



## Health problem finds the right cure

The joint efforts of village activists, municipal assembly and the OSCE Mission resulted in the construction of an ambulanta in the village of Livoç i epërm/Gornji Livoç .

**Text and photo: Mewlyde Salihu**

The village of Livoç i epërm/Gornji Livoç is located in the western part of Gjilan/Gnjilane. A mixed population of Kosovo Albanians and Kosovo Serbs, approximately 3500 inhabitants, live there. For the moment, villagers lack medical services. But this severe health problem is about to be cured.

Some time ago, activists of the village approached the Gjilan/Gnjilane municipal assembly and asked for help in building a health house. They found support. Mr. Fadil Osmani, Director of projects in the municipal assembly, got in touch with the OSCE Office in Gjilan/Gnjilane and, in co-operation with its staff, began to work on this issue. They prepared a project, the OSCE Office approved it and found the money, and the construction work soon started. Now, the ambulanta is almost completed and the inauguration is expected sometime in September.

Ms. Lola Ansede, from the OSCE Democratisation Department in Gjilan/Gnjilane, says

that the OSCE Mission is very happy with the project and with the way things have developed. "The ambulanta will serve both the Albanian and Serb community. We think it is a very good project that will help people to have a much better health assistance than they had until now," says Ms. Ansede.

Aside for providing with medical services, the ambulanta will also increase the number of employees in the village. Doctors will most probably come from Gjilan/Gnjilane, since there are no graduate physicians in Livoç, but nurses will be preferably hired from the village. So far, inhabitants had to travel to Gjilan/Gnjilane to get medical treatment. This will not be necessary when the ambulanta will become operational.

The representative of the village, Mr. Ramadan Kurteshi, says this is a project of capital importance for Livoç i epërm/Gornji Livoç. "We were a village with completely underdeveloped infrastructure. Now, with the hard work of village

activists, municipal assembly in Gjilan/Gnjilane and OSCE, we are very close to having a functioning health house here," said Mr. Kurteshi. Mr. Osmani from the municipal assembly thinks that the local residents did a tremendous job. "They overcame barriers and divisions. The Albanian and the Serb community agreed that the priority was solving the problem of health assistance in their village," Osmani added.

The commitment of villagers paid off. They have a reason to be happy, and they are. Mr. Halim Ramadani, a young man from Livoç i epërm/Gornji Livoç, said that they are very glad as they see constructors setting up the roof of the ambulanta.

The practice shows that when people agree between themselves, solutions come quick. Although building the ambulanta took approximately one year, the result is impressive. At least for the 3,500 inhabitants of Livoç i epërm/Gornji Livoç, who in the near future will not have to travel to the nearest city - which is not very close - to get medical treatment.



Workers building the roof of the Ambulanta

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## A successful return

It took several attempts before 100 Kosovo Albanians could return to their homes in Gornja Bitinja/Biti e Epërme.

**Text: Mustafa Skenderi**

Gornja Bitinja/Biti e Epërme, a village in municipality of Štrpce/Shtërpeç, was inhabited before 1999 with Kosovo Serbs and Albanians. Most of the Kosovo Albanians from this village have been displaced in Ferizaj/Uroševac and surrounding villages during the past four years. After the improvement of security situation, Kosovo Albanian villagers on 27 February sent to the international community and to municipal structures a request to return to their own homes.

The first spontaneous return of Kosovo Albanians in the village Gornja Bitinja/Biti e Epërme occurred on 9 May. A number of Kosovo Serb inhabitants of the village blocked the entrance in sign of protest. After negotiations, an agreement was reached that the Albanians should be seated they would try again to return to their homes on 22 May.

In the meantime, the OSCE Office in Štrpce/Shtërpeç, in co-operation with UNMIK, KFOR and UNHCR, has started a public awareness campaign and public debates, aiming to promote and clarify the right to return. "It is an undeniable right for every community to return to its original place", says Mr. Horst Denecke, Head of Office.

"In regard to return itself", says Mrs. Spomenka Kojadinovic, a member of the Municipal Working Group, "we had no direct involvement on return of Kosovo Albanians to Gornja Bitinja/Biti e Epërme. Our role was to make a picture of the place where they return, and this community to make a contact with another community, to talk with each other, so that this return can be of benefit for Kosovo Serbs as well, in order to straighten out relations".

Around 100 Kosovo Albanians from Gornja Bitinja/Biti e Epërme, escorted by 20 KFOR and UNHCR vehicles, tried to enter the village again on 22 May. About 100 Kosovo Serbs blocked the entrance to the village. During the day talks started between Kosovo Serb and Kosovo Albanian political leaders on one hand and the inhabitants of both communities on the other, but without results. It has been agreed to continue the meeting on 23 May when a final agreement was reached and Kosovo Albanians entered the village without KFOR or police escort. International humanitarian organisations like the American Refugees Committee and UNHCR are helping these people to accommodate for the time being. The day when we visited the returnees, they were collecting details about materials needed for reconstruction of houses.

## EDITORIAL

## OSCE is here to help with property rights

In June 2003, the OSCE Mission in Kosovo published a very extensive report on property rights. We launched the report at a building site with an extraordinary story of an unfinished building, like so many other finished or unfinished buildings in Kosovo.

The land belonged to a resident of Kosovo in the mid 80s. It was expropriated by the municipality, but the municipality did not follow procedures and the land was returned to the rightful owner.

In 1988 the owner sold his land. After the conflict the owner started to build, but did not apply for a construction permit. In 2001, the municipality ordered him to stop the construction. The owner then made a request to legalize the construction, which he is allowed to do. However, ownership of land could not be determined and the construction could not be legalized by the municipality.

The case is still pending with the owner seeking confirmation of his property rights in court, but it is hard to tell the outcome because of the lack of documentation.

