



Rrjeti i Grave të Kosovës

Mbështet, mbron dhe promovon të drejtat dhe interesat e grave dhe vajzave në Kosovë

KWN: Advocacy Letter for Budget Line for Centers for Social Work

On 20 October 2022, Kosovo Women's Network sent a letter to Government to advocate for a sufficient budget to cover all expenses necessary for shelters and Centers for Social Work dealing with the protection of women and children who have suffered violence.

See the letter below:

Honorable Prime Minister of the Republic of Kosovo, Mr. Albin Kurti,

Honorable Minister of Finance, Labor, and Transfers, Mr. Hekuran Murati,

Honorable Dear Minister of Justice, Mrs. Albulena Haxhiu,

Honorable Director of the Department for Social and Family Work, Mr. Mentor Morina,

There is an increase in the reports of cases of violence against women and girls, especially sexual violence. According to the Institute of Forensic Medicine, 85% of victims of sexual violence from 2019-2021 were minors.

The current government of Kosovo has repeated several times that social welfare is one of its main priorities and this has been included in the governing program.

Meanwhile, social services, namely local coordinating mechanisms for the protection and treatment of victims of gender-based violence, continue to operate under challenging conditions.

KWN seeks to strengthen local coordinating mechanisms for the protection and treatment of victims of gender-based violence, specifically, Centers for Social Work, based on the Government's obligations derived from the Constitution, in favor of the implementation of The Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, the National Strategy for Protection from Domestic Violence and Violence against Women, the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence, and the Gender Equality Program.

According to Law No. 02 L-17 for Social and Family Services, the Center for Social Work (SCW) as a public institution at the municipal level is competent for the protection of all citizens in need of social

services. In this aspect, the SCWs are responsible for the protection of children, and consequently also for the protection of women and girls from all forms of violence until their reintegration into society. SCWs have an essential role in the prevention, protection, and re-integration of victims of violence, especially girls. However, based on the research of KWN From Words to Action, SCWs do not have sufficient budget or capacity to conduct their duties, as defined by the legal framework of Kosovo.

As a consequence:

- SCWs lack the human resources to manage all the cases assigned to them;
- Since they lack human resources, the management of cases by social workers is weak, at the same time women and children are often pushed to return to environments of violence;
- Poor infrastructure makes it impossible to monitor the well-being of children and provide a safe environment to help victims;
- SCWs lack sufficient space and access to reliable transport, to reach victims, court hearings, or to carry out visits in accordance with their duties.

Since the budget for SCWs is executed according to the budget requirements of the municipalities, the Ministry of Finance, Labor and Transfers also plays a very important role in the funds for these institutions. According to Law No. 08/L-066 on Budget Allocations for the Budget of the Republic of Kosovo for 2022, there is no specific line for the financing of SCWs, but there is a line for Social Policies and Social Services for each budget organization at the local level from which the SCWs are also financed.

The total budget allocated for social services by all municipalities is €8,013,787 with an average of €222,605 and a median of €95,600. From this budget, €2,785,522 are allocated to the budget category 'Wages and Allowances'. Considering that there are about 464 employees in the municipalities for social services (an average of 13 per municipality), the employment of at least two more workers in each municipality, specifically for handling cases of gender-based violence, including sexual violence and domestic violence per family, it would cost a total of about €444,000 more per year for the Government of Kosovo. Ideally, the largest municipality in the territory of Kosovo, Prishtina, needs twice the amount, which would be about €12,000 more per year.

To ensure the dignified treatment of victims of gender-based violence, in accordance with the legal framework, the KWN has these requests:

- The Ministry of Finance, Labor and Transfers should increase the budget allocated to the SCWs, in coordination with the municipalities, in order to raise their capacities by making the centers functional as defined in the relevant legal framework and the government program;

further, these changes should be reflected in the planned amendments to the Law on Local Government Finances;

- To increase the budget allocated for SCWs in the Salary and Allowance category (about €456,000) in order to employ at least two more social workers in each municipality, and to focus only on handling cases of gender-based violence ;
- To create emergency funds in the Kosovo Police and in the SCWs in order to meet the emergency needs of victims during the treatment of cases of violence.
- We also call for the continued inclusion of the budget line, especially for shelters, as licensed service providers providing services required by the Istanbul Convention.

We hope that these requests will be translated into concrete actions aimed at protecting women and girls in Kosovo.

We are ready to meet to discuss these recommendations in detail.

Sincerely,

Igballe Rogova

Executive director

Kosovo Women's Network