

STRONGER **WOMEN** STRONGER **NATIONS**

REPORT SERIES



2007 KOSOVO REPORT

Amplifying the Voices of Women in Kosovo



WOMEN *for* WOMEN
International

THESE ARE THE COUNTRIES WHERE WOMEN FOR WOMEN INTERNATIONAL WORKS



AFGHANISTAN



BOSNIA AND
HERZEGOVINA



DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC
OF THE CONGO



IRAQ



KOSOVO



NIGERIA



RWANDA



SUDAN



WOMEN *for* WOMEN
International

Women for Women International mobilizes women to change their lives by bringing a holistic approach to addressing the unique needs of women in conflict and post-conflict environments.

We begin by working with women who may have lost everything in conflict and often have nowhere else to turn. Participation in our one-year program launches women on a journey from victim to survivor to active citizen. We identify services to support graduates of the program as they continue to strive for greater social, economic and political participation in their communities.

As each woman engages in a multi-phase process of recovery and rehabilitation, she opens a window of opportunity presented by the end of conflict to help improve the rights, freedoms and status of women in her country. As women who go through our program assume leadership positions in their villages, actively participate in the reconstruction of their communities, build civil society, start businesses, train other women and serve as role models, they become active citizens who can help to establish lasting peace and stability.

KOSOVO

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



Starting the journey from crisis to self-sufficiency

This report combines grassroots access and experience with international political expertise to amplify women's voices in the ongoing discussions about Kosovo's future. It is the result of a partnership between Women for Women International, the Public International Law & Policy Group (PILPG) and American University.

PILPG, a 2005 Nobel Peace Prize nominee, is a non-profit organization that operates as a global pro bono law firm. It provides free legal assistance to states and governments involved in peace negotiations, drafts post-conflict constitutions and prosecutes war criminals. PILPG currently maintains an association with American University in Washington, D.C.

Women for Women International is grateful to the individuals who provided the insight, vision and direction necessary to make this *Stronger Women, Stronger Nations* report a reality, including Hamide Latifi, director of Women for Women International's Kosovo program; Zainab Salbi, founder and CEO of Women for Women International, Paul Williams, executive director of PILPG; PILPG associates Julia Rieper, Brett Gerson, Pemra Hazbay, LeeAnn O'Neill, Sutton Meagher and Ryan Vogel for providing briefing materials and analysis; and Amjad Atallah, president of the Strategic Assessments Initiative. Women for Women International would also like to acknowledge Anna Bennett of Bennett, Petts & Normington for her review of the survey design.

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Finally, Women for Women International recognizes the women in Kosovo who participated in the survey for sharing their priorities, recommendations and hopes for Kosovo's future.

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LETTER FROM ZAINAB SALBI AND PAUL WILLIAMS

There is a duality to war—a disconnect in the way it is portrayed, talked about and understood that creates a distinction between what we call the front-line discussion and the back-line discussion. For every front-line discussion dealing only with the detached calculations of warfare, there is a back-line discussion that embraces the often overlooked questions of how those caught in war’s midst will survive, and how they will rebuild their society in war’s wake.

While men continue to steer the front-line discussion, it is the women who lead the discussion of war on the back lines, ensuring that there is food to eat and water to drink, and preserving the seeds of hope so that they may take root in a peaceful future. Once the fighting ends, it is the women who pick up the pieces of their families and mend the social fabric of their communities. Yet women’s crucial role in sustaining society amid armed conflict is rarely acknowledged. As an organization dedicated to serving women survivors of war, Women for Women International has witnessed this back-line discussion, and recognizes it as a key to sustainable peace.

Women for Women International and the Public International Law & Policy Group believe that women’s well-being is the bellwether of society. We have seen that when women thrive in areas like education and employment, society benefits as a whole. And when women suffer, it is only a matter of time before all of society is at risk. Thus it is not difficult to realize that the incorporation of women’s views into traditionally male-dominated political processes is vital to achieving sustainable peace, democracy and prosperity.

The segregation of front- and back-line discussions continues to marginalize women’s role in creating a lasting peace to the detriment of all survivors of war, women and children as well as men. But peace is not just the signing of a peace agreement. That is only the beginning. The promise of substantive economic, social and political change can only come about from a stable, inclusive society working together to move beyond the divisions of war.

Peace—real peace—means that there are schools for children to attend, and that it is safe for them to go. Peace means having three meals a day, a job, and home to come back to. These are the prosaic triumphs of sustainable peace in stable societies, and they would not be possible if women did not bridge the gap between the front-lines of conflict and the back-lines of stubborn hope.

This is why we conducted our *Stronger Women, Stronger Nations* survey in Kosovo at this pivotal time. To ensure that women's priorities and recommendations are part of Kosovo's national agenda, we surveyed more than 1,600 Kosovar women on subjects that extended beyond "women's rights" or "women's issues," delving more broadly into the economic, social and political issues that affect all of Kosovo. Among the many encouraging findings of the survey was that 89 percent of women feel that the situation in Kosovo will be better one year from now.

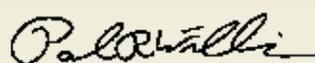
This optimism for the future, we would argue, is one of the most important points to emerge from the survey. Hope is a potent commodity that can tangibly transform people's lives. In the midst of challenges, hope can be the bridge that extends from crisis to stability and beyond. To lose hope is to surrender to powerlessness and the status quo. But when allowed to flourish, hope creates leaders, mobilizes support and fuels action, all of which Kosovo desperately needs right now in its struggle to achieve true peace and independence.

Sustainable peace, democracy and economic development depend on women's economic, social and political participation. The front-line and back-line discussions must be held at the same negotiating table for real peace to materialize. It is time for women to be involved, not just in symbolic ways, but through full participation at every level, from the family dinner table, to community councils, to the United Nations. Women's vast potential for leveraging hope into sustainable peace must not be allowed to remain untapped. Strong women lead to strong nations.

Sincerely,



Zainab Salbi
President and CEO
Women for Women International



Paul Williams
Executive Director
Public International Law & Policy Group

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is a pivotal time for Kosovo, a province of Serbia that has struggled with ethnic tension and full-blown conflict between its Albanian and Serbian populations since the early 14th century. In 1999, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) intervened to halt the Serbian campaign of ethnic cleansing, ultimately leading to Kosovo being placed under United Nations administration.

Now, eight years later, Kosovo is still under UN administration, its final status still unresolved. Serbia prefers to maintain Kosovo as an autonomous region within Serbia, while Kosovo itself overwhelmingly favors independence. Russia, a traditional Serbian ally, is also wielding its considerable international influence to back Serbia's position.

In November 2005, the UN appointed former Finnish president Martti Ahtisaari to lead the status negotiations. In March 2007, Ahtisaari presented a final status report and draft settlement agreement to the UN Security Council, recommending that Kosovo become an independent nation after a transitional period supervised by the international community. Both the status report and draft agreement were informally rejected by Russia and publicly opposed by Serbia.

Kosovo's final status remains unresolved to this day. But one thing is certain: For long-term peace and stability to succeed in Kosovo, grassroots women's priorities and recommendations must be part of Kosovo's national agenda. However, most of the people engaged in this conversation are men acting in their professional capacities as diplomats, government officials and advisors, with very few women speaking on behalf of anyone or anything. Women are simply not at the negotiating table.



