

Kosovo Youth for Democracy and Peacebuilding Project




Centre for
Common
Ground



An EU funded project managed by the
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Since 1994, Centre for Common Ground (CCG), previously known as Search for Common Ground, has worked to strengthen interethnic relations, resolve conflicts, prevent violence, and promote reconciliation in the Western Balkans. During this period it has designed and implemented multiethnic national and regional programs in the sectors of education, media, ecology, arts, and culture. Based in Skopje, CCG's programmes were unprecedented since they not only targeted children and youth, but sought to incorporate them as active participants in decision-making processes, from the production of TV shows to political discussions about the future of their country. In 2005, the CCG team extended their activities to Kosovo, with the successful implementation of programs in the area of education and media. In collaboration with Save the Children in Kosovo, it has implemented "Mozaik" multicultural model for preschool education in five communities throughout Kosovo. Also in cooperation with National Center for State Courts (NCSC), CCG produced 3 public service announcements and the TV series "Inside Justice" aimed to increase public awareness of the on-going justice sector reforms in Kosovo as part of the USAID-funded Kosovo Justice Support Program.



Introduction

Kosovo Youth for Democracy and Peacebuilding

Since January 2010, CCG has been implementing the project called **Kosovo Youth for Democracy and Peacebuilding**. Its overall goal is to create awareness and consolidate knowledge of basic principles of democracy and human rights achieving greater social cohesion and community dialog among Kosovo civil society and young people. The action targets young people and youth NGOs in Kosovo to reinforce and build on their capacities to engage in society. This project is implemented in partnership with YMCA Kosovo and funded by the European Commission and managed by the European Commission Liaison Office in Kosovo (ECL0). This project is implemented in partnership with YMCA funded by European Commission and managed by the European Commission Liaison Office in Kosovo (ECL0) and French Embassy in Kosovo.

“Kosovo Youth for Democracy and Peacebuilding” seeks to increase the ability of youth in Kosovo to participate actively in society and engage their communities. It also aims to facilitate integration and understanding among Kosovo youth from different ethnicities and backgrounds, promote dialogue, and facilitate reaching common ground solutions to problems facing youth. Focusing on

Baseline Study

In spring 2010, CCG and YMCA conducted a survey of over 180 young people in Kosovo to examine youth's knowledge and attitudes on democracy, human rights, leadership, and conflict resolution. Youth in general, and youth leaders in particular, in Prishtina, Mitrovica, Prizren, Peja, Gjilan, and Gjakova were surveyed on these issues.

Results revealed that youth lacked decision-making opportunities in their schools and communities, with more than one-third of respondents saying they did not participate in any decision-making whatsoever. Many youth were unfamiliar with the basic concepts of democracy and democratic leadership- 45% of youth did not know what democratic leadership is. Furthermore, many were unaware of the role that they can play in society and their potential to contribute to building a democratic Kosovo. Generally, youth were passive, not proactive, lacking methods to improve their societal status.

Just to illustrate - young people were asked about opportunities to participate in various workshops, debates and discussions and to increase their knowledge about various aspects of democracy. As shown in the figure below in the six surveyed municipalities, more than 30% said they never have had such opportunity, the same proportion of respondents said “not very much”. A slight proportion of 4% said “great deal” and around 20% said “a fair amount”. The results show that young people are not involved at a satisfactory level in various activities where they can have opportunity to give their voice. Here, the problem is two-fold. From one side, the results could be interpreted that young people are not interested and self-motivated to be involved in such activities or become more engaged in the civil sector or extra-curricular activities. On the other side, the results also indicate that the civil society sector, the schools and various youth clubs and organization should be more proactive and work more on attracting youth and motivating them to express their voice and act as a factor of positive change in society.

commonalities is a way to build unity around a common message and pursue a common goal, enriched and not obstructed by differences of background.