There are many other cases with similar legal problems. Yes, the current report shows that progress has been made, but there are still obstacles. Among the many:

- The lack of property records;
- A confusing and contradictory legal framework;
- The failure of some municipal governments to follow expropriation procedures;
- Illegal construction and inconsistent practices around Kosovo in dealing with the issue;
- The inefficiency of courts in dealing with property disputes; and,
- The insufficient protection of minority and returnee property rights.

We should also note a few areas where progress has been made:

- The settling of property claims submitted to the Housing and Property Directorate improved, in particular in 2003;
- The inter - agency coordination improved, especially through the Advisory Board on Communities Working Group on Property Rights;
- The Special Chamber of the Supreme Court of Kosovo on Kosovo Trust Agency Related Matters was recently established. It will deal with disputes and claims related to the privatization

and economic restructuring process currently under way in Kosovo.

As the transfer of competencies continues, we look to provisional institutions to take up their responsibilities in the area of property rights. It is not an easy task and it will not become any easier in the coming years. But helping all the people of Kosovo to have clarity on their rights and their homes is an important part of building a stable and peaceful future for Kosovo.

As always, OSCE will be here to help.



**Ambassador Pascal Fieschi,  
Head of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo**

## "We are offering technical assistance to the institutions in applying the laws"

- says Mr. Haki Demolli, Director of the Kosovo Law Centre -

**Interviewer: Edita Bučaj**

Details: Being an independent body from the OSCE and with a local director, what are the challenges that the Kosovo Law Centre (KLC) is facing?

Mr Demolli: It is true that the KLC is in the process of becoming independent from its founder the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, but this does not mean that the KLC will cease all links and co-operation with the OSCE. Currently, one of its main challenges is drawing and implementing a long-term strategy, which would transform the KLC into a sustainable and stable organization. A priority will undoubtedly be education on legal issues, raising legal awareness of different layers of society, legal training and publication of magazines, books and compilations from the field of justice.

Details: The KLC plays an important role in reforming the Faculty of Law. How much has been done in this aspect and can we say that there will be quick improvements in the future?



**Mr. Haki Demolli, Director of the  
Kosovo Law Centre**

Mr. Demolli: Since 2000, the former Department of Education (UNMIK) gave KLC a leading role in reforming the Prishtina University Law Faculty. General reforms include the curriculum, the model of studies, inclusion of new specialisations in law studies, programs of legal practice, and examination methods. Despite the difficulties, certain parts of

the reforms have already been applied and now the model of studies in the Law Faculty is in line with the "Bologna scheme." In addition, during the academic year 2003/2004, we are expecting to start with the first generation of post-university studies.

Details: KLC assists Kosovo students to study abroad and gain new experiences. What happens upon their return to Kosovo? Do KLC or other local authorities help them find jobs in Kosovo's institutions?

Mr Demolli: Following the agreements signed with universities from other countries, the KLC has managed to help 22 Kosovar students to continue their studies abroad (Netherlands, Austria and elsewhere), be it for BA or MA degree. Upon their return to Kosovo, with the experiences gained abroad, they have an advantage compared to their colleagues who did not have such an opportunity. And usually, in the conditions of market economy, this category of lawyers manages to "sell themselves"

and secure a better working place, and some of them, upon their return have been and are directly involved in implementing different KLC projects.

Details: Your centre compiles applicable laws in Kosovo. According to the most recent reports on Kosovo's judicial system, the triple source of legislation makes the work of courts difficult and is in some cases contradictory. What are your observations while compiling these documents?

Mr Demolli: So far the KLC has published five compilations of applicable laws and provisions in Kosovo, in three languages: English, Albanian and Serbian. By this we are more or less offering technical assistance to the institutions applying, commenting, analysing and studying these laws. Seen from the aspect of analysing and commenting these legal provisions, I can say that the KLC professional fellows often express their opinions, observations, remarks and professional suggestions, through the KLC journal "Kosovo Legal Studies."

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**OSCE**  
Mission in Kosovo

Shënim:  
Pikëpamjet e paraqitura apo prezantimi i materialeve të botuara nuk shprehin politikat, opinionet apo qëndrimet e misionit të OSBE-së në Kosovë.

# A daunting task

Local and international experts discussed the challenges of reforming the local government.

**Text: Leon Malazogu & Besnik Tahiri / Photo: Hasan Sopa**

From December 2002 until June 2003, the OSCE Mission in Kosovo and the Kosovo Institute for Policy Research and Development (KIPRED) have organized a series of three roundtables / conferences about the reform of local govern-

ence included other stakeholders and opinion makers as well. A local expert, who greatly added to the local ownership of the debate, chaired all three sessions. A number of other local organizations participated and were active in various panels.



*Local and international experts, during the session held in the OSCE Mission Headquarters in Prishtina*

ment. The discussion started with the topic of decentralization, as this had been launched several months before by the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General to motivate the Serb community to take part in the local elections. But it soon became clear that decentralization was a far more complex and a very long process that Kosovo has to undergo, regardless of ethnic tensions. As a result, subsequent conferences dealt with "reform of local government", a terminology also adopted by the Decentralization Mission of the Council of Europe.

This series aimed to gather local and international experts and practitioners involved in local government in Kosovo and in countries in the region that underwent similar experiences. Initially, the project comprised a smaller group that was rather academic. The second and the third confer-

enced, and politicians and civil society could make an easier choice of the best solutions for Kosovo.

The conferences thus endeavoured to create a different environment for policy analysis, by setting a slightly more academic frame in the first place. Despite the very politically charged context of decentralization, it managed to persuade stakeholders that it is "reform of local government" that we ought to be talking about. As one international expert with extensive knowledge of Kosovo said, we have to "de-emotionalize and de-irrationalize it".

