

# DETAILS

## Stake holders meet to agree plan to combat human trafficking

Today many girls, as young as 11 years old, and women are being trafficked into and around Kosovo. How to combat trafficking in Kosovo was the question 300 qualified individuals from all over Kosovo and the Balkans aimed to address at a recent conference.

By Hannah Cranston

A tale shared at the conference about a 13-year-old girl, kidnapped from outside her school and persistently raped was not a happy one. Having been drugged, raped, photographed naked and threatened by a man holding a hammer, she was then too afraid to tell her family. Shocking, but certainly not extraordinary. This month, at the Kosovo Conference to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings, judges, social workers, police, human rights specialists, prosecutors, government and many other individuals working to combat trafficking, actively discussed ways of preventing these kinds of experiences and how to help victims of trafficking in the future.

The conference held in Prishtinë/Pristina was co-organized by the OSCE, the Provisional Institutions for Self-Government, UNMIK Department of Justice, IOM, UNICEF and local and international NGOs. It aimed to build on existing work and to increase dialogue and co-ordination between relevant groups, in order to come up with recommendations that can be incorporated into a Kosovo Action Plan, led by the Prime Minister's Office



Cross border trafficking

(OPM). Participants included officials of the Stability Pact Task Force on Trafficking in Human Beings, OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), Amnesty International, Europol, South Eastern Europe Regional Initiative Against Human Trafficking and representatives of international and local NGOs.

### Understanding trafficking

Kosovo is a place of transit and a destination, as well as a land of origin for human trafficking. Therefore, both foreign and Kosovan victims are trafficked to, through, within and from Kosovo. Today, more and more women and girls are being lured or kidnapped inside Kosovo, then either being sent to a location in South Eastern Europe, or being internally trafficked to somewhere within Kosovo itself. According to Dr. Helga Konrad, Chair of the Stability Pact Task Force on Trafficking in Human Beings, this year 67% of assisted victims in Kosovo were Kosovans and 32% of them were between the ages of 11 and 14 years old.

Traffickers prey on vulnerable women and children in Kosovo who are suffering from the poverty and unemployment which prevail

here, especially in rural areas. Offers of work, especially abroad, are tempting for those who cannot feed themselves or their children, and more traffickers are using females who speak the local language to lure women into becoming slaves. It is, therefore, important that people look out for each other, especially in rural villages and small communities, to keep alert and spread the word to be aware of predatory traffickers offering work.

### Prevention should start at home

A general problem in Kosovo surrounding trafficking is a lack of understanding and willingness to discuss the problem. This leads to victims being ostracized by their family and community upon their escape and return home, making it difficult to become reintegrated into life and work. Trafficked women endure physical and mental torture, which often leaves them with lasting psychological scars. Victims of trafficking are slaves and have no choice in what happens to them after they have been sold; Kosovo has the highest use of coercive trafficking methods, such as violent abduction, in South Eastern Europe.

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# A step towards combating trafficking



By Helga Konrad,  
Chair of the Stability Pact Task Force  
on Trafficking in Human Beings

An important step towards building a solid framework in which to organize Kosovo's local and regional efforts to combat human trafficking has been taken. The OSCE co-organized Kosovo 'Conference to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings', held on October 20-23, was a seminal event which gathered together the main actors in Kosovo's anti-trafficking effort, to discuss the elements of a strong anti-trafficking plan of action. This is particularly important now, as we must push harder against the traffickers who continue to perpetrate this crime with relative impunity across South Eastern Europe. Governments must recommit themselves to working with local NGOs, to ensure meaningful care and safety for trafficked victims so that they have an opportunity for recovery. Law enforcement and NGOs must work together to establish effective links of referral and co-operation. In addition, the fact that there are signs that internal trafficking, and trafficking in children and minors is increasing across the region and in Kosovo, underscores how essential it is to address these areas with specific attention and strategies. In this regard, the first meeting of Kosovo's sub-group on child trafficking was initiated, and hopefully will be formalized shortly by the governmental co-ordinators. The commitment and energy of those organizing and participating in this conference was impressive, and the Stability Pact Task Force on Trafficking in Human Beings commends their work, and is optimistic that positive outcomes for Kosovo and South Eastern Europe will result.

## "Grandma, kiss our house"

By Olivera Stojanovic

Brankica Ugrinovic is one of 50 returnees to Sredska village, in Prizren municipality. She told us, "my grandchildren were born here in Sredska village, but now they are in Novi Sad. When I was returning, they said to me, grandma, kiss our house in Sredska." Brankica told us it is very important to her to be back.

Sredska is a mountainous Sara village that was abandoned by its Kosovo Serb inhabitants in 1999. Despite the damage and limited infrastructure, it has a splendid landscape that takes one's breath away. Now, 4 years later, having spent time in various collective centres all over Serbia and Montenegro, or with relatives, some families have decided to return.

Aleksandar Softic, 81, was the first to return at the end of 2002 and is now the 'village leader'. We met him as he was rushing to a community meeting and he told us, "what we found here were ruins, but with assistance reconstruction soon began. For now everything is fine, but I do hope we will have more young people returning soon."

Those who have returned do not hesitate to express their satisfaction with being back. In Serbia they enjoyed better security, but life away from Sredska where they left everything they owned was not pleasant. "Being over fifty, and putting all one's life-long possessions into two rucksacks, and starting from scratch again is not easy," many told us. "We had a normal life before, but now we have to start again from acquiring tables and pots to irons and chairs," they concluded.