YMCA in Kosovo is a values-based organization formed of volunteers that seeks to share the ideal of building a human community of justice with love, peace and reconciliation for the fullness of life for all creation. It is a non-profit, apolitical, nongovernmental, nonreligious and inclusive youth association which aims to provide more opportunities and actively to interact with the youth in it's local community. Inspired by the worldwide mission of YMCA as a viable answer to the needs of Kosovo, a National Office was established in August 2003, focusing on social responsibility, social inclusion and youth development. Afterwards programs in Prishtina and Peja started, and activities in Mitrovica, Ferizaj and Gjakova. Nowadays, YMCA Kosovo, as a national association, has 6 operating branches: Prishtina, Peja, Gjakova, Mitrovica, Y Media Club, and Y International. YMCA Kosovo also established organization programs such as Kosovo Special Olympics and Basketball Academy.

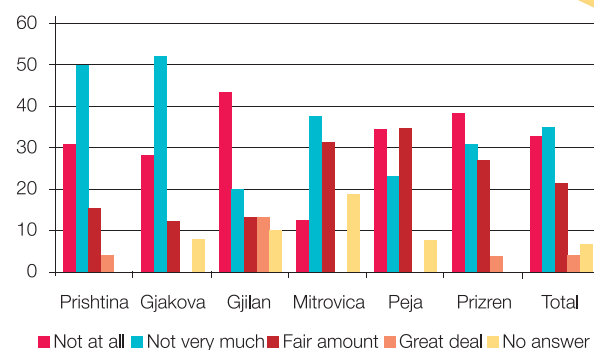
Q. Is the school/local youth club/youth NGO organizing various workshops, discussions and debates wherein youths learn about various democracy aspects (free speech, awareness about their rights and responsibilities)?

Q. What areas related to youth would you consider important to participate in decision making?

- A1. Politics.
- A2. Culture and environment.
- A3. Education and employment.
- A4. I don't know.
- A5. Other (no answer or unique answer)

The highest proportion of respondents gave no answer (38,51%). In Mitrovica around 93% of their respondents gave no answer, and the remaining respondents stated "I don't know". For the youth respondents in Prishtina all three first listed areas are equally important. In Peja more than 60% of the respondents declared that the area of education and employment is the most important for them to be involved in the decision-making process.

Based on these findings, CCG developed the project for Kosovo youth to combine leadership with instruction on democracy, human rights, and peacebuilding. The project builds on the effort of Kosovo's government, which in 2009 adopted the Law on Youth Empowerment and Participation and the Kosovo Youth Strategy and Action Plan for 2010 – 2012. The activity was supported by the Ministry of Culture, Youth, and Sports and by the local government structures that are in charge of implementation of the newly adopted Law on Youth at the local level in Pristina, Gracanica, Rahovec, Prizren and Mitrovica (South and North).



Training of trainers (ToT) of Youth Leaders

CCG and YMCA worked to increase the capacity of several local youth NGOs by providing training for a group of 13 participants from selected 5 local NGOs: “Global Motion” from Pristina, “Me Dore Ne Zemer” from Mitrovica, “Fisniket” from Prizren, “Youth Centre Gracanica” from Gracanica, and “Students Help Life” from Rahovec (Prizren region). In collaboration with Search for Common Ground (SFCG)’s program Leadership Wisdom Initiative (LWI) CCG has prepared and delivered trainings for the trainers and accompanying manual on working with youth. The selected young trainers were civil society leaders working with youth who learned how to consolidate principles of participatory democracy and respect for human rights amongst Kosovo’s youth. The ToT training was comprised of three components:

- 1. Conflict Resolution and Leadership Training**, which focused on imparting skills for conflict analysis and effective leadership.
- 2. Principles of Democracy and Human Rights**, which focused on the importance of civic participation, national vs. international structures and norms, and the duties and responsibilities of right-holders vs. duty-bearers.
- 3. Organizational Capacity and Management**, which included the development of an effective action plan and the skills necessary to define long-term strategies.

The added value of CCG’s and LWI culturally sensitive trainings resides in its capacity to introduce democratic and governance principles and concepts among leaders and community members, both the local and national levels.