This series analyzed various issues. Initially, the issues were broad and conceptual. As conferences progressed, they boiled down to more specific topics like: analysis of fears on both sides; the legal framework and conflicting laws; how was this process done in other countries with similar experiences; what is the role of the transfer of competencies; what are the financial implications etc. A number of experts from Slovenia, Switzerland, Austria, Hungary and Macedonia greatly contributed to this input. The final roundtable saw the Council of Europe unveiling the first draft of the model that they deemed appropriate for Kosovo.

Overall, the conferences educated all of the participants. They put many relevant examples on the table, and put forward everyone's fears and preferences. This enabled experts to draw models and test them. The Council of Europe has unveiled the preferred model. However, the OSCE Mission and KIPRED will work closely with the Council to continue the debate. They will jointly coordinate a number of activities of other organizations and donors, in order to yield results that will be beneficial for the long-term future of the people of Kosovo.

# Four Kosovo athletes to the Special Olympics

"Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave the attempt," says the motto of the games.

**Text and photo: Hasan Sopa**

Many disabled people in Kosovo may remember the day of Thursday 12 June. But four young athletes with learning disability will never forget it. Thanks to a small group of people, the athletes participated in the Special Olympics World Games, which were held in Dublin, Ireland, from 16 June to 29 June 2003.

Special Olympics are a worldwide sports movement for people with disabilities. Eunice Kennedy Shriver founded it over 30 years ago, and it is now active in more than 160 countries throughout the world. For the first time, the games were held outside the United States. Participating in this event is not about winning or losing, it is simply about being a part of it.

The four athletes returned from Dublin with two bronze medals. But the other benefits that they

will definitely affect their life, as they will carry this recognition into their daily lives at home, in school, on the job and in the community they live.

Not only will the four athletes remember this day, but also their families will never forget it. The day of departure was a very happy one for Zade Ibrahim from Gjakovë/Djakovica. Words were too weak to express her feelings. Her son Adnan Ibrahim is one of the four athletes who will join the team to Dublin. "It is very important that my son will be out from home in the company of others. That will help him better realize that there are other people out there that care and love him," says Zade Ibrahim.

The Irish community, representing different international organizations in Kosovo, has helped the most in sending this team to Dublin. According to William Egar, Field Coordinator in the



*The four athletes (first row, bottom) who participated in the Special Olympics*

got from the Olympics through sports and competition will have a positive impact on many aspects on their lives, such as enhancing self-confidence and social abilities in daily life, preparing for independent living and improving friendships and family relationships. In other words they were not only recognized as athletes, but as valuable members of society. This

OSCE Mission, they are very happy and very proud to have done so. He thinks that the small group travelling to Dublin symbolizes all the people in Kosovo who are handicapped. He says that they represent all of them, and he hopes that public awareness will be raised with respect to the problems that handicapped people encounter. They deserve everybody's support.

# Bicycles for children

**Text and photo: Andrej Sever**

12 pupils who participated in a traffic-awareness programme were rewarded with a nice prize for the summer holidays.

The OSCE-founded Kosovo Law Centre (KLC) has several months ago issued a brochure called "Passport for My Life", meant for primary school pupils in Pristina region. Its basic aim is to introduce school children with traffic rules.

The project was scheduled to finish in the first half of June, with a series of "lottery drawings" where the children had a chance to get bicycles.

One of the happy winners of the 11th June drawing is Marina Andrejevic, a fifth grader of the Primary School "Sveti Sava" in Sušica/Sushica. Marina proudly says that she has learnt from "the passport" that it is safe to walk on the left side of the road, and to

wear bright clothing at night time. Her joy made Mr. Boro Dragovic, the Principal of the school, to say: "Such moments when we can see a full smile on the faces of our pupils are very rare."

Teachers and parents welcomed the booklet, says Ms. Aleksandra Dimitrijevic, National Advisor at the KLC. The continuation of the programme, according to her, depends on donors.



*Marina (right) is the happy winner of a bicycle*



## Understanding media

Representatives of local government learn about media standards and regulations.

**Text: Nderim Pasuli**

The lack of knowledge on media standards and regulations sometimes brings local representatives of political parties and members of local government to unpleasant situations. As we found out, local officials are not fully aware, for instance, of the role and responsibility of the Temporary Media Commissioner (TMC) in issuing frequencies and licences for electronic media. Among others, the TMC also deals with reviewing complaints against broadcast and print media.

In order to overcome this lack of awareness, the Democratization Department of the OSCE Office in Prizren has

organized a series of seminars for municipal councillors and municipal directors. They were held in Prizren, Suharekë/Suva Reka, Dragash/Dragaš, Rahovec/Orahovac and Malishevë/Mališevo.

A topic which stirred a lot of interest was the importance of organizing press conferences and of developing interviewing skills for the members and directors of municipal assemblies. Everybody agreed that the improvement of the public image of local institutions is a very important issue, which deserves a lot of attention.

Relations between journalists, officials and municipal councillors were also considered very important, as poor rela-

tions often result in deceiving and inaccurate reporting. Political bias and the difference between news, opinion and newspapers' commentaries were also discussed.

The debate on the role of the journalists and the role of media role in society was very animated. "Democratic and responsible media play a very important role in increasing or decreasing social tensions. The general level of media development is reflected into the development of democratic society and vice versa," said Mr. Zenun Çelaj, Deputy editor-in-chief of the daily newspaper "Zeri". Mr. Çelaj was a guest lecturer in the seminars.

## Democracy on air

A radio station in Kačanik/Kaçanik is organizing live debates with local community leaders.

**Text and photo: Hasan Sopa**

In most areas of Kosovo the social climate has improved, but this has not insured full implementation of the principles and practices which are essential to democratic western societies. Four years after the end of the conflict, the municipalities of Kačanik/Kaçanik, Ferizaj/Uroševac and Štrpce/Štrpçë still struggle to function according to democratic principles, and this stands true to most of Kosovo municipalities.

