

**USING INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION
TECHNOLOGY TO BUILD WOMEN'S CIVIL SOCIETY IN
THE AFTERMATH OF WAR –
THE KOSOVO EXAMPLE**

**Final Report on the IT and Information Capacity Building Project
Undertaken by The Advocacy Project with
the Kosova Women's Network**

September 2001 – May 2002



PART ONE: FROM REPRESSION TO INDEPENDENCE – THE EMERGENCE OF A NETWORK

- 1. General Politics.**
- 2. Women Under Serbian Repression During the 1990s**
- 3. The 1999 War**
- 4. Post-War Development**
- 5. The KWN Network Forms**
- 6. Antagonism With the UN**

PART 2: USING INFORMATION TO BUILD THE NETWORK

- 1. AP and the KWN Partner**
- 2. Developing the Plan**
- 3. The First Phase the Project (March 2001 – March 2002)**
 - **Preparation**
 - **Identification of and Discussions with Partners**
 - **Assessments and Prioritization**
 - **Information Officer**
 - **Website**
 - **Newsletter**
 - **Training**
- 4. The second phase (March 2002 to May 31 2002)**
 - **ICT training**
 - **KWN Capacity as a Network**
 - **Website**
 - **Campaigns**
 - **Conclusion**

PART THREE: ISSUES, CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

- 1. The eRider**
- 2. eRiders and Networks**
- 3. Gender its Impact on ICT learning**
- 4. Coordinator and Coordinating NGO**
- 5. IT Friendly Environment and IPKO**
- 6. Sustainability and Duration**
- 7. Benchmarks**
- 8. Strategic use ICTs and Information**
- 9. Timing of outside support – best time to intervene**
- 10. Infrastructure**

Annex 1: Group Descriptions

Annex 2: ICT Benchmarks

Annex 3: KWN Newsletter

INTRODUCTION

Over the last nine months, the Advocacy Project (AP) has worked with the Kosova Women's Network (KWN), a group of thirty-two community-based organizations, to provide an integrated package of information support. AP's goals were to help the network members work together, grow as an institution, and lobby more effectively for women's rights in Kosovo. This work has been supported by the ICTs for Civil Society program at the Open Society Institute-Budapest.

This report, by AP Technical Director Teresa Crawford, explains the background to the project and describes the results.

It explains how women's civil society was forged by opposition to the Serbian regime in Kosovo, which systematically denied Albanians their rights beginning in the early 1990's. In 2000, the KWN emerged from a grouping of four small women's organizations, which came together to form the Rural Women's Network in 1998. By 2001 it had grown to thirty-two different organizations that represented over 90% of women's civil society.

This network had the potential to impact the reconstruction of post-war Kosovo. These women had a long tradition of engagement in Kosovo's affairs, and the KWN was a powerful voice. The transitional government was weak and disorganized – there was a clear role for women to advocate for rights and monitor the rebuilding. After years of repression women's voices needed to be heard. This report explains how the KWN emerged from Kosovo's storm and began to make use of information technology in their lobbying and collaborative campaigning efforts.

This report will focus on the system AP put in place to train and support the KWN. It also elaborates the factors that affected the success of the project and explains the difficulties staff faced in getting KWN members to use technology effectively.

Also contained in the report are also three profiles of KWN members who received training and support as part of this project. The profiles describe their work and the innovative ways they are making use of technology.

Annex 1: contains short descriptions of the work done with each KWN member. **Annex 2:** contains the draft version of benchmarks for IT use by non profits. **Annex 3:** contains the first issue of the KWN newsletter.

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

The following are general lessons learned from this project developed to support a network of organizations make better use of information and information technology. These lessons learned are elaborated on in the body of the report. Section three contains a more thorough explanation of these general lessons and lessons learned specific to the groups worked with during this project.

- A relatively small investment of equipment, software, and training can make an enormous impact on the daily operations of organizations.
- A committed and engaged local coordinator is necessary for the success of the project
- Participants require much more on-site training.
- eRiders alone are not enough. Local training and support resources are required to complement the work of eRiders.
- A dedicated and well trained network staff member is essential to produce information products
- Goal setting with eRiders and network coordinators is essential to establish the 'successes' of the project and clearly spell out the expectations of the participants.
- More work building the capacity of the coordinating partner is important so that their own technical needs are addressed along with the needs of network members.
- When working with large numbers of groups either have a project of a longer duration or focus on a smaller sub set of groups (i.e. board member's organizations, only groups outside the main cities, new members, a working group collaborating on a campaign).
- eRiders provide more than just technical advice. They often suggest materials, websites or techniques for management, accounting, fundraising and project development.

