EUROPEAN CENTRE FOR MINORITY ISSUES

Decentralisation Outreach – Serb Women in the Future Municipalities



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Decentralisation Outreach – Serb Women in the Future Municipalities

The European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo (ECMI Kosovo) is currently engaged in a decentralisation project aimed at increasing the awareness of communities on decentralisation and furthering their involvement in this process, financed by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. During June and July 2009 ECMI Kosovo has focussed its activities on women living in the new municipalities south of the Ibar river. It organised eight round table and two focus group discussions. These activities had three main goals: (1) raising their awareness of decentralisation and answering any question on this topic, (2) raising the most important issues faced by women in the new municipalities. These goals were addressed through the round tables. The third (3) goal was to help develop ideas on how the new municipality and the community itself could work to address these issues. This goal was tackled in the focus group discussions. As the Municipal Preparation Teams (MPTs) are established, ECMI Kosovo will work to assist local women to advocate for their interests using the conclusions of the round table and focus group discussions.

The activities were organised in cooperation with local women's NGOs: 'Our Home', the 'Women's Committee for the Protection of Human Rights' (WCPHR) and 'Ruka-Ruci'. The activities were mainly focussed on the future municipalities of Gračanica/Graçanicë and Novobërdë/Novo Brdo, but activities were also organised in Parteš/Partesh and Ranilug/Ranillug.

All round tables were attended by between 10 and 25 participants and consisted of a concise presentation on the decentralisation process, the distribution of information leaflets and a discussion on decentralisation and the issues participants considered of vital importance for the future municipalities to address. These areas of priorities will be presented to the MPTs once established.

There were two focus group discussions, one on Novobërdë/Novo Brdo (nine participants) and one on Gračanica/Graçanicë (10 participants). The participants of the respective focus group discussions were active and interested participants from the previous round tables. For the Gračanica/Graçanicë discussion particular care was taken to ensure an even geographical representation. The focus group discussions were used to take a more in depth approach to these issues and discuss practical solutions.

A summary of the most important areas of concern and needs of the community is provided below. For the specific conclusions of each round table and focus group discussion, please consult the specific reports for those events which are also part of this report.

Areas of Concern:

- Distrust exists among local communities regarding the willingness of Kosovo institutions to deliver everything that is promised by decentralisation;
- Local communities face strong pressures from within the community not to participate in the process;
- A fear exists that certain political parties will monopolise the decentralisation process through corruption and nepotism;
- A sense of isolation and a lack of information prevails among the citizens of the new municipalities;

Needs of the Community:

- Lack of employment opportunities in general and for women in particular;
- Lack of cultural and sports activities;
- Poor infrastructure: unreliable water and electricity supplies, poor roads, and poor sewage systems;
- Poor public transport connections;
- A lack of kindergartens;

Round Table Lepina/Lepinė

Date:	9 June 2009
Location:	Restaurant 'Siki' in the village of Lepina/Lepinė in the future municipality of Lipjan
Local Partner:	NGO 'Women's Committee on the Protection of Human Rights
Participants:	18 people from the villages of Radevo/Radevë, Lepina/Lepinė and Skulanevo/Skulanovė, which are currently localted in the Lipjan municipality, but which will be part of the new municipality of Gracanica/Graçanicë.
Outline:	The round table was opened by Ms. Snezana Karadzic, representing ECMI Kosovo and the NGO 'WCPHR', who welcomed the participants. After the participants had introduced themselves, Ms. Karadzic explained the main aspects of the decentralisation process in Kosovo. Following the short presentation on the decentralisation process, the participants were given the chance to ask questions and voice their concerns regarding their community.

Areas of Concern and Needs of the Community:

- The local Serb community has faced absolute isolation during last ten years, including a lack of objective information for citizens;
- Local development is hampered by the negative influences of political interests;
- High unemployment rates and a lack of information about job opportunities;
- Extreme poverty of families;
- Undeveloped rural areas;
- Old infrastructure, lack of drinking water, electricity, sewage systems;
- Lack of social services and access to social benefits;
- Undeveloped cultural and sport/recreational activities for young people;
- Lack of public and private transport;
- Undeveloped mechanisms for protection of women's rights;

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Round Table Jasenovik

Date:	12 June 2009
Location:	The residence of Mr. Boban Filic in the village of Jasenovik in the future municipality of Novobërdë/Novo Brdo
Local Partner:	NGO 'Our Home'
Participants:	19 people, including several officials from the parallel institutions
Outline:	The round table was opened by Mrs. Vesna Stajic, representing ECMI Kosovo and the NGO 'Our Home', who welcomed the participants. After the participants had introduced themselves, Mrs. Stajic explained the main aspects of the decentralisation process in Kosovo. Following the short presentation on the decentralisation process, the participants were given the chance to ask questions and voice their concerns regarding their community.