The oldest returnee is grandma Jefimija (91). She told us that she returned because of the house and restaurant she used to have, "I had nowhere to go so my son refurbished our property," said this old lady as she whispered, "it is much better here in my native village than anywhere else."

Days can be very long without something to do, but villagers told us, "activities such as garden maintenance, sweet making for the village and visits now happen." In fact, although rare, some Sredska villagers have also travelled outside the village and met with old Albanian neighbours, who told them they were welcome.

The general impression of the village is that work is happening. However, there is neither a school nor shop in the village and work on the ambulanta is still not completed. Certainly, conditions will not be sufficient to enable villagers to remain in the village for this coming winter. The Sredska people explained how rough the mountain winter is, and told us that without water, electricity or firewood they simply cannot remain here during winter.

Despite the conditions, there is hope among the returned villagers for a mass return. The OSCE and many other international organizations strongly support the return process, emphasizing that anyone who wishes to return should do so if the conditions are right. Many returnees wish to see a return to normalization in their villages, and hopefully, this will happen with time.

## DEALS

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However, Naime Sheriffe, the anti-trafficking co-ordinator for the Centre for the Protection of Women and Children (CPWC) stated that, "Sadly, respect for victims of trafficking is low in Kosovo at the moment." The situations of victims usually arise out of desperation and should, therefore, be regarded as an overall social problem, rather than an individual downfall.

The first action against trafficking should start at the domestic level: with 30% of victims in Kosovo coming from abusive family backgrounds, it is obvious that prevention should start at home. Family should be the greatest protection a person can have. There is no denying that Kosovo has a poor economy and the desire for migration is great, but women and girls would be less likely to leave home and be trafficked if they had a stable, equal and loving family life.

## The fight against trafficking

In terms of preventing trafficking, the conference illuminated many ways to improve aversion methods. Habit Hajredini, Director of the OPM Office for Good Governance, Human Rights, Equal Opportunities and Gender Issues, called for more information sharing with UNMIK's Trafficking and Prostitution Investigation Unit (TPIU). He also spoke of addressing the causes of trafficking such as the demand for sexual services in Kosovo.



A full house at the Kosovo Conference to combat Trafficking in Human Beings

Florije Pajaziti, Save the Children Kosovo, spoke of more training for children at a secondary level and increased awareness promotion in rural areas, which are prime targets for the perpetrators of trafficking.

It was generally agreed that all Ministries, organizations and NGO's should work in closer co-ordination to achieve comprehensive, preventative and compassionate results.

Dr. Konrad advised that, "The national government should implement effective measures to fight trafficking. It is their responsibility and they should be supported by other groups." She suggested that a Kosovan Government Co-ordinator should be established to work with the Ministries, and this Inter-Ministerial Working Group should be fully inclusive of all other relevant organizations.

Other recommendations included extended training for police officers, judges and prosecutors so that the issue is treated with the sensitivity it deserves.

It was also agreed that once a victim has been identified by the police she should be taken into the care of an NGO that can provide her with shelter, confidentiality, advice about legal counsel and a comforting level of understanding, as soon as possible.

Many participants highlighted the need to increase the level of safety and protection for victims.

It was advised that the law on trafficking (UNMIK Regulation 2001/4) should be more strongly implemented; this law allows up to 15 years in prison for those who procure sexual services from a trafficked woman, 20 years for the traffickers and no prosecution for the victim. New criminal courts and laws that will come into action next year should also take into account a standardized proce-

cedure for the status and protection of victims, the closing of premises used for the prostitution of trafficked women and the seizing of assets.

## Trafficking is a major problem at the human level

Pasquale Lupoli, Head of the IOM in Kosovo elucidated a sense of collective responsibility when he stated that, "Trafficking is a major problem at the human level, it not only effects the few who are entrapped, but is a problem for all of us." The use of trafficked women for sexual purposes could contribute to the money and power of organized criminal groups, as well as create other networks of drug and gun crime in Kosovo that add to an unstable environment. Using services from enforced prostitution can also spread sexually transmitted diseases.

Due to this conference, Kosovo can now look forward to continued and improved measures against trafficking. The Deputy Head of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, Rolf Van Uye, declared the issue of counter-trafficking to be "a top-priority for the organization, as the OSCE Action Plan to combat trafficking recently adopted by the Permanent Council shows."

Paul Coffey, Director of the Department of Justice UNMIK Pillar I pointed out that if the phenomenon of trafficking were referred to literally as 'Torture, Kidnapping and Slavery', the interest and public attention would have been far greater to date. Trafficking is an obscene and intolerable abuse of human rights. For a region that hopes someday to become part of the European Union, it is imperative that Kosovo acts now to counter this heinous crime once and for all.

## Civic Dialogue develops

By Besnik Tahiri

The Civic Dialogue was launched by the Mother Teresa Society (MTS) in Kosovo and the Center for Regionalism in Novi Sad (CR), with the assistance of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo and the Freedom House Foundation (FHF) office in Belgrade. The idea is to promote, support and conduct specific project activities aiming at: developing civic channels of communication; regional co-operation; restoring trust, interaction and co-operation towards a citizen's interest driven reconciliation process; and normalization of relations between communities.

The Civic Dialogue action plan for the year 2004 has been developed since the completion of a successful meeting with youth NGOs from Kosovo and Serbia in May 2003, and the regional conference 'Building Regional Partnerships and Networks' in June of this year in Prishtinë/Pristina.