"Radio Kačanik", in co-operation with the Democratization Department of the OSCE Office in Štrpce/Štrpçë, has developed a project called "Discussion on Democracy". Over a period of six months, the station will bring together different actors of the local community to discuss mutual concerns and potential. This discussion is meant to enhance communication and facilitate the sharing of valuable information between the elected municipal representatives and citizens from their constituencies.

According to Mr. Bedri Elezi, the editor in chief of "Radio Kačanik", the main objective of the project is to highlight topics like tolerance, transparency, the right to return, gender empowerment, citizens' rights and the role and responsibility of media.

Mr. Elezi explains that for each topic a series of four radio programmes is foreseen. "Today

was the second debate of the first topic. Three major political leaders of Kačanik/Kaçanik (LDK, PDK, AAK) discussed about inter-party relations and how to overcome the political gridlock, because of which the local government is still not functioning," says Mr. Elezi.

local elections people won't go to vote at all," warned the angry citizen.

The three guests - Mr. Fadil Çalaku (PDK), Mr. Habib Shehu (LDK) and Mr. Shukri Luta (AAK) - accepted the criticism and admitted that the citizens have the right to be dissatis-



Mr. Habib Shehu (left) and Mr. Shukri Luta, during a live radio programme

Many citizens called during the debate. This is a clear indication that they are not happy at all with the level of co-operation between the political parties. Some brought forward harsh criticism. One said that there is a total lack of co-operation between the political party leaders. "This is best illustrated by the fact that the local government has not functioned at all for the last six months. They keep blaming each other, but in fact they are all equally responsible. If they continue to behave like this, at the next

They also said that projects like the one developed by Radio Kacanik could improve the situation. "My impressions about this program are positive. This was a discussion on issues of daily concern, which are very important for the citizens. Through this program they have the chance to get informed about the current situation in our municipality, which is something that political parties usually hesitate to do. I must say that I am impressed", said Mr. Luta.

## Dancing for reconciliation

A happy crowd celebrated the end of a nine month reconciliation programme in Shtime/Štimlje.

**Text and photo: Hasan Sopa**

Pizzeria 'Morigona', which is located in the centre of Shtime/Štimlje and has a huge space inside, was as crowded as ever on Wednesday, June 11th. This time the crowd gathered to happily celebrate the end of a reconciliation programme that started nine months ago. The stage was ready; the guests sat on their chairs with drinks

dance group came on stage. Despite their very young age - students in primary school - they performed very well. People in the audience expressed their delight by applauding the young artists. Other dancing groups, from the Albanian and Roma-Ashkali communities came on stage, and each group performed traditional dances.

The programme whose suc-



Young people dancing on the celebration program in Shtime/Štimlje

on their tables. A few youth groups dressed in traditional clothes were standing by, ready to perform.

The moderators announced the opening of the celebration gala and invited Ms. Margarethe Matic, the Head of the OSCE Office in Lipjan/Lipljan to give a short speech. Ms. Matic greeted the guests, emphasized the importance of the reconciliation process and said that the youth can make a great contribution with artistic programmes. "Music gets across all boundaries, and can help bring together people from different backgrounds", added Ms. Matic.

The music started and the first

successful end was celebrated that night was organised and funded by the OSCE Mission and implemented jointly with the "Youth Centre" in Shtime/Štimlje. It included reconciliation and social activities, but also educational workshops such as computer classes, English language and drawing courses, which will help the youth to integrate easily in the school and professional life. It will encourage in particular members of the Ashkali community to get education, as this brings about more job opportunities, better living conditions and full integration in the life of community.

## Fighting for transparency

Six NGOs from Mitrovicë/Mitrovica took a step towards closer co-operation between municipality and civil society.

**Text: Sevdije Bućinca**

Transparency is an attribute of good governance. It increases the responsibility of the local government and the confidence of citizens. According to the UNMIK regulation on self-governance, citizens must have access to information on the work of the local government. People have to be informed, and not ignored, as it is the current practice of many municipal assemblies. Based on these principles, several local non-governmental organizations have come up with the idea of establishing a network for monitoring the activities of the municipal assembly in Mitrovica.

It was primarily the idea of the NGO Resource Centre and of the Mitrovicë/Mitrovica Initiative for NGO Support ("MINGOS"). In co-operation with the OSCE Democratization Department and the National Democratic Institute (NDI), they initiated the establishment of the "NGO Network for Monitoring", which consists of six local organizations from Mit-

rovicë/Mitrovica: "MINGOS", "Pagedashësit", "Pëllumbat e Paqes", "Organizata për Humanitet", "Handikos" and the "Youth Centre".

The members of the monitoring network have experience in monitoring and knowledge on municipal structure and legislation. Prior to the start of the monitoring programme they participated in a series of training sessions on "Monitoring and Advocacy", conducted by NDI. The project implementation started on voluntary basis on May 1st of this year. The municipality welcomed the initiative and has facilitated the work of the monitoring network. According to Eliza Bitic-Shukriu, Manager of "MINGOS", this idea appeared to be a first good step towards transparency and closer collaboration between municipality and civil society actors.

Regular reports will be produced and publicized during the implementation of the project. The network will also organize open debates, round tables and conferences.

# “Our association directly represents the interests of the municipalities”

- says the President of the Association of Kosovo Municipalities, Mr. Lutfi Haziri -

The Association of Kosovo Municipalities was created immediately after the first local elections, in order to secure a joint strategy towards solving common problems through inter-municipality co-operation.