PART ONE: FROM REPRESSION TO INDEPENDENCE – THE EMERGENCE OF A NETWORK

Women have played an active role in Kosovo's controversial history most recently during the period of repression by the Serbian regime – the 1990s and the 1999 war. Women organized and assumed many of the social roles normally assumed by government. This work left them well placed to play a significant role in post-war Kosovo. But the aftermath of the war presented them with new challenges, which required them to work together like never before. This need for cooperation led to the creation of the Kosova Women's Network. The KWN is a dramatic example of how women's civil society forms in response to challenge and pressure.

1. General politics.

The story of modern Kosovo began in 1389, when the kingdom of Serbia was defeated at Kosovo Polje by the Ottoman Turks. That defeat gave Kosovo a mythical place in Serbia's history. By the 1970s, most of Kosovo's inhabitants were ethnic Albanian, and Kosovo was given the status of an autonomous province under the 1974 constitution of Yugoslavia. This made Kosovo a tempting target for Serbia's manipulative President Slobodan Milosevic in the late 1980s, as he was seeking to enflame Serbian nationalism. In 1989, Milosevic revoked Kosovo's autonomy and dissolved the constitution.

The Albanians responded with non-violent resistance. In a valiant reassertion of their autonomy, they set up their own form of government, which operated as a shadow health, education and political system.

By 1997 young Kosovars were tiring of this form of passive, non-violent opposition to Serbia. Students took to the streets to demand a restoration of their education rights. A shadowy new guerrilla organization, the Kosova Liberation Army (KLA), emerged.

Serbia attempted to suppress the KLA with violent attacks on the civilian population. The international community tried to stop the bloodshed at the Rambouillet (Paris) conference but failed to resolve the crisis. Serbian forces then stepped up their campaign in Kosovo, finally triggering a massive aerial campaign by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) on March 24, 1999.

After weeks of bombardment, Serbian forces finally withdrew from Kosovo on June 10, 1999, making way for an international peace mission. This mission comprised a NATO force (KFOR) and a large U.N. civilian mission (UNMIK) that was to administer Kosovo until a long-term solution could be found for the province. In November 2000, after eighteen months of international administration local elections were held and in 2001 parliamentary elections. After months of wrangling, in February 2002, Bajram Rexhepi was sworn in as the first post war Prime Minister and Ibrahim Rugova their first post war president.

2. Women Under Serbian Repression During the 1990s

Women's civil society emerged in 1999 strengthened by each stage of this violent sequence of events. Their experiences are crucial to understanding how the KWN emerged as a network, its strengths and weaknesses, and the essential role played by information in building the networks' capacity.

Women's civil society was forged by the Serb repression, which created enormous social and humanitarian needs for the Albanians of Kosovo. Women's organizations helped to fill the gap. As a result, many of the KWN's member organizations formed during the 1990s, when Serb repression was at its height.

The Center for the Protection of Women and Children (CPWC) formed in 1997 to work with the internally displaced who had difficult receiving medical care from the majority run medical system. **Motrat Qiriazhi** formed in 1992 to work in the education sector making education more accessible to women and girls in the rural areas. Aferdita Kelmendi and Geraldina Vula formed the **Media Project** and began working with young women training them as journalists and teaching them conflict resolution skills.

Much of the work they did was humanitarian but it also had a strong advocacy component. Some, like the **CPWC**, provided medical check ups, pre and post natal care, which was badly needed but also provided family planning services and helped organize demonstrations of medical workers and women.

Motrat Qiriazhi worked in the isolated Has region providing emergency food assistance. They also educated women and taught them their rights. They were advocates, even though their possibilities for expression were limited.

It was dangerous to be seen opposing the Serb administration openly, so women's groups met in secret and provided moral and financial support to each other. In 1998 five rural women's organizations - **Aureola, Elena, Legjenda, Liria** and **Motrat Qiriazhi** held their first meeting in Ohrid, Macedonia. As their caravan of cars passed through the border into Macedonia they told the border guards they were on their way to a wedding. What could be less threatening than a group of women on their way to celebrate a marriage?