Areas of Concern and Needs of the Community:

- The poor status of the economy is an area of great concern, particularly the high unemployment rate: according to Ms. Stajic only 25% percent of community members are permanently or temporarily employed. The reopening and renovation of state owned companies was suggested as a possible solution although the problem of ownership was recognized;
- The need to improve health care, particularly in relation to specialists. It was proposed to open a nursing home;
- (Medical) aid for the elderly who live in remote villages and do not have access to the clinics;
- The need to preserve the rich cultural heritage of the Serb community in Novobërdë/Novo Brdo. It was proposed to open a cultural centre;
- There is a need for a kindergarten;
- Concerns were raised about the quality of drinking water. It was proposed to ask the Sanitary Bureau from Mitrovicë/Mitrovica to check the quality of drinking water;
- Concerns were raised about breast cancer and the need was voiced for preventive actions to be taken;

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Round Table Ugljare/Uglar

Date: 15 June 2009

Location: Restaurant 'Jastreb' in the village of Ugljare/Uglar in the future municipality of Gračanica/Graēanicė

Local Partner: NGO 'Ruka-Ruci'

Participants: 23 people from the villages of Ugljare/Uglar, Bresje, Kuzmin and Batuše/Batushë.

Outline: The round table was opened by Mrs. Vesna Stajic, representing ECMI Kosovo, who welcomed the participants. After the participants had introduced themselves, Mrs. Stajic explained the main aspects of the decentralisation process in Kosovo. Following the short presentation on the decentralisation process, the participants were given the chance to ask questions and voice their concerns regarding their community.

Areas of Concern and Needs of the Community:

- There is a certain acceptance of the decentralisation process as such, however there is scepticism about the willingness of Kosovo institutions to resolve the issues outlined below;
- A perceived lack of freedom of movement and safety of family members;
- Corruption and nepotism are rampant in local institutions;
- Poor infrastructure: Lack of a regular supply of drinkable water and electricity to the villages; poor sewage system; local roads are in a poor condition; garbage is dumped everywhere; and there is a lack of parks and public spaces;
- Lack of food control for people and cattle;
- Underdeveloped local economy;
- Discrimination of women older than 35, of whom a high percentage is unemployed;
- Lack of pre-school educational facilities for children under age 7 and long distances to high-schools;
- Lack of cultural and recreational activities;
- Issues facing IDPs living in the Bergen camp: Lack of residential space; tougher criteria to obtain social welfare;
- Lack of respect in protection of human rights: Disrespect of official use of languages in the provision of public documents; Lack of information among women regarding their rights according to Kosovo laws; and a lack of Kosovo based Serb media;

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Round Table Preoce/Preoc

Date: 16 June 2009

Location: Restaurant 'Sempre' in the village of Preoce/Preoc in the future municipality of Gračanica/Graçanicë

Local Partner: NGO Women's Committee on the Protection of Human Rights

Participants: 22 people, including a representative of the ICO.

Outline: The round table was opened by Ms. Snezana Karadzic, representing ECMI Kosovo and the NGO 'WCPHR', who welcomed the participants. After the participants had introduced themselves, Ms. Karadzic and Mr. Lars Burema, a representative of ECMI Kosovo, explained the main aspects of the decentralisation process in Kosovo. Following the short presentation on the decentralisation process, the participants were given the chance to ask questions and voice their concerns regarding their community.

Areas of Concern and Needs of the Community:

- Political parties hold a monopoly on information and misuse their control of information;
- Nepotism and corruption in local institutions/politics;
- Poor infrastructure;
- There is a need for measures to protect the local environment;
- High unemployment rates and lack of job opportunities;
- Lack of contacts with majority community and other communities;
- Lack of cultural and sport facilities;
- Lack of activities on promotion of human rights protection.