**Text and photo: Hasan Sopa**



Mr. Lutfi Haziri, President of the Association of Kosovo Municipalities

“Open borders for people and goods is the main problem and the main obstacle that holds up integration in this region”, says Mr. Lutfi Haziri, President of the Association of Kosovo Municipalities (AKM) and President

of the Gjilan/Gnjilane Municipal Assembly. In his view, co-operation in infrastructure and in creating better conditions for a free flow of people and goods will help this war-torn area turn into a region of peace and stability.

Speaking about regional cross-border co-operation initiatives, Mr. Haziri says that there are two developments in this direction. “The first is that the Council of Europe has opened an office for local development and democratisation in Gjilan/Gnjilane that covers all Kosovo municipalities, but also some municipalities in the region. Its aim is to enhance local self-government and to involve different social groups in the decision-making process. The second positive development is regional integration. In the frame of cross-border co-operation, through our initiative, Kosovo has been included in the integration process of the European Union. It is also worth mentioning the cross-border co-operation between Kosovo, some municipalities from Serbia and Macedonia and two small municipalities from Bulgaria.”

On internal relations, the Association has managed, with the

support of all municipal assemblies presidents, to decently represent municipalities in relation to the international organisations and to the interim self-government institutions. “We have signed with the Prime Minister of Kosovo an agreement on common principles of a returns strategy for all those who, for various reasons, had to leave Kosovo and today are displaced or refugees somewhere. We are also actively involved in the public debate that deals with civil administration or decentralisation. The latter term is not used any more, because Kosovo has nothing to decentralise as it was meant in the beginning. The role of the association was crucial in identifying the problems that municipalities are facing, as well as in raising issues that were not known by the central level and higher state institutions. In this sense, our association directly represents the interests of the municipalities”, reminds the president.

“On the other side we are also very active in representing the local bodies in the congress of local and regional government in Strasbourg, where all states take part and Kosovo has observer status. Since Kosovo has a specific status under international administration, we have managed to enhance our position, from that of special status to observer status. We hope to take our status even further in the future, but it is important for the moment that municipalities are among the first to be represented in the Council of Europe. In other words, this association not only supported and encouraged the co-operation among the municipalities here, but it has also supported the co-operation among the municipalities of South-Eastern Europe and Europe in general. Today, most of the municipalities have active partnerships with counterparts from abroad”, says Mr. Haziri.

## School library in Osojane re-opens

It will also serve villagers from Binxhë/Bica and Grapë/Grabac.

**Text: Zekije Kelmendi / Photo: Max Seelhofer**

Nine months after it was submitted, the project of re-opening the primary school library in Osojan/Osojane came to a successful conclusion on 4 June, when, in the presence of representatives of the OSCE Mission, Istog/Istok Municipality teachers, dozens of potential readers and other onlookers, the library was officially inaugurated. Osojan/Osojane is the first organised return site for Kosovo Serbs. Approximately 350 inhabitants are currently li-

ving there, and 30 pupils attend the school.

The project consisted of three main components: the renovation of a large former classroom (60 sqm) on the main floor, the purchase of books and of library furniture. 2250 books were bought, and the school donated another 600 titles from their own stocks. The refurbishment was done by a small Gorazdevac/Gorazhdac-based construction company (“Berti”) under the supervision of the

Building Manager of the OSCE Office in Pejë/Peć. The budget of the project totalled Euro 22,240.

The library offers a variety of books, such as novels, non-fiction, dictionaries and encyclopaedias, popular science etc. The Serbian speaking villages in the neighbourhood of the valley, such as Binxhë/Bica and Grapë/Grabac, might also benefit from the library, which is an important step forward in the creation of a social infrastructure in this Kosovo Serb return area.



Ms. Dragana Petrovic, who is in charge of the library and one of her young readers.

## Restoring good relations

A cross border co-operation initiative in Dragash/Dragaš opened the way for solving old problems.

**Text: Mustafa Skenderi**

By opening two border crossing points with Albania in the villages Orqushë/Orçuša and Krushevë/Kruševo, Dragash/Dragaš Municipality, local officials aimed at improving communication between Gorani villages in Dragash/Dragaš municipality (Kosovo) and Gorani villages from the municipalities Sistevac and Zapod in Albania.

The OSCE Office in Dragash/Dragaš and the OSCE Office in Kukes, Albania, initiated the first meeting between representatives of Dragash/Dragaš municipality and Kukes Municipality. Representatives of border villages from Kosovo and Albania were invited. The meeting, meant to improve co-operation, was held in Dragash/Dragaš in January this year.

Cross border co-operation aims at solving long lasting problems, like illegal cutting of wood and illegal border crossing for cattle pasture. One of the meetings resulted in the agreement to establish a hotline between representatives of Dragash/Dragaš in Kosovo and Sistevac in Albania, so that

information on any incidents could be quickly exchanged and delivered to the border police.

According to Mr. Uzair Hamza, Local Community Officer in Dragash/Dragaš, the opening of the two border crossing points in Orcusa and Krusevo has significantly improved the situation. The increasing number of people who are using them confirms the usefulness of the crossing points. As the number of phone calls made to the hotline indicates, the number of incidents has decreased.

Four meetings in total have been held so far, and co-operation will extend to other fields. During the last meeting, steps that will be taken towards cultural and sports co-operation were discussed. Gorani people from both sides of the border hope that this co-operation will break down the wall that has existed for many years between them. This will be particularly important as it is a well-known fact that many of them have relatives on the other side of the border. The cross-border co-operation initiative is an opportunity for all of them to restore relations.



## Youth organizations encourage dialogue

The second meeting of youth NGOs from the region discussed several draft joint projects.

**Text: Besnik Tahiri**

The second meeting of youth non-governmental organizations from Kosovo and Serbia took place in Novi Sad by the end of May. The project "Civil Dialogue" is implemented by the Center for Regionalism from Novi Sad and Mother Theresa Society from Prishtinë/Priština. Both organizations are partners of the Democratization Department of the OSCE Mission.