The newly formed **Rural Women's Network** was supported by the Swedish NGO, Kvinna til Kvinna. As the Rural Women's Network, they developed a common program to provide more support to women and girls in the conflict areas of Kosovo, and to increase networking with feminist women's groups outside of Kosovo. International solidarity was essential as they became increasingly isolated within Kosovo.

Opposition to the Serbian regime and providing support for Albanians motivated these women tremendously and honed their organizing skills. This experience is crucial in understanding the origins of the Kosova Women's Network.

3. The 1999 War

The consolidation of women's civil society continued during the 1999 war between Serbia and NATO even as - ironically - it battered their organizations, created a flood of new responsibilities and a growing caseload of refugees.

An estimated 40% of Kosovo's 2.2 million people were expelled or fled during the war between NATO and Serbian armed forces. They were driven out of their homes by the thousands at very short notice.

Several of the women leaders remained in Kosovo and continued to provide essential humanitarian support for IDPs and refugees. Flora Brovina, founder of the **Center for the Rehabilitation of Mothers and Children** and a famous poet and doctor, was imprisoned in Serbia because of her work.

Sevdie Ahmeti, one of the founders of the **Center for Protection of Women and Children** stayed in Prishtina throughout the NATO intervention. She and her family were targeted for harassment by paramilitaries. In her own words she describes the experience:

"It would have been incorrect for me, as a human rights worker, to leave Kosovo. But what we experienced can't be described. I've seen things like that in the movies. It was hell."

"We would watch from behind our curtain to see what was going on in the streets. Only old people and women went out. After noon, there was no one in the streets, no one to be seen. Cars without license plates drove around. No one spoke loudly. The dogs barked all day. They were like our radar, a sign that the NATO planes were coming."

"Early one morning masked people broke in our door. Because of the noise, we thought it was a NATO bomb. They shouted, 'Police!' There were three men. One stayed at the door. They had machine guns and knives. The police hit me on the back. It was painful. They were hitting us and demanding hard currency. They broke my brother-in-law's ribs. They tortured him, then my husband, and then me. It was two hours of torture-you can imagine what they did."

"They then ordered us to leave the country. We sent our children to another place, and I separated from my husband. I dyed my hair and covered my head like a villager. After 10 days of fear, some friends came to help me. They fed me and reunited me with my husband."

"My house was broken into nine times. They took our computer, our VCR, camera, and many valuable things. They also came to the office. They didn't steal equipment, but they took my papers, notebooks, and very valuable material."

"You'll see a difference between the people who left and those who stayed. I'm very happy to see that people are coming back. But even a small noise makes me tremble. Everyone"

writes about the refugees who left the country, but what about the 700,000 who remained inside? They are forgotten."

Another of the activists who remained was Marta Palokaj. Marta worked with **Motrat Qiriazi** in the Has region of Kosovo, which was one of the first to be cleared by Serbian forces. Marta and others watched from a hill opposite while the attackers arrived at the village of Krusha e Vogel. They saw men being rounded up and killed. The women and children were driven down to the river.



Marta (left) took a tractor, drove it across the river, and started to pick up the panic-stricken women. When they saw this, others from her village rushed down to join her. They managed to rescue scores of villagers and took them along when they too abandoned their own village. Of the 940 inhabitants of Krusha e Vogel approximately 114 men were killed.

While some stayed other activists were forced to leave Kosovo during the fighting. They regrouped on the other side of the border in the camps and continued to provide aid for the refugees.

In June 2002 one of the founders of the KWN took the time to write down her story of fleeing Kosovo during the war. It took her three years to be able to write down what happened to her. Her story shows how even under the extreme circumstances in the camps women were able to organize, provide support and communicate with each other. They worked together to survive the no man's land of the Blace border camps and took the initiative that eventually led to their release into Macedonia.

A week into the bombing she and thirty-seven members of her family were forced by Serbian police to flee Prishtina to Macedonia. The mobile phone network had been cut so she was unable to call her friends in Macedonia to let them know they were coming. She took her phone with her anyway – just in case.