On the road to active citizenship, women's issues are society's issues

In the meantime, women are bearing the brunt of the hardship brought on by the uncertainty about Kosovo's status, which is negatively affecting its political, economic and social sectors. Society benefits when women have access to jobs, education, and legal protection of their rights. However, women's access to these development resources is directly tied to their ability to participate in formal decision-making structures. When women are not seated at the negotiating table, their interests are negotiated for them and their collective insight is squandered. This marginalization of women's views is the norm in Kosovo right now. Women's issues are society's issues, and Kosovo's society is poorer for the continuing political exclusion of Kosovo's women.

Together with the Public International Law & Policy Group (PILPG) and American University, Women for Women International created this report to raise awareness about the connection between women's economic, social and political participation and long-term peace and stability in Kosovo. PILPG and American University identified the key issues on Kosovo's agenda from a political perspective. Women for Women International used this information to create a survey that looked beyond "women's issues" and identified women's priorities and recommendations with regard to the broader economic, social and political issues affecting all of Kosovo. The survey was conducted among the more than 1,600 participants in Women for Women International's Kosovo program, which helps the most socially excluded women survivors of war move from crisis to stability to active citizenship.

Key findings from the survey show:

Unemployment worries more pressing than status woes

54.3% of women are dissatisfied with the current situation in Kosovo. Of these women, more than twice as many cited unemployment as the reason for their dissatisfaction as those who cited uncertainty over Kosovo's status.

While the international community is primarily focused on protecting minority rights and devolving political power to the municipal level, survey respondents were primarily concerned with educational and employment opportunities.

Strong support for a tolerant, multi-ethnic society

79.8% of women feel that minorities should be able to stay in Kosovo with no restrictions, and 63.6% of women can imagine themselves working with a woman of another ethnic group.

With such strong support among women for the minority populations, the international community and the Kosovo government should design governing mechanisms that seek to fully integrate the minority community into the economic, social and political fabric of Kosovo.

Trust in home-grown institutions greater than in international ones

More women express more confidence in "internal" institutions, such as the police and the media, than "international" ones, such as the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

Although the Ahtisaari plan for Kosovo provides for extensive international management of Kosovo's internal affairs, women have the most confidence in Kosovo's indigenous institutions, with international institutions earning the least confidence.

Optimism for the future

89% of women expect the overall situation in Kosovo to be better one year from now.

Because of the indispensable roles that women play in their families and communities, sustaining women's hope in the future of Kosovo will be a crucial factor in transforming it into a democratic and economically viable state.

Conclusion

Regardless of how Kosovo's final status is resolved, one overriding challenge will remain: convincing national and international policymakers to recognize the status of women as integral to economic growth, reconstruction and sustainable peace. Women's access to development resources is directly tied to the overall strength of a nation. When women are excluded from educational and economic opportunities and denied protection of their rights, sustainable peace is thwarted. Stronger women build stronger nations.

FOR LONG-TERM PEACE AND STABILITY TO
SUCCEED IN KOSOVO, GRASSROOTS WOMEN'S
PRIORITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS MUST
BE PART OF KOSOVO'S NATIONAL AGENDA



Women for Women International-Kosovo works in the communities indicated above. The first spelling is Serbian, the second spelling is Albanian.

INTRODUCTION

Kosovo has been under United Nations administration since 1999, when NATO intervened to halt the brutal campaign of ethnic cleansing that Serbian forces were meting out through rape, murder and massive displacement of ethnic Albanians.

Resolution of Kosovo's final status is now an international issue, and it is essential that women's priorities and recommendations be included in formal discussions about Kosovo's future. Women for Women International, the Public International Law & Policy Group (PILPG), and American University conducted this survey to raise awareness about the critical link between women's economic, social and political participation and long-term peace and stability in Kosovo.

More than 1,600 participants in Women for Women International's Kosovo program took part in the survey, providing compelling constituent data for elected officials, and strategic policy insight for advocates and practitioners.

Part I of this report provides an overview of Kosovo's history of conflict between Albanians and Serbs up through the final status negotiations currently underway. Part II discusses the rationale behind the *Stronger Women, Stronger Nations* survey. Part III discusses the survey results in the context of Kosovo's current political, economic and social situations. Part IV provides an analysis of the survey results and sets forth recommendations for the future. Finally, Part V sets forth an Action Agenda of practical steps that should be taken to ensure the involvement of women in Kosovo's future.

I. HISTORY OF CONFLICT

Both Albanians and Serbs lay claim to ethnic roots in Kosovo. The Albanians maintain that they are the original inhabitants of Kosovo, tracing their roots back to the Illyrians, an ancient people thought to have inhabited the Balkans thousands of years ago.¹ The Serbs, on the other hand, claim that Kosovo is the cradle of their civilization and point to Kosovo Polje, the site of a battle in 1389 where the Serbs were defeated by the Ottoman Turks.²

A. After World War II

The Yugoslav Constitution of 1946 created Kosovo as an autonomous region within Serbia. Kosovo was responsible for cultural and economic development and the protection of its citizens' rights. Kosovo became an "Autonomous Province" within Serbia under the 1963 Yugoslav Constitution, giving its government greater decision-making powers. Later, the 1974 Yugoslav Constitution effectively granted the Autonomous Provinces, Kosovo and Vojvoda, sovereign status, nearly equivalent to that of the six Yugoslavian republics.³ This gave Kosovo the same level of autonomy and federal representation as a full-fledged Yugoslav republic.⁴

Self-government and federal representation were particularly important in Kosovo, where Albanians were the majority by a ratio of 9 to 1. During this time, the Serbian government granted more freedoms to the Kosovar Albanians, including the founding of the University of Priština and allowing the Kosovar Albanians to fly the Albanian flag as a "national emblem." Albanians began to participate more in the civic and political life of Kosovo. However, instances of actual and perceived discrimination against Serbs led to Serbian demands for a return to the pre-1974 period, when Kosovar Serbs had more power.⁵

B. 1980s-1990s: Escalation of Violence

A declining economy coupled with the fall of communism led several Yugoslav republics to do so in

the early 1990s.⁶ Slovenia was the first republic to do so, and peacefully separated from the former Yugoslavia in 1990.⁷ Subsequent declarations of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, however, led to the Bosnian War in 1992. The war ended with the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement in 1995, but, to the disappointment of the Kosovars, regional considerations were not incorporated into the pact.⁸

In Serbia, Slobodan Milošević was elected as the country's first president in 1989. Under his leadership, the Serbian Assembly amended the Serbian Constitution, revoking Kosovo's control over many of its institutions, including the courts, police and schools. The use of the Albanian language was also prohibited, a clear swipe at the province's Albanian majority.