At the core of the training methodology is a highly experiential approach that values indigenous and local practices while also introducing tools and insights gained from a global perspective on leadership. This way of working with participants is also unique in building understanding and relationships across divides, empowering participants to communicate more effectively with each other. Through extensive experience working with world leaders, LWI has developed the Three Pillar Leadership approach:

- **Leadership from the inside out** – authentic leadership that synthesizes the inner and outer arts of leadership
- **Leadership for the whole** – not just for “my” party, faction, tribe or group – that is rooted in a profound sense of our common humanity and the interconnectedness of all beings; and
- **Compassionate Leadership** – that facilitates problem solving and heals societal divisions.

The core group of young trainers and leaders delivered nine trainings to the broader Kosovo youth.

Youth Trainings

Participants trained through all this nine trainings included 150 youth aged 15 to 22 from the regions of Prishtina (including Gracanica), Mitrovica (both South and North) and Prizren (including Rahovec, Strpce, and Bardhosh).

These 2-days workshops served to enhance young people's skills in mediation, dialogue promotion, conciliation of interests, and pursuing a common goal in a structured, inclusive, tolerant, and coherent way. As result of participation in the trainings youth increased their leadership skills, their knowledge and understanding of democratic systems, and capacity to build relationships across dividing lines. The youth proactively participated in the sessions of the workshops and debated openly about youth issues and the place and role of youth in Kosovo society. Youth participants were actively engaged in the sessions and learned from their own experiences (experiential learning). The various energizers and activities, as well as the group work, contributed to the positive, friendly, and highly dynamic atmosphere.



Small Action Projects

Young people were given the opportunity to practice the skills and knowledge they had gained from the trainings by forming teams and drafting proposals for projects on the themes of democracy and peacebuilding. Youth teams then participated in a competition for which winners could receive grants. Having youth design their own projects based on priority issues facing their local community promotes ownership of the projects' activities and results.

Twenty-seven youth teams were formed by training's participants and they submitted project proposals at the competitions. The competitions were held in Prizren, Prishtina and Mitrovica, with support and participation from the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport and the local government as part of the evaluation committees.

The ten most successful small actions proposed by the youth teams and selected by the evaluation committees were funded for the amount of 2,500 Euros each to implement the project in their community. By translating the knowledge learned in trainings into hands-on project implementation, youth take theory and turn it into action, offering them an alternative to their current situation of disengagement- one based on active citizenship and democratic citizenship.

A presentation of each of the ten team's projects follows.

"Just Dance"

1

Location:

Kosovo, country-wide

Purpose:

To encourage all youth, no matter their nationality or religion, to live together in one country as equal citizens in every respect.

Team members:

Dastidë Hajdari, Arbër Selmani, Genc Mehmetaj, Hana Xhemajli, Vukman Manić.

Target Audience:

All citizens of Kosovo.

Description:

The "Just Dance" project's main intention was to make a video clip which would show that the youth of Kosovo want to continue living in peace and harmony with other ethnicities. This project was implemented by a multi-ethnic youth team from Pristina and Gračanica. The video included many ethnicities living in Kosovo: Albanians, Serbians, Roma, Ashkali, Bosnians, and Turks. The voiceover in the video clip is speaking in three languages: Albanian, English, and Serbian, and the spot was produced in the same three languages. Produced by the well-known company "Entermedia", the video was posted on the website "YouTube" - we expect to have lots of viewers!



In addition, the video will be transmitted through national TV channels RTK, KTV, TV21, and KLAN Kosova and on the local TV stations in Peja, Gracanica, and Mitrovica.



What an individual person cannot achieve, a group can.

Live in harmony, peace and love, live in democracy.

Teamwork is what brings success. The creativity and ideas written down on paper and the initiative to take action are the concepts that make a group win.

"Multi-Ethnic Youth"

Location:

Mitrovica

Purpose:

To create links across ethnic divides between the Albanian and Serbian communities who live separately in Mitrovica and advance young people's knowledge in peace and conflict transformation through trainings, courses, and activities.

Team Members:

Gëzim Shala, Ferdi Kadriu, Kastriot Leku, Visar Kasa

Target Audience:

Young people of Mitrovica and music lovers everywhere.