Specific Obstacles faced by Women:

- The lack of information is most detrimental to women and young women of this region;
- Disrespect of women's rights by communities and institutions;
- Women are unable to get into positions with decision making powers;
- Respected and progressive women from communities are not in leading positions;
- Lack of activities to support women's engagement;
- Despite fulfillment of employment criteria women hardly get jobs.

Round Table Gušterica/Gushtericë

Date: 18 June 2009

Location: Restaurant 'Markov Konak' in the village of Gušterica/Gushtericë in the future municipality of Gračanica/Graçanicë

Local Partner: NGO Women's Committee on the Protection of Human Rights

Participants: attended by 21 people

Outline: The round table was opened by Ms. Snezana Karadzic, representing ECMI Kosovo and the NGO 'Our Home', who welcomed the participants. After the participants had introduced themselves, Ms. Karadzic and Mr. Gazmen Salijevic, a representative of ECMI Kosovo, explained the main aspects of the decentralisation process in Kosovo. Following the short presentation on the decentralisation process, the participants were given the chance to ask questions and voice their concerns regarding their community.

Areas of Concern and Needs of the Community:

- Despite their large number, Serbian areas of this municipality are isolated and they lack information;
- There is a distrust of the parties involved (particularly the local political parties) in the decentralisation process. There is a fear that they will monopolise all power and jobs;
- There is a lack of job opportunities – especially for young people;
- Roads and infrastructure are not developed;
- Neglected rural development of this region;
- Lack of companies and projects to offer job opportunities;
- Undeveloped pre-school education and insufficient number of kindergartens;
- Lack of public transport;
- Lack of facilities for cultural and sporting activities;
- Disrespect and lack of promotion of human rights;

Specific Obstacles for Women:

- Lack of information on job opportunities;
- No opportunities for career advancement;
- Lack of associations and women activities;

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Round Table Gornje Kusce/Kufcė e Epėrme

Date: 19 June 2009
Location: Restaurant 'Princ' in the village of Gornje Kusce/Kufcė e Epėrme
Local Partner: NGO 'Our Home'
Participants: 23 people and was observed by Ms. Sandra Cvetanovic, representing the ICO
Outline: The round table was opened by Mrs. Vesna Stajic, representing ECMI Kosovo and the NGO 'Our Home', who welcomed the participants. After the participants had introduced themselves, Mr. Gazmen Salijevic, a representative of ECMI Kosovo, Ms. Stajic and Ms. Cvetanovic explained the main aspects of the decentralisation process in Kosovo. Following the short presentation on the decentralisation process, the participants were given the chance to ask questions and voice their concerns regarding their community.

Areas of Concern and Needs of the Community:

- The formation of a cultural centre, also with facilities for women. Ms. Cvetanovic explained that the ICO had some funds available for cultural projects.
- There were concerns about Belgrade's negative position on decentralisation
- Concerns were raised about the water supply infrastructure. Ms. Cvetanovic explained that funds had already been allocated to address this issue. The participants were not aware of this.
- There were concerns about rumours that the decentralisation process was a way to allow Albanian children to enrol in Serb schools and to enter Serb institutions

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Focus Group Novobërdë/Novo Brdo

Date: 23 June 2009

Location: The residence of Mrs. Vesna Stajic in the village of Prekovce/Prekoc in the future municipality of Novobërdë/Novo Brdo

Local Partner: NGO 'Our Home'

Participants: 9 people

Outline: The focus group discussion was opened by Mrs. Stajic and Mr. Gazmen Salijevic, a representative of ECMI Kososvo. It was explained that the main purpose of the meeting was to come up with a list of priorities for the municipality.

Focus Group Recommendations:

- The Creation of a Youth and Cultural Centre;
- The development of a nursing home for the elderly, who in Novobërdë/Novo Brdo often live by themselves in squalor. Such a nursing home would also have capacity to provide assistance to those elderly still capable of living by themselves;
- The renovation of the textile company's facilities;
- The reorganisation of a tailor shop into a small enterprise;
- The creation of an Ethno-House: a small museum aimed at preserving the traditions of all communities of Novobërdë/Novo Brdo;
- The development of a National Park;
- A centre for the protection of human rights, specifically aimed at providing victims of domestic violence with a refuge;

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Focus Group Gračanica/Graçanicë

Date: 10 July 2009

Location: the village of Ugljare/Uglar in the future municipality of Gračanica/Graçanicë

Local Partner: NGOs 'Women's Committee for the Protection of Human Rights' (WCPHR) and 'Ruka-Ruci'

Participants: 10 women from the future municipality of Gračanica/Graçanicë (including Serb villages in Lipjan and Fushe Kosove/Kosovo Polje).