In July 1990, the Kosovo Assembly adopted a resolution claiming independence in response to the Serbian government's actions restricting the rights of Albanians and encouraging the movement of Serbs into Kosovo.⁹ The Serbian government then forcibly dissolved all remaining

Kosovo governmental institutions derived from the 1974 Yugoslav Constitution and imposed direct rule from Belgrade.¹⁰

Ethnic violence escalated in Kosovo with Serb forces cracking down on Albanian resistance between 1989 and 1996.¹¹ Although ethnic Albanian leaders declared unilateral independence in 1991, a passive resistance movement in the 1990s failed to secure independence or restore autonomy.¹² The ethnic Albanian rebel movement, the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), was formed in 1996¹³ out of frustration with the passive resistance movement. In February 1998, a KLA attack on four Serb policemen in Kosovo's Drenica region ignited a massive Serbian backlash. The resulting violence caused KLA membership to swell as thousands of ethnic Albanians joined its ranks.¹⁴

By the summer of 1998, Albanians were mounting mass protests against Serbian rule, and police and army reinforcements were sent in to crush the KLA,¹⁵ which attacked Serbian military targets, and sometimes civilian ones. Serbian forces responded with tremendous and sweeping force, resulting in mass killings, such as the January 1999 massacre in Racak, southern Kosovo, in which 45 civilians died. Serb measures such as detention incommunicado, torture, summary imprisonment and economic marginalization effectively displaced 350,000 civilians.¹⁶

During this time, thousands of ethnic Albanian women were victims of ethnic cleansing and rape, which had become a tool of war. According to a 2000 assessment by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), women were separated from male family members, taken away in large groups, "placed in different buildings around Kosovo and raped by Serbian men. Women were also forced to cook and clean for the Serbian paramilitary and were subjected to rape and torture." The assessment reported that most rapes of women in Kosovo were "gang rapes, and that rape was associated with...placing Serbian nationalist symbol tattoos on victims' bodies."¹⁷ Although ethnically Albanian women were targeted in greater number, ethnically Serbian, Roma, Egyptian and Ashkali women also experienced sexual violence, forced displacement, violence and insecurity.¹⁸ The violence prompted more Kosovars to flee, and increased the pressure on Western powers to intervene.



“THEY BURNED OUR HOUSE AND THAT NIGHT WE STAYED IN THE MOUNTAINS... WE WALKED FOR SEVEN DAYS AND SEVEN NIGHTS...”

A Women for Women International participant from Vuçitrn / Vushtrri, a municipality in northern central Kosovo, describes the day that Serb forces came to her village:

“It was Monday, a terrible day when the Serb forces bombarded our village and they moved us away from our houses. They burned our house and that night we stayed in the mountains. ...We walked for seven days and seven nights and there were 13,000 people. ...We have seen many killed peoples and we were very scared.”

Another Women for Women International participant from Vuçitrn / Vushtrri describes a similar scene:

“Serb forces moved us away from our house and they have separated women from men. They also have beaten and maltreated many peoples in front of us. Serb forces have also beaten my husband and from that time he is not feeling well. His thorax was broken and he is not feeling well yet.”

C. 1999: International Intervention

In February 1999, Serbs and Albanians met in Rambouillet, France, in an effort to come to a peaceful resolution.¹⁹ The meeting was held under the auspices of the Contact Group, the principal group of nations that supervises the international community's policy in Kosovo. The Contact Group's six members are the United States, Italy, the United Kingdom, Russia, France and Germany.

Serbia, however, refused to sign a peace agreement.²⁰ On March 18, 1999, Albanians unilaterally signed a peace agreement that allowed interim broad autonomy and allowed NATO to enter Kosovo, which Serbians later rejected.²¹

On March 24, 1999, NATO launched air strikes to force Milošević to remove his security forces from Kosovo. NATO air strikes lasted 78 days, until Milošević capitulated in June 1999 and agreed to withdraw his troops completely from Kosovo.²²

D. 1999: Adoption of UN Resolution 1244

On June 9, 1999, the UN Security Council passed UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (UNSCR 1244),²³ in which NATO agreed to cease its bombing of Serbia. Kosovar Albanians were given the right of return to Kosovo, and Kosovo came under UN administration.

UNSCR 1244 created the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), which has four objectives. Different organizations have responsibility over each objective:

- Pillar I: Police and Justice, under the direct leadership of the UN;
- Pillar II: Civil Administration, under the direct leadership of the UN;
- Pillar III: Democratization and Institution Building, led by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE); and
- Pillar IV: Reconstruction and Economic Development, led by the European Union (EU).²⁴

An important aspect of UNSCR 1244 is the establishment of Kosovar institutions operating in cooperation with the UN called the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government (PISG), including an assembly, a prime minister, a president, and a court system. The PISG also has an interim constitution. The United Nations' Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) oversees the PISG and has final authority.²⁵ Although Kosovars elect their own public officials in the PISG, elections are sometimes irregular.²⁶

After the adoption of UNSCR 1244, NATO led an international security force into Kosovo that remains there today. The Kosovo Force (KFOR) is responsible for establishing and maintaining a "secure environment in Kosovo, including public safety and order; to monitor, verify and when necessary, enforce compliance with the agreements that ended the conflict"; and to provide assistance to UNMIK. KFOR troops come from 35 states and are grouped into four Multi-National Task Forces.²⁷

The former KLA was transitioned into the Kosovo Protection Corps (KPC), a civilian agency charged with providing emergency response and reconstruction services. The KPC's mission is to protect Kosovo's population against natural or man-made disasters and to assist in the rebuilding of Kosovo through work on public utilities and social projects. The KPC does not have any law enforcement powers.²⁸ KFOR manages the KPC's day-to-day operations.



E. 2005-Present: Kosovo Final Status Negotiations

The presence of the international community has kept Kosovo relatively stable. With the exception of a series of riots in March 2004 where Albanians targeted Serbs and UNMIK, no major acts of violence have taken place.²⁹

Per UNSCR 1244, the United Nations initiated the final status negotiating process. In November 2005, the UN Secretary-General appointed Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari to lead the negotiations. After numerous delays and a year of unsuccessful negotiations between Kosovo and Serbia, Ahtisaari's final status report and draft settlement agreement for Kosovo were presented to the UN Security Council on March 26, 2007.³⁰

Ahtisaari's settlement agreement proposes a temporary "supervised independence" for Kosovo, with an International Civilian Representative (ICR) overseeing the Kosovar government. Following a transition period, UNMIK would transfer authority to the governing authorities in Kosovo and the ICR.³¹ If the UN passes a resolution implementing the settlement, Kosovo would enter a 120-day transition period in which it must draft and pass a constitution. UNMIK would then transition out of Kosovo, leaving it fully independent. Although Ahtisaari's proposal was largely supported by the United States and many European countries, the settlement agreement and subsequent drafts of it were informally rejected by Russia and publicly opposed by Serbia.

WITHOUT A UN RESOLUTION RESOLVING FINAL STATUS, KOSOVO FACES A PERILOUS STATE OF LIMBO IN WHICH IT IS NEITHER INDEPENDENT AND RECOGNIZED, NOR PART OF ANOTHER STATE



There is no consensus in the international community regarding the Ahtisaari plan or final status for Kosovo. While the United States and some members of the UN Security Council support the Ahtisaari settlement and an independent Kosovo,³² Russia has consistently signaled that it will veto any UN resolution that grants Kosovo independence without Serbian consent. Despite this, a number of draft UN resolutions granting Kosovo supervised or transitional independence have been circulated among members of the Security Council. Russia has informally rejected each of them, with Serbia echoing public opposition.³³

The constancy of Russia's dissent has begun influencing other players on the international stage. The European Union, like many other states, has expressed its unwillingness to replace the UN mission without a UN resolution authorizing it, and has warned Kosovo against making a unilateral declaration of independence.³⁴ Without a UN resolution resolving final status, Kosovo may then face a perilous state of limbo in which it is neither independent and recognized, nor part of another state.

In July 2007, as political deadlock over Kosovo's status showed no sign of lifting, the issue was removed from the UN Agenda and offered to the six-nation Contact Group to revisit. Although Russia is a member of the Contact Group, it does not hold the same veto power that it enjoys in the UN Security Council. With this move, United States and European officials agreed to allow an additional 120 days for negotiations that would include talks with Kosovo and Serbia.³⁵ On August 10, a diplomatic troika from the United States, Russia and the EU began meeting with Serb leaders in Belgrade and has agreed to provide the UN with a report on the new talks by December 10, 2007.