The main topics of the discussion were the development of joint projects of youth NGOs from Kosovo and Serbia, and the possibility of building a partnership between youth NGOs in the region. 25 representatives of youth NGOs from Kosovo and 22 from Serbia, as well as representatives of local and regional media participated in the conference.

The meeting was greeted by Mr. Friedhelm Frischenschlager, Director of the Department of Democratization of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo. Mr. Frischenschlager emphasized in his speech the importance of the "Civil Dialogue" project. He underlined the role of youth organizations in the normalization of relations and in the creation of an atmosphere of

interethnic trust in the region.

All three groups concluded that there is a great need for more frequent meetings of young people, as well as a need to create a united and functional regional network that would be founded on concrete projects. Several draft joint projects were presented in the working groups. Participants also had interesting discussions during the informal sessions of the meeting.

The general impression was that a step forward was accomplished, in comparison to the first meeting of youth organizations which was held at the end of August last year in Palic. Labinot Hoxha, a youth activist from the NGO "Post Pessimists" said: "It was a very nice experience to see that youth groups from other parts of the region are also working for improvement of civil dialogue".

According to Agon Maliqi, a youth NGO activist from Pristina, this conference will not remain just a one-day event, as there will be follow up projects like the EXIT music festival.

"For me the informal talks that we had during the breaks and during the social events were especially important," said Mr. Maliqi.

## Closer to media

**Text : Florin Pasnicu / Photo: Sandro Betanelli**

The Parliamentary Group of the Other Communities was formally established only a few months ago this year. It represents the interests of several ethnic minorities - Ashkali, Bosniak, Gorani, Roma and Turkish - and it ranks, with its 10 members, as the fourth largest group in the Central Assembly. Although it carries a significant political weight, its public appearance was so far rather discrete, and its contacts with local media sporadic.

The OSCE Mission offered to help them in overcoming this situation, by providing a series of training sessions on media

relations. From the basics of designing a public message, to preparing a TV interview and to communicating in a crisis situation, the parliamentarians learned how to approach journalists and how to get their message across media. The training ended with a friendly ceremony, where the Head of the OSCE Mission, Ambassador Pascal Fieschi, awarded them with symbolical certificates. "I have strengthened my media skills thanks to this training", said Mr. Haxhi Zylfi Mergja during the ceremony. "I now know more about the ways of drawing the attention of the media", he added.

*Members of the Other Communities Parliamentary Group enjoy their certificates*



## Lessons about education

A joint public awareness campaign is trying to convince Roma parents about the benefits of sending their children to school.

**Text and photo: Andrej Sever**

The right to education is one of the basic human rights. As a large number of Roma children in Kosovo do not attend school at all, or go to school very rarely, the OSCE Office Prishtinë/Priština launched a public awareness campaign aiming to inform Roma parents about the benefits of education.

According to Mr. Vojkan Milovanovic, Assistant in the Democratization Department of the office, this project is done jointly with the Ministry of Education. The final goal is to have as many

Roma children in the schools. This door-to-door campaign is taking place simultaneously in two villages: Gračanica/Ulpianë and Plemetinë/Plemetina. Local Roma Hub Managers are carrying out the project, as, according to Mr. Olivier Revah, Democratization Officer, the Roma tend to trust Roma people.

Mr. Sebastijan Serifovic is a local Hub Manager in Gračanica/Ulpianë. "Roma people are at a very low level concerning the education," he says. "People look differently at you when you are educated. Roma rights are still being violated, as the Roma are not educated," deems Sebastijan.



Roma children from Gračanica/Ulpianë

Mr. Gligorije Stojanovic, the Principal of the primary school Kralj Milutin in Gračanica/Ulpianë said that every year around 10 % of Roma children do not attend in the school. "We have discussed with leaders of Roma about this issue. We were promised this year also, like the previous ones, that the Roma children will attend the classes, but I am afraid that on 1 September, when the school begins, a number of Roma children will not attend the classes. I appeal to the parents not to repeat the mistake which their parents have made, and leave their children without education," says the principal.

In some cases, social problems may keep Roma children away from school. Mr. Berisa Erdzan, a father of four, said that his family is from Prishtinë/Priština and they are displaced. The only income his family receives is social aid from UNMIK and aid for children. "We have addressed all humanitarian organizations for help. All we have got are promises," explains he. "Have we had normal living conditions, my child would certainly go to the school, and be able to work and be a normal member in a society", says Sanela, the wife of Mr. Erdzan.

## An issue of equality

This year, all municipalities in Kosovo have set up gender equality offices.

**Text and photo: Hasan Sopa**

Whenever they hear the term "gender", people from Kosovo associate it with female gender. Therefore, the general perception is that gender issues are of concern only to women. But this is definitely not what people who actually deal with the issue think. According to them, gender issues are not related only to women, but they model equal opportunities and empower both genders.

The Office for gender issues in the municipality of Glogoc/Glogovac in co-operation with the OSCE Office in Lipjan/Lipjan recently organized a gender awareness training session. This is considered yet another attempt to change general perception on gender equality. Mrs. Zahrie Podrimçaku, Officer for gender issues at the Glogoc/Glogovac municipality assembly says: "Perception on gender equality still hasn't changed the way we want, but it is going in the right direction." As an example she mentioned the setting up of gender equality offices in all Kosovo municipalities this year.

It is interesting, though, that the number of males participating in gender issues trainings is growing. Mr. Behxhet Binaku, from the NGO Han-

dikos, was one of the participants of this session and he highly evaluates it. In his perception, both genders are equally important, despite the fact that our mentality favours male gender based only on the physical aspect, rather than on the intellectual capacity of the females.