At a recent meeting in Belgrade in October 2003, the Civic Dialogue council defined future plans and designed a strategy for the expan-

sion of its activities in 2004, based on its previous activities and regional engagements. The council proposed concrete activities, emphasizing that once the formal dialogue between Prishtinë/Pristina and Belgrade began, new possibilities for the involvement of civil society would arise and should be explored to maximum effort.

The Civic Dialogue council proposed to conduct public outreach activities in co-operation with the media, to enhance visibility and the role of NGOs and other civic actors in the UN sponsored government negotiations between Prishtinë/Pristina and Belgrade, through publications, lobbying and public events.

Beside the Civic Dialogue council members, Mr. Friedrich Frischenschlager, Director of the OSCE Department for Democratization, and Michael Staresinic, Director of the FHF in Serbia, also participated. Mr. Frischenschlager said that the OSCE really appreciates the efforts of the Center for Regionalism and the MTS, and that the OSCE will be interested to con-



Civic Dialogue Council at work

tinue as a partner with the FHF in supporting Civil Dialogue.

One of the council members, Dr. Jovan Komsic, said, "Let us start with the least controversial topics and influence public opinion by organizing affirmative meetings with public individuals from Kosovo and Serbia, in order to show the public that negotiations are underway between non political structures. This would also contribute towards building trust and normalization of relations in the region."

## Capacity building and co-operation

By Biserka Ivanovic

An opportunity arose for individuals to meet, share experiences and learn from each other when 75 Kosovo Serb NGO activists met to discuss capacity building and co-operation amongst each other. At the opening of the conference, Ambassador Pascal Fieschi, OSCE Head of Mission in Kosovo, pointed out that, "there is a need for pragmatic collaboration between all communities and inter-ethnic engagement that will contribute to a truly multi-ethnic Kosovo."

Kosovo Serb NGO representatives were joined at the conference by international community representatives (OSCE, UNHCR, Council of Europe, UNMIK Office of Returns and Medicos del Mundo) and a representative from the local

Kosovo Albanian NGO Council for Defense of Human Rights and Freedom (CDHRF).

The participants used the opportunity to share their opinions and thoughts about developing a future strategy for different sectors of civil society work. Specifically, they discussed steps that should be taken to provide sufficient inter sector co-operation, and a better flow of information, networking and inter community co-operation.

Everyone showed admirable enthusiasm and involvement in group discussions and many constructive ideas were created. An interesting idea came from Kosovo Serb NGO activists who would like to see the international com-

munity more open to ideas and suggestions from them. It was felt that a better flow of information was needed between sectors (donors and NGO's).

The representatives of the Kosovo Serb NGOs also stressed the need to organize themselves better in joint endeavors and activities. They saw this conference as a very important step towards future co-operation with other international community actors.

One of the recommendations heard at the conference was a need for the OSCE to be more transparent. Kosovo Serb NGO activists also asked to have professional training delivered by experts as part of their capacity building and professional development. Recently, the OSCE Democratization Department updated the Kosovo Serb NGO database and this information, together with the results of the group discussions, recommendations and suggestions from the conference, will be disseminated in a brochure in all 3 languages (English, Albanian and Serbian).

Ambassador Fieschi told the participants, "NGOs have an opportunity to take a leading role in showing the politicians how inter-community dialogue can become routine and mutually beneficial for all communities." The Ambassador also stressed the need for the Kosovo Serb NGO activist's voices to be heard and understood. He welcomed constructive views and ideas in this regard, hoping that the international community will increase support for the good work this NGO community is doing.



Sharing experiences at the Local NGOs Capacity Building and Co-operation Conference

# OSCE urges young people to take a greater role in community development

By Edita Buçaj

A famous Balkan (Albanian) writer and critic Faik Konica said, “young people in this part of the world have had the misfortune of having to mature before their time.” This is particularly true of Kosovo children. Many of them have had to stand on their own feet and behave like adults much earlier than in other cultures.

## Investing in youth, invests in change

As the largest demographic group, young people in Kosovo have shown a strong willingness to be more involved and provide input into policy-making. Ultimately, the young generations are the ones who will boost the processes, enabling them to see results and changes that they might like. With youth assemblies, they hope to succeed. The OSCE has stepped forward and offered its help.

In the first half of October, teenagers from Gjilan/Gnjilane and Lipjan/Lipljan gathered to elect the leaders - a president and deputy president - of the first multi-ethnic youth assemblies of their kind. A similar project will be sponsored and implemented in the troubled town of Mitrovicë/Mitrovica.



One participant taking the oath

“Your decisions are going to make a difference to your communities, so this is very important for you and for the community you represent,” said Ms. Edit Kovacs, an OSCE Democratization Officer opening the meeting.

## Roles and approaches

According to the statute of the Youth Assembly, within the Municipality, the assemblies will be responsible for: Education, culture and sport; Ecology and environmental protection; Social assistance of young people with disabilities and also management and control of the budget, within the laws regulating each activity. The Assembly also envisages forming committees for each of these areas.

## Meeting democratic standards

Besides a multi-ethnic component, the youth assembly worked to ensure a gender balance. The democratically elected President of the Youth Assembly in Gjilan/Gnjilane, Miss Arbëresha Rrahmani was not elected just because she is a woman. She received votes from both genders represented. In her first speech in her capacity as president, she pledged, “to do my best to improve living conditions for people in our municipality. There is an urgent need to tackle the environmental situation. All we breathe is dust and smoke.” Her Lipjan/Lipljan counterpart pledged to fight smoking and other unpleasant phenomena concerning youth.