Description:

This project had several implementation phases. The first was a 4 day-long training on "Concepts of Peace, Prevention, and Negotiation of Conflicts" led by professional trainer Professor Fisnik Kumnova that included 15 young people of Albanian and Serbian heritage. The atmosphere at the training was friendly and cooperative. The second phase was a one day cultural tour around Kosovo to visit historic monuments, and the third involved recording a song named "Peace" in Serbian, Albanian, and English with youth from the



rock school in Mitrovica. This school lent a lot of support for these young people in order to produce the song, which was an excellent example of the work that these young people did - and the work of all youth in Mitrovica. "Peace" was played on local radio stations such as Radio Mitrovica and Radio KFOR and also published on the YouTube and Facebook websites.

Lyrics of the song "Peace":

We're stuck in a cloudy day;
We're looking for some freedom
To shine upon us like the sun.
We're going to find a way,
Left or right,
We're searching for that day.
Kemi ngecur në një kohë pa diell,
po kërkujmë liri.
Por ne do të gjejmë rrugën tonë,
në paqe dhe lumturi.
Заглављени смо у облачан дан;
и тражимо слободу
да сија над нама као сунце.
Ми ћемо да нађемо начин,
лево или десно,
у потрази смо за тај дан.

**We created social relations through
cooperation and respect from both sides.
We achieved our goal.**

**We advanced the knowledge of the
youth on negotiation and peace.**

**The song we composed reflects our wish
for a peacefull future.**

"Together it's Possible"

Location:

Mitrovica

Purpose:

To sensitize youth about the multicultural values and traditions of Kosovo by creating an opportunity for youth from various background to understand, learn and experience the cultural heritage and beauty of their country together.

Target audience:

Youth from different background from Mitrovica

Team Members:

Agron Ademi, Edona Selmani, Arbër Kyqyku

Description:

A group of 40 young people of different backgrounds (Albanian, Serbian, Bosnian, and Turkish) from Mitrovica visited various cities in Kosovo. In the company of one another, they saw the cultural monuments and natural beauty of Mitrovica, Vushtrri, Pristina, Gjilan, Ferizaj, Peja, Decan, Gjakova, Prizren, and Brezovica. Kosovo's vast diversity of ethnic heritage sites was represented among the many places visited by the group. As a result, these youth were able to see different cultures and break the boundaries that previously seemed unbreakable for some of them. Participants established strong social contacts, continuing to stay in touch through the social network "Facebook". The photos that group members took during the 4 day excursion are now displayed on the walls of schools in Mitrovica as an example of social cooperation. Through these activities, the quote "Together It's Possible" was brought to life.





The project achieved wonderful social and multi-ethnic relations that continued even after the project finished. We have also come to the conclusion that we can live and cooperate together in a multi-ethnic Kosovo.

The main challenge was to convince the minorities to join this multi-ethnic project but now we are all happy with the relationships created between each other, no matter one's nationality or religion.

"See the World through My Eyes"

Location:

Prizren

Purpose:

To promote culture and raise consciousness on the cultural values and beauties of Prizren and to contribute to the development of tourism in the city.

Team Members:

Fatlum Kryeziu, Lavdim Morina, Donika Spahiu, Rrona Simitçiu.

Target Audience:

All citizens of Kosovo.

Description:

To achieve the goals of promoting Prizren's culture and tourist industry, the "See the World through my Eyes" team was trained in photography by professional painter and photographer Hasan Thaçi. The 10 young people who participated represented Prizren's cultural diversity, as they came from Roma, Turkish, Albanian, and other backgrounds. The team, together with their trainer, traveled for 3 weeks through the region of Prizren to take more than 150 photos, 80 of which were then developed and shown at an exhibit organized by the team members. The photo exhibition, held in the city's Hamam-Turkish baths dating to Ottoman times-attracted a crowd of supporters. This initiative was supported by the Ministry of Culture, Youth, and Sports and art critics. Photographs depicted Prizren's cultural heritage and diverse architecture and landscape.



"See the World Through My Eyes"

Finalizing the day
(collecting the photos)

Choosing the participants
(from the community
and outside of it)

Choosing the places
where the photos
will be taken

One day training
on professional
photography

Choosing the topics
of the photos

Practicing for one day
how to take professional
photos



We built tolerance through art

Tolerance makes life more beautiful.

