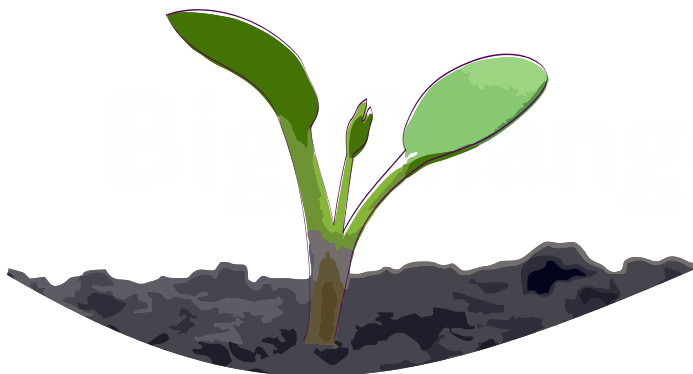




Kosovo Women's Fund

Little Grants,
Big Changes



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About the Kosovo Women's Fund

Since fall 2012, the Kosovo Women's Network (KWN) has provided 12 grants, totalling €10,209, to its member organizations through the Kosovo Women's Fund. These initiatives **directly benefited 928 diverse women** including women with limited physical abilities, from rural areas, of various ethnicities (e.g., Turkish, Gorani, Serbian, Roma, Ashkali, Egyptian, and Albanian), youth, and pensioners. Many more people within their communities benefited indirectly. These little grants (up to €1,000) have achieved big changes in a short period of time. This booklet tells their stories.

**"I felt part of a great initiative
that changed the lives of
women from rural areas."**

- Grant recipient

But first, we would like to share some history about the Kosovo Women's Fund. With generous support from Kvinna till Kvinna, KWN established this Fund to provide small grants to women's organizations that lack access to other sources of funding. The Kosovo Women's Fund was established following a series of consultations with KWN's 100 member organizations regarding their needs and vision for the Fund.

The Kosovo Women's 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.

In 2013 and 2014, KWN will provide at least €60,000 per year in grants to its members, supported by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) and Kvinna till Kvinna (KtK). We are seeking additional funding and plan for the continual growth of the Kosovo Women's Fund.

Kosovo Women's Fund Key Achievements

- **928 diverse women benefitted to date**
- **Increased KWN members' capacity to write proposals**
- **Diverse KWN members, including rural and minority groups, have unique access to funds**
- **Municipal Gender Equality Officers and other institutions involved in KWN members' initiatives**
- **KWN members provided substantial co-financing for their initiatives**
- **High demand for continuation of Kosovo Women's Fund**

How does the Kosovo Women's Fund work?

Three times per year, KWN's 100 diverse member organizations are encouraged to submit applications for initiatives that will 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
- Combatting domestic violence and trafficking in persons
- Empowering women economically

Women's organizations may apply for funding in either Albanian or Serbian languages, using the Application Form available on KWN's website (www.womensnetwork.org). In order to apply for grants 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.

Starting in January 2013, initiatives supported by the Kosovo Women's Fund may last up to six months and receive up to €3,000, though the funding ceiling and timeframe may increase as KWN secures additional funds. The Kosovo Women's Fund Grant Review Committee, elected annually by KWN members, meets three times per year to decide whether grant proposals meet the aforementioned eligibility criteria and to award grants using a points-based system.

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.

KWN support for grant recipients does not end once a grant is allocated. 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.

"KWN is very successful in delivering services to its members. The hard work of KWN staff is visible through the support they give to small NGOs, so NGOs feel empowered."

- KWN Member

For more information about the Kosovo Women's Fund, please visit our website at: <http://www.womensnetwork.org/?FaqlD=33>. 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.

***Vita-Jeta* Diagnoses Osteoporosis**

Given the lack of knowledge about osteoporosis among the elderly in Kosovo, and the diseases' difficult to observe nature, *Vita-Jeta* ("Life"), an association of approximately 850 retired women, launched an information campaign about the disease. They organized a lecture about osteoporosis and provided free of charge medical exams for diagnosing the disease.

"Even though I was once a nurse, I never realized I was suffering from osteoporosis," said Remzije Pireva, a *Vita-Jeta* member. "It was only through *Vita-Jeta* that I took the initiative to do the test for diagnosing it." Since then, she has followed the doctor's orders and taken the recommended medicine. "Now I am feeling much better," she said.

Remzije was among 243 retired women tested for osteoporosis by *Vita-Jeta*. Through these free exams, nearly one-third of the women learnt that they suffered from osteoporosis. Like Remzije, some have received treatment thanks to *Vita-Jeta* representatives who convinced a local pharmacy to provide free medication to retirees living in poor economic conditions.