II

II. WOMEN FOR WOMEN INTERNATIONAL IN KOSOVO

For long-term peace and stability to succeed in Kosovo, women's priorities and recommendations must be part of Kosovo's national agenda. Women held society together during the war and have since become the grassroots experts on peace-building and reconstruction.

However, because women lacked access to decision-making processes and institutions before the conflict, they are often excluded from these processes and institutions once the fighting ends.³⁶ For example, the current scarcity of women participating in high-level decisions about Kosovo's future can be traced back to women's absence from the peace negotiations in Rambouillet.³⁷ Yet according to Noeleen Heyzer, executive director of UNIFEM, "early recovery and post-conflict governance do better when women are involved. Women make a difference in part because they adopt a more inclusive approach to peace and security and address key social and economic issues that provide the foundations of sustainable peace and that would otherwise be ignored."³⁸

Women for Women International launched operations in Kosovo in 2000 to help the most socially excluded women rebuild their lives, families and communities. Since then, more than 14,000 women have participated in a yearlong program of direct aid, rights awareness, vocational skills training, income generation assistance and emotional support.

Program participants are identified through a comprehensive community assessment (see sidebar at right), which ensures that the program reaches the most socially excluded women in society. During this process, Women for Women International staff collect information about each community, including population, male/female ratio, human and material impact of violent conflict, employment, the economy, education and infrastructure.



Women learn beekeeping during vocational skills trainings

ABOUT WOMEN FOR WOMEN INTERNATIONAL'S COMMUNITY ASSESSMENTS

Goals of the community assessment

1. Assess the conditions of the community
2. Understand the community's needs, particularly as they affect women
3. Determine the willingness of the community to cooperate with the organization's objectives

Stages of the community assessment

1. Initial identification process
2. Institutional meetings
3. Community leader meetings
4. Community member meetings
5. Practical needs assessment exercises
6. Observation
7. House visits
8. Decision

Once the decision is made to work in a particular community, Women for Women International staff continue to work with local leaders to increase buy-in and support for the program. Without this crucial step, women's participation would occur in a vacuum, and their ability to exercise their rights or apply their new skills would stagnate once they left the safe haven of the training space. As awareness of and support for Women for Women International's program grows, more women are referred for enrollment. Women for Women International staff interviews the women to ensure that they understand the program's goals and what will be required of them—regular attendance and a desire for personal enrichment.

Findings

When asked what obstacles they face to earning an income, 52.6% of the surveyed women cite lack of money to buy raw material or equipment, and 44.2% cite finding customers. Although 74% of women report that they never participate in an activity to improve their community, 52.3% believe that women have a strong ability to make changes in society. Furthermore, 44.1% of the survey participants believe that they personally have a strong ability to make changes in society.

As part of Women for Women International's yearlong program, each participant is matched with a sponsor who provides a monthly donation. A small portion of this covers training costs, while the majority goes to the women, allowing them to purchase basic necessities for themselves and their families while they are involved in the program. According to the most recent data, 55.2% of women in Kosovo use their sponsorship funds to pay for food; 12.1% use the money to buy clothing; 7.6% pay for housing; 11.8% buy medicine; and 14.4% of the women use a portion of their sponsorship funds to pay their children's school fees.

As grassroots practitioners, Women for Women International has come to recognize what women have always recognized—that women's issues are society's issues. Yet national and international policy makers continue to segregate "women's issues" from the core economic, social and political agenda. In response, Women for Women International launched a public education and outreach campaign called *Stronger Women, Stronger Nations* to raise awareness about the connection between women's economic, social and political participation in society and a nation's overall strength. Women for Women International chose to launch our inaugural *Stronger Women, Stronger Nations* survey and report in Kosovo now because women's voices urgently need to be heard during this critical time that may well decide Kosovo's future.

To amplify grassroots women's voices in discussions about Kosovo's final status, Women for Women International partnered with the Public International Law & Policy Group (PILPG) and American University in Washington, D.C., merging grassroots access and experience with international political expertise. PILPG and American University identified the key issues on Kosovo's agenda from a political perspective. Women for Women International then used this information to create a survey that looked beyond "women's rights" or "women's issues" and identified women's priorities and recommendations with regard to the broader economic, social and political issues affecting all of Kosovo.

In March and April 2007, Women for Women International surveyed 1,679 women participating in our Kosovo program from in and around the following municipalities: Dečani / Deçani, Glogovac / Drenas, Obilič / Obiliq, Kosovska Mitrovica / Mitrovicë, Kosovo Polje / Fushë Kosova, Lipjan / Lipjan, Orahovac / Rahovec, Podujevo / Podujevë, Priština / Prishtinë, Prizren / Prizren, Srbica / Skenderaj, Štimlje / Shtime, Vuçitrn / Vushtrri. The demographics of the sample group are in the right sidebar.³⁹

It should be noted that no Kosovar Serbian women participated in the survey. However, it should also be noted that the Women for Women International-Kosovo chapter office completed community needs assessments and met with women's groups in Serbian enclaves as part of its standard community assessment protocol. Although women in these areas expressed interest in Women for Women International's programs, political tension and other obstacles prevented chapter office staff from securing the level of community support needed to serve these communities effectively. Women for Women International-Kosovo continues to cooperate with Serbian women experts individually, but not yet at the community level.

DEMOGRAPHICS OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Rural / Urban Breakdown

Rural	74.6%
Urban	25.0%
Don't Know	0.4%

Ethnic Breakdown

Albanian	94.8%
Roma/Egyptian/Ashkali	4.7%
Bosniak	0.4%
Other	0.1%

Marital Status

Currently Married	70.3%
Never Married	25.6%
Divorced/Separated	0.6%
Widowed	3.4%

Age

15 - 20	12.1%
21 - 30	24.7%
31 - 40	30.0%
41 - 50	23.1%
51 - 60	9.2%
61 - 68	0.8%

Number of Children

0	0.3%
1	9.2%
2	15.2%
3	23.1%
4	18.9%
5	15.3%
6	9.1%
7	5.2%
8	1.5%
9	1.0%
10	0.9%
11	0.3%

Level of Education Completed⁴⁰

Primary	69.7%
Secondary	23.1%
University	0.5%
Other	6.5%

III

III. SURVEY RESULTS ON KOSOVO'S POLITICS, ECONOMY, SOCIAL ISSUES AND INSTITUTIONS

A. Politics

Kosovo's Political Status

Uncertainty regarding Kosovo's final status has dominated politics there, and women share in that anxiety. However, Kosovar women are more likely to cite economic woes as more pressing than political ones, both for themselves and for Kosovo society.

Among the women who participated in Women for Women International's survey, 79.5% describe the current Kosovo-Serbia relationship as either somewhat or very bad. When asked what was needed for the relationship to improve, the overwhelming majority of women said that Kosovo needs independence. The second most common response was that everyone would get along once the economy improves. Perhaps surprisingly, 57.8% of survey respondents thought that citizens of Kosovo had been given a chance to contribute their input on the question of Kosovo's final status.

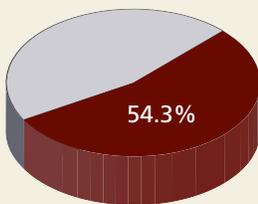
On the question of Kosovo's current status, 54.3% of respondents express dissatisfaction with the situation as it stands now. But the lack of employment, not the surplus of political uncertainty, is their chief complaint. More than twice as many women cite unemployment as the reason for their dissatisfaction as those who cite uncertainty over Kosovo's status. Other top reasons include general economic problems, poverty and low salaries or pensions.