## Taking the oath

“I solemnly declare that I will fulfil all my duties and responsibilities as a Municipal Assembly member honourably, impartially,



Voting in the first multi-ethnic youth assembly in Lipjan/Lipljan

with conscience and in accordance with the law. In order to ensure fair conditions for a peaceful life for all,” were words that all the Assembly members articulated with admiration.

Enthusiasm prevailed throughout these early meetings as teenagers from different communities found a common language, something that is not always the case with adults.



Young people engage in the first multi-ethnic youth assembly in Lipjan/Lipljan

# Return needs sustainable commitment

Despite continuous efforts by the international community, including the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, and work by the local communities, returnees are still facing many difficulties. Issues vary from shelter, food, clothing, and freedom of movement, to unemployment and basic living conditions.

By: Hasan Sopa

After many efforts and attempts, the first and largest group of Kosovo Albanians returned to the village of Biti e Epërme/Gornja Bitinja, in the Štrpce/Shtërpçë municipality in March 2003. Since the conflict they were living either with their relatives or in collective centres.

When they first returned, their houses were ruined and so they set up the tents received earlier from UNHCR. Only the heads of the families decided to stay and try to fix some temporary shelter from what was left, usually one room of a house. On weekends family members would come to help, but they couldn't really do much without substantial assistance.

## Life under the open sky

Monday, 13 October for many people was an ordinary day. For the inhabitants of Biti e Epërme/Gornja Bitinja this was a remarkable day. A lorry with humanitarian aid arrived to distribute desperately needed items for the village inhabitants.

Many people may have already forgotten the distribution scenes that were daily events not so long ago. Certainly, they are no longer headline news for the media. However, for 46 families who have returned here, this truck carrying humanitarian aid donated by a German organization, 'Lachen Helfen' meant a great deal.

In less than an hour, more than one hundred boxes were laid on the ground ready for the clothes and food to be distributed. These items were certainly needed with winter on its way, as Mr. Shyqeri Hamiti explained, "We live in tents under the open sky."

A Kosovo Serb driver was hired with his private truck to distribute the humanitarian aid. This is an encouraging sign in terms of reconciliation. "Given that 50% of the aid was distributed beforehand to the Kosovo Serbs, we



Returnee's house waiting to be restored

decided to use the same truck, to distribute the aid to the Albanian inhabitants. We told him you received your share, now help yourself, your neighbours and all of us in this situation. It worked out perfectly," said Mr. Marc Kalmbach, the OSCE Democratization Officer in Štrpce/Shtërpçë

## Returning under the mercy of fate

There is no doubt that these people, like all refugees, are tired of having no home, but returning under the mercy of fate is also not an easy step to take. Concern prevails amongst the returnees with winter on the way. Their faces speak volumes. The village leader told us, "We desperately need help. If the reconstruction material that has been promised does not arrive soon, we do not know what is going to happen to us."

Fate seemed to be on its way. A joint project of the 'American Refugee Committee' (ARC), the Municipal Working Group on Return and the OSCE has begun. According to Mr Denecke

Head of OSCE Office in Štrpce/Shtërpçë, the entire project will cost €1.9 million. The Office of Returns and Communities has donated €500,000 for this first phase.

"Before the winter arrives 24 Kosovo Albanian houses from Biti e Epërme/Gornja Bitinja, that were completely destroyed during the conflict, will be reconstructed. Also, 3 Kosovo Serbs from Donja Bitinja/Biti e Poshtme houses will be reconstructed. These were considered as the most vulnerable families," explained Mr. Denecke. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Danish Refugee Committee will also support the project.

## Not everyone is happy

However, all this does not occur without problems. When we talked to some earlier returnees to Biti e Epërme/Gornja Bitinja, they told us that there are indications that some Kosovo Serbs from Donja Bitinja/Biti e Poshtme will block the road on the day that the construction material is due to arrive. The same thing happened to them when they first returned to the village at the beginning of this year.

According to Mr. Denecke there is a struggle among the Kosovo Serbs as they are not happy with the way aid is to be distributed. "We tried to explain to them that with winter coming we need to prioritize those whose homes are in a desperate situation, which happens to be Kosovo Albanians from Biti e Epërme/Gornja. When the project is implemented as a whole they will definitely get their share," Mr Denecke told us. He believes that a solution will be found and the aid will find its way to the destination point as soon as possible.

There is no doubt that the return process is not easy. To have a sustainable return needs the co-operation of all those directly or indirectly involved. Each and every member of Kosovo's society can do something to help the process.



Aid is delivered to the returned inhabitants of Biti e Eperme/Gornja Bitinja village

## To live together

By Nderim Pasuli

After the armed conflict ended in Kosovo the lack of communication and trust between communities was the main obstacle for reintegration. Members of different communities hardly talked to each other. It was necessary for the respective organizations and institutions operating in Kosovo to initiate various meetings, public discussions and roundtables. As part of this a series of roundtables on returns, baptised 'To Live Together', were implemented in the Prizren Region in co-operation with the OSCE, UNHCR, International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) and Pax Christi/Forum CPS.

The latest session, the eighth broadcast in a series of nine, was conducted at Radio Vala 2000 from Suharekë/Suva Reka. The participants were the Chief Executive Officers (CEO) from Prizren, Suharekë/Suva Reka, Dragash/Dragaš, Rahovec/Orahovac and Štrpce/Shtërpçë municipalities.