By the time they reached Blace after hours crammed into airless, windowless trains she knew getting her entire family into Macedonia was going to be nearly impossible. But by chance once they entered the camp there was mobile phone network coverage. She used her phone to call friends and humanitarian organizations in Macedonia. She asked what progress was being made to get them all out of the camps. All said the same thing – We cannot help. We are not allowed into the camps.

In her own words:

The word spread out that my phone is working so friends were calling me constantly. Outside no mans zone, on the Kosova side, was an empty house, where electricity still worked so I was able to charge my mobile batteries.

The next day I gathered the children to do gymnastics. I wish we had a ball to play but since we had nothing gymnastics were good. This made the children happy and their

parents had smiles on their faces. Then the sad news. Two newborn babies died during the night. Also an old man who was ill and he had no medical care. I thought how each morning I would hear news like this if something didn't change fast.

Late the next day I had an opportunity to leave the camps with some friends who had been allowed in. "We have to do something here" I told them "Some kind of protest. You can inform all the media present in Macedonia. All political leaders."

They stayed four hours. While watching them leave, I felt for the first time, I want to leave with them. My heart broke. But I had to stay and organize the protest.

We made an organizing committee planning how the protest would be. We agreed that the next day, at 11am we would start packing our bags, making a line facing Macedonia border and exactly at noon, start walking toward the border slowly, but loudly shouting: HELP!

That evening we had to inform all the people so they can be prepared next day. Everyone had a smile because they felt good they would do something.

Around 10am, I received a phone call from an American friend, who was living in Macedonia: "You have to stop this protest. This will lead to a bigger war. The police might even shoot the people!"

He was right. We had to change the plan fast. Instead of walking toward the border, we would just stand in the line and shout: Help!

We had a hard time convincing people to change the plan. At 11am they stood up, prepared bags, me shaking, afraid they would start walking. But at 12, everyone in the line, while standing in one place, for half an hour we all shouted: HELP!

The police were angry but didn't intervene because we didn't walk toward the border. After shouting people slowly unpacked their things and continued talking with each other.

After this another phone call. "You did it! It worked! Tonight they are going to let people in!" I started sharing the information to the people and asked them to spread the news.

Faced with a new set of challenges in the camps, the women were able to work together, even in exile. Communication amongst the groups proved crucial as they struggled to force the Macedonian government to open the camps and allow refugees into host families. Without the network of both Kosovar, Macedonian and international supporters there would not have been the critical mass of protest needed to force the opening of the camps.

4. Post-War Development

In June 1999 the refugees flooded back into Kosovo way ahead of the timeline set by UNHCR and the international humanitarian community. Following the end of the war and the rush back to Kosovo the challenge facing women's groups changed again. They responded vigorously, and with growing confidence. The pace of networking and organizing accelerated, as the UN created more space for civil society, but at the same time the newly formed United Nations Interim Administration (UNMIK) created great problems for women.

When the Serbs withdrew in June 1999, the refugees returned to devastation, death, and despair. Thousands were missing or dead. Graves littered the province. Landmines and unexploded NATO cluster bombs continued to take lives. Adding to the anguish, hundreds of Kosovars had been snatched by the retreating Serbian forces and now languished in Serbia jails. Already poorly maintained infrastructure was destroyed. Telephones and communications were particularly badly hit, because they had been the targeted by the NATO bombing campaign.

When the refugees returned to their homes many were traumatized and exhausted by their months in exile. Women's groups in particular faced a whole new set of challenges: many men had been killed, leaving widows and orphans; some of their own colleagues such as Flora Brovina - had been snatched and were being held in Serbian prisons; young women who had been raped during the war were exiled from their families.

There were also new protection issues. Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians were being killed, run out and their houses burned for collaborating with the Serbs. The Serbs who remained, mainly old people, were now isolated and surrounded. The regime in Serbia had no inclination to support them but used them as an example of how ineffective the NATO intervention was at protecting their rights.

Many of the Albanian women had good reason to hate the Serbs, but at the same time they saw that the roles had been reversed. Those Serbs who remained were beleaguered and threatened, as they had been before. This created much anguish, but some of the women tried to reconcile their feelings. Igballe Rogova, head of the women's organization **Motrat Qiriazi**, recalled the Serb woman in the Kosovo Polje shelter for displaced Serbian women. After her experience as a refugee she identified with her.