International organisations developed a number of training programmes on gender equality ever since they came to Kosovo. But the more local institutions consolidate, the more responsibilities are passed to them. One of such local organisations is the Gender Training and Research Center, which acted as facilitator of this training.

According to Ms. Arjeta Rexha, Executive Director of the organisation, the intention of the training is to raise the awareness of the general population. "Awareness campaigns were done since 1999. Now it's time to set up institutional mechanisms for protection of gender issues and for their implementation in every aspect of life."

It appears that the old saying "if you educated one male you have educated one person, whereas if you educated one woman you educated one generation", is slowly making way in the minds of people. Let's hope that this will remain a practice in the future.

*Participants in the gender equality training in Glogoc/Glogovac, trying to solve a puzzle problem*



## Youth traffic awareness programme saves lives

Since the beginning of the programme, the number of fatal road accidents involving children dropped by 62%.

**Text: Ardian Spahiu / Photo: Dale Samuels**

The Youth Traffic Safety Program is going strong with four regions and over 300 school children participating: Prizren (90), Gjilane/Gnjilane (80), Peja/Peć (120), and Mitrovicë/Mitrovica (22).

Officers of Kosovo Police Service (KPS), in co-operation with KPS Community Police and Traffic Units are working in schools through the regions. The officers visit the schools, offer an in-class program on traffic safety, and talk with the teachers.

Students are selected by their

schools to learn traffic safety. Once they go through the training, they are provided with mini stop signs and in some cases with uniforms, to ensure the safe crossing of roads at designated cross walks to and from the schools.

Over 12,000 road safety books, funded by the British NGO "War Child" and the Kosovo Police Service School (KPSS) "Cops for Kids" Programme have been provided to the schools. The books provide valuable information on road signs, proper use of seat belts,

and even on how to ride a bicycle safely. This initiative had never been taken in Kosovo previously.

Youth Traffic Safety Police have also visited the KPSS to learn more about Traffic Safety and to tour the campus with the KPSS Community Liaison.

Analyses have been conducted to determine the impact of such educational activities and a general strengthening of traffic enforcement activities. There are 62% less fatal road accidents involving children since the start of the program during 2002. Not only is the program fun, but it also saves lives!



Junior KPS Officers and Primary School Children from Prizren

## Long-term solution for water in Gornje Kusce

A Kosovo Albanian company hired five Kosovo Serbs to take part in the reconstruction of the water system.

**Text: Mustafa Skenderi**

Prior to the conflict, the villagers of Gornje Kusce/Kufcë i epërm, municipality of Gjilan/Gnjilane, relied on private wells for supplying their households with water. After the conflict, analyses showed a serious deterioration in the quality of the water from the shallow wells. To avoid serious consequences on the health of the people, in the past two years KFOR has supplied fresh water to the village by tankers. However, this was only a temporary solution. The long-term solution was found only by the end of last year.

"We, as a board, and other villagers, were involved in the meetings with UNMIK and other institutions where the decision on the water supply project was approved. It has been an important issue for us, because 200 households out of 364 are without drinking

water", says Mr. Momcilo Petrovic, village representative in the Gjilan/Gnjilane Municipality and member of the village council.

"Lesna Decon", a Kosovo Albanian Company from Gjilan/Gnjilane, won the tender in November 2002 for improving the condition of the water supply system in the village. Work started in January 2003 of this year. The company employed five local ethnic Serbs, who participated in the building of a reservoir. A socially owned company, Hidrotehnika, provided geodesic work and experts carried out the field research. The same company will be in charge with maintaining the system.

The whole project consists of two phases. The first was sponsored by the OSCE Mission, and it included the building of a 83 cubic meters reservoir. It will be filled continuously and

if consumption will be rational, there will be enough water for all 364 households of the village. The second phase - the establishment of the water pipe network - has to be sponsored by UNMIK. Works were scheduled to start in June and to end in August 2003, then handed over to Hidrotehnika, says Ms. Lola Ansedo, Democratization Officer in the OSCE Office in Gjilan/Gnjilane.

Inhabitants of the village gladly welcomed the implementation of this project. One of them, Mr. Novica Petrovic, told us that the water works mean a lot for this village. "This will be a long-term solution for us. We have been supplied with water from our shallow wells, but most likely water was unhealthy and not good for drinking, that is for sure, because our stables were too close to the wells", he explained.

## Lasting impressions

Visitors of the Kosovo Police Service School are impressed with the living conditions and the positive multi-ethnic spirit of the school.

**Text and photo: Ardian Spahiu**

The Community Liaison Section (CLS) at the OSCE-run Kosovo Police Service School (KPSS) is continuing its activities throughout Kosovo. Last month, in co-operation with Kosovo Police Service (KPS), the Community Liaison Team from KPSS brought 48 kids from five mountain villages in the Deçan/Deçani area about 40 km south and west of Pejë/Peć. Each of these kids lost one or both parents during the hostilities in Kosovo. These children were very happy and impressed with the school and with the hospitality offered to them by the school staff and the students. In addition, 48 children (Kosovo Albanians and Kosovo Serbs) from Lipjan/Lipljan region visited the KPSS as well. They were from two Serbian and one Albanian schools. 11 teachers and two elder leaders from both Serb villages joined the kids and reported back to their people about what they saw at KPSS.

These are only a couple of the visits of schoolchildren (Albanian, Serb, Turkish and other) from all over Kosovo which are organized by the KPSS. Children are always impressed. Almost all of them say how good it is to see the students of different ethnicity working, studying, eating lunch together and having joint sport activities at the schools campus. This is how the future should look like in Kosovo: working and living together.