This session was successful because the participants focused on the actual topic, return of displaced neighbours. All of them supported

the return process and presented solid facts on the performance of their municipal governments on returns. "We continue to strengthen the local administration and make citizens aware of their local governments policy towards the return and reintegration process," said Vassilios Tagios, the Democratization Officer in OSCE Prizren.

The participants unanimously agreed that the return process should not be politicised, and that local governments should strongly support it and create the necessary conditions for return and reintegration.

"It is not easy to live in exile, or as an internally displaced person (IDP). Kosovo is a democratic place that offers suitable conditions for return. But, we also cannot ignore the problems these individuals face," said Ragip Gajraku, the CEO from Prizren.

The consequences of living in exile remain vivid for many, thus house reconstruction is a crucial condition for return. Ibrahim Kryeziu, CEO Rahovec/Orahovac explained, "Return is not an easy process, it is a marathon, but we

have already taken concrete steps. The communities have been integrated into our institutions. We have concrete plans for building premises, which should enable the employment of returnees and community members."

Talking to each other in public debates, roundtables and daily discussions is necessary to increase citizen's awareness, in order to understand each other and the daily problems that IDPs are facing. The 'To Live Together' roundtable sessions are just one way to help facilitate a smoother return process by promoting discussion and awareness.

Spomenka Kojadinovic, the acting CEO in Štrpce/Shtërpçë told us, "the return process for Kosovo Albanians in Štrpce/Shtërpçë has almost been accomplished. Few technical requirements regarding IDP's house reconstruction remain. The communities have accepted each other which is very important." It is clear that with the help of the local and central institutions and support of the international and local communities difficulties relating to return can be overcome.

## Building on 'Breaking the Wall'

By Afrone Çitaku

"It was one of the most productive study visits so far. We were able to learn and enrich our knowledge on how local government can function to best effect," said Mr. Skender Zogaj, Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje Municipal President, about a recent four-day study visit to Norway.

The Municipal President of Dragash/Dragaš, Mr. Halim Shemsedini, accompanied Mr. Zogaj on the trip, along with the Chief Executive Officer from Štrpce/Shtërpçë Mrs. Radica Janicevic, NGO representatives and the Public Information Officers from the three Municipalities. This visit was part of an OSCE Democratization Department project called 'Breaking the Wall'.

The purpose of the study visit was for the participants to explore ideas on how Municipalities inform their citizens, by exchanging experiences and knowledge with peer institutions and other associations in Norway. Particular emphasis was placed on municipal communication and transparency with citizens. The ultimate aim being to improve municipal services making them more accessible.

The Kosovan group had the opportunity to meet with the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities in Oslo, and to learn about the involvement of citizens in Norwegian local government, specifically in the Hamar, Stange and Loten Municipalities. They were

also informed about the role of the public information offices and about each Municipality's co-operation with the private sector. Municipal standard procedures for administrative matters, and propositions to the Municipal Council and its executive board were other areas discussed, as well as information about co-operation with NGOs.

"The decision-making processes in the Norwegian local governments are very advanced compared to ours," said Skender Zogaj. He continued, "the citizen's direct influence is very strong and importantly, is respected." A great deal was learned by everyone who participated. Mr. Zogaj told us more, "we learnt about the best ways to manage the municipal budget and what impressed me most, was the very close co-operation between all the political parties and their devotion to work for the will of their citizens."



The Kosovan group on a study visit in Norway

This study visit would not have happened without co-operation. Tore Nilsen, Chief of the Economy in the Hamar municipal government primarily organized the visit, with support from the Municipal Presidents of the Hamar, Stange and Loten Municipalities as well as from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. All the representatives seem to share the same opinion that the study visit allowed them to learn a great deal and was an excellent opportunity.

# The task of modernizing media in Kosovo

By Mustafa Eric

“We are going back with new ideas from this conference and this is what is important,” said Kelmend Hapqiu, Editor-in-Chief of the Kosova-Live news agency, who headed the first ever Kosovo delegation taking part in an international consultative meeting organized by the World Association of Newspapers (WAN).

The mid October event, a ‘Roundtable on Newspaper Association Management’, brought together representatives from other South Eastern European countries such as Romania, Bulgaria and Albania. It was mainly aimed at allowing participants from print media outlets to share experiences on how to strengthen their associations through joint action before their governments. The Kosovo delegation’s trip to Prague for this event was sponsored and funded by the OSCE Mission in Kosovo (OMiK), as part of its mandate to support institution building and media development in Kosovo.

The Media Support Unit of the Democratization Department (DD) in the OSCE has been involved in an all embracing effort to consolidate the media scene so that newspapers and broadcasters can function as real agents of the “Fourth Estate”, as public information outlets are labeled in functioning democracies.

Over the years, trainings on journalism have been a distinctive feature of such efforts. The training unit of the DD media section conducts between 15 to 20 programmes annually, to empower Kosovan journalists to improve investigative and writing stories skills and to produce TV and radio programmes of a higher standard.

Recently, the training has been focusing on management skills to allow existing media outlets to consolidate their positions by achieving self-sustainability in Kosovo’s admittedly small market.