Women's participation is vital to Kosovo's future

MORE THAN TWICE AS MANY WOMEN CITE UNEMPLOYMENT AS THE REASON FOR THEIR DISSATISFACTION AS THOSE WHO CITE UNCERTAINTY OVER KOSOVO'S STATUS

On the question of Kosovo's current status



54.3% of respondents express dissatisfaction with the situation as it stands now

Based on this information, it is reasonable to conclude that when asked specifically about the Kosovo-Serbia relationship, women's top priority is independence. But when women are asked about the situation in Kosovo more generally, their top priorities are employment and other economic issues, rather than the status of Kosovo's relationship with Serbia.

Perhaps one of the most encouraging figures to emerge from the survey is that 89% of women surveyed expect the overall situation in Kosovo to be better one year from now. In discussions with the women after the survey, some of those from around Priština offered some additional insight:

"I hope we will have independence, the employment issue will be improved, we will have increase in salaries, pensions and we'll become as other countries."

"I hope that Kosova's future is the independence and that status will bring more opportunities for investments and more opportunities for employment for all of us."

"I hope that women will be more free and will be part of decision-making, starting from their families up to the highest institutions of Kosova."⁴¹

Political Participation

Women in Kosovo overwhelmingly report a lack of access to political information, significantly hindering their ability to participate in vital political decisions that affect them. At the same time, a majority of women believe that they are not well represented politically, although they also believe that women's political participation is important for Kosovo.

When asked about their access to information about political developments in Kosovo, 73.8% of women say they have either not very much information or no information at all. When asked if they had information about the laws currently being applied in Kosovo, that number jumped to 81.5%. Moreover, 67.7% of women say they do not know how to obtain information about the laws under which all residents of Kosovo live. Of those women who say they know how to obtain information about the law, the primary sources of information were cited as municipal courts, municipal administration buildings and lawyers.

When asked about Kosovo's constitution, 54.3% of respondents had heard about plans to draft a new constitution following the resolution of final status. However, only 37.1% of these women were aware of ways that they could participate in the plans to draft a new constitution, such as referendums and public meetings.

Despite their lack of access to political information, most respondents report a positive perception of women's political rights, though fewer see the tangible benefits of them. While 76.5% of survey respondents said that the participation of women in government is extremely important to the development of their community, and 95.3% of women said they knew they had the right to participate in the political process, 54.9% of women felt that women are not well represented in government.

The survey participants' instincts are not far off from the facts. Even though women have voting rights, they are underrepresented in both the government and the voting electorate.⁴²

A recent UN report found that "[w]omen constitute 35.7 per cent of the civil service, but remain seriously underrepresented at the senior level. There are only 193 women, compared to 937 men, in senior posts at the central level, with only one minister and one permanent secretary who are women. There are only 56 women, compared to 731 men, at the municipal level, with only two chief executive officer posts occupied by women."⁴³

Regardless of this, 54.2% of women surveyed believe that those making decisions about Kosovo's final status have considered the circumstances of

ACCESS TO INFORMATION ABOUT POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN KOSOVO IS LIMITED

Access to information on political developments

Not very much or no information at all

73.8%

Access to information about laws currently being applied in Kosovo

Not very much or no information at all

81.5%

Knowledge of how to obtain information about the laws under which all residents of Kosovo live

Not very much or no information at all

67.7%

Kosovo's women. When asked why they thought women's circumstances were considered, most women responded that politicians needed women's votes to get elected.

However, when some of the women were interviewed about this question after the survey, there seemed to be less of a feeling that women's circumstances were in fact being considered. Some of the women remarked:

"No, they are not considering our circumstances. They are interested in the political and security, not to have troubles in general situation in Kosova, and we are not very considered."

"Well, somewhat. They have well-ordered themselves and don't want to listen about us. They are looking out only for their interests and nothing else, they have already solved their problems."

"No, any of them isn't considering our circumstances. I don't know, but I think that they are giving more importance to the minority issue and are neglecting many other important issues."

"It seems like they are not considering anything. They continually keep saying; we'll do this we'll do that and in fact they do nothing."

Rule of Law

As the primary guardian of Kosovo's rule of law, the justice system faces steep challenges, including corruption, a disjointed patchwork of laws from UNMIK, PISG and the former Yugoslavia, a significant backlog of cases, and uneven enforcement of laws. Municipal and local government administration appears to be less problematic, with protections in place and a commitment to soliciting public comment on proposed legislation, although minorities are still underrepresented.⁴⁴ The judiciary's problems notwithstanding, an overwhelming number of women surveyed express trust in Kosovo's legal system.

Kosovo's legal code is divided between UNMIK regulations and PISG assembly laws, as well as laws from the former Yugoslavia, leading to inconsistencies in the law—sometimes even contradictions. Enforcement of court decisions is also a problem because judges are often pressured, while some municipalities refuse to enforce judgments. The court system is congested with a backlog of as many as 45,000 civil and criminal cases, and the judiciary lacks an effective witness protection program.

Kosovo lawmakers and representatives of the Ministry of Justice recently requested the legislature to accelerate its passing of laws, focusing on the need for engaging Kosovo's entire professional, legal and academic potential to improve the quality of the justice sector.⁴⁵ The OSCE has also advised the government of Kosovo to correct problems in its administrative law system, such as the lack of judicial review for UN and KFOR decisions.⁴⁶

When women were asked whether Kosovo's judicial system is unbiased and treats all persons equally, 47% of all respondents somewhat agreed and 29% of respondents strongly agreed. When responses were

separated by ethnicity, strong agreement was actually higher among Roma, Egyptian, Ashkali and Bosniak women than among ethnic Albanians. Women who did not agree most commonly stated that wealthy people are given preference, as well as people with connections at the courts, people in authority and those who give bribes.

Even so, 64.6% of survey respondents say they trust the legal system somewhat to protect their rights and

20.5% say they trust it a great deal. This is particularly interesting, because although the majority of women know they have economic, social and political rights, 71.4% feel their rights are different because they are women, and that it affects their ability to do things such as leave the house, attend school, vote and run for office. This discrepancy points to the possibility that even if women's rights exist on paper, customs and tradition may restrict those rights in practice.



Women write letters to their sponsors in the United States and other countries around the world

A robust rule of law relies as much on the executive and legislative functions as it does on the judicial. Municipal governance in Kosovo, by some accounts, has been making progress through the “strengthening of both legislative and administrative structures. All municipalities...now have rules and procedures that are incorporated into their statutes. Interdepartmental consultation is ensured through a board of directors.”⁴⁷ In fact, 65.2% of Women for Women International survey respondents said they trust the legal system somewhat to maintain law and order, and 20.4% said they trust it a great deal.

