

Welcome to Kosovo! Part two

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This study addresses several aspects of accomplishments and failures in the field of gender issues during the eight years of UN administration in Kosovo. The purpose of this article is to enable a clearer picture on opportunities and conditions of work in the field of gender issues for the EUMIK mission expected to be installed in Kosova after the settlement of its final status.

I. INTRODUCTION

Kosova is back in the focus of the world's media. Kosova last dominated the newspaper headlines and made the breaking news of the strongest media houses after the war of 1999 and the NATO bombing campaign. Today, the political status settlement has once again brought this small Balkan country to the attention of the international community.

During the 1999–2007 period a completely new reality has been brought about in Kosova, when compared with the immediate postwar period.² This period saw the building of democratic institutions at the local and central level, the vast majority of legal infrastructure needed for functioning of the society has been passed, the banking system has been consolidated, and the telecommunication and road infrastructure has been greatly improved.

However, this period has also witnessed negative developments. As a consequence of the unsettled political status, there has been very little or no significant long-term foreign

¹ <http://www.kgscenter.org/>

² After the abolition of Kosova autonomy in 1989, a totalitarian rule by Slobodan Milosevic took place, to end only after a large scale NATO bombardment *against the Serbian regime* in 1999.

investment here. The process of privatization, initially seen as a saviour of the ruined Kosovar economy, has also failed. The justice system has revealed serious shortcomings in fighting corruption and other societal ailments. Kosova is continuing to endure grave difficulties with energy supplies.

Looking back

The swift and comprehensive return of Kosovar refugees from countries where they found shelter during the war, greatly and pleasantly surprised the international community. The return enabled drastic curtailing of the planning time allocated for larger international operations, and resulted in quick responses and “ad hoc” solutions.

After July 1999, the emergency phase in Kosova began with a main purpose to commence plans and projects for reconstruction and stabilization of the Kosovar society then emerging from war. As a result of the devastating effects of the war, Kosova was in a semi-chaotic state, which again made it impossible for it to contribute financially and institutionally to its own reconstruction efforts. Therefore, the contributions of numerous international donors, both governmental and non-governmental, were vital for the reconstruction and revival of the Kosovar society.

The United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosova (UNMIK), established through UN Security Council Resolution 1244 and approved on June 1999, marked the start of an undertaking *sui generis* for the United Nations themselves, who had never before endeavoured an effort of such proportions and nature³. Apart from UNMIK, who represented the civilian international presence, a NATO (KFOR) mission was also installed in Kosova, and tasked to guarantee security of the Kosovar citizens in the post-war period.⁴

³ For more information on UNMIK, visit its official we-site www.unmikonline.org, as well as www.wikipedia.org/wiki/UNMIK

⁴ According to the official KFOR web-site (www.nato.int/kfor), “the NATO-led Kosovo force, or KFOR, deployed in the wake of 78-day air campaign launched by the Alliance in March 1999 to halt and reverse

During the eight years of UNMIK administration, four (two national and two municipal) elections took place in Kosova, allowing for the constitution of Provisional Institutions of Self-Government (PISG) of Kosova⁵. During this period UNMIK has gradually transferred most of its competencies to the Kosova Provisional Institutions of Self-Government, which has actually⁶ resulted from almost absolute powers in all spheres of life in greatly reduced competences⁷.

II. ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND FAILURES IN GENDER ISSUES DURING 1999-2007 PERIOD

Accomplishments

In spite of the many difficulties it faced during the eight years of international protectorate, Kosova managed to create a solid basis of legal infrastructure and institutional mechanisms for accomplishing gender equality.

The most significant accomplishment in this regard has been the development of the National Action Plan for Achieving Gender Equality in Kosova, which has allowed for the building of an institutional infrastructure to make gender equality a reality in Kosova. It is also worth noting here that since 2002, following a decision by the Central Elections Commission, all political parties in Kosova are obliged to have women represented at one third of candidates in their election lists. As a result, 33 % of members of parliament in

the humanitarian catastrophe that was then unfolding. At present, NATO has approximately 16.000 troops deployed in Kosovo. KFOR presence remains crucial to guarantee security and stability in Kosovo as the diplomatic process led by the United Nations to define its future status moves forward. The Alliance has promised to support the security provisions of any final settlement.”