"Educating and Raising the Awareness of Consumers in Kosovo"

Location:

Gjakova/Mitrovica/Peja/Pristina/Prizren

Purpose:

Using the occasion of the World Consumer Rights Day (March 15th) to raise awareness and to inform Kosovo citizens about their rights and duties as consumers

Team members:

Shkumbin Asllani, Agnesa Fejzullahu, Lum Hoxha.

Target Audience:

All citizens of Kosovo.

Description:

Members of this team from Pristina promoted the Law defending consumers' rights and informed people of the importance of this field as a step towards Kosovo's integration into Europe. The project educated consumers on:

- 1) the law on consumers' rights in Kosovo;
- 2) European Union guidelines; and
- 3) where customers should go to have their problems addressed.

Youth team members worked with many high school students, as they believe that they can spread the information to others in order to improve the knowledge people have about the products they buy. In each of the 5 cities where the team implemented the project, the group visited at least one school (visiting 3 in Mitrovica) to inform students and teachers directly about the problems, challenges, and rights of each of us as



costumers. Advancing this knowledge was achieved by distributing 7,500 flyers about the relevant Kosovo laws and the EU Directive on Consumer Rights. The team also interviewed 500 people on the street about their experience with faulty or expired products, knowledge of laws to protect consumers, and the processes available to them to notify authorities of potentially hazardous products. Team members then presented the statistical findings of the surveys to their peers. In each city, team members were assisted by 15 volunteers to conduct interviews and hand out flyers.



We celebrated an important day with information, education, and raising the awareness of Kosovo's consumers with the goal of raising an issue that has been left aside lately and which is actually of great interest to consumers.

We identified the problems that consumers have and their worries about the present condition, including not having proper defense from the institutions for their rights. It is necessary to strengthen this defense, meaning to raise the oversight on the producers, both on the prices and the quality.

"Youth for a Clean Environment"

Location:

Rahovec

Purpose:

To raise awareness among young people, as well as citizens in general, on how important it is to care about the environment.

Target Audience:

Students in the Rahovec area, as well as the wider community in Rahovec

Team Members:

Irvin Jaha, Birken Kadriu, Djellza Thaçi, Ramadan Sokoli

Description:

The "Youth for a Clean Environment" team worked towards the goal that in the future there will be no degradation of nature, something people in Kosovo currently witness on a daily basis. Throughout the municipality of Rahovec, this diverse group of young people chose locations for planting tree, flower, and plant seedlings based on where young people hang out and relax, such as the town's central park. The official opening of the activity was celebrated during the International Earth Day (April 22nd) and advertised over the radio. The students that participated in the project learned how to improve their habits and develop awareness about saving the environment. Activities took place in the villages of Krusha e Madhe , Hoqa e Madhe , Ratkoc and Xerxe, at the schools " Isa Boletini", "Mihail Grameno", "7 Shtatori", "Ardhmeria", "Xhelal Hajde- Toni", and "Xhelal Hajda- Toni". Thus, all the school of the municipality profited from the project.





We raised awareness of young people about their responsibility to contribute to a clean environment in their cities and villages.

We helped, supported and cooperated with the youth of Rahovec.

"Through Sports We Build Peace and Tolerance"

Location:

Shtërpce

Purpose:

To contribute to building the peace and tolerance by involving young people from both communities that live together in Shtërpce: Serbians and Albanians.

Team Members:

Besart Bajrami, Bektesh Bajrami, Bojan Stefanović

Target Audience:

Athletic youth from all communities in Shtërpce.

Description:

The project "Through Sports We Build Peace and Tolerance" sought to bring together young people from different ethnic backgrounds to demonstrate that the residents of Shtërpce can do

anything together- live, work, play, and live in peace. This was realized by organizing a football tournament, a sporting event that brought together youth from the Albanian and Serbian communities. To announce the team application and registration processes, "Through Sports We Build Peace and Tolerance" group members created posters and radio advertisements in Serbian and Albanian, thus ensuring that all youth knew about the tournament and could participate. Young people formed 8 football teams to compete in the contest. Games were played 3 weekends in a row, drawing an estimated audience of more than



150 people over the course of the tournament. Each week, the result of the match narrowed down the participating teams until the final match, at which the winning team was determined.



