Annual Report 2023

Reporting year 2023

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CHIEF OF BOARD'S MESSAGE

Dear ECMI Kosovo Staff and Partners,

It is with immense gratitude that I continue my journey as the Chairperson of the Senior Oversight Board for the second year. The warm reception and unwavering support from the ECMI Kosovo team have been truly heartening. I am particularly delighted to witness the remarkable growth of our organization, evidenced by the inclusion of new projects and the expansion of our team. This resurgence to pre-pandemic activity levels is a testament to our collective resilience and dedication.

Reflecting on the past year, we have made significant strides in promoting and protecting minority rights. Our initiatives have not only addressed immediate community needs but have also laid a solid foundation for sustainable development and inclusion. I am excited about the potential that lies ahead as we continue to foster an inclusive, democratic, and stable multi-ethnic society in Kosovo.

As we move forward, I look forward to working closely with our dedicated staff, partners, and the communities we serve. Together, we will continue to drive positive change, ensuring that every individual in Kosovo can enjoy equal rights and opportunities.

Thank you for your continued dedication and support.

Sincerely,

Florina Berisha

Chairperson

Senior Oversight Board

European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Dear Colleagues, Partners, and Friends,

On behalf of ECMI Kosovo, I am pleased to welcome you to another year of dedication and progress. We extend our heartfelt appreciation to our Chairperson, Florina Berisha, for her steadfast leadership and the warm, inclusive environment she has fostered. Her commitment has been instrumental in our organization's growth and success over the past year.

2023 has been a pivotal year for ECMI Kosovo. We have seen a major expansion of our activities, bringing us back to pre-pandemic levels. This growth is a reflection of our team's hard work and the strategic initiatives we have implemented. From new projects aimed at socio-economic empowerment to innovative environmental sustainability efforts, ECMI Kosovo has continued to be a beacon of support and advocacy for minority communities in Kosovo.

We have embarked on numerous impactful projects this year. Our efforts in the "Recycling Matters Activity" have not only transformed the recycling sector but have also fostered community engagement and environmental sustainability. Additionally, our "Support to Diploma Verification Process" project has significantly enhanced the representation and employment opportunities for non-majority communities.

These achievements would not have been possible without the unwavering support of our partners and the dedication of our staff. As we look ahead, we remain committed to our mission of fostering a stable, multi-ethnic Kosovo where the human and minority rights of all communities are respected and realized.

Thank you for your trust and collaboration.

Sincerely,

Adrian Zeqiri

Executive Director

European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS OF 2023

• Recycling Matters. The activity carried out baseline and feasibility work, established a consultative forum, held an Earth Day recycling fair and began procurement for a recycling processing line.

• Diploma verification. ECMI Kosovo assisted the Commission and Secretariat, supported liaison with authorised municipalities, and worked on the legal basis for expanding verification.

• Human Rightivism Project: Continued efforts in human rights protection through engagement of paralegals and youth empowerment. The project addressed numerous instances of human rights violations and provided legal assistance, fostering greater community awareness and engagement.

• Cross-border Green Deal. The project worked with waste utilities on equipment needs, began research on municipal waste management and prepared awareness materials.

KEY POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN KOSOVO - 2023

Ohrid Agreement

On March 18, 2023, Kosovo and Serbia reached a significant milestone with the Ohrid Agreement, facilitated by the European Union. This agreement aims to normalize relations between the two countries, which have been fraught with tensions since Kosovo declared independence in 2008. The negotiations, held in North Macedonia, resulted in an implementation annex that outlines specific steps both countries must take to improve bilateral relations

Despite the progress, there are still unresolved issues, particularly concerning the formal signing of the agreement by Serbia. The EU has emphasized the importance of both parties fulfilling their obligations under this agreement to advance their EU membership prospects

Association of Serb-Majority Municipalities

A contentious point within the dialogue has been the establishment of an Association of Serb-Majority Municipalities in Kosovo. This arrangement aims to provide greater autonomy to these municipalities. Although discussions have advanced, no final agreement has been reached. The EU has urged immediate negotiations to establish this association, highlighting its importance in ensuring self-management for Serbian communities within Kosovo

Tensions in the North

October 2023 witnessed significant tensions in northern Kosovo, particularly in Serb-majority areas. The local Serb community boycotted the municipal elections, leading to heightened unrest. This boycott stemmed from longstanding grievances and dissatisfaction with the political status and autonomy of Serbian communities within Kosovo. The EU and other international actors have called for calm and urged both sides to engage in constructive dialogue to resolve these issues peacefully

Conclusion

2023 has been a pivotal year for Kosovo, marked by both significant progress and persistent challenges. The Ohrid Agreement represents a critical step towards normalization, but its successful implementation will require continued commitment and cooperation from both Kosovo and Serbia. The ongoing discussions about the Association of Serb-Majority Municipalities and the recent tensions in the north underscore the complexities involved in achieving lasting peace and stability in the region. ECMI Kosovo remains committed to supporting these efforts through its various initiatives and projects.