⁵ For more detailed information on Government of Kosova, Assembly of Kosova and its Presidency see the following official web-pages: www.ks-gov.net (*Government*); www.kuvendiikosoves.org (*Assembly*); www.president-ks.gov.net (*Presidency*).

⁶ Month of August, 2007.

⁷ However, competences of the SRSG remain to be almost absolute since, inter alia, he can annule decisions brought by the Kosova Assembly, remove from office and replace most senior officials such as the President, Prime-minister and Speaker of Assembly.

the Assembly of Kosova are women. This fact alone ranks Kosova very high internationally regarding participation of women in politics⁸.

Participation of women in other important institutions is also at a relatively good level; for example, 13.8 % of the Kosovo Police Service employees, are women.

The National Plan for Achieving Gender Equality in Kosova

The idea for designing this plan was present in the circles of the civil society in Kosova immediately after the war of 1999. Its drafting, supported by UNIFEM, started in June 2002 and was completed in April 2003, to be approved by the Government of Kosova and the then Prime-Minister Bajram Rexhepi on April 14, 2004.

The approval of the National Action Plan made way for the drafting and approval by the Kosova Assembly, of the Law on Gender Equality in 2004. This Law then allowed for the establishing of the following institutional mechanisms for accomplishing gender equality at the local and national level:

a) Institutional mechanisms for gender equality at the national level

- Agency for Gender Equality / Office of Prime-Minister
- Advisory Office for Good Governance – Division for Gender Issues / Office of Prime-Minister
- Unit for Gender Equality - Institution of Ombudsperson
- Officers for Gender Equality in ministries
- Inter-ministerial Council for Gender Equality

b) Institutional mechanisms for gender equality at the local level:

- Officers for gender equality in municipalities
- Municipal committees for gender equalities

⁸ For example this percentage of representation of women in the Kosova Assembly is higher than that of women in respective parliaments of the United Kingdom, the USA, France, Italy, Switzerland, Canada, The Czech Republic, Poland, Greece, Slovenia, the Russian Federation, etc. It is certainly higher than that of all other countries in the region of SEE.

These mechanisms are crucially important for the institutional treatment of gender issues in Kosova. In a long term perspective, it is expected that gender issues will become an integral part of any strategy and/or policies of Kosovar institutions.

Failures and lost opportunities

Public opinion in Kosova widely believes that despite significant achievements in the field of gender issues, more could have been done if all opportunities had been used in a better planned development.

1) UNMIK Office for Gender Issues

Most criticisms from Kosovar activists in the field of gender issues target UNMIK's lack of initiative, particularly the needed will for implementation of important development projects in the field.

Office of Gender Affairs (OGA), acting in the framework of UNMIK since 1999, played an *insignificant* role advancing gender equality and has remained on the margins of relevant developments despite its lengthy existence in Kosova. Although part of UNMIK establishment and enjoying the necessary powers and authority to act in the field, the OGA limited its activities to organizing occasional training events. This completely ignored local (governmental and non-governmental) initiatives in the process. More so, as it has happened, the OGA Office sometimes presented as its own successes, events to which it was invited merely as a guest.⁹

2) Lack of women in decision-making

One of the most obvious shortcomings during this period has been the lack of women in the crucial postwar political processes in Kosova. To illustrate, there are two government cabinets, which each have only one women minister.¹⁰ The Kosovar Negotiation Team, who are leading the process of negotiations with the international and the Serbian party

⁹ Regional Conference of Albanian Women, Prishtina, 2000

¹⁰ The cabinet of Bajram Rexhepi (2002 – 2004), Ms. Resmije Mumcu acted as minister of health, whereas in the present cabinet of Agim Çekut, Ms. Melihate Termkolli is the minister of public services.

for the final status settlement, have also been criticised because its members do not include any women.