Women wait to add their names to the day's list for free medical exams.



A woman is tested for osteoporosis in Prishtina at Vita-Jeta.

“We are very keen to offer the same possibility to all members of our NGO,” said Ajshe Nuhui who leads *Vita-Jeta*. Such free screening and medication can be crucial for elderly persons living in Kosovo, many of whom struggle to survive in dire economic conditions.

Vita-Jeta also assists its members with doctor-prescribed therapies. “Since they are members of our NGO and attend regularly our meetings, it is easy for us to see if they are following the medical advice that they have received,” said Ajshe Nuhui.

Due to *Vita-Jeta*’s accomplishments in only two months, 500 of the association’s members are knocking on their door, hoping that they too can receive this diagnostic test. *Vita-Jeta*’s awareness-raising efforts have successfully educated their members about the importance of the test.

Vita-Jeta representatives say that they will apply to the Kosovo Women’s Fund again so that they can build on this success and provide similar services to more members. They also plan to seek funding from other possible sources, using their new fundraising skills, developed with support from KWN staff.

Blind Women Learn to Cook

Yllka cannot wait for the opportunity to surprise her family with traditional meatballs on the table. She is blind; thus few people in Kosovo expect her to cook, or do much of anything for that matter.

The Association of Blind People in Prizren has taken the initiative to empower more blind women to become autonomous. Through their program “Let’s Learn to Cook,” Yllka and nine other blind women have learned to cook independently.

The organization, a branch of the national Association of Blind People, aims to protect the integrity and rights of blind people, further their education, and help them integrate into Kosovo society.

“Of course it is harder for them to learn to cook, as they must learn based on touch,” said Miradije Buçaj, the organization’s Director. “However, as a blind woman and a mother of two daughters, having prepared meals, cleaned the house, ironed



Members of the Association of Blind People in Prizren learn to make qofte (Albanian-style hamburgers).

and done all other house work, I can say it is possible for these women to achieve it.”

Beyond learning new skills, the project also brought women together and enabled them to create new friendships. For women who have limited to no social life and lack support from their families, encouragement from newfound friends facing similar issues offers hope.

“It is a challenge for us,” Yllka said. “But it helps us a lot, and it also gives us the opportunity to socialize with other blind women and girls.”

The women who participated in the project have committed to sharing what they have learned with other blind people.

“This project was a special pleasure and I benefited a lot from it,” said Valmira Berisha, another participant. “In our families they do not allow us to cook because we are blind. The experience of learning is extraordinary. I have learned to cook not only for myself, but for others as well. I have become independent.”

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Women Advocate Sale of Traditional Products to Mayor, President

At *Arta's* office in Prishtina, women worked expeditiously. Their fingers quickly moved in and out of the traditional clothes. They were busy preparing traditional garments for the Mayor of Prishtina, Isa Mustafa, and the President of the Republic of Kosovo, Atifete Jahjaga.

The garments were donated along with a mannequin with the hope that these politicians would promote Kosovar women's handmade products, including displaying them in their offices. The garments now consider the main hall of Prishtina Municipality their new home.

The organization *Arta* received support from the KWN Kosovo Women's Fund for this initiative. *Arta* trained women in traditional handcrafts, improved women's economic situation and furthered women's social integration.



Women presented a mannequin wearing traditional clothes to the office of the Mayor of Prishtina and the President of the Republic of Kosova, towards promoting women's handmade products.

"I am extremely grateful for the opportunity that has been offered," said Valbona Durmishi. She earned money through sewing, which offered her some economic empowerment. Her earnings enabled her to help her family and educate her children.



Members of "Arta" sew traditional clothes while socializing.

"Working with the organization enabled me to receive my own income, so that I do not have to depend economically on my husband or other family members," said Hava Bytyqi, another *Arta* member. "Here I have the opportunity to spend time with my friends and work. I didn't have the chance to go to school when I was young, and this opportunity is a very good one for me to work and socialize with other women," she continued.

According to Hafije Qyqalla, director of *Arta*, President Jahjaga and Mayor Mustafa promised to support women's groups in presenting their handmade goods in several Kosovo embassies worldwide, promoting Kosovo culture.

"This will exhibit our national handcrafts and our tradition, while economically empowering our members," Qyqalla said.

Arta promoted their initiative on public television, in social media and in newspapers.

***Ato* Offers Health Education**

Women in Kosovo's rural areas tend to lack information about their health in general and reproductive health specifically. Therefore, the women's association *Ato* decided to organize a campaign for women's health education.