MISSION AND VISION OF ECMI KOSOVO

The European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo (ECMI Kosovo) is the principal non-governmental organization (NGO) engaged in the protection and promotion of the rights and interests of all minority communities in Kosovo. Our overarching goal is to contribute to developing an inclusive, democratic, and stable multi-ethnic society in Kosovo.

Our vision

ECMI Kosovo's vision is a stable multi-ethnic Kosovo where human and minority rights are realized in line with domestic and international standards.

Our Mission

With a view to contributing to this vision, ECMI Kosovo engages in a wide range of activities aimed at stabilizing inter-ethnic relations and ensuring the effective implementation and functioning of the legal, policy, and institutional framework for the protection and promotion of minority rights.

Our Approach

ECMI Kosovo adopts a unique approach in its work, combining top-down implementation and bottom-up feedback. We provide capacity-building and policy recommendations to government institutions to function in a community-sensitive, accountable, and transparent manner. Simultaneously, we empower civil society within communities to effectively participate in decision-making and advocate for their rights. This approach seeks to enhance dialogue between these actors and develop an inclusive, participatory, and accountable democracy. We also strive to ensure the inclusion of gender perspectives and the representation of particularly vulnerable groups in our work.

Our Main Areas of Work

Since its establishment in 2001, ECMI Kosovo has developed expertise in various areas of minority rights. Our current work focuses on five main thematic areas:

• Governance & Accountability: Working closely with institutions and civil society to establish an accountable and transparent system of governance responsive to the needs of all minority communities in Kosovo.

• Education: Promoting inclusive education systems respectful of diversity and human rights, with a particular focus on the inclusion of Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian children.

• Language Issues: Supporting the development and implementation of language rights legislation and providing language courses to municipal officials to enhance service delivery in both official languages.

• Economic Empowerment: Creating economic opportunities for minority communities through training, sub-granting, and support for business associations in Serb-majority municipalities.

• Advocacy of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms: Raising awareness and advocating for the rights of vulnerable and marginalized groups, including minority communities, women, youth, and LGBT individuals.

ECMI KOSOVO ACTIVITIES

Human Rightivism

Project Duration: 48 Months

Funding: Embassy of Sweden in Pristina

Implementing Partner: Community Development Fund (CDF)

Introduction

The Human Rightivism project, funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and implemented by ECMI Kosovo, aims to support non-majority communities in Kosovo by addressing human rights violations and providing legal assistance. This report provides a comprehensive overview of the project's progress, achievements, and challenges throughout 2023.





Project Objectives

The project has three primary objectives:

• Engagement of Paralegals: To identify and address human rights violations in non-majority communities.

• Training and Empowerment of Youth: To promote critical thinking, cooperation, and human rights awareness among young people from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

• Community Outreach and Awareness: To enhance public understanding of human rights and the legal framework supporting minority communities.

Achievements and Results

Engagement of Paralegals

ECMI Kosovo recorded 156 reported human-rights violations in the year. Paralegals assisted residents with documentation, language rights, legal assistance and access to services.

Additionally, ECMI Kosovo developed and published two important legal handbooks: one on the legislative framework for minority communities and another on obtaining civil status documents. A promotional video was created and disseminated to highlight the support services provided by paralegals, further increasing community awareness.

Success Stories:

• The project saw several impactful success stories:

• Property Rights/Education Rights: Assisted a Roma family in Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje, resulting in housing and educational support.

• Identity Documents: Helped a divorced mother from the Ashkali community obtain her child's passport.

• Discrimination: Prevented the creation of a segregated class for RAE pupils in Prizren.

• Employment: Secured employment for repatriated Roma individuals in Lipjan.

• Awareness Campaigns: Conducted sessions on breast cancer awareness and participated in the 16 Days of Activism.

• Human Rights Day Campaign: Distributed brochures and facilitated discussions on human rights across Kosovo.

Training and Empowerment of Youth

ECMI Kosovo implemented training programs aimed at empowering youth through critical thinking and cooperation. These programs involved 22 young participants from diverse ethnic backgrounds, focusing on critical thinking, peacemaking, conflict transformation, protection of minorities, and youth engagement. Interactive sessions, including movie nights, explored themes related to conflict transformation and minority protection. The training equipped youth with the knowledge and skills to become active agents of change in their communities. Follow-up activities were planned to apply the competencies developed during the training in schools and communities.

Community Outreach and Awareness

To enhance public awareness of human rights and the work of paralegals, ECMI Kosovo developed and published a promotional video, reaching over 14,636 people through social media platforms. Additionally, widespread awareness campaigns were conducted on Human Rights Day, distributing informative brochures and engaging with local communities. These efforts significantly increased public awareness of human rights and available legal assistance, fostering greater engagement and potential collaborative initiatives with other organizations and stakeholders.

Challenges and Mitigation

The project faced several challenges in 2023:

• Political and Procedural Challenges: The resignation of Serbian judges and difficulties in obtaining identity documents for young Serbs posed significant hurdles. These were mitigated through continuous advocacy, collaboration with local authorities, and raising awareness among affected communities.

• Digital Literacy and Access: Navigating the E-Kosova platform for textbook reimbursements and other online services proved challenging. ECMI Kosovo provided hands-on assistance through paralegals and collaborated with volunteers to address this issue.

• Educational Material Costs: High costs of textbooks for the Bosniak community were a significant concern. Efforts were made to mediate and find potential solutions, though larger issues of publishing dynamics remain.

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL)

A comprehensive Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Plan was developed and implemented, incorporating regular reviews and adjustments based on feedback from stakeholders and beneficiaries. This approach ensured continuous learning and adaptive management, enhancing the project's effectiveness and impact.

Conclusion

In 2023, the Human Rightivism project made substantial progress in improving the protection and promotion of human rights for non-majority communities in Kosovo. Through dedicated efforts in

legal assistance, youth empowerment, and community outreach, ECMI Kosovo has fostered greater awareness and engagement in human rights issues. Despite challenges, the project has demonstrated resilience and adaptability, ensuring continued support and empowerment of vulnerable communities.

Recycling Matters Activity – Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje

Project Duration: 48 Months

Funding: USAID Kosovo

Introduction

The USAID Recycling Matters Activity (RMA) in Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje is a three-year initiative aimed at enhancing socio-economic cohesion among marginalized communities. By facilitating recycling models led by the private sector and supported by the local community and authorities, the project seeks to transform the recycling sector and serve as a replicable model for other municipalities in Kosovo. This report outlines the progress and achievements of the project during 2023.



Project Objectives and Results for 2023

Objective 1: Local Stakeholders Coordinate, Support, and Mobilize to Increase Socio-Economic Cohesion among Targeted Communities

The project focused on building a strong network among local stakeholders, including the Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities, particularly targeting informal waste collectors. The aim was to foster collaboration and support for socio-economic cohesion. A comprehensive Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Plan was developed in collaboration with USAID. This plan identified three core objectives: fostering community cohesion, creating sustainable recycling models, and expanding these models. Fifteen strategic indicators aligned with Kosovo's EU accession goals and donor-supported strategies were incorporated, enabling continuous learning and adaptation.

Objective 2: Create Sustainable Recycling Models in Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje

The project successfully developed sustainable recycling models supported by the private sector, local government, citizens, and local businesses. A Branding Strategy and Marking Plan (BSMP) was

developed to ensure alignment with USAID guidelines. This plan identified key audiences, outlined co-branding strategies, and established distinct marking guidelines for administrative and technical categories, enhancing the RMA's visibility and recognition.





A Gender Analysis report was completed, forming the basis for the Gender Action Plan. Gender-sensitive and gender-transformative approaches were employed in all interventions. Significant barriers faced by women, especially in minority communities, were identified, and interventions were proposed to address these issues.

A Baseline Study focusing on waste collection stakeholders and the informal waste collection sector was conducted. This study integrated global recycling trends and techniques with local opportunities to develop a sustainable, locally-led recycling model. Furthermore, a Feasibility Study assessing the potential expansion of waste separation at the source was completed. This study evaluated different approaches for formalizing waste collection and recommended practical strategies for the developmental phase.

Objective 3: Establishing Relations with Municipality and CLSF

The establishment of the Consultative Local Stakeholder Forum (CLSF) was a significant milestone, with 15 diverse members fostering collaboration and effective decision-making in recycling and waste management. Working relations with the Municipality of Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje were formalized through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between ECMI Kosovo and the municipality, ensuring their commitment to support the project.





Capacity building and technical support for CLSF members were prioritized. Training modules were implemented to enhance the knowledge and skills of CLSF members, focusing on recycling sector education, health hazards, and the connection between recycling and community well-being.



To support the municipality in introducing policies for separation at source and engagement with neighborhoods, a successful Recycling Fair was organized to mark International Earth Day. This event promoted environmental awareness and community engagement. Market research was conducted to identify the most feasible structure for managing recyclable waste, focusing on the "Recycling Zone" company. Capacity building and technical support were provided to enhance the business capabilities of "Recycling Zone."

Procurement procedures for supplying a complete recycling line to upscale processing capabilities were initiated, ensuring the sustainability of recycling practices in the municipality.

Conclusion

The Recycling Matters Activity (RMA) has made significant progress in 2023, achieving crucial milestones and setting the foundation for sustainable recycling models in Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje. Through collaborative efforts, capacity building, and community engagement, the project continues to foster socio-economic cohesion and promote sustainable waste management practices. The initiatives undertaken this year not only address immediate challenges but also pave the way for long-term positive change, ensuring that the benefits of recycling and socio-economic development are realized by all community members.

Support to Diploma Verification Process, Independent Commission, its Secretariat, and UMN

Project Duration: 25 Months

Funding: The British Embassy in Pristina and the Embassy of Switzerland in Kosovo, through the International Organization for Migration (IOM)

Introduction

The "Support to Diploma Verification process, Independent Commission, its Secretariat, and UMN" project, led by ECMI Kosovo and funded by the British Embassy in Pristina and the Embassy of Switzerland in Kosovo through IOM, aims to enhance the representation of non-majority communities in public institutions by certifying diplomas issued by the University of Mitrovica North (UMN). This report provides a comprehensive overview of the project's progress, achievements, and challenges

throughout 2023.

Project Goals

• The project has three primary objectives:

• Strengthening the representation of non-majority communities in Kosovo's public institutions by certifying UMN-issued diplomas.

• Providing technical and legal support to the Government of Kosovo to expand the Commission's mandate to include secondary schools and professional colleges in Serbian-language education.

• Increasing awareness and utilization of the Verification Mechanism among non-majority communities.

Project Description

The project supports the Independent Commission, its Secretariat, and UMN to establish a robust diploma verification mechanism. Recognizing qualifications from Serbian-language educational institutions in Kosovo aims to boost employment opportunities for non-majority communities and foster their representation in public institutions. The project also leverages sports and cultural platforms to encourage intercultural unity among youth.

Progress and Activities

Engagement of Mediator Officer

A Mediator Officer has been engaged since the project's inception, facilitating effective communication and fostering cooperation with UMN. This officer has also maintained consistent communication with the three authorized municipalities: Gracanica, Ranilug, and North Mitrovica. Preliminary communications with secondary school officials have been initiated to prepare for the expansion of the commission's mandate.

Training for Secretariat Members

Two training sessions were conducted to enhance the understanding of diploma verification processes and working procedures among Secretariat members. The Secretariat's archive has been digitized, and a new database template has been developed for applicants. This effort included the systematization of the physical archive, ensuring its organization and accessibility.



Operationalizing Authorized Municipalities

Direct communication channels have been established between designated municipal officials responsible for diploma verification, facilitating regular meetings and cooperation between the municipalities and the Commission.

Development of the Online Platform

The project team has been analyzing the necessary measures for establishing an online platform. A company has been selected to develop the platform, and a demo version is being created. The platform's integration with MESTI's server system is pending approval.

Support to the Government of Kosovo in Amending Regulation No. 21/2015

ECMI Kosovo has provided legal support for the amendment of Regulation No. 21/2015 to expand the Commission's mandate. This expansion will include UMN, three professional colleges, and 34 secondary schools, benefiting approximately 17,000 students attending Serbian-language education. The Government of Kosovo has officially approved this mandate expansion.



Information Sessions and Information Leaflets

Drafting of information leaflets is underway, with feedback from the Commission and donors. Information sessions in Serb-majority municipalities will be scheduled following the Government's official decision on the mandate expansion.

Development of Teaching Materials and Translation Services

A language expert has been engaged to develop, revise, and translate teaching materials for the Balkanistics Study Programme. Additionally, translation services for documents such as the Statute of the University of Prishtina and job announcements have been provided.

Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Assessment

Significant progress has been made in promoting gender equality within the Commission, with approximately 50% of the members being women. A National Gender Expert has been engaged to prepare an inception report and conduct an overall gender analysis.

Challenges and Actions Taken

Political and Administrative Challenges

The project faced challenges due to the political situation in northern municipalities and procedural difficulties in resuming the diploma verification process. Continuous communication and meetings with UMN and relevant government institutions helped overcome these obstacles.

Backlog of Unorganized Files

ECMI Kosovo voluntarily addressed the backlog of approximately 2,000 unorganized files, developing an electronic database to enhance project efficiency and flexibility for the mandate expansion.

Technical Challenges

Lack of necessary technical equipment for the Secretariat was resolved by providing the required tools from the organization's budget. Issues with notarizing diplomas were addressed through guidance and facilitation with the Chamber of Notaries of Kosovo.

Implementation monitoring

The project monitored applications, the Commission’s decisions and the operation of the verification mechanism.

Conclusion

The "Support to Diploma Verification process, Independent Commission, its Secretariat, and UMN" project made substantial progress in 2023, enhancing the representation and employment opportunities for non-majority communities in Kosovo. Despite challenges, the project's successful activities and strategic initiatives demonstrate a strong commitment to fostering inclusivity, sustainability, and equality. ECMI Kosovo's dedication to this project underscores its mission to support non-majority communities and build a more inclusive and equitable society in Kosovo.

Socio-Economic Reintegration for Minority Communities and Other Vulnerable Marginalized Groups

Project Duration: 11 Months

Funding: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ Kosovo)

Introduction

The European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo (ECMI Kosovo) has continued its dedicated efforts to enhance the socio-economic conditions of minority communities and other vulnerable groups in Kosovo through the project titled "Socio-Economic Reintegration for Minority Communities and Other Vulnerable Marginalized Groups." We are delighted to be working with GIZ for the first time, and their support has been instrumental in the success of our initiatives. This report provides a comprehensive overview of the activities and achievements for the first half of 2023, marking the significant progress made in this impactful project.



Project Objectives

The primary objective of this project was to improve the employability and self-employment opportunities for returnees and minority communities by aligning their training with labor market demands. This was achieved through tailored training programs, individual consulting sessions, and the provision of necessary tools and equipment.

Key Activities and Achievements

Continuation and Expansion of Training Programs

The self-employment and entrepreneurship programme provided vocational and enterprise training in fields such as metalworking, carpentry and culinary services.



Participants received soft-skills training on communication, problem-solving and working with others, alongside individual counselling and mentoring.

Tool and Equipment Distribution

The programme provided tools and equipment to 140 participants, including 84 women, across six regions. Packages were tailored to participants' work.



Comprehensive Outreach and Engagement

Outreach helped eligible participants learn about the programme and request support.

Survey and Feedback

The project collected participant feedback about training, counselling and equipment support.



On 31 May, ECMI Kosovo presented its study of the impact of social and economic reintegration programmes for minority communities.

Challenges and Mitigations

The project faced several challenges, including reaching out to minority communities and women due to cultural barriers and stereotypes. Additionally, delays in the application deadline for training programs were encountered to accommodate interested participants. These challenges were effectively addressed through intensive outreach efforts, flexible scheduling, and the provision of language support and cultural sensitivity training to staff. ECMI Kosovo's proactive approach ensured that these challenges did not hinder the project's progress and impact.

Conclusion

ECMI Kosovo is pleased with the progress and achievements of the "Socio-Economic Reintegration for Minority Communities and Other Vulnerable Marginalized Groups" project for the first half of 2023. The comprehensive training programs, individual consulting sessions, and provision of tools and equipment have significantly improved the employability and self-employment prospects of the beneficiaries. The project's impact is evident in the enhanced skills, confidence, and socio-economic stability of the participants, particularly among minority groups and women. ECMI Kosovo remains committed to continuing its efforts in empowering marginalized communities and facilitating their integration into the labor market.

We are proud to be engaged in such impactful socio-economic reintegration efforts and look forward to building on this foundation in the coming year. The partnership with GIZ has been a rewarding experience, and we are grateful for their support in making this project a success.

Cross-Border Green Deal (CB GD)

Project Duration: 24 Months

Funding: European Union

Introduction

In 2023, ECMI Kosovo began implementing the EU-supported Cross-border Green Deal with partners in Kosovo and Montenegro. The year focused on planning, needs assessment and research.

Project Implementation and Progress

Procurement and Equipment Distribution

Throughout the project period, ECMI Kosovo engaged in extensive communication with utility companies and municipal managers to assess their needs and ensure the effective distribution of equipment. Regular meetings with utility companies like “KRM Ambienti Sh.A.” and “KRM Çabrati” established strong collaboration and understanding of the local context.

ECMI Kosovo held meetings with KRM Ambienti in Pejë/Peć on 2 October and KRM Çabrati in Gjakovë/Đakovica on 13 December 2023.

National-level engagement was also a priority. In November 2023, ECMI Kosovo reached out to the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning. Program Coordinator Ms. Blerta Visoka ensured the ministry was well-informed and supportive of the project's goals, coordinating fieldwork with the minister's advisor, Mr. Valon Shehu.

Following a needs assessment and detailed discussions, ECMI Kosovo conducted market research to identify potential suppliers. The procurement process culminated in a comprehensive tender package divided into three lots:

• Lot 1: Various containers (120L, 240L, and 1.1m3).

• Lot 2: Equipment such as multi-cultivators, composter machines, grass mowers, work clothes, loppers, and air quality measurement equipment.

• Lot 3: Green islands for community-based waste management and recycling initiatives.

Research and Surveys

Research on waste management and waste composition in Pejë/Peć began in September 2023.

Cross-Border Collaboration

Regular communication with project partners in Montenegro through physical and online meetings facilitated project progress and addressed challenges. A Memorandum of Cooperation signed at the project's inception ensured collaborative efforts and shared responsibilities among partners.

Community Engagement and Awareness

Media Campaigns

ECMI Kosovo prepared environmental-awareness material on waste reduction and recycling.

Supporting Continued Access to and Retention in Public Education in 15 Municipalities in Kosovo

Project Duration: 26 Months

Funding: UNICEF

Introduction

ECMI Kosovo and UNICEF launched the programme in November 2022 with the education ministry. It supports continued access to and retention in public education in 15 municipalities.



Project Objectives

The project focuses on three primary objectives: conducting a baseline study and situational analysis, establishing and training School Prevention Teams (PRTANs), and enhancing the usage of the Early Warning System (EWS).

Activities and Achievements

Baseline Study and Situational Analysis

The Baseline Study conducted in late 2022 provided critical data on factors contributing to school dropouts, such as socio-economic challenges, low academic performance, and high absenteeism rates. This data informed the project's interventions throughout 2023. ECMI Kosovo regularly updated the situational analysis to reflect new data and emerging trends, ensuring that the project remained responsive to changing conditions and challenges. This iterative approach involved continuous data collection and analysis, allowing for the adaptation of intervention strategies to meet the unique needs of each municipality. For instance, in areas with high absenteeism rates due to economic hardships, additional resources were allocated to support affected families, thereby improving school attendance.

Establishment and Training of School Prevention Teams (PRTANs)

By the end of 2023, ECMI Kosovo successfully established 70 Upper Secondary School Prevention Teams (PRTANs) in collaboration with local schools and education authorities. These teams comprised school administrators, teachers, and social workers dedicated to identifying and supporting at-risk students. Training sessions equipped team members with the necessary skills and knowledge to handle cases according to state protocols, covering legal frameworks, state protocols, and administrative instructions. Starting in May 2023, the training efforts expanded to include Primary and Lower Secondary Schools, establishing 170 additional prevention teams. The training focused on addressing specific issues such as absenteeism, low academic performance, and the impact of family circumstances exacerbated by the pandemic.



Enhancing the Usage of the Early Warning System (EWS)

ECMI Kosovo promoted the importance of the Early Warning System (EWS) within the Educational Management Information System (EMIS) as a tool for monitoring at-risk students. Awareness campaigns and informational sessions were conducted to highlight the benefits of the EWS, encouraging schools to actively use the system to track student progress and intervene early. In October and November 2023, training sessions focused on the effective use of the EWS for Upper Secondary Schools. These sessions aimed to improve understanding and utilization of the system among school staff, promoting a supportive rather than punitive approach to dealing with at-risk students.

Additional Achievements and Collaborations

In May 2023, ECMI Kosovo organized a major conference to launch the first draft of Municipal Action Plans for dropout prevention. Developed in collaboration with local municipalities, these plans were tailored to address the specific challenges identified in each area. Ten municipalities endorsed their action plans, and five more were in the public hearing stage by the end of the year. ECMI Kosovo also actively supported the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology, and Information (MESTI) in their annual Dropout Prevention Week, amplifying the impact of these initiatives through awareness campaigns, workshops, and community events.

Impact

The training sessions held in 2023 equipped School Prevention Teams (PRTANs) with the necessary skills and knowledge to support at-risk students effectively. These teams now implement proactive measures such as personalized support plans, regular monitoring of student progress, and engagement with parents and communities. The promotion and training on the Early Warning System (EWS) have led to increased awareness and improved usage across schools, enabling timely identification and intervention for students at risk of dropping out. The endorsement and implementation of Municipal Action Plans have provided a strategic framework for local municipalities to address dropout rates, fostering a collaborative effort that ensures the strategies are locally relevant and sustainable.



Conclusion and Future Plans

The project has made significant strides in supporting continued access to and retention in public education in Kosovo. Through comprehensive research, targeted training, and strategic use of monitoring tools, ECMI Kosovo has built a robust framework to address the issue of school dropouts. The ongoing collaboration with local municipalities and national education authorities ensures sustainability and long-term success.

Looking ahead, ECMI Kosovo plans to enhance the utilization of the Early Warning System, support the implementation and expansion of Municipal Action Plans, and extend training and support to additional schools and municipalities. Strengthening partnerships with Learning Centers will also be a priority to offer comprehensive support to vulnerable students. Regular monitoring and evaluation of the project's interventions will ensure their effectiveness, allowing for continuous improvement and adaptation to achieve the best results for students.

ECMI Kosovo remains committed to making a positive impact on the educational landscape in Kosovo. By focusing on these goals, the project will continue to ensure that more students have the opportunity to complete their education and reach their full potential.

Technical Support to the Multi-Ethnic Parliamentary Group in the Assembly of Kosovo

Project Duration: 5 Months

Funding: UNMIK

This project, funded by the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), aimed to provide technical support to the Multi-Ethnic Parliamentary Group within the Assembly of Kosovo. The European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI) Kosovo served as the implementing partner, working diligently to enhance the legislative and functional capacities of the group.

Objectives

The primary objective of the project was to empower the Multi-Ethnic Parliamentary Group and other non-majority community representatives in the Assembly of Kosovo. This was achieved by providing

them with specialized support through expert advisors, thereby enabling them to effectively influence legislative processes and policies. The project also sought to improve the knowledge and skills of Assembly Members regarding the constitutional framework on minority rights and enhance their participation in various Assembly Committees.

Activities

The project commenced with a series of meetings between ECMI Kosovo representatives and key members of the Assembly, including the Head of Commission and deputies. These meetings set the stage for the recruitment of four expert advisors who provided specialized support to the Multi-Ethnic Parliamentary Group and other non-majority representatives

Key Activities:

• Selection of Local Experts: The project initiated with the selection of local experts to provide technical support to the Multi-Ethnic Parliamentary Group.

• Coordination Meetings: Conducted several meetings with members of the Multi-Ethnic Parliamentary Group to discuss important issues for non-majority communities in Kosovo.

• Workshops: Organized a two-day workshop focusing on the employment of community members in public institutions.

• Development of Legal Handbook: A comprehensive legal handbook was developed covering constitutional provisions, legislative frameworks, and institutional setups concerning non-majority communities in Kosovo.

• Stakeholder Meetings: Conducted meetings with representatives from non-majority communities and relevant institutions to ensure the handbook accurately reflected the current situation.

The expert advisors' contributions included:

• Providing detailed comments and research on the Draft Statute of the Assembly of Kosovo, focusing on translation services for non-majority members.

• Offering insights on the inclusion of non-majority communities within the Accreditation Agency as per the Law on Civil Service.

• Advising on the importance of maintaining archives in both official languages and translating documents into official languages when necessary.

• Preparing background research and written notes for speeches delivered by members of the Multi-Ethnic Parliamentary Group.

An expert was also engaged to compile a comprehensive list of publications detailing constitutional and legal provisions for the protection and promotion of non-majority community rights. This list was shared with the Multi-Ethnic Parliamentary Group to aid their legislative efforts.

Results

The project successfully enhanced the legislative capabilities of the Multi-Ethnic Parliamentary Group and other non-majority representatives. Key results included:

• Increased capacity of Assembly Members to influence policy through improved understanding of constitutional frameworks on minority rights.

• Strengthened technical and functional capabilities of the Multi-Ethnic Parliamentary Group and other non-majority representatives, enabling more effective participation in Assembly Committees.

• Easy access to essential legal and constitutional documents, aiding daily legislative work and promoting the rights of non-majority communities.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

The primary challenge encountered was political resistance, with concerns that UNMIK's involvement might be politically sensitive. However, ECMI Kosovo effectively mitigated this issue by emphasizing its independent status and the non-political nature of the project.

Sustainability

The project's results are expected to be sustainable, as the trained members of the Multi-Ethnic Parliamentary Group will continue to utilize their enhanced skills and access to information throughout their four-year term. The network and resources developed during the project will support their ongoing legislative efforts.

Conclusion

The Technical Support to the Multi-Ethnic Parliamentary Group project, funded by UNMIK and implemented by ECMI Kosovo, has significantly contributed to empowering non-majority community representatives in the Assembly of Kosovo. Through expert advice, comprehensive training, and resource provision, the project has laid a solid foundation for improved legislative advocacy and minority rights protection in Kosovo.

CARES - Cross-border Actions in the Reproductive Health Sector Project

Project Duration: 30 Months

Funding: European Union

Acknowledgment

The CARES - Cross-border Actions in the Reproductive Health Sector project, generously funded by the European Union and the Ministry of EU Integration in Montenegro, was implemented by the European Center for Minority Issues (ECMI) Kosovo in collaboration with FORS Montenegro. This initiative aimed to enhance reproductive health services and promote awareness on preventive health measures in Kosovo and Montenegro, spanning from May 1, 2023, to April 30, 2024.



Objectives

The primary objective of the CARES project was to improve reproductive health services by providing necessary equipment, enhancing the capacity of medical professionals, and raising community awareness about preventive health measures. The project sought to achieve these goals through cross-border cooperation, fostering a collaborative approach to address reproductive health challenges.

Activities

1. Procurement and Distribution of Equipment

ECMI Kosovo and FORS Montenegro conducted detailed consultations with public health institutions to identify their specific needs. This ensured the effective distribution of essential medical equipment tailored to the requirements of various health centers. The equipment included digital colposcopes, ultrasound machines, glucometers, pregnancy tests, and other vital tools for reproductive health services. The delivery of equipment took place across multiple health centers in Kosovo, significantly enhancing their capacity to provide quality healthcare.





2. Training Programs

Training on using the new equipment accompanied its delivery to health institutions.

Additionally, ECMI Kosovo facilitated training on the usage of new medical equipment during its distribution. These sessions, conducted in cooperation with the winning tender company, KOSLABOR, ensured that health center staff were well-versed in operating and maintaining the new equipment, thereby enhancing the quality of healthcare services.

3. Preventive Examinations and Campaigns

CARES 2 continued to promote preventive reproductive healthcare in 2023. Its examination figures cover more than one reporting period.

ECMI Kosovo also ran extensive awareness-raising campaigns, including press conferences, TV and radio shows, and the publication of articles on reproductive health. These campaigns educated the public on the importance of preventive health measures and promoted the services provided through the project.

4. Community Engagement and Youth Education

The project also implemented a youth camp in Peja on February 2-4, 2023, aimed at educating high school students on reproductive health. This camp, attended by 23 youth, provided valuable knowledge on maintaining healthy lifestyles and making responsible health choices. The youth camp was designed as a "training of trainers" event to ensure sustainability and the education of more youth beyond the project's completion.

5. Cross-Border Collaboration

A key component of the project was fostering cross-border collaboration. Regular communication and meetings with project partners in Montenegro facilitated the exchange of best practices and addressed any challenges. A cross-border round table was organized on November 22, 2023, in Pejë/Peć, bringing together stakeholders from Kosovo and Montenegro to discuss improvements in reproductive health services and share project results.

Results

The CARES project achieved significant milestones in improving reproductive health services and raising awareness on preventive health measures:

• Enhanced Healthcare Capacity: The distribution of essential medical equipment and training of health center staff improved the quality and efficiency of reproductive health services.

• Increased Awareness and Preventive Measures: Extensive campaigns and preventive examinations contributed to early detection and increased awareness about reproductive health.

• Youth Engagement and Education: Educational workshops and youth camps equipped young people with essential knowledge on reproductive health, promoting long-term health consciousness.

• Strengthened Cross-Border Cooperation: Collaboration with FORS Montenegro and other stakeholders fostered a cooperative approach to addressing reproductive health challenges, ensuring the sustainability of project outcomes.