III. EUMIK

The European Union Mission in Kosova (EUMIK)¹¹, which will be installed after the final status settlement of Kosova, is expected to have a different mandate than that of UNMIK. Whereas UNMIK's task was to administer Kosova, EUMIK's competences are expected to be more limited in range and to focus more in facilitating the transfer of authority and the remaining UNMIK competences to Kosovar institutions, as well as in monitoring the implementation of international agreements that will result from Kosova status negotiations.

However, EUMIK will also retain some decisionmaking competences in the field of justice, security, customs and administration.

EUMIK and gender issues in Kosova

Although official documents conveying the basic schemes of EUMIK bodies do not appear to have plans for a specific unit that would deal with gender issues, it is however expected that this mission would involve an cross-institutional approach to gender issues.

Nevertheless, it is hoped that EUMIK unlike UNMIK, will be more ready to utilize the existing capacities, will and enthusiasm of the local NGO-s active in the field of gender issues in Kosova, which would in return allow for cooperation and partnership in developing joint projects. As a result, ample information from the field will be made

¹¹ www.eupt-kosovo.eu

available to EUMIK, to allow for better, more meaningful and effective policies and projects (which was not the case during UNMIK administration).

As an extreme case of an “opportunity lost” one could consider the organization “Kosovo Women’s Initiative” (KWI), established in July 1999. KWI was created after the United States Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration allocated a grant of 10 million US dollars to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) for the implementation of this project. The idea was to use this fund to support the needs of Kosovar women and to help regenerate and consolidate existing Kosovar women organizations, which had been heavily damaged and in some cases destroyed during the war of 1999.

However, a grave mistake was committed, which eventually resulted in the complete failure of this initiative. The planning of allocation of funds was carried out through a “top-down” approach. There was no prior consultation of local actors, which would enable clear identification of real needs of Kosovar women and of women NGOs. Consequently, the major proportion of the grant went to UNHCR to fund its international partners’ operational costs. A further consequence was that due to the lack of local knowledge and relevant information, the remaining part of the funds was distributed on an “ad hoc” basis to organizations that terminated their activities as soon as donations were spent and funds ceased to flow.¹²

¹² For more information: Chris Corrin *Gender Audit*, Jock M. Baker and Hilde Haug *Final Report: External Evaluation of the Kosovo Women’s Initiative*.

Recommendations

With the intention that the mistakes of the past eight years be prevented in the future, it is necessary that the EUMIK mission take into consideration experiences of local actors during the 1999-2007 period.

1. EUMIK should take into consideration achievements in the field of gender issues in the process of planning of its mission in Kosova. There are two obvious reasons for this: first, local experience in addressing gender issues in Kosova can serve as a sound basis for developing effective EUMIK policies in the field. This will help avoid unnecessary bureaucratic procedures and save time and funds. Secondly, by utilizing existing achievements in addressing gender issues in Kosova (the already established institutional mechanisms and the existing women NGOs), EUMIK will further advance the current situation and would make existing mechanisms for gender equality more functional, and will also support the activities and work of women NGOs. A memorandum of understanding between Kosovo women's organizations and EUMIK may support and advance the achievements and future initiatives regarding gender issues.
2. The legal and institutional infrastructure is in place in Kosova for planning and implementation of any long term initiatives in the field of gender issues. As a result of eight years of capacity building and participation and organization of various events (conferences, meetings, and projects) of local, regional and international character, the civil society in Kosova, especially the NGO sector involved in gender issues, have built a significant experience and the needed capacities for successful work in this field.
3. A cooperative approach on the part of EUMIK will enable a mutuality of best practices. On one side, EUMIK will be in the position to save time and resources in planning this segment of its mission and, on the other hand, this approach

would alleviate the danger of repeating previous mistakes in the process of addressing relevant gender issues..

4. Decisions on larger scale projects and main policies should be built in close cooperation and partnership with local NGOs, since they possess the needed experience, expertise, local knowledge and the opportunity for first-hand communication with the final target population and groups; these, together with the knowledge on the situation and the real needs in the field makes these NGOs noteworthy partners for any serious and fruitful approach in the field of gender issues in Kosova.

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