B. The Economy

Economic issues such as poverty and unemployment top the list of concerns for most people living in Kosovo, including women. However, people often lack information about Kosovo’s economy. For example, 62% of survey respondents said they had not very much information and 11.7% said they had no information at all about economic developments in Kosovo.⁵⁰

UNMIK, the PISG, and the EU are charged with promoting economic growth in Kosovo, but the

71.4% OF WOMEN FEEL THEIR RIGHTS ARE DIFFERENT BECAUSE THEY ARE WOMEN, AND THAT IT AFFECTS THEIR ABILITY TO DO THINGS SUCH AS LEAVE THE HOUSE, ATTEND SCHOOL, VOTE AND RUN FOR OFFICE

In addition, “public consultation has become normal practice prior to the adoption of legislation and budget proposals by municipal assemblies. However, the general lack of meaningful consultation with minority communities is a cause for concern.” To address this, on February 28, 2007, the government of Kosovo adopted an administrative instruction defining the competencies of human rights units in the ministries. These units are comprised of “three to seven staff members covering gender, the rights of minorities, equal opportunities, anti-discrimination, children’s rights, anti-trafficking and the rights of persons with disabilities.”⁴⁸

In theory, “[t]his administrative instruction adds the monitoring of implementation of recommendations of the Ombudsperson to the units’ responsibilities.” However, the Ombudsperson’s position, head of the independent Ombudsperson organization that investigates complaints against local authorities or other PISG organs, is filled by Kosovo Assembly appointment, which the Assembly has not yet done. Finally, “[d]espite the existence of an anti-discrimination law, a comprehensive implementation plan and an administrative instruction to implement the law, little has been done. There is still no comprehensive mechanism for tracking discrimination cases, and ministries have not been tasked with specific duties for its implementation.”⁴⁹

economy remains underdeveloped.⁵¹ The World Bank reports that 37% of Kosovo’s population lives in poverty, with 15% living in extreme poverty.⁵² Kosovo has a trade deficit of 43%. The per capita GDP is estimated at €1,100. Economic and social development experts list de-industrialization, disinvestment, regional competitiveness, and economic dependency as the primary challenges to Kosovo’s economic development.⁵³ The World Bank has stated that economic growth in Kosovo depends on private sector-led growth and the maintenance of peace and security.⁵⁴

Employment

According to women’s responses to questions about employment, 95.8% of women feel that employment opportunities for women are extremely important, yet 84.3% of women describe their opportunities for employment as poor or non-existent.

Unemployment in Kosovo is estimated at a staggering 42% to 44%.⁵⁵ The primary force driving unemployment is the lack of entry-level jobs.⁵⁶ The international community downsized its presence in Kosovo in the late 1990s due to the conflict, which also led to deflation and decreased job opportunities.⁵⁷ The “lack of foreign direct investment and access to international loans continues to hamper the PISG’s ability to effectively combat unemployment.”⁵⁸



Non-traditional skills trainings help women challenge gender stereotypes

Unemployment rates for women are estimated at 60%, and combined with the lack of childcare, some sources estimate that women account for only 10% of the workforce.⁵⁹

In March 2007, the European Union launched a €3.2 million program managed by the European Agency for Reconstruction to create new jobs in northern Kosovo. The program will create an estimated 2,000 jobs and will provide local entrepreneurs with financial and technical assistance.⁶⁰ However, Joachim Rücker, the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative in Kosovo, noted in a recent report that "issues of common concern, such as unemployment and the state of the economy, are viewed with increasing pessimism by members of all of Kosovo's communities."⁶¹

It is worth mentioning again that, of the 54.3% of women who expressed dissatisfaction with the current situation in Kosovo, more than twice as many cited unemployment as the reason for their dissatisfaction as those who cited uncertainty over Kosovo's status. Other top reasons included more economic problems, such as poverty and low salaries or pensions.

Infrastructure

Functioning infrastructure is a vital component of a stable society, and Kosovo's infrastructure is in dire need of improvement. Of all women surveyed, 79.6% say that the rebuilding of infrastructure such as roads, wells, drains and public buildings is extremely important to the development of their communities. The international community is responding with targeted aid. In December 2006, the EU agreed to invest €1.4 million in Kosovo's infrastructure, with plans to rebuild schools and to engineer water supply and sewage systems in several municipalities. The EU will also help build new roads, pave existing ones and install street lights.⁶²

ABOUT 60% OF WOMEN ARE UNEMPLOYED, AND WITH THE LACK OF CHILDCARE, SOME SOURCES ESTIMATE THAT WOMEN ACCOUNT FOR ONLY 10% OF THE WORKFORCE

Electricity is unreliable in Kosovo, and some businesses have reported up to 90 days per year without electricity. Because Kosovo's current power plant uses 1960s-era technology and does not meet EU emissions requirements, the World Bank in October 2006 approved \$8.5 million to develop areas of Kosovo's economy, including construction of a new power plant.⁶³ In June 2007 the Bank subsequently approved a \$5 million grant to assist the Kosovo Energy Corporation in generating electricity in an environmentally responsible manner,⁶⁴ and the European Agency for Reconstruction began a €2.1 million project to update Kosovo's electricity transmission system.⁶⁵

C. Social Issues

Kosovo's history of ethnic tension has created deep divides on social issues such as education, health, and minority and human rights. Yet these divides

may be perceived as wider than they actually are, with women indicating a preference for inclusion rather than segregation.

Education

On the subject of education, 93.9% of survey respondents felt that educational opportunities for women and girls are extremely important, yet 63.8% of women described their opportunities for education as either poor or non-existent.

UNICEF estimates that as many as 45% of schools in Kosovo were damaged due to Milošević-era violence.⁶⁶ Secondary school enrollment rates are among the lowest in the region.⁶⁷

Currently, two parallel educational systems exist in Kosovo: a Serbian one taught in Serbian, and a system connected to the Kosovo government taught in Albanian, Bosnian and Turkish. Both are flawed. Dropout rates are as high as 15% in compulsory education and as high as 28% in secondary education.⁶⁸

There have been some encouraging developments however. In January 2007, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) helped create 25 women's literacy centers in Kosovo which teach women and girls to read and write.⁶⁹ With its implementing partners, Mercy Corps and the International Organization for Migration, USAID dedicated four new rehabilitation projects in April as part of an ongoing effort to address the basic infrastructure needs in minority areas of Kosovo. Two educational institutions in northern Mitrovica and two water systems in Rudare, Zvečan / Zvečan municipality, and Brestovik, Peć/Pejë municipality, were upgraded as a result of this effort.⁷⁰

Health

When asked about health care, 44.5% of women surveyed described their access to medical and health care services as poor, and 6.5% say they have no access at all. The quality of care varies somewhat based on geography, with only 25.4% of rural women describing the quality of available health care as poor, with this number increasing to 45.7% for women in urban areas.

Kosovo has a three-tiered health care system. Primary health care centers are located in each municipality; hospitals serve as secondary health care facilities at the regional level; and the University Clinic Center and other specialized institutions reside in the third tier.

According to a January 2007 UN report, "[a] referral system is in place, whereby the University Clinic Center identifies cases with serious medical conditions requiring sophisticated treatment outside Kosovo and refers them to the Ministry of Health." Since 1999, "[w]ith the support of international assistance and funds made available by the Provisional Institutions for Self-Government (PISG), many...health facilities have been rehabilitated. In spite of these improvements, however, numerous shortfalls continue to affect the proper functioning of the health care system," such as "a lack of health care personnel, lack of adequate management of health services, obsolete medical equipment, and insufficient supply of essential drugs, resulting in inadequate treatment and alleviation of medical conditions."⁷¹



Human Rights

Because of past ethnic conflicts in Kosovo, many of the human rights issues there currently concern minority rights. When asked about minority rights, most women favor inclusion. Specifically, 79.8% of women feel that minorities should be able to stay in Kosovo with no restrictions, and 63.6% can imagine themselves working with a woman of another ethnic group. In addition, 74.7% of respondents feel that the government is responsible for protecting minorities, although 89.8% of women feel that the Kosovo government should not give minority groups special rights. Finally, 72.3% of women surveyed say they are not afraid that other ethnic groups would have more rights than they do. Again, in discussions after the survey, the women offered some additional insight:

“In every democratic country, there are minority groups and they live equal, so it must happen in Kosova as well, and I think in fact it is happening. We have to live with them, work and learn with them, Kosova doesn’t need to be exceptional.”