Outline: The focus group discussion was opened by Ms Snezana Karadzic, a representative of 'WCPHR', Ms. Nevenka Rikalo, a representative of 'Ruka-Ruci' and Mr. Gazmen Salijevic, a representative of ECMI Kosovo. It was explained that the main purpose of the meeting was to come up with a list of priorities for the municipality.

Focus Group Recommendations:

- Cooperation with the MPT in Gračanica/Graçanicë;
- Recognising community problems and advocating those problems to the MPT;
- Recognising problems of women and violations of their rights, as well as advocating for those rights to the MPT in order to create a position for women in the future municipality;
- Recognising infrastructure problems, present an analysis and proposal to the MPT;
- Developing cooperation with the newly elected political leadership of the municipalities, establishing good relations;
- Propose the development of the existing mechanisms for civil society, groups, networks, societies and NGOs, and establish of new mechanisms for cooperation;
- Cooperation with the rural sector and providing proposals/ideas to the MPT for development of rural areas;
- Cooperating with and advising the MPT in developing employment opportunities, especially for women and young people;
- Recommending ways to break the isolation of enclaves and communities, applying model of women NGO for Serb women;
- Developing the system of receiving and distributing information to and from citizens of isolated enclaves;

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Round Table Parteš/Partesh

Date: 10 July 2009
Location: The restaurant 'Trokadero' in the village of Parteš/Partesh
Local Partner: NGO 'Our Home'
Participants: 23 people
Outline: The round table was opened by Mrs. Vesna Stajic, representing ECMI Kosovo and the NGO 'Our Home', who welcomed the participants. After the participants had introduced themselves Mrs. Stajic explained the main aspects of the decentralisation process in Kosovo

Areas of Concern and Needs of the Community:

- The formation of a cultural association
- There is no kindergarten, police station or centre for social welfare
- There is a renovated Cultural House, but there is nothing inside (no furniture or equipment)
- The cinema is not functioning. (there is no projector)
- There are no street lights, which contributes to criminality
- Problems with electricity, phone and RTK bills
- The park needs to be redone, right now it is desolated and ruined
- There is dissatisfaction with the secondary schools, particularly with the possibilities for extracurricular activities. Also, only 2 out of the 10 computers are working and the youth would like to continue the 6-month course in English they started. Moreover, there is a need for school busses.
- There is great demand for a swimming pool
- There is a demand for classes in women's rights and sexual education

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Round Table Ranilug/Ranillug

Date: 16 July 2009
Location: Restaurant 'Kod Dame' in the village of Ranilug/Ranillug
Local Partner: NGO 'Our Home'
Participants: 13 participants and was also observed by Mr. Dragan Stankovic, representing the ICO
Outline: The round table was opened by Mrs. Vesna Stajic, representing ECMI Kosovo and the NGO 'Our Home', who welcomed the participants. After the participants had introduced themselves Mrs. Stajic gave the floor to the ECMI Kosovo representative Mr. Lars Burema who explained the main aspects of the decentralisation process in Kosovo. Following the short presentation on the decentralisation process, the participants were given the chance to ask questions and voice their concerns regarding their community.

Areas of Concern and Needs of the Community:

- Several questions were raised regarding the establishment of the Municipal Preparation Teams (MPTs). It was explained that the Klokot-Vrbovac/Kllokot-Vërbovc MPT had been established, and that the Ministry for Local Government Administration and the ICO were in the process of establishing the others.
- A question was raised regarding the link between elections and decentralisation. It was explained that there is no direct link between the elections and decentralisation, one will not affect the other.
- Participants wondered what they would gain by participating in the decentralisation process and the elections. It was explained that new municipalities would give the local community the chance to take control over their own situation, that it would offer them opportunities for extra investments and that it would create new jobs. It was also stressed that several Serb parties had already registered to participate in the elections
- The issue of education was also addressed. Participants worried that if their children went to the Kosovo educational system they would not be able to continue their education in Serbia.
- Concerns were also raised about the validity of Kosovo passports.

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