Women in rural areas of Vushtrri Municipality, including the villages of Pantinë, Druar, Novolan, Oshllan, and Dru i Madh, attended lectures about reproductive health, protection from unwanted pregnancy, child growth, and domestic violence, including what to do in violent home situations.

"Women spoke freely about these topics and did not hesitate to ask questions," said Hazbije Dibrani, a nurse at the Family Medicine Center in Vushtrri who led the training. "I also offered women the opportunity to visit me at work in case they ever need any help with such issues," she said.

Altogether, 94 women from three villages in Vushtrri Municipality gained awareness through this initiative.

"The project has been very successful and women's requests to continue with such trainings have been enormous," said Fikrije Ferizi, the association's Director.



*Members of
Ato discuss
their project
with KWN
representatives.*

Women Learn about Pregnancy

The organization *Active Women of Gjakova* organized a lecture series regarding pregnancy for Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian women in Gjakova.

"I didn't know anything about the methods I could use to protect myself from unwanted pregnancy," said Tabe Maliqi, a woman who participated in the lectures.

"Thanks to KWN, around 170 women with minimal education and very poor economic conditions now have basic information about this topic," said Valbona Rizvanolli, Director of Active Women of Gjakova. "This is something they had known little to nothing about."

For example, "until now I thought that the period of pregnancy lasted six months," a woman said. "It was only through this project that I learned that it's actually nine months."

The women participating did not only discuss issues of pregnancy and maternity; they also expressed their will to discuss issues with a gynecologist and visit her for an exam. Considering their poor economic situation, the organization plans to identify solutions for women to receive gynecological check-ups in the future.



Women in Gjakova learn about pregnancy and maternity.

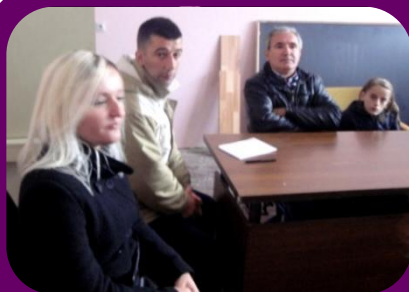
Persons with Muscular Dystrophy Share Strategies

At a two-day workshop called “We Have Rights, Too,” thirty diverse people with disabilities discussed state services and the challenges they face. Participants concluded that respect for their rights had improved slightly, but much work remained for full integration into social life.

The Organization of Persons with Muscular Dystrophy organized the discussion, which resulted in three conclusions:

1. Law enforcement for people with disabilities, including campaigning for rights and respecting the administrative regulations for their access to public institutions.
2. Access to education as a vital human right.
3. Advocacy to relevant ministries to support people with disabilities through social assistance schemes.

The workshop also provided a space for participants, who travelled from different regions of Kosovo, to exchange experiences regarding the challenges they face and how they access assistance.



Members of the Organization of People with Muscular Dystrophy discuss the issues they face and potential solutions.

“We were with people who have different disabilities, coming from different municipalities, having seminars about the rights of this category of people, and different sport and entertainment activities,” said Resmije Rrahmani, a member and one of the founders of the organization.

The project, supported by the KWN Kosovo Women’s Fund, seeks to improve the lives of people with disabilities, particularly those with muscular dystrophy through rehabilitation, recreational and sports activities, information, and awareness-raising.

The initiative also enabled people with muscular dystrophy to meet other people facing similar issues.

“Through this project we had the opportunity to show our abilities, discuss, play together and have fun!”

“Through this project we had the opportunity to show our abilities, discuss, play together and have fun,” said Yllka Berisha, a member of the organization. “For example, I tried to play darts. It is normal that I had difficulties, but I had a lot of fun. It was a magical game for me.”

“There should be more activities like this so that we can attract people with disabilities who have problems and needs related to health, economic situation and education. We should use civil society as a tool to sensitize the public to the problems we face,” said Agron Kube, a member of the NGO.

Women Fight Breast Cancer in Dragash

Women in Dragash have always struggled to see a doctor. Their Municipality rests high in the mountains of southern Kosovo, far from the nearest city of Prizren. Public transportation is limited and weather conditions often prevent travel. Dragash Municipality does not have any women doctors, and few people consider it acceptable for women to be examined by men.

Concerned for the wellbeing of women in their area, the Women's Initiative Association set out to raise awareness about the importance of routine check-ups, particularly toward early diagnosis of cancer.

"Women had the opportunity to meet a woman doctor, ask questions, speak openly, learn about cancer, and understand the importance of detecting cancer early," said Gjejron Lokaj, Coordinator of the Women's Initiative Association.