Besides the visits it organizes at the KPSS, the Community Liaison Section goes to the field and visits communities whose members have no possibilities to travel to the KPSS. Last month, together with Norwe-

gian KFOR, the CLS people spent four days in a row visiting Serbian schools in Obiliq/Obilić and the villages of Babimoc/Babin Most, Caravadiçe/Crkvena Vodica, Donja Bernica/Bërnice e poshtme and Gornja Bernica. They went into the classrooms, talked to more than 300 kids and attended a parent/teachers meeting to discuss the possible visit of students to KPSS. This is what Community Policing is all about.

The visit of a multi-ethnic group of school children and the first visit to KPSS made by a Serbian school from Lipjan/Lipljan are also a couple of major successes to be highlighted. There are two more Serbian Schools visiting KPSS this month.

On June 20th, 25 Serbs adults from Obiliq/Obilić area visited the police school. They were the second group from the same village who visited the school. The mayor of the village, accompanied by 24 women and men, was impressed with the organization and the way the school was operating. After visiting some of the classrooms where teaching was ongoing, they were very happy to see that Albanian, Serbian and other Kosovan communities are working all together for the same cause - the multiethnic Kosovo.

In addition, they had the chance to talk to many Serb cadets who expressed their satisfaction with the life and the work being done at the KPSS. The cadets emphasized that the school should be taken as an example throughout Balkans on how members of different ethnic communities can work, study, live and have fun together.



Junior KPS Officers and Primary School Children visiting the KPSS



## Summer run in Gjilan

**Text and photo: Andrej Sever**

Weather was nice on Sunday, 22 June, when 155 runners, divided in seven groups, took part in a 10-kilometre Summer Run. People enjoyed a lot watching a rare sport event and gave a strong encouragement to their favourites. The best runner was Mr. Abdurrahman Shkodra from Prishtinë/Priština: he covered the distance in 32'18".

There were runners from Prizren, Deçan/Dečani, Mitrovi-

će/Mitrovica, Suharekë/Suva Reka, Kamenicë/Kamenica and Novoberdë/Novo Brdo. A mixed team of Kosovo Albanian and Kosovo Serb children from the Gjilan/Gnjilane region trained for two months under professional supervision. Milos, a 13 year-old Serb member of the team came third in his category. He said that he owes his success to his Kosovo Albanian coach, Ekrem.

OSCE employees also took a significant part in the race. Joanne, Ecaterina, Luljeta and

Rupert (42'32") - among the best three of their categories - won prizes.

This first edition of the event was organized jointly by the municipality of Gjilan/Gnjilane and the OSCE Office. According to Mr. Srdjan Antic, Democritisation Assistant in the OSCE Office, next year it will be solely the municipality that will be in charge of organisation. "We will be happy to assist them to cope with whatever obstacle might come up," he added.



## "Look at me, I'm the same as you"

Young people from Prizren try to raise awareness on the condition of disabled people.

**Text and photo: Hasan Sopa**

People with disabilities are definitely one of the most vulnerable groups in society. It is not only the institutions that are not doing enough to assist them, but the public at large is far from understanding their situation. The Human Rights Youth Club from Prizren, in co-operation with the Human Rights Department of the OSCE Office in Prizren has compiled a project to help this vulnerable group of people.

The members of the Human Rights Youth Club - 11 school children of different ethnic background - want to address the problems that people with developmental disabilities face in every day life. According to Anita Shala, the leader of the eleven, the idea of the project is to signal that the public is not paying enough attention to this vulnerable group of people.

Kaltrina Rexha, a student of the second grade of the secondary school, says that the first phase of the project includes visits to the families who have people with disabilities. "This way we get familiar with their problems.

During the visits we take pictures, and we are planning to organize a photo exhibition that will be displayed in public places and institutions. We think this will help raise general awareness", concludes Kaltrina.

On 19 June, the students visited the family of Ibrahim Shala, in the village of Ngucat/ Guncat, Malishevë/Mališevo municipality, where they met Enver Shala. Ibrahim, the father of Enver, recalls that his son got sick when he was 6 - he caught an influenza - and was sent to hospital in Prizren. After four days of treatment he was supposed to be released from the hospital. "That night, around midnight, a doctor came in his room and gave him an injection, despite the fact that his patient's chart had already been withdrawn", recalls Ibrahim. Ever since that night, Enver did not have a normal life. Today, he is 32. When he saw us approaching his house, as he was sitting outside on the terrace, he was very happy. He could not say it, but we could see it on his face. When we left, he kept looking at us until he could

not see us anymore.

The campaign that the young members of the Human Rights Club are developing is primarily targeting Kosovo institutions. They also address the society at large, asking that people stop for a moment and think about the condition of the people with developmen-

tal disabilities. "It would be a great help to these people if some of them, who are able to work, could be employed. That would help them overcome their complexes and be part of society. This primarily depends upon our institutions," concludes Anita Shala.



Mr. Ibrahim Shala (left) and his son Enver

## The bridge of music

A festival in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica brought together young people from both sides of the city.

**Text: Sven Lindholm**

For one evening in June, Mitrovicë/Mitrovica was not a divided city. The bridge and music brought people together. A few thousand youth from both communities, north and south, listened to music and danced on the bridge all night until the show was over.

The occasion was the "Fete de la Musique" celebration, organized by the French Office and the French KFOR contingent. This is third time the music festival has been in town, but the last two saw two separate events, on both the north and the south of the Ibar river.

This one event came about from local pressure from the youth of both ethnic communities to build on smaller events - such as theater performances in the Cultural Centre and the Mobile Cultural Container - and have more multi-ethnic events. And so it was decided that this year's "Fete" would be on the bridge itself.

The evening began with a band from Finland playing rock and reggae music. They were soon followed by another Finnish band, and then, in succession, well-known DJs from Sofia, Prishtinë/Priština and Belgrade. There was clear excitement from those on the bridge. They came together for music. It may seem like one small step, but it is one small step closer to normalization in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica.