



Youth Assemblies for Community Development

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Introduction

This document will guide you through the Youth Assemblies. What are the Youth Assemblies, what do we do, who is involved, and how to get involved with us.

It also tells you our recommendations for a better Youth Policy in Kosovo and the contribution the we've already made through our projects.

If you're a young person, read it and if it grabs you and you'd like to get stuck in to make life better, come and join the Youth Assembly. We do it!

If you are a local official or a local community member, read it, think about it and help us.

What is A Youth Assembly?

A Youth Assembly is a non-governmental, non-political simulation of a Municipal Assembly in Kosovo. It involves around 20-30 young people in each municipality who are engaged in the recreation of Municipal Assembly activities and functions. We have over 300 members from Albanian, Serbian, Bosniak, Ashkali, Roma, Turkish and Croat communities of Kosovo. We meet to discuss issues of concern and interest to ourselves and our community, we engage with representatives of local government on these issues, we receive training on a range of topics, we make recommendations on the major issues in Kosovo for Youth (they are outlined on page(...I can't fill this in until the booklet is made) and then implement projects which address those issues.

Who can be involved?

Youth Assemblies are open for all young people of secondary school age. The Youth Assemblies begin selection of the interested participants at the beginning of the year but this procedure is on-going. The main criterion is for participants to have commitment and desire to improve their community.

Where are there Youth Assemblies?

The Youth Assemblies have been established in thirteen municipalities in Kosovo. There are Youth Assemblies in:

Dragash/Dragaš - DR	Mitrovicë/Mitrovica - MI
Gjilan/Gnjilane - GN	Podujevë/Podujevo - PJ
Kaçanik/Kaçanik - KA	Prishtinë/Priština - PR
Kamenicë/Kamenica - KK	Rahovec/Orahovac - RH
Leposavić/Leposaviq - LE	Prizren/Prizren - PZ
Lipjan/Lipljan - LI	Prizren - PZ
Vushtri - VU	Suharekë/Suva Reka

Youth Assembly Recommendations for Change 2005

Youth Assemblies of Kosovo have been able to identify and unanimously agree upon the seven major problems facing the Youth of Kosovo today.

They are unemployment, poor inter-ethnic relations, insufficient youth facilities, lack of consultation with youth in the decision making bodies, low standards and opportunities within education, environmental decline and early marriage.

Below we set out the problems in more detail, their causes, consequences and possible solutions for the improvement of the situation.

Unemployment

The first of the issues confronting us today is the lack of employment opportunities within Kosovo. Without reasonable possibility for regular, worthwhile and legal employment we are left with few desirable choices. Departure from Kosovo for the lucky few who have that option, menial labour that fails to utilise our skills and criminal activity. All three of these options have a massively negative impact on Kosovo in general.

We have identified 6 low cost means to improve the situation.

◇ **Ministry for Education Science and Technology (MEST)** and Kosovo's businesses need to co-operate to provide work experience over the summer for all who are interested. This would have clearly positive effects for both business and the pupils. Businesses would have the opportunity to take some of the brightest and best and introduce them to their work with possibilities of further employment to those who work out well. The pupils will gain relevant work experience to supplement their educational qualifications.

◇ **Provisional Institutions of Self Government (PISG)** and European Union (EU) should involve Kosovo Youth in any working groups intended to resolve the problems with unemployment in order to ensure that the concerns of Youth are adequately addressed by the proposals. United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and PISG must change the law on customs to improve incentives for local production rather than import.

◇ **Municipal Bureau for Employment** should provide more trainings on CV writing, interview technique and job applications. Kosovo's businesses should post advertisements in youth focused publications.



A homeless boy in Prishtina

◇ **Kosovo Police Service (KPS)** and Municipal courts must follow up on cases of the abuse of child labour and ensure proper treatment of young workers in Kosovo.

Strained Inter-Ethnic Relations

The second pressing issue for the youth of Kosovo is the state of inter-ethnic relations in Kosovo which are not yet at even the most basically functioning level. This comes from direct and indirect pressures from a society in which many family members, friends and community members instil a sense of fear and opposition that prevents both freedom of movement and association. Minority communities are hesitant to be integrated into society because of the still recent violence and continued attacks on minority community members.

Again, we have identified 5 possible means to improve the inter-community relationships.

◇ **PISG** should establish more common business spaces for all communities as exist in GN should be established since the desire to integrate is much deeper across all communities if there are financial incentives.

◇ **Youth Assemblies, UNMIK and PISG** should all implement more common cultural and sporting events open and accessible to all with support of KFOR, UNMIK police and KPS to provide security where necessary.

◇ **UNMIK, PISG, Media outlets and Youth Assemblies** should conduct Awareness campaigns to encourage involvement in these events and media campaigns to promote the benefits of multi-ethnic co-operation.

◇ **Youth Assemblies and MEST** should co-operate to hold discussion groups in schools on the issue of inter-ethnic relations with the involvement of Municipal officials and politicians.

◇ **Youth Assemblies** will implement activities to promote freedom of Movement. They will involve music, speeches and discussion of the issues at hand.

Lack of Involvement in the Decision Making Processes

Our fourth concern is that the young people of Kosovo are left outside the processes of decision-making. They are not regularly invited to relevant discussions which affect their lives and future in either schools, universities, local and central government or UNMIK. This has led to laws and regulations that are supposed to represent the interests of the youth but which fail to do so.

◇ **Youth assembly, Youth NGO forums and informal youth groups** can establish and organise the pupils councils in order to encourage and engage pupils in the decision making process within and across schools and PISG. They can draft projects and fundraise for

these councils/forums in order to secure their functioning

- ◇ **Youth Assembly and Municipal Information Officer (MIO)** can conduct an awareness raising campaign for the youth to see their rights and the laws.
- ◇ **Youth NGO's** can hold capacity building working groups for youth to build the awareness of their rights regarding the decision making process.
- ◇ **Local PISG** must encourage and facilitate the participation of the Youth in the drafting of Municipal and Central budgets and policies to ensure sufficient allocation of funds and resources for Youth activities and implement legislation regulating consultation with youth on such issues
- ◇ **Furthermore, the Municipalities** should support the MYO and request from the MYO preparation of the annual action plan for enhancement of the youth in the municipal level. This Action plan should be drafted in close cooperation with representatives of all youth groups.
- ◇ **Ministry for Culture Youth and Sport (MCYS) and MEST** must cease the practices of approving decisions affecting youth without prior approval endorsed by the school forums/councils. Also, any organisation of activities should be in co-operation with Youth to ensure that they take place at a time and with an agenda suitable for the youth.
- ◇ **MCYS** should ensure the functioning of the Kosovo Youth Parliament and the Youth Assemblies could take an active role in the Youth Parliament.
- ◇ **The International Community** must make serious effort to influence the local and central PISG to proactively consider and incorporate recommendations and concerns of the youth groups. They must also ensure co-operation with and between youth and local authorities when developing and implementing any projects which have an impact on the youth.

Lack of Sporting, Cultural and Youth facilities

The third issue we have identified that heavily affects the Youth of Kosovo is the lack of sports centres, theatres, cinemas and spaces for general youth activities. This lack of outlet for the youth's energy and creativity is leading to increased numbers of drug and alcohol users and those involved with crime. It has come about because of the lack of co-operation between municipalities and youth with the allocation of the budget and facilities required for these activities.



- ◇ **PISG** could replicate, across Kosovo, the cultural activity model used in SR in the Festari. A week long festival of sporting and cultural activities implemented with Municipal and sponsorship funds.
- ◇ **PISG** should involve the youth in the planning of Municipal and Central allocation of funds for youth activities.
- ◇ **Youth Assemblies** can organise sporting and cultural events in co-operation with Municipalities.
- ◇ **Youth Assemblies** can organise an awareness campaign on the effects of drug and alcohol addiction

Lack of access to quality educational facilities and institutions

Our fifth identified problem is with the low standard of educational facilities and the difficulty of gaining access to those that do exist. The libraries are poor, the laboratories are insufficient, the teachers are not motivated and the availability of university places is limited. These low standards result in the inability of students to practically test out their acquired theoretical knowledge and properly develop their understanding. As such, their preparedness for life in the practical world is limited and insufficient. The problems have come about because of a politicised educational system where unrelated political beliefs conflict with sound educational policy which leads, at all levels, to the non-implementation of the appropriate laws on education.

- ◇ **PISG and UNMIK** can ensure that the law on education is implemented as directed
- ◇ **Teachers** should have more freedom to specialise in their individual areas of expertise and teach subjects they are passionate about.
- ◇ **The Youth Assemblies** should activate school councils in their respective institutions and encourage them in others.
- ◇ **OSCE** can organise trainings for students and staff on effects of corruption, bribery and politicisation of the educational system.
- ◇ **MEST** can provide better information on how to be enrolled at university and should make the scholarship process more transparent, less nepotistic and more accessible to those who really need it.

Environmental Deterioration

The sixth of our identified problems facing the Youth of Kosovo today is the deteriorating environmental situation caused by an apathetic population, business community and institutions. With a lack of awareness of the population in general of the issue, little regard of the local and

central authorities to solution, insufficient investment into recycling and refuse collection, the poor planning of the placement of factories and illegal logging practices, the future for Kosovo's environment looks bleak. It is us who will have to live the mistakes of the older generations and as such we have suggested six ways to improve the situation.

An example of environmental carelessness in Kosovo



◇ **Youth Assemblies, NGO's, OSCE, PISG and media outlets** can conduct Media campaigns (TV, Radio, leaflets) and trainings/discussion groups on problems with environment from local experts, the possible effects, what natural phenomena there are to save, ways in which the people can help and what can be achieved. With more knowledge, they can be part of the solution and the pressure on the government to effect change would be increased

◇ **MEST** should incorporate environmental education aspects into the primary school curriculum in order to have the knowledge implanted from a young age. Therefore, it will not require a change of attitudes, only the formation of them.

◇ **Youth Assemblies, NGO's and local community members** can participate in clean-up operations in local areas of natural worth damaged by illegal dumping and littering.

◇ **PISG and UNMIK** can approve laws and legislation to protect the few green areas remaining and the environment in general. Additional protection for woodlands from illegal logging and requirements for environmental impact assessments on all major industrial development. This legislation will have the additional effect of raising awareness and will empower those who are trying to make the changes.

Early Marriage

The seventh identified issues facing the young people of Kosovo today is that of early marriage. It is a problem that affects perhaps only a small number but the negative effect on those few is enormous.

◇ **Police and Municipal courts** must uphold the relevant laws that are in place to protect the young from abuse.

◇ **Centres for Social Welfare and Municipal Gender Officers** should be obliged to go to the schools and to widely inform youngsters about their legal rights, procedures and means of assistance available to them. On the other hand these institutions need support through capacity building to be enabled to adequately respond to this task.

◇ **Youth Assemblies, MEST and Municipal Education Directors (MED)** should have this issue discussed in schools and in the media in areas where it is a problem to raise awareness amongst the population of the seriousness of the issue.

Trainings

The Trainings are a central part of the Youth Assembly project. We are able to develop our skills and capacities in order to better understand and address the problems facing us today. We have attended the following trainings provided by OSCE Mission and Local NGO's.

- ◇ Advocacy and Lobbying techniques
- ◇ How to plan and organize a campaign
- ◇ Team Building
- ◇ Municipal structures
- ◇ Project development and writing
- ◇ Conflict management and resolution
- ◇ Internal communication
- ◇ Problem Solving
- ◇ Human rights
- ◇ Journalism



Training in GN Youth Assembly

2004 and 2005 Projects

In order to go some way to addressing the identified issues we have implemented several projects in Kosovo.

Strained Inter-ethnic Relations

We are in the process of developing a documentary film on Freedom of Movement throughout Kosovo. We received training from a BBC consultant from the UK and have been filming throughout the past six months in eleven municipalities in an effort to try and promote freedom of movement by uncovering some of the issues surrounding it along with short documentaries on several of the projects seen below.

We had a series of campaigns to develop inter-ethnic awareness and tolerance throughout the local community. These included parades through the various towns, folk dancing and singing displays, exhibitions, sport activities and a series of debates on the issue of Freedom of Movement and Tolerance Promotion in Kosovo. This has been implemented in LI, SM, VU and PZ.

Youth Assembly members from VU and MI received training of trainers on MA structures and functions, project development and peace building. This training is now passed on by the Youth Assembly members to 300 of their peers in schools with Caritas supervision.

Lack of Sporting, Cultural and Youth facilities

DR Youth Assembly encouraged tourism through the mapping and signposting of areas, natural phenomena and pathways for people to follow in the Gora region.

DR Youth Assembly has also managed the re-development of the school field in DR and organised a Kosovo-wide Basketball tournament for 100 youth for its inauguration.

And we are trying to provide low cost sporting activities for the Youth of Kosovo through the development of an Orienteering society in Kosovo which has so far been developed in GN, KK and PJ and has involved over 100 youth.

Lack of Involvement in the Decision Making Processes

The Youth Assemblies organised a campaign (twelve roundtables, a series of radio spots, one TV debate and eight radio debates and the development of recommendations) in order to raise awareness on existing difficulties with youth involvement in the decision making process in schools and influence the improvement of education in secondary schools. This has so far taken place in GN, KK, MI and VU municipalities.