"It was much needed in our village," said Qesbana Pajaziti, who participated in the meeting in Lubishte village. "We had significant knowledge about breast cancer, but now we are better informed. We are even able to perform self-exams to identify symptoms ourselves." This new knowledge will help women detect potential signs of cancer independently.

"It was much needed in our village ... Now we are better informed. We are even able to perform self-exams to identify symptoms ourselves."

Further, 182 Albanian, Gorani and Bosnian women in eight isolated villages received free-of-charge health exams.

An additional estimated 2,500 teachers, nurses, pupils, and citizens also gained knowledge through the media campaign on Radio Sharr and Radio Gora.

Women's interest in the examinations was so high that the organization had to prioritize recipients. Women who had problematic medical histories or illness in their families received examinations first.

Women not examined were advised to make the extra effort to visit a doctor, especially if they were over 40 years old.

"I enjoy the fact ... that women had this opportunity, especially when we know that in our community there are no women doctors," Gjejrón Lokaj said.



Women in Dragash discuss their fight against breast cancer with KWN visitors.

Sexual Violence Survivors Seek Justice

Survivors of sexual violence perpetrated during the 1999 war in Kosovo have yet to receive sufficient attention from Kosovo's political leaders. The issue of sexual violence has not been raised in negotiations between Kosovo and Serbia. There has never been an official apology for the crimes committed against women, let alone a single court conviction or reparations.

By and large, society has ostracized and failed to support women who suffered this terrible crime. As a result, many women have attempted to continue their lives without ever learning how to psychologically deal with their past. This often results in various untreated illnesses, including trauma, phobia, inhibited sexual desire, and eating disorders, as well as untreated physical injuries. Identifying women who have suffered such crimes is crucial for providing them with much-needed assistance in developing coping mechanisms that will enable them to live their lives.

Thus, the Centre for Protection of Women and Children set out to identify women survivors of sexual violence in Drenas. Within only a couple months, they found 37 survivors, ages 25-50, in 13 villages of this region.

"We have helped the women a lot," said Kadire Tahiraj from the Centre. "In one case, a woman survivor of sexual violence was identified for the first time, and the project helped her in her family relations, especially with her husband... Her husband became aware of how important it is for him to support his wife."

The Centre has opened this previously taboo topic for greater discussion towards healing within some violence-survivors' families.

"This project has had a very positive impact and has broken the silence that covered this issue for many years," a woman survivor said. "We feel much safer."

**"This project has had a very positive impact and has broken the silence that covered this issue for many years. We feel much safer."
- Woman survivor**

Beyond identifying survivors and providing individual and family counseling, the organization brought survivors and supporters together to formulate eight demands on behalf of women survivors. One demand was for all actors to respect the human rights of sexual violence survivors and their needs. They presented their demands to the President of Kosovo, Atifete Jahjaga, who promised stronger institutional commitment and improved support.

"Now the other women and I are more tranquil," another woman survivor said. "We have renewed belief that our future will be better."

Women Gain Health Awareness

Women in Kosovo have insufficient information about reproductive health. Further, few women from rural areas visit the doctor unless they are sick. The Association for Education and Care of the Family in Gjakova began their initiative to address these two issues. The organization decided to increase awareness about healthcare, particularly preventative care, in three villages of Gjakova Municipality.

“I was in menopause, but I didn’t realize that I was five months pregnant,” a woman said. “I learned this only after the informative sessions that the project offered.”

In total, 91 girls and women of different ethnicities participated.

“Now they are aware of the importance of reproductive health, the process of planning a family, and the importance of regularly visiting the gynecologist,” said Bahrije Deva, the organization’s director.

The initiative also installed a sense of volunteerism in the community. “Even though the project ended, we have girls volunteering. They keep in touch with us and inform us about the needs of women in their communities. They also ask for help from us, as needed,” said Bahrije Deva.

*Women in
Gjakova
learn about
their
reproductive
rights.*



Women Advocate to End Violence

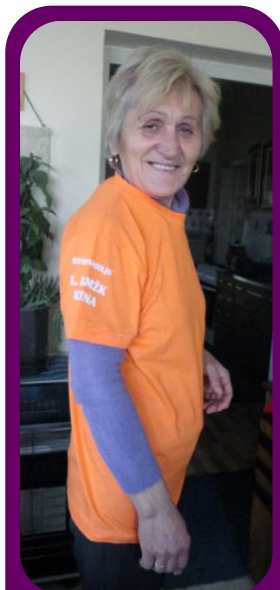
In a small village of 500 inhabitants, women rarely have the opportunity to speak about their problems, especially domestic violence. The gossip would be too difficult to bear.

However, the women's organization *Lepsa Buducnost* provided the opportunity for women to gather and discuss such issues.