There were other challenges that reflected the new environment in Kosovo. The refugees and internally displaced whose homes were destroyed would have long waits until their homes were repaired. Many in the rural areas moved to the capital swelling the population to 500,000 almost twice its post war size. All the factories and industry including the mines and textile plants were closed and remain closed to this day. Three years on the overall unemployment hovers at over 70%. According to a report commissioned by UNIFEM only 26.7% of women are now engaged in paid employment outside the home.

Another problem was violence against women. This was a new and frightening issue. Part of it was a hold-over from the war. Kosovo like many countries to emerge from war found that the legacy of violence spills over into the family. But there was also violence from organised crime

against women, which took advantage of the vacuum in security and the length of time it took the UN to create a system of justice. Cases of trafficking soared. It was a new and frightening challenge.

The post war environment created a vast challenge for which Kosovar women's groups were well suited. They were organised, motivated and had assumed great challenges during the previous ten years.

5. The KWN Network Forms

It was out of these circumstances that the Kosova Women's Network emerged. In January 2000 with support from a few individuals within international institutions the Kosova Women's Network (KWN) was formed. It built on the foundation established by the groups in the Rural Women's Network. The new KWN would serve as an umbrella organization, representing over thirty-two women's groups, most of them founded in 1999. Its regular monthly meetings included women from these groups and from international organizations.

The new members included groups such as **Zgjimi** or **Awakening**, a group of women with disabilities and **Femrat ne Veprim** from Podujevo, a town that before the war had not had a women's organization. Some of the new groups were novices at NGO work and needed the mentoring that other more experienced network members provided. More experienced KWN members such as the **Center for the Protection of**



Women at KWN member Open Door's computer lab
learn vital new job skills

Women and Children, Norma and **Motrat Qiriazi** took the lead in organizing trainings for these new groups. Some of the trainings were in partnership with international organizations such as OXFAM and Kvinna til Kvinna who had supported the network from the beginning. Several members such as **Open Door** received grants to purchase computers and set up training centers for women.

During their monthly meetings members began to define their campaigning issues and lobbying goals. Members such as the organization of **Women Veterans of Education** with experience in teaching took the lead organizing a working group to develop an education awareness campaign. Other working groups were formed to address other issues such as supporting women politicians and educating men politicians about issues affecting women. The leaders of these working groups took the initiative to approach donors, international supporters such as UNICEF and bring

in other local civil society organizations such as the **Mother Teresa Society** or the **Kosova Civil Society Foundation**.

As campaigns took shape the KWN began to come together as an organization. They decided early on not to seek NGO status or rent an office. They had all seen too many organizations spend exorbitant amounts on rent and salaries without clearly articulating their mission and work plan.

From the beginning the network was self-sustaining through their own contributions. During their monthly meetings an envelope circulated and each woman contributed 5 DM. This money went to the translator, meetings space and soda. Any money that remained was saved and when they had collected enough it was donated to the newest member of the network. It was like a revolving credit scheme designed to encourage the development of new organizations – after – they had been established to meet a need in their community.



Members of the Roma, Ashkaeli and Egyptian Women's Network learn from KWN members and each other

The RWN changed their name to the Kosova Women's Network (KWN) to reflect their changing membership. They encouraged and supported new groups that were forming outside the main cities. They welcomed women from other ethnicities and provided support to **RAE**, a network of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian women's groups and **Komitet za Zenska Ljudska Prava** a newly formed Serbian women's group in Kosovo Polje. It proved difficult

for some of these women to attend monthly meetings as travel was still dangerous. The international bodies could not be counted on to provide security on a regular basis. When it was impossible for the minority groups to attend KWN members made visits to the Serbian enclaves.

As infrastructure began to come back on line it was easier for the women to communicate and reach out to rural and minority women. But many of these women had missed the technological revolution. Before the war there were few chances to use computers – either there were no computers, a shortage of trained teachers or they were used by men. While they made good use of their informal communications networks and the telephone few had been trained to use computers and even fewer knew how to use e-mail. In the future this weakness in their communications would make it difficult for them to develop large scale campaigns.