Youth Assembly members founded a newsletter in schools in MI. It is written by the students and covers issues of education, the activities of the municipality and of the youth in order to raise awareness of the issues of

concern in the school community. This has so far produced 12 issues circulating to over 500 secondary school pupils and is still running independently of OSCE funds with support from school funds and sales of the bulletin.

Environmental Deterioration

We implemented a series of eight campaigns highlighting the importance of environmental awareness through radio spots, three TV debates, 6 debates in secondary schools, posters and newsletters. In addition we organised eight clean up days in various areas of Kosovo and provided over 200 rubbish bins for town centres in order to promote continued environmental awareness. This was implemented in GN, KK, VU, LE, PJ and SR in partnership with other Youth organisations, the Municipal Youth Officers and with the Municipal Public Utilities Companies.

Early Marriage

The Youth Assembly raised awareness of secondary school students and parents on the problem of early marriages in the Rahovec/Orahovac municipality through trainings, debates, one TV and two radio talk shows, and the production and broadcasting of a short documentary film.

The Youth Assembly Retreat

Between the 19th and 26th August 2005 the 3rd annual Youth Assembly summer retreat took place in Žabljak, Montenegro. It involved over 250 of our members between the ages of 16-20 from the Albanian, Ashkali, Bosniak, Croat, Gorani, Roma, Serbian and Turkish communities.

The retreat itself had two goals:

1. To provide an opportunity for youth from different areas and ethnicities in Kosovo to meet each other and build relationships across geographic and ethnic boundaries in order to increase co-operation between our Youth Assemblies, and
2. To give us a forum to discuss the main problems facing the Youth of Kosovo and come up with the recommendations seen above.

Through team building activities the relationships were built up between members of different regions and ethnicities. It was a great success with strong friendships and working relationships being established and, as one of our members said, 'we began the retreat shaking hands but ended it by hugging each other'.

How can I get involved as a member?

If you are between 15 and 18 years old and want to know more, contact your nearest member on the contact list at the back of the booklet or the OSCE office in your region.

How can I support the Youth Assemblies?

If you are a Municipal Official, a local NGO member or a civil servant who can contribute to the development of political and social awareness of young people and are willing to listen to our concerns and ideas then we'd love to hear from you. You can contact the various Youth Assemblies through the contact list at the back of this booklet, by contacting local schools or by contacting the OSCE office in your region.

Thank You!

Thank you for reading and we hope to hear from you in the future, whether it be as a member, an official or simply an interested person with something to contribute to the improvement of Youth life in Kosovo. Help us to help ourselves!

Contact List

Dragash/Dragaš
OSCE: +381 29 44 200 - Latif

Gjilan/Gnjilane
Jelena Vasic: jelena_vasic_db@yahoo.com
OSCE: +381 280 24 757 - Edmond

Kaçanik/Kaçanik
OSCE: +381 38 500 162: Jeton Lika

Kamenicë/Kamenica:
Community Centre Kamenica: cc_kamenica@yahoo.com
Arta Hoda: artushi15@hotmail.com
Bedri Krasniqi: bedri_2@hotmail.com
OSCE: +381 280 24 757 - Ljubo / Fatmir

Leposavić/Leposaviq:
Bojana: bojanalep@yahoo.com
OSCE +38 28 33 944 - Snežana

Lipjan/Lipljan:
li_youth_assembly@hotmail.com
OSCE: +381 38 581 844 - Pedrag / Berat

Mitrovicë/Mitrovica
Besart Hajrizi: besarth@hotmail.com
OSCE: +38 28 33 944 i pitaj za Shkendiza

Podujevë/Podujevo:
Fidan Rekalii: rekaliu96@hotmail.com
Kreshnik Hyseni: niku_kh@hotmail.com
OSCE: 381 38 500 162 - Elita

Prishtinë/Priština
OSCE: 381 38 500 162 - Ismet

Prizren/Prizren
OSCE: +381 29 44 200 - Alev

Rahovec/Orahovac
OSCE: + 381 29 76 501 - Art

Suharekë/Suva Reka
Fisni Shurdhaj: niki_llokumi9@hotmail.com
Besart Lumi: bes_senior@hotmail.com
OSCE: +381 29 44 200 – Salih/Kreshnik

Vushtrri/Vučitrn
Beqir Lahu: Beqir_l@hotmail.com
OSCE: +38 28 33 944 - Sevdije

www.youthassemblies.com