promised that they will make use of self-examination methods at least once a month," said Stanica Kovacevic, Executive Director of Luna.

As a result, a roundtable was organized with Serbian and Roma women, a doctor from the community health centre, a representative of the Prilluzha primary school pedagogy. The topics of discussions included an analysis of the health situation of women during the implementation of the project and cooperation towards rural women's health improvement.

"Based on Ms. Bunjaku Zuna's report, 70% of the women she examined had never received an examination before. This illustrates the need for organizing similar activities in the region," said Marina Milosevic, Project Coordinator.

Whereas the doctor from the community health centre of Prilluzha stated that "the need to have such services is very large. We have the necessary equipment in our hospital, but we do not have sufficient staff to use it. We express our willingness to cooperate with you and to improve women's health in Prilluzha in the future."



Serbian and Roma women and girls learn about breast and endometrial cancer.

AEFC, Gruaja Hyjnore Promote Health Education in School Curricula

Insufficient health education in schools continues to pose an obstacle for many youth. In the beginning of 2014, with support from KWF, the Association for Education and Family Care (AEFC) successfully advocated for the inclusion of health education as part school curricula in the Municipality of Gjakova. This resulted in a pilot project where Health Education was offered as a school subject in two schools in Gjakova.

In order to ensure the sustainability of this initiative AEFF and the organization Divine Woman in Gjilan decided to share their experiences and combine their advocacy efforts for this cause, now simultaneously in both municipalities. The beneficiaries of the project were a total of 740 pupils of 6th, 7th, 8th, and 9th grades from the villages of Mulliq, Bec, Cermjan, and Ponoshec in the municipality of Gjakova and the villages Bresalc, Malishevë, and Zhegër in the municipality of Gjilan.

Through this project they advocated to local and central institutions to introduce Health Education in the school curricula. This would include education on personal hygiene, contagious diseases, sexually transmitted diseases, drugs, HIV/AIDS, vaccinations and other issues regarding the health of students.

This advocacy effort included informative meetings with the Directorate of Education, meetings with parents and students from lower secondary schools; meetings with leaders of the inspectorate of education in the Municipalities of Gjakova and Gjilan; the development of educative sessions and the distribution of brochures regarding protection against sexually transmitted diseases; organizing various interactive quizzes; organizing therapy sessions on the dangers they face; art

exhibitions on the local level; as well as a questionnaire evaluating knowledge regarding Sexually Transmitted diseases.

In addition to these activities, these two organizations continuously increased their advocacy efforts. After meetings with relevant institutions they organized an additional roundtable to discuss health education. Participants included representatives of the Municipality of Gjilan, the Head of the Municipal Assembly, representatives of municipal directorates (education and health), different NGOs, school directors, teachers, and parents. In this roundtable, the statistics and analysis resulting from their project were presented, and participants had the opportunity to offer recommendations regarding which future steps should be taken.

“The introduction of this new school subject is of the utmost importance, but it requires that staff are specifically trained in this field, since there is a widespread lack of knowledge on these issues. It could be offered as an elective course from third or fourth grades,” stated Veton Uka, from the Directorate of Health.

Based on recommendation made during the presentation, an advocacy strategy was drafted that will be used in coming years, possibly in other municipalities as well. This initiative was supported by the Kosovo Women’s Fund with a Networking for Change Grant worth €8,000.

Summary of Grants Given in 2014

CSO	Title of initiative	Location	Amount
Round 4			
Women's Initiative Association	New opportunities towards advancing employment	Dragash	€3,000
Hendifer	A Healthy Woman - A Happy Family	Ferizaj	€2,630
Association for Education and Family Care	More awareness - Less risk	Gjakova	€2,390
Organization of Persons with Muscular Dystrophy of Kosovo	My step, my challenge	Prizren	€2,700
Contemporary Woman	Help today for a better future for women with disabilities	Prizren	€2,155
Alma	"Identifying and economic empowerment of women in two local communities of Peja	Peja	€2,854
Gora	Economic empowerment of women from Gorani communities	Prishtina/ Dragash	€2,780
Round 5			
<i>Shqiponjat e Dardanes</i>	Breaking the silence about women's position in the	Kishnic/ Gracanica	€2,804

	municipality of Gracanica		
Foundation for Education and Development	Organizing and interethnic cooperation of the women in Novobrd	Novo Berdo	€2,665
Vita Jeta	Health care of women in the third period of life	Prishtina	€2,812
Women's Association Violeta	Leader of Education in my Community	Barileva/P rishtina	€2,780
Partners Kosova	Women's advocacy for gender equality, their rights to property and inheritance	Prishtina	€2,880
NORMA Lawyers Association	Gender Equality in the Right for Inheritance	Prishtina	€2,810
Active Women of Gjakova (AWGJ)	Implementation of the law on protection from domestic violence	Gjakova	€2,780
Visionary Woman of XXI Century	The fight against cancer	Has, Gjakova	€2,885
Round 6			
NGO Bliri	The improvement of women's access to	Drenas	€2,957

	quality health care		
NGO Hand to Hand	Development of Gender Policies in the Municipality of Prizren	Prizren	€3,000
Women's Initiative Association	Women of Sharr aims to integrate in social and political life	Dragash	€3,000
Luna	Prevention is the key to health: Regular medical exam save lives	Prilluzha/ Vushtrri	€2,410
The Centre for Promotion of Women's Rights	Identification of rape cases in the municipality of Skenderaj	Drenas	€3,000
Open Door and <i>Ruka Ruci</i>	Empowering vulnerable women through knowledge and awareness on the Law on Gender Equality, Law No.2004/2	Prishtina/ Fushe Kosovo (Uglare)	€8,000
Association for Education and Family Care and <i>Gruaja Hyjnore</i>	Be aware for a better life	Gjakova/ Gjilan	€8,000

Women's Center "Ato"	Involvement of women (and men) in the community to advocate in the municipality to ensure free transport for all children for obligatory education	Vushtrri	€2,850
Association of Deaf Women – Prizren	Women become active in preserving their health	Prizren	€2,600
The Inter-municipal Organization of the Blind and Partly Sighted – Prizren	Implementation of the Law for Blind People	Prizren	€2,620
NGO Top Radio	Release women and girls from municipal taxes for new businesses	Gjakova	€3,000
NGO Venera	Violence against women is not a family matter	Peja	€2,467

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