In June 2001 the KWN took on their largest campaign to date – Campaign Against Violence Against Women and Girls. This campaign would address both domestic violence and violence against women in society in general. The campaign utilized culture and arts to influence peoples' attitudes and emotions. The campaign included a radio drama, a theater drama, two popular songs, two television spots, posters and press/information packs.

Beginning in November 2001 on the International Day Against Violence Against Women, the team of organizers together with the singers and actresses, traveled in bad snow conditions to several cities to perform the play. In each town the municipality made it possible to use the hall for free, in this way they showed they supported the campaign. In each town the KWN member that represented that region was responsible for arranging for the advertising and promotion of the campaign.

During the performance some men would go out in the lobby to have a cigarette but in fact they were crying because they were touched by the stories. When talking to them, they would say, 'I never thought how much women suffer under different violence and despite all the difficulties they have the strength to survive.'

The strongest reactions came after the story of a woman being raped during the war. Many people said, 'Instead of supporting the women raped during the war, we condemned them. Big mistake! Big mistake!'

This campaign was sponsored by USAID-Kosovo Transition Initiative and the Kvinna til Kvinna. Initially CARE, an international NGO working in Kosovo, committed to produce the posters for the campaign. At the first campaign working group meeting they agreed to come to the next meeting with a sample of the posters they would produce. At this next meeting it was clear that they had a different image from KWN members of the image they wanted to project with the campaign. Their posters had graphic images of abused women and shackled men convicted of abusing them. The KWN had decided early on that the campaign was about a culture change not about a punitive shame based campaign. Kosovar women had little faith that the justice system would protect them from violence but did believe they could change the level of acceptance of violence in their society. They voiced their opinions to the CARE representatives but were told it was either their way or there would be no support for the posters. The KWN decided to stay true to the spirit of the campaign they developed. They sent an e-mail to Kvinna til Kvinna describing the situation and they received funding for their posters.

After several months of campaigning they had a dramatic response to their work. The coordinating organizations receive regular calls from women seeking to escape a violent situation. But the government's social service system is weak and they have to rely on other KWN members to provide support. But regular communications amongst the groups was poor. To provide support for these women it was crucial that these groups communicate and coordinate their work.

It was clear if the KWN was to continue taking on campaigns of this magnitude they needed a way to communicate more effectively with each other and the world. They decided they needed to make more of an impact with their campaigns. They needed to improve their lobbying of the international agencies, as well as their own government. Without communications it would be difficult for them to work together as a network and lobby with one voice.

6. Antagonism With the UN

Ironically, besides the challenges of reconstruction the women faced another challenge in the form of the international agencies. Instead of drawing from women and providing them with independence, they tried to impose their views. This created resentment and further cohesion among women's civil society.

As they confronted the post war challenge women's organizations should have had a natural ally in the presence of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). Instead, at this critical moment, when they should have been forging a partnership in Kosovo, the international community and civil society began to draw apart.

This drawing apart was described on the KWN website:

In 1999 women's groups become increasingly disaffected at the way the international community is failing to include them as equal partners, and instead is marginalizing them. The groups struggle against the neo-colonialism functioning under the auspices of the UNMIK and the OSCE, which gives little respect for the years of self organizing by the Albanian community.

For the United Nations and NATO, the immediate priorities were to provide emergency assistance and protect Kosovo's minorities, particularly Serbs and Roma. But this caused them to ignore Kosovo's experienced civil society. Instead of drawing on the veterans of the parallel society, Western governments turned to their own nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Foreign relief workers poured into Kosovo. To the extent that educated Kosovars were used in the relief operation, it was as drivers, guards, and interpreters. Several experienced activists took low level jobs in international organizations. The unique role of civil society was being overlooked and in some cases deliberately squashed.

Once again, this was illustrated dramatically by women. Instead of turning to women's groups and learning from them and drawing from their experience, the aid agencies imposed their vision on women's groups.

In one misguided example, the United States through UNHCR tried to force large amounts of money on women's groups, in the form of the \$10 million Kosovo Women's Initiative (KWI). This was far more money than could be properly spent – these organizations were small and had a small administrative capacity – it also created jealousy and competition.

During one visit to Kosovo the Advocacy Project found three women's centers on the same block in the city of Mitrovica. All had been funded by KWI and were competing for clients. To make things worse, the money for projects had to go through three different levels of bureaucracy and was handed out to the Kosovar women like classic aid.