OMiK’s multi-faceted media support programme also targets ethnic communities in Kosovo, to provide them with possibilities of access to timely, accurate and objective information in their own languages through various projects. One significant effort worth mentioning in this area is the soon to be completed net-



Media in action

work of 28 Kosovo Serb radio stations located all around Kosovo. Under the project funded by the European Agency for Reconstruction (EAR) and implemented by OMiK, all 28 stations will be able to broadcast joint news and current affairs programmes before the end of 2003. The project has not ignored the need for quality journalism and has also provided systematic training for employees of the radio stations through the involvement of the European Centre for Broadcast Journalism (ECBJ), an institution based in Belgrade and run by the BBC.

As for intra regional co-operation, OMiK’s media support team has also been very active since the beginning of this year. Many conferences, seminars and meetings have been organized bringing together representatives from several South Eastern European countries, to contribute to the establishment of professional relations and the widening of tolerance and understanding among regional media players. One prominent endeavour was a conference organized in May under the aegis of South

Eastern Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO), an affiliate of the International Press Institute (IPI), bringing together senior media executives and editors from Serbia and Kosovo. OMiK sponsored and facilitated the participation of Kosovan media representatives in the event. A follow-up meeting to the May event will be organized in Skopje before the end of the year. Within the context of regional media co-operation, various projects targeting Roma and other ethnic communities, and projects aimed at training women journalists and establishing children TV programmes exchanges, are either underway or have been implemented.

Although a lot has been done, much remains to be achieved. The task of institution building in the field of media has a long way to go before adequate regulations can be put in place for an environment whereby media outlets can properly function as efficient watchdogs for the good of the public. As the Temporary Media Commissioner prepares to become the Independent Media Commission, there is a particular need for a self-regulatory body for print media and a code of conduct to emerge.

The Kosovo Assembly should discuss and adopt a series of legislative acts to regulate copyright issues, public and private broadcasting and such contentious topics as libel and defamation.

New regulations on taxation of media outlets, including the possible reduction of VAT on newspaper sales and possible regulations to govern cable broadcasting are among the other main items waiting to be discussed. Mid career training of journalists will need to be transferred to Kosovan partners so that such activities will be carried out by local institutions, while academic journalism education will have to be instituted with an adequate curriculum and academic staff.

The outlook for the accomplishment of such tasks is promising: There is dedication on the part of the OMiK staff and the international community and there is understanding within the Kosovo media establishment, with a few exceptions, that these goals should be achieved if Kosovo is to become part of Europe as it aspires to.



# Model UN Conference in Lipjan/Lipljan

By Berat Recica



Voting takes place at the Model UN Conference in Lipjan/Lipljan

The subject of a recent 'Model UN Conference' (MUC) organized by the OSCE Democratization Department in Lipjan/Lipljan, was 'Trafficking of Human Beings', which is becoming a larger issue every year.

The overall aim of this twelfth session of the MUC was to provide Kosovo Albanian,

and informal tolerance building activities, in a positive and challenging environment for the physical, mental, emotional and social development of young people.

"This was the first programme after the conflict to bring together youth from different communities," Milenko Bilibajkic, another participant

Kosovo Serb and Ashkali secondary school students in Lipjan/Lipljan municipality with the opportunity to participate in an ethnically mixed reconciliation programme. Arta Uka, a participant, explained: "The MUC helps minorities to integrate into everyday life, to meet other people and to communicate in an alternative language, in this case in the English language."

The programme offers supervised recreational building activities, in a positive and challenging environment for the physical, mental, emotional and social development of young people.

"This was the first programme after the conflict to bring together youth from different communities," Milenko Bilibajkic, another participant

told us. "We have discussed a lot of topics, for example: AIDS; repatriation of refugees; drugs and narcotics; the new temporary administration in Iraq; the conflict between Israel and Palestine and trafficking in human beings," he concluded. The most important thing is that these issues have been discussed together, regardless of who sat nearby. All participants tried hard to put themselves in other people's shoes to understand different perspectives.

During this programme, the participants were encouraged to form their own support networks and mechanisms, in order to maintain contact with other young people residing in the municipality. Relationships have certainly developed between communities and ethnicities in the area. Many young Kosovo Serbs and Ashkalis are now comfortable to enter the Lipjan/Lipljan youth centre daily to take part in activities. This was not the case previously.

The OSCE hopes to continue the programme during 2004 in order to implement a 'Model UN Conference' Kosovo wide. To date it has been an important reconciliation tool. The future plan is to concentrate more on qualitative work as the members become more expert.

## Improving Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian education

By Mevlyde Salihu

Today the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian (RAE) communities face a difficult social situation, education is one reason for this. Too often RAE children are seen on the streets rather than in school in Kosovo, and those who do attend school often drop out early. The OSCE and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) decided to address this problem.

In most cases the low school attendance rate of RAE children is due either to lack of money and transport, or to parents under-estimating the importance of education. In addition, discriminatory treatment or language problems often lead to a drop out of those children who do actually attend school.

In order to overcome this difficult situation, the OSCE and MEST organized regional roundtable discussions, aiming to identify the main difficulties and ways to address them. Rexhep Osmani, Minister of Education, at a press conference said that MEST is strongly committed to improving the provision of education to the RAE community.

"We have information that 1,600 RAE children now participate in a 9 month catch-up pro-



Lindholm- OSCE Spokesperson, Frischenschlager-Director of Democratization Department OSCE & Osmani, Minister of Education on RAE education

gramme, which is being carried out in 12 municipalities," said Osmani. "One priority identified is to have their language, history and culture included in the school curriculum," he added. The Ministry and OSCE will create a working group to review the feasibility of this. Gianfranco D'erao, an OSCE Democratization

Department officer said, "If recommendations are followed, the programme may increase RAE children's enrolment by up to 40% by the beginning of the next academic year." The catch-up programme is clearly important for improving attendance rates and education overall.