"This is the first time that women have had the chance to talk about their problems, especially related to domestic violence," said Liljana Stefanovic. "It is very important for us."

During a forum organized by *Lepsa Buducnost*, 25 Serb and Roma women shared information about family violence. They also discussed protection mechanisms, advocacy tools, and ways to promote women's human rights in Priluzje. The organization shared information with people in their village through pamphlets and T-shirts with the motto: "Stop Violence."

"With support from the Kosova Women's Network, we increased our capacity for implementing small projects," said Radosava Mirkovic, the organization's director. "Even this small project made big changes in our lives," she said.



Radosava Mirkovic
wears a T-shirt:
"Stop Violence."

Visionary Women Showcase Activism

In Prizren, women face diverse challenges related to accessing education, economic independence, health, and social inclusion. Women-led non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the city have worked for years towards improving the position of women. *Visionary Women of the XXI Century*, a KWN member from Has, promoted the work of women's NGOs through a media campaign. In doing so, these visionary women have bolstered public awareness of women's NGOs' positive contributions in communities throughout the Prizren region, as well as helped women's organizations secure additional local support for their efforts.

It all started with Visionary Women of the XXI Century recording biographies that described the work of women's NGOs in Prizren, including Dora Does (Hand to Hand), One to One, and the Society of the Blind. Their stories were broadcast on local TV Opinion.



Marte Prekpalaj helps showcase women-led NGOs' work on Prizren's TV Opinion.

“The NGOs in our Municipality often have said that they cannot afford to have their own TV or radio shows,” explained Marte Prekpajaj, Director of Visionary Women of the XXI Century. Their requests inspired her to draw from her own experience and her positive relationship with local media to help women’s organizations promote their work.

The documentaries were well-received by viewers, who said that these programs had a very positive influence on their community.

“We were unaware that women’s NGOs did so much work and activities,” a viewer said.

“We were unaware that women’s NGOs did so much work and activities.”
- Television viewer

Due to popular demand, TV Opinion broadcast the program continuously for two weeks more than they had planned originally.

The program emphasized women’s NGOs’ need for continued community support. Impacted by these programs, officials from the Municipality of Prizren have offered women’s NGOs the opportunity to use two offices in Prizren, free of charge, for carrying out their initiatives. This contribution is important for women’s NGOs, which often struggle to secure sufficient funds for their operational costs and advocacy work.

Visionary Women of the XXI Century hopes that they can continue to support women’s organizations in promoting their future work. Funding from the KWN Kosovo Women’s Fund also enabled Visionary Women of the XXI Century to hold a roundtable with 27 women in rural areas on the International Day against Violence against Women.

Women with Disabilities Access Healthcare

Bukurije Gashi, the mother of a handicapped child, has suffered from breast cancer. While she had an operation five years ago, she has not visited the doctor for the recommended regular check-ups since. "I have not had the opportunity to visit the doctor because I could not afford it," she explained. "Therefore, I am more than grateful to Women for Women with Disabilities, who has made it possible for me to see a doctor," she said.

The organization's project, "I Love Life as I am", supported by the KWN Kosovo Women's Fund, offered a free Pap test to 10 women with disabilities who could not afford such tests due to their economic situation. "We also, provide training for using a urinary catheter for women or members of their families, so they do not need to pay for this service. At the same time, we provide people with free catheters," said Drita Vukshinaj, the organization's director.

Further, Women for Women with Disabilities ensured that women receive sustainable support from public institutions. "Our organization successfully placed the names of individuals who use catheters on the essential list of the Department of Health within the Municipality of Prizren," Vukshinaj explained. "This department has promised to offer people catheters and the service of installing them free of charge starting in 2013."

Women for Women with Disabilities works for the empowerment, emancipation, protection, and improvement in the role of women with disabilities in society. The organization also trains women with disabilities in preventing and treating kidney diseases.

About the Kosovo Women's Network

The Kosovo Women's Network (KWN) works to support, protect, and promote the rights of women and girls throughout Kosovo, regardless of their political beliefs, religion, age, level of education, sexual orientation, or ability. This mission is fulfilled through the exchange of experience, networking, advocacy, and other services provided by KWN's 100 member organizations.

KWN members work towards goals that they identify together as important for promoting the rights of women and girls. These goals are summarized in the KWN Strategic Plan for 2011-2014.

To learn more about the Kosovo Women's Network and/or how you can become involved in our work, please visit us at www.womensnetwork.org. We also are connected on Facebook, so please visit our Kosova Women's Network page. You can join our Facebook Group, Kosova Women's Network, to receive regular updates about our work.

Kosovo Women's Network

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