KWN members threatened to boycott the KWI if at least two of their strongest and most well established members were not made implementing partners. UNHCR agreed. Three years on there are some good examples of successful initiatives funded by KWI and run by KWN

members but there is no local accountability or buy in to support the initiatives now that the money is gone. Examples of misguided international initiatives such as this continue to plague civil society.

The tense relationship with the UN further deteriorated when UNMIK established the Office of Gender Affairs a move that was harshly criticized by women's activists as making women's issues separate and removed from the responsibilities of all the ministries. The unit regularly acted in a high handed manner and bypassed the women's groups. The OGA set up parallel women's meetings along with meetings already in place at both OSCE and UNHCR and the monthly KWN meetings.

Lesley Abdela a senior official in OSCE, was sacked from her job for championing the cause of local women's groups. In late 1999 a meeting was arranged between civil society representatives and United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan during his first visit to Kosovo. Lesley saw the list of invitees and felt that women were seriously underrepresented. When she brought this up her comments were dismissed and she was told no additional people would be invited. She went around her bosses and invited several local women leaders including Igballe Rogova from the KWN. For siding with local civil society she was fired from her job.

The attitude and actions of many in the international community created a major sense of irritation but it also gave the women a focus. It furthered their sense of independence and forced them to look inwards for more support. In June 2000 the KWN organized the first regional women's conference. Women from throughout the former Yugoslavia attended. This meeting served as the launch pad for a report on gender and the peace processes in the Balkans over the last ten years.

They took great satisfaction from this meeting as it showed other Kosovars that they shared a lot with women's experiences in other countries, even their friends in Serbia were able to attend. A group of Bosnian women began a symbolic march to Prishtina in solidarity.

The post war challenge of dealing not just with problems like violence, but with the stubborn UN and OSCE was the final factor in forcing women to come together as a network. These issues required a united front and a single voice if the KWN were to effect any change. They needed to maintain a solid front vis a vis the UN and government. There were a growing number of opportunities for advocacy. These experiences led them to form a closer organization and begin to improve their ability to communicate.

PART 2. USING INFORMATION TO BUILD THE NETWORK

1. The Advocacy Project and the KWN Partner

Motrat Qiriaz and its coordinator Igballe Rogova took a lead role in organizing the KWN. There were several good reasons why she turned to the Advocacy Project (AP) to help them improve their information and communication capacity.

It was an obvious partnership for three reasons. First, AP's technical director's personal experience of Kosovo. In 1998 she worked with students at the University of Prishtina as they staged large scale protests against the war. In 1999 she helped to create the IPKO. IPKO was the first post war Internet Service Provider in Kosovo. It came online in September 1999. Several of the founding KWN members were the first NGO users of the connection.



Kosovo's first eRider

Second, AP had experience with the use of information technology for rebuilding social trust in Kosovo. In 2000 AP was hired by the United States Institute of Peace to support the communications of Serb and Albanian community and political leaders.

AP developed a project that connected to the Internet and trained forty Serbian and Albanian politicians in the use of e-mail. During the training phase of the project, AP began to work with a young Kosovar Albanian woman, Heroína Telaku, who was 17 years old and a junior at the technical high school in Prishtina.

Taking from innovative work being done in the United States, AP adapted the circuit rider or non profit technology assistance provider to the Kosovo setting. Heroína became Kosovo's and AP's first 'eRider'. She began a six month period of roving training and support for the politicians. Heroína needed little training in the use of e-mail and surfing the World Wide Web but AP trained her in techniques for training others. AP helped her to develop a plan for the training and manage her time over the six month project. AP staff visited each politician and became familiar with the technology issues they faced.

While the training and connectivity proved relatively easy to provide, encouraging them to communicate with each other on a regular basis through an e-mail discussion forum proved nearly impossible. They were wary of trusting each other and the coordinator of the project was over concerned with making things perfect. Discussions bogged down over including three translations of postings and filtering out anything deemed too political.