# Give us equal opportunities

"No matter where you work or live, the most important issue for an individual, in order to be successful and prosperous, is being able to integrate into society and be accepted."

- says Gëzim Rexha, a media monitor in the OSCE Mission in Kosovo -

By Fatime Lepaja

Among three thousand visually impaired people in Kosovo, there is a tall, handsome, and very intelligent guy, Gëzim Rexha from the town of Gjakova/Djakovica, in South Western Kosovo. Gëzim graduated in English Language and Literature at the University of Prishtinë/Pristina and has been working with OSCE since 1999.

## Equipment required

When starting in OSCE, Dan Seymour the head of the OSCE Gjakova/Djakovica office asked Gëzim what he needed to be able to work successfully. Having read about electronic facilities he knew what equipment existed, but had never had the opportunity to use any of it before. The procedure soon began to acquire the right equipment, and in no time Gëzim was fulfilling his role as a media monitor, first in OSCE Gjakova/Djakovica, then in headquarters.

A regional media co-ordinator Caterina Artelli, helped Gëzim in his early days by sending him an original copy of a special programme 'Job Access With Speech' (JAWS). This programme makes it possible for visually impaired people to make full use of a computer by using a speech and audio mechanism. The system enables individuals to read, write, edit and perform all operations as any other person might. Later on the OSCE provided another screen reader programme called 'Virtual Graphical Overlay' (VIRGO) enabling Gëzim to read and send e-mails. With the two programmes and the help of a specialist trainer he can now perform his duties without difficulty.

"Being blind means you have additional and varying difficulties to deal with," Gëzim tells us, "but they are not insurmountable, and I can overcome them by using alternative techniques in order to achieve the same results as others." Gëzim is a member of the Association of Blind and Visually Impaired People, and he was recently elected as the Kosovo representative for the association.

## International White Cane Day

October 15 was 'International White Cane Day', so we asked Gëzim how institutions could support people with special needs more? He told us, "everyone in Kosovo, including those with special needs, understand that in



Gëzim Rexha, Media Monitor, the OSCE Mission in Kosovo

general there are limited possibilities or conditions for Kosovo institutions to do more, and that we cannot expect much. But, what we would appreciate is for others to put away their prejudices, because prejudices and negative attitudes create additional difficulties over and above blindness itself.

## Prejudice preventing equality

As a blind person you can still have the necessary abilities and qualities to carry out a specific job or attend a school, but because of prejudice many are simply not given the chance to do so. Therefore, we would ask people to give us an equal chance. Our motto would be, "just give us equal opportunities."

"My personal experience is very positive and I appreciate the fact that I am always welcome and treated fairly equally in the OSCE. Personally I do not feel either positively or negatively discriminated against, though I do believe that either discrimination can have negative consequences," said Gëzim Rexha.

Gëzim has shown how people with special needs can integrate into society and work in a normal capacity. It is now the task of society to accept and provide the opportunity for more visually impaired people to be successful and prosperous as Gëzim undoubtedly is.



# Gender equality has begun

By: Patrick Hoffmann



Learning more about gender equality

Recently a gender awareness workshop for men and women was held in Lipjan/Lipljan and Glogovc/Glogovac municipalities. It aimed to increase awareness about women's rights in order to ensure equal employment, and a correct gender balance in democratic institutions.

Fifty-four Ashkali, Kosovo Serb and Kosovo Albanian community members participated in the workshop that provided training on

women's issues such as, gender and sex, gender needs and mainstreaming gender in civil society.

Hysni Sefa, an Ashkali man from the village of Vrella/Vrelo in Lipjan/Lipljan municipality learnt about new issues on gender, "my hope is that every male who participated in the workshop will start to implement the advice which we have heard. It was very useful for me as a man to attend the training, and also for the Ashkali women, because they have learnt how to protect their rights for the future."

The training was conducted by the Gender Training and Research Center in Prishtinë/Prishtina. It was focused on enabling participants from three different ethnic communities and two municipalities to examine and develop initiatives in a different way, through improving their abilities to integrate gender awareness into planning, policies, programmes and practices.

The idea was to equip the participants with a basic understanding that gender bias is a genuine obstacle to the sustainable development of democracy. It further enhanced the basic understanding on gender awareness, and how to mainstream gender into all their core activities as a valuable tool in building a sustainable democracy. It has ensured that gender is taken into consideration in all aspects of programme planning and that a proper gender balance is achieved in all decision-making.

Khyste Dabaj, Municipal Gender Officer for Lipjan/Lipljan said that, "simply the number of participants on both days shows that the training was very successful and that they were satisfied with the content and the organization of the workshop."

A colleague of Ms. Dabaj from Glogovc/Glogovac municipality said, "Even though I had already attended the gender workshop in my municipality, I still gained new knowledge and will use it for my future work."

The general impression was that the training was well organized and individuals expressed an interest to attend another one in the near future. At the end of the workshop, certificates were delivered to the participants who proudly announced that gender equality has now begun and that nobody can stop it.