Conclusion

The CARES project, funded by the European Union and the Ministry of EU Integration in Montenegro and implemented in partnership with FORS Montenegro, has made substantial progress in enhancing reproductive health services in Kosovo and Montenegro. Through effective equipment distribution, comprehensive training programs, and robust community engagement initiatives, ECMI Kosovo and FORS Montenegro have laid a solid foundation for improved reproductive health and preventive care. The project's success underscores the importance of cross-border cooperation and community involvement in achieving sustainable healthcare outcomes. ECMI Kosovo remains committed to fostering a healthier future through ongoing efforts and future initiatives.

Outlook at the close of 2023

As ECMI Kosovo moves into 2024, the organization is poised for continued growth and increased impact. Building on the successes of 2023, ECMI Kosovo has outlined strategic plans and goals to further its mission of fostering minority rights and community empowerment.

Strategic Plans and Goals for 2024

1. Expansion of Human Rights Initiatives:

• New Projects: Launch new initiatives focused on addressing emerging human rights issues within minority communities. These projects will include targeted support for vulnerable groups, enhanced legal assistance, and expanded outreach programs.

• Enhanced Legal Support: Increase the number of paralegals and legal advisors to provide more comprehensive support to individuals facing human rights violations. This will include the development of specialized legal clinics in underserved areas.

2. Strengthening Community Engagement:

• Community Centers: Establish additional community centers in key regions to serve as hubs for engagement, education, and support. These centers will offer various services, including legal aid, educational workshops, and social support programs.

• Outreach Programs: Expand outreach programs to include more remote and rural areas, ensuring that all communities have access to ECMI Kosovo’s resources and support. This will involve mobile

units and pop-up events to reach those who cannot travel to the centers.

3. Educational and Youth Empowerment:

• Youth Leadership Programs: Develop new youth leadership programs aimed at empowering young people from minority communities to become advocates for change. These programs will focus on critical thinking, leadership skills, and community involvement.

• Scholarship Initiatives: Launch scholarship programs to support higher education for students from minority backgrounds. This will include partnerships with local universities and international organizations to provide financial and academic support.

4. Environmental Sustainability:

• Green Projects: Continue and expand green projects like the Recycling Matters Activity. Introduce new initiatives focused on sustainability and environmental protection, engaging local communities in waste management and conservation efforts.

• Awareness Campaigns: Increase awareness campaigns on environmental issues, leveraging media, social platforms, and community events to promote sustainable practices.

5. Advocacy and Policy Influence:

• Policy Development: Engage in policy development to advocate for stronger legal protections and rights for minority communities. Work closely with government bodies, international organizations, and civil society to influence policy changes.

• Research and Reports: Conduct research and publish reports on the status of minority rights, providing data and insights to support advocacy efforts and inform policy decisions.

Anticipated Challenges

1. Political Instability:

• Mitigation Strategies: Develop contingency plans to navigate potential political instability. This includes establishing strong partnerships with local and international organizations to ensure the continuity of projects and support services.

2. Funding and Resources:

• Fundraising Efforts: Increase fundraising efforts through grant applications, donor engagement, and crowdfunding campaigns. Explore new funding opportunities to secure the necessary resources for expanding programs.

3. Community Trust and Participation:

• Building Trust: Continue to build trust within communities through transparent operations, regular communication, and consistent delivery of services. Engage community leaders and stakeholders to foster collaboration and participation.

Commitment to Fostering Minority Rights and Community Empowerment

ECMI Kosovo remains steadfast in its commitment to fostering minority rights and empowering communities. The organization's strategic plans for 2024 are designed to address the needs of minority groups through comprehensive support, advocacy, and engagement. By expanding its reach, enhancing its services, and advocating for policy changes, ECMI Kosovo aims to create a more inclusive and equitable society in Kosovo.

Conclusion

As ECMI Kosovo enters 2024, the organization is dedicated to building on its achievements and addressing the challenges ahead. With a focus on new initiatives, community engagement, and policy advocacy, ECMI Kosovo is well-positioned to continue making a significant impact on minority rights and community empowerment in Kosovo. The future looks promising with plans for stronger staff engagement, expanded programs, and deeper community involvement.

Audited finances and personnel

Audited measure	2023
Grants received	€874,872
Personnel costs for staff and contracted contributors	€286,107
Project activities	€458,312
Administrative costs	€167,678
Total expenditure	€912,097
Closing cash and bank balance	€146,732

The institutional audit records an average of 34 regular and contracted personnel per month. The personnel cost line includes the salary and pension costs covered by the audit's definition.

Independent audit

Alb Audit L.L.C. expressed an unmodified opinion on ECMI Kosovo's 2023 financial statements in its report dated June 2024.

Project audits

The Community Development Fund (CDF) commissioned Quatra Audit Int. LLC to carry out independent financial audits of the Sida-funded HumanRightivism project, covering the 2020-2023 implementation period.

BDO LLP carried out a GIZ-commissioned financial audit of Migration for Development Programme III in 2023, covering July to December 2022.