Discipline is a value of the group.

**Cooperation is the connecting bridge
between the two communities.**

"Basketball Peace Tournament"

Location:

Bardhosh and the municipality of Pristina

Purpose:

To use sports as a tool of bringing together young people from different ethnic backgrounds.

Target Audience:

Youth interested in sports from diverse backgrounds in Bardhosh, Pristina, and nearby towns.

Team Members:

Blendrit Elezaj, Rinor Musliu, Liridona Elezi, Albert Ramadani, Sabri Dragusha.

Description:

This project was organized by a group of young people from Pristina who thought of doing something in the village of Bardhosh because of the importance of this village as a multi-cultural zone.

They organized a basketball tournament with multi-ethnic teams from Bardhosh, Pristina and the surrounding villages. To attract a wide range of youth, team members created and pasted posters around Bardhosh, Pristina, and other villages. Sixteen teams, comprised of youth of Roma, Serbian, Albanian, and Turkish heritage, participated. In breaks between games, the audience watched a karate demonstration by Roma youth, a documentary film on HIV/AIDS, and listened to music. More than 200 people attended the event.





Cooperation is one of the virtues that have brought wonders to mankind. Cooperation between the organizers and the participants was successful.

With good communication between the participants, the mission was completed.

We were able to experience peace among the participants of this event, including us. For the first time we experienced young people from different ethnicities brought together to play and “live”, cheering for their favorite teams and having fun all together.

"Green School"

Location:

Gračanica

Purpose:

To raise awareness about the environment and promote living in an environmentally friendly manner.

Team Members:

Marina Jovanović, Milan M. Jovanović, Danijela Ničić

Target Audience:

Citizens of Gracanica, students in particular.

Description:

"Green School" sought to create an "eco-culture" by educating young people in Gracanica about the environment. The goal was that through education, these messages can be passed by youth to the children, and through them, to their families and the community. The project was implemented in two phases: first, group members, along with 6 other volunteers, gave a training session for youth aged 16-23 on saving the local environment by using education, led by a qualified

trainer Jugoslav Mitić, a professional biologist. The second phase included fieldwork- working with students from local schools and other citizens and distributing 700 flyers that promoted saving the environment as well as 700 eco-bags (reusable bags) to anyone present during the activity.





Although it was hard to gather a lot of people because of the short time, the pleasure was indeed really deep seeing groups of people and friends enjoying this.

We are an example of how with a good motivation and a lot of energy, we can achieve big results with modest equipment and money.

The curiosity and the interest we provoked in these children is immeasurable.

I think I found myself through this project. Working with children just fulfills me and I want to become a teacher when I finish my university.

"The Earth Revolves around Youth"

Location:

Mitrovica

Purpose:

To help young people express their talents and creativity through painting and to use art to raise funds for community members in need.

Target Audience:

students in Mitrovica North area

Team Members:

Gordana Jeličić, Predrag Petković, Irena Otasević, Slobodan Otasević, Vesna Tanić

Description:

The winning team from the northern part of Mitrovica organized workshops and provided art supplies in order to increase interest in the arts among youth in their community. Every weekend for a month, they held gatherings at the French Cultural Center where students of primary and secondary school age came to paint works of art. Young musicians provided guitar music at these sessions.

The artists produced 28 paintings, 21 of which were presented in a formal exhibition of the work attended by local municipality representatives as well as the participating young art enthusiasts. The artwork was auctioned off, and proceeds were designated for charitable purposes- to help community members in need by providing them with needed supplies that they could not afford. Team members established a website: "Slikarskaradionica.t15.org", where you can find all the 21 paintings and other information about the workshops.





We gave an opportunity to the young people to express their talent with the slogan:
"Let's make the youth see the beauties of life and the opportunities we have for a better one."

We achieved socializing in a big group no matter one's age and competing in a positive way with one another, bringing their creativity to the front.



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