# Community socializing wins

Sport events are strengthening reconciliation and reintegration

By Zilha Nurkollari & Kujtim Paqaku

There are many Roma issues requiring long term interventions. Some projects, mostly initiated by NGOs, are dealing successfully with many of the Roma issues, including reconciliation and reintegration and are valuable examples for the future.

A Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian (RAE) Football Tournament was one such successful initiative organized by the Roma NGO 'Initiative 6' in cooperation with the Youth forum of the Ashkali Albanian Democratic Party (PDASHK), and supported by the OSCE Prizren Democratization Department and the Municipal Department for Culture and Sport.

On a bright Sunday, Prizren's open sports stadium exploded with fans and cheering as the football teams took part in their tournament. The fellowship among the team players and fans was clear for all to see, and was proof of the success of this project.

"The aim of this project was to gather youngsters from the Kosovo Albanian and RAE com-

munities together for one sports event," Mr. Osman Ismani, a representative from 'Initiative 6' told us. "This football tournament saw the continuation of the process to bring youth from different communities together in order to facilitate the reconciliation process," he added.

The twelve teams that participated in this tournament showed exactly what was hoped for, easily socializing together and respecting one another. From the first blow of the whistle by the referee, all the way through to the last whistle there was more applause than goals.

As planned, three winning teams were rewarded, but in the end community socializing was the big winner.



One of the proud winners accepts his prize

# Media coverage of human trafficking in Kosovo

By Arben Hajredinaj

The month of October witnessed a major three-day conference to combat trafficking in human beings, co-organized by OSCE's Human Rights Victim Advocacy Support Section. Prior to the conference in Prishtinë/Pristina, a half-day training workshop on 'Media Coverage of Human Trafficking' in Kosovo was organized by the Democratization Department/Media Training unit of the OSCE.

As a negative phenomenon in Kosovo and the entire South Eastern Europe region, trafficking has grown continuously over the last four years. Only a short time ago people knew little on the subject, if anything. The responsibility of educating people on trafficking falls mainly to the NGOs and government institutions, who through awareness raising campaigns, training courses, workshops or seminars, gather activists from local and international levels to discuss and try to overcome the problems of trafficking in the Kosovo region.

Trafficking emerged as a major problem when proper preventative methods didn't exist and before crime investigation units were established to find and arrest persons involved in this activity. Today different organizations have compiled statistical reports and published maps of nightclubs, restaurants, pubs and cafeterias that are prohibited for international and local staff due to their dubious status in relation to trafficking. However, the majority of the population still has access to these premises. As a new phenomenon, offers of sexual services is thrilling for some young people in Kosovo - forgetting that most of these women and girls were either brought by force from other countries or kidnapped and trafficked internally within Kosovo itself.

Over time the Kosovo media - especially television, considered as the most powerful medium in Kosovo - has barely reported any investigative story of repatriated survivors of trafficking. Most of the time they rely on official statements from different organizations working to combat human trafficking. There is, therefore, a lack of public knowledge surrounding the fight against trafficking and the context within which trafficking occurs.

Recently the Montenegrin media reported that an ordinary police officer arrested a notorious and wanted Albanian criminal from Macedonia involved in networks of organized crime, including human trafficking, not only in the Balkans but also in Europe. This shows that with commitment, this phenomenon can indeed be uprooted and stopped if international and local police work hard and with interest to fight organized crime in Kosovo.



Laura Aviles (OSCE), Igballe Rexha (Centre for the Protection of Women & Children) & Linda Karadaku (Voice of America) at the Media Coverage of Human Trafficking Workshop

In the context of organized crime, reporters feel they cannot pro-actively perform their jobs, despite the fact that they want to carry out detailed investigations, and be motivated to do research and inform the public of what is happening around them. Generally, more needs to be done to report and research many topics in Kosovo, but trafficking is an important one to focus on.

During the workshop on 'Media Coverage of Human Trafficking', an interview was shown with a victim of trafficking from Albania who was forced into prostitution in Italy. The interview clearly showed that the victim, now back in Albania after 10 years, could not fit back into her own family or society. Her life was destroyed, but she was helped by the fact that her identity was kept confidential - she was able to tell her story without personal repercussions. The interview served as a positive lesson to the Kosovan media and the wider public that sensitivity is required when reporting or considering stories involving victims of trafficking. Few Kosovo viewers have the opportunity to know more about what is happening both inside and outside Kosovo concerning trafficking. It is the responsibility of the media to strengthen their position on such issues.

Problems arise due to the economic and educational system in Kosovo. Besides the victims of trafficking, some women and female adolescents throughout Kosovo take up prostitution

in order to survive. Statistics show that more than 50 per cent of the population of Kosovo is unemployed. According to the Centre for Protection of Women and Children, many victims of trafficking only have primary school education or no education at all. A lack of understanding certainly exists in relation to trafficking - one actual victim interviewed by a representative of this centre said that trafficking is related to something like 'traffic lights' or 'traffic' in general. Most of these victims do not know what happens around them once they have been kidnapped and forced into prostitution.

The Kosovo media can help now by taking the initiative to focus more on trafficking and related issues, in order to motivate a fundamental interest in this area amongst the media and population.

In addition, the best recommendation to stress is that legal mechanisms, the police and the judicial system do the utmost to uproot human trafficking in Kosovo in co-operation and co-ordination with neighbouring countries that deal with similar problems: combating trafficking, identifying, assisting and rehabilitating the victims.

As Kosovo develops, the media will also need to be more responsible in their reporting on trafficking and increase the number of related topics in their programme schedules.