“We’ve got to live and cooperate with minorities. We’ve got to do a business together, they should have opportunity to go to school, etc.”

“Yes, we will cooperate and interact much more, they have nowhere to go nor do we. Without cooperation we can not build country so we have to cooperate better.”

Some human rights groups report that retributions by the Albanian majority on the Serb minority continue to occur, pointing to the riots and violence of March 2004 as evidence of the potential for continued violence.⁷² While minority participation remains weak, particularly by the Serbs, the framework constitution creates provisions to protect minority rights and promotes minority inclusion in Kosovo society.⁷³ Most experts agree that human and minority rights must be central to any agreement on Kosovo’s final status.⁷⁴

D. Institutions

Survey respondents expressed more confidence in “internal” institutions, such as the police and the media than “international” ones, such as UNMIK and the OSCE. Specifically, 73.3% of respondents expressed a fair amount or a great deal of confidence in the Kosovo Police Service (KPS), a multi-ethnic local police force established by UNMIK under UN Security

Council Resolution 1244. KPS recruits are required to demonstrate tolerance and a willingness to work with people of different backgrounds.⁷⁵ This tolerance may also help explain why 46.6% of survey respondents said they trust the KPS somewhat and 49.7% trust it a great deal.

While the media are regarded with intense skepticism in some parts of the world, 63.3% of respondents expressed a fair amount or a great deal of confidence in Kosovo’s media. In contrast, only 41.7% of respondents expressed a fair amount or a great deal of confidence in UNMIK, and 79.4% of women say they have not very much information or no information at all about UNMIK activities in Kosovo. Similarly, only 43% expressed a fair amount or a great deal of confidence in the OSCE.

The remarks of women from around Priština provide some additional clarification:

“They [local and international institutions] don’t have self-confidence at first. They aren’t working seriously any of them. Local institutions have limited competences in making decisions, so they can’t do so much.”

“I have more confidence in local institutions even though I think some of them are corrupt, while in international institutions I don’t have confidence at all. I would have confidence if there were only Americans, but as far as Europeans are involved in this then I can’t believe them.”

“Sometimes they make us hope, and sometimes we lose all confidence. The prolongation of status issue makes us think that our institutions don’t have much decision-making power, and rely a lot on internationals.”

“I believe because I am listening to news every day and I can see their commitment, they are arranging meetings in all countries and I expect that things are going to be better.”

“Local institutions don’t have capacity and competences, international institutions don’t have will to make changes and improve situation faster.”

“Institutions should be more transparent. While we have some access at the local institutions at international institutions women have not much access.”

IV

IV. ANALYSIS AND NEXT STEPS

Despite their self-declared lack of information, the women who participated in the survey show remarkable insight into the issues affecting their country. In assessing the ways in which Women for Women International's survey results can be used to inform decisions about Kosovo's future, four primary themes emerge: human rights, confidence in local versus international institutions, allocation of resources, and hope for the future.

A. Human Rights

With such strong support among women for Kosovo's minority populations, the international community and the Kosovo government should design governing mechanisms that will fully integrate the minority community into the economic and political fabric of Kosovo. Neither the international community nor the Kosovo government should attempt to protect minority rights by isolating minorities in enclaves and creating governing mechanisms that force them to exercise an ethnic veto in order to protect their rights. Such a course would misappropriate resources that could be allocated toward an inclusive approach to social and economic development. This is especially true in the education sector, where the parallel systems for Kosovar Albanians and Kosovar Serbs⁷⁶ have resulted in parallel inefficiencies.

The Ombudsperson Institution of Kosovo reports that international human rights instruments that apply to Kosovo, such as the UN Declaration on Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights, are effectively unknown to Kosovo's people and institutions.⁷⁷

According to the Acting Ombudsperson, awareness of these documents "within the central and local levels of government, the courts and among the wider public is quite poor. This is mostly due to the fact that the texts of these instruments are not made available to the public, and are difficult for persons working in the public administration to find, particularly in the Albanian and Serbian languages." The result is that "there is a general lack of knowledge on what discrimination actually is and how to combat it." This combined with the "weak administrative, executive and judicial



Women for Women International helps women create sustainable agribusinesses in Kosovo

structures in Kosovo typical of places in transition" facilitates discrimination and prevents its elimination.

Therefore, until everyone in Kosovo "can identify situations where discrimination has occurred, and... the competent public authorities are willing and able to support and act upon subsequent complaints," discrimination based on ethnicity, gender or other factors will continue to be a problem.

Clearly, access to information about human rights is critical to safeguarding them. Local women's groups can begin combating discrimination by working with international NGOs to ensure the availability of human rights materials, such as leaflets and explanatory brochures in local languages, especially in rural areas. This would help bridge the gap between the grassroots and leadership, both within Kosovo and the international community.

B. Confidence in Local versus International Institutions

Although the Ahtisaari plan for Kosovo provides for extensive international management of Kosovo's internal affairs, Women for Women International's survey showed that women had the most confidence in the indigenous Kosovo Police Force and the Kosovo media, with international institutions such as UNMIK and the OSCE earning the least confidence. While it is necessary for the international community to maintain a presence in Kosovo, the Women for Women International survey indicates that the international community's top priority should be to assist in building up Kosovo's institutions and turning over authority to those institutions as quickly as possible.



Agribusiness activities help women feed their families and generate income

Hamide Latifi, director of Women for Women International's Kosovo program, reports that "people feel like there has been tremendous investment in international administration without much return. People perceive UNMIK as being removed from the daily concerns of people at the grassroots, and they do not necessarily perceive OSCE as being any different from UNMIK in this regard."⁷⁸ The low level of confidence in the international institutions operating in Kosovo also supports the premise that the international community's primary role should be to support existing or newly created Kosovo institutions, and to avoid exercising any direct executive or plenary powers.

At the same time, support for indigenous institutions may dissolve unless there is meaningful evidence of their legitimacy and transparency. The Ombudsperson Institution maintains that while the creation of human rights organs "is an important step towards improving Kosovo's administration from within, the Ombudsperson Institution continues to be the only independent human rights protection mechanism in Kosovo that holds the PISG accountable by law."⁷⁹ At the time of writing there existed only an Acting Ombudsperson; therefore, the Kosovo Assembly must avoid further delay in the appointment of a permanent Ombudsperson.

C. Allocation of Resources

While the international community has been primarily focused on protecting minority rights and devolving political power to the municipal level, the Women for Women International survey indicates that the women of Kosovo are primarily concerned with education and employment opportunities. Protecting minority rights is unquestionably vital, but the international and Kosovo officials tasked with developing the constitution must design an effective and efficient system of government that will ensure economic and social development for all people of every background in Kosovo.

But that system is only the beginning. Independence and even a new constitution are not panaceas that will improve everyone's quality of life overnight. Sustainable change will require practical solutions that address the twin crises of under-education and under-employment affecting nearly every family in Kosovo. For women in Kosovo, this means access to training and employment opportunities in both traditional and non-traditional areas.⁸⁰

A major issue for the women of Kosovo is how money will be allocated to rebuild infrastructure in ways that address the two chief priorities of the people: economic opportunity and access to education. With research and know-how, this information is available but not particularly transparent. This is especially true for budgetary decisions made with regard to evaporating humanitarian assistance from other countries and international institutions. Municipalities may be able to make decisions about how their social and economic funds are spent, but those funds have been allocated to them from above. Decisions about how the financial pie is divided in the first place are often made behind closed doors and without input from women. Therefore, unless women are at the highest-level negotiating table from the beginning, there is no way for them to ensure that their needs will be addressed in the decision-making process.

With the devolution of power to the municipal levels as a focus of discussion, the time is ripe to increase women's opportunities for substantive political participation. Grassroots women are the primary experts on the everyday implications of municipal service

and policies. Meanwhile, local and community-based groups can wield their grassroots influence to hold municipalities accountable on high-priority issues. When these joint efforts garner visible, public successes, the results will trickle up from the

NOW IS THE TIME FOR CIVIL SOCIETY TO EXERCISE ITS COLLECTIVE STRENGTH, SETTING THE AGENDA FOR FUTURE NEGOTIATIONS AND ENSURING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PROCESSES

provision, or lack thereof. Their recommendations on education, medical services and infrastructure issues will not only comply with gender standards, they will also contribute to the effectiveness and efficiency of service provision in municipalities.

D. Hope for the Future

Because of the roles that women play in their families and communities, sustaining their hope and commitment to the future is crucial to Kosovo's successful transformation into a democratic, economically viable state. It is reasonable to assume that the high levels of hope cited above are directly related to women's belief that final status, in the form of independence, will be resolved in the next few months. Further delay in resolving Kosovo's final status may not only spark violent protests among the population, but also erode the people's hope and optimism. The international community and the Kosovo government must ensure that their actions do not undermine that optimism and squander what may turn out to be the key element to Kosovo's successful transformation.

With hope spurring women to increase their political participation, both international NGOs and community-based groups can leverage their individual advantages for the collective benefit of the women of Kosovo. International NGOs can use their access to high-level channels in Kosovo and the international community to ensure the development and use of gender-disaggregated data in budgets



Women's hope for Kosovo's future is a potent commodity

municipalities and trickle down from the international community, generating confidence and momentum for successive improvements.

With politicians in deadlock, now is the time for civil society to exercise its collective strength, setting the agenda for future negotiations and ensuring women's participation in economic, social and political processes. Continued delay will erode confidence not only in international institutions, but in Kosovo's politicians and institutions as well, so that when a decision is finally reached, those charged with implementing the plans will have lost the trust of the people they serve.

E. Conclusion

The results of Women for Women International's survey show that women's issues are society's issues, and that Kosovo's most socially excluded women are articulating the same concerns and priorities as practitioners.

It seems that the international community which has taken responsibility for Kosovo's final status is now desperate for any conclusion that will break the long stalemate. Women for Women International's survey found that Kosovar women believe that ethnic majorities and minorities can live and work together. PILPG's political analysis indicated the centrality of this issue in formal discussions. Therefore, all Kosovars must be actively engaged

in creating connections among themselves and between domestic ethnic groups in order to build Kosovo's civil society from the grassroots.

A large percentage of Kosovo's populace lives in abject poverty, and it is critical that significant investments be made in Kosovo's infrastructure to meet basic needs. Investments are also needed in education and industry to promote human capital. However lofty these goals may be, they are vitally necessary for Kosovo to permanently transition out of its "post-conflict" humanitarian status, and to ultimately rely on citizens' ability to maintain Kosovo's economic viability. All citizens of Kosovo, including women, must have full and equal seats at the negotiating table.

Regardless of how Kosovo's final status is resolved, a primary challenge will remain: bridging the front- and back-line discussions so that national and international policymakers come to view the status of women as integral to reconstruction, economic growth and sustainable peace. When women are excluded from educational and economic opportunities, the seeds of sustainable peace cannot take root. Women are the ones who hold society together during war, and when the fighting stops, women must be able to move from crisis to stability to self-sufficiency. When women are not stable, families are not stable. When families are not stable, communities are not stable. When communities are not stable, society as a whole cannot flourish. Stronger women build stronger nations.

WHEN COMMUNITIES ARE NOT STABLE, SOCIETY AS A WHOLE CANNOT FLOURISH. STRONGER WOMEN BUILD STRONGER NATIONS.

V. ACTION AGENDA

If hope is ever to be transformed into sustainable peace, women must be involved in setting Kosovo's political agenda, not just in symbolic ways, but through full participation at every level—from the family dinner table to community councils to the UN.

Women for Women International has learned during more than a decade of working in post-conflict societies that three elements are necessary to ensure women's full participation in a new democracy: 1) a recognition throughout society that women play a critical role; 2) an active, organized local women's NGO community that bridges the divide between the grassroots and the leadership; and 3) a commitment from the highest levels of leadership to fully include women at all levels of society, both in institutions and decision-making.

Recognizing that each of these elements requires strong public petition, this Action Agenda is meant to provide local groups, international NGOs, the media, the Kosovo government and the international community with practical strategies for cultivating women's social capital and bridging the gap between the front- and back-line discussions about Kosovo's future.

Show that women's issues are society's issues

The Women for Women International survey results show that, even without information about economic and political developments, socially excluded women articulate the same priorities and concerns as practitioners and experts: jobs and education. If women themselves are not focusing on marginal issues, their input should not be marginalized either. Women's representation in government and civil service should be fully integrated, not concentrated in specific ministries or offices charged with overseeing "women's issues."

Make rights relevant

As the survey results show, a majority of women know they have economic, social and political rights, but feel those rights are different because they are women. At the same time, women express high levels of trust in the legal system to protect their rights. If women know they have the right to go to school and work outside the home, but are unable to do so, customs or traditions may be standing in their way. Again, women's issues are society's issues. Rights education activities must be practical and inclusive, engaging men and women for the benefit of society as a whole.

Mobilize horizontal support for women's participation

Women are not merely recipients of information, they are powerful advocates for reconciliation and development. Local groups should focus on providing women with opportunities to integrate their development efforts horizontally, mobilizing support for women's participation in their municipalities and cultivating a sphere of influence through leadership training, public education and outreach.

Mobilize vertical support for women's participation

International NGOs should focus on providing women with opportunities to integrate their development efforts vertically, navigating national, regional and international channels to open the door for women's participation in formal discussions about how to create jobs and increase access to education for everyone in Kosovo. Local groups and international NGOs must also work together to teach policymakers and the public that women's issues are society's issues.

Engage the media

With strong support for the media already in place, programming about the importance of women's full and equal participation would complement the efforts of local groups and international NGOs, and become part of the public consciousness by reaching all sectors of society. Such programming could include public service announcements, news segments, in-depth investigations, and even sitcoms.

Show proof of progress

Regardless of how Kosovo's final status is resolved, Kosovo's government must not squander people's commitment to the future. Elected officials and other decision-makers must present proof that they can be trusted to act on behalf of the people of Kosovo. Human rights enforcement mechanisms must not only be created, they must also be funded, staffed, evaluated and made accessible to all residents of Kosovo. People's trust in the more "indigenous" institutions such as the police and the media should be remembered as new institutional models are created.

Provide long-term investment in Kosovo's future

Reconstruction is a marathon, not a sprint. Kosovo desperately needs long-term investment in its social and economic infrastructure to address people's needs and help them acquire the tools to move forward. Schools need the resources to help students become members of a skilled work force. The economic sector must be accessible to women and acknowledge the obstacles to their success by offering adult vocational skills trainings, work-study opportunities and placements, access to credit, and market-based business development services.



When women are engaged, all of society benefits

ENDNOTES

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