Third, AP also knew **Motrat Qiriazi** and Kosovo well. In two series of On the Record (OTR) AP profiled civil society after the war. This series included a campaigning issue on the problems women's organizations faced with international agencies. (These stories can be found on the AP website at www.advocacynet.org/campaigns)

2. Developing the Plan

In August 2001 Igballe told AP that its help with the development of the KWN would be welcome. AP then fashioned a package of support unlike anything done before. The basic idea was an integrated package of support that contained three main components:

- ICT support that would allow all thirty two groups to have computers, use them and connect to each other and the Internet.

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- A monthly newsletter that would allow them to present common issues, report to each other and inform their supporters.
 - A website that would contain basic information about the KWN – essential information for international supporters and donors.

Each of these elements was important and complementary. The KWN members would need e-mail to communicate and collaborate with each other between their monthly meetings. As has been shown above this was essential given the physical isolation of the groups and the magnitude of the campaigns they were engaging in. It was hoped that this support would also firm up the KWN as an organization and be particularly useful for their executive board. They would use the newsletter to lobby and would repurpose the articles in the newsletter for the website. The combined package would make the KWN a more formidable lobbyist in pursuing some of the campaigns referred to above (e.g. anti-violence, education).

This project, particularly the emphasis on ICT was ambitious but was helped by the improved climate for technology. The phone system was gradually being restored. Dial up access to the Internet came online in September 2001.

In addition, the IPKO was emerging as a powerhouse, serving the ICT needs of civil society and developing as a strong business. In March 2002 IPKO split into two organizations – IPKOnet a business venture providing Internet connectivity on the open market and IPKOorg a non profit providing training and advocacy on IT issues. They worked to serve NGOs like many of the women's groups who were KWN members. IPKO's support was essential to the success of the project and provided valuable support. Their expansion meant that web designers were available locally. The project was feasible because it could rely on local technical capacity.

The AP-KWN project was also innovative in that it provided for training of the groups in ICT by eRiders. The first small scale eRider project with Serbian and Albanian politicians had been a success the previous year. This would be the first time providing support to a network of organizations.

Though a relatively new approach outside the United States, the eRider has shown promise for catalyzing change in groups lagging behind in technology use. The eRider movement began in the United States over seven years ago and showed great success supporting environmental groups in the Pacific Northwest.

The formal role of the eRider is best defined, in the words of one leading advocate and practitioner, as "part trainer, part management consultant, part computer expert. They provide consulting and assistance with technology strategy development, make multiple visits to the organizations they serve, and provide advice and information by phone and e-mail. They can serve regional constituencies by travel from a central location." In the best circumstances, eRiders may even "cross-pollinate" the groups they service, transmitting insights, tools, and tips as they travel throughout the sector

This approach was ambitious but had high promise in Kosovo. Instead of sophisticated and expensive outside high tech solutions AP would develop a system of local training and technical assistance. eRiders would train KWN members and develop partnerships with others who would support the needs of the network. Several multi million dollar high tech solutions had been launched in Kosovo but had failed because not enough thought went into handing over to local management. They proved unsustainable. As the IPKO had shown, there was plenty of local technology talent available in Kosovo.

What's more, AP and the KWN had an eRider waiting and ready to support them. She was trained, had proven capable at time management, working with little supervision and interested in the issues the KWN were tackling. There was good reason to hope that this mechanism of local training and support would help the KWN unite and coalesce as a network.

3. The First Phase of the Project - March 2001 – February 2002

The first phase of the capacity building project lasted from March 2001 until February 2002. It evolved through several stages. Some of the stages proceeded better than others.

Preparation. Much of the end of 2000 and early 2001 was spent fundraising for the project. During this time the KWN network was expanding and meeting on a regular basis. They were beginning to develop their internal structure with working groups and new leadership. As described above they launched strong programs addressing women in the economy, literacy and probably most importantly a project to address violence against women in their society.

In September 2001 funding for the ICT capacity building project was secured from the ICTs for Civil Society Program at the Open Society Institute-Budapest. Originally AP budgeted for a computer for each member of the network. The OSI funding would not cover the purchase of new computers. After further investigation found that many of the members had already been granted computers from other donors. AP decided to move ahead without the additional funding.

Identification of and discussions with partners. There was no question of AP imposing a program of support for the KWN. From the outset the development of the project was collaborative. It proved difficult to consult the entire network and AP had to rely on an intermediary – **Motrat Qiriazi** and its director, Igballe Rogova who doubled as the coordinator of the KWN.



**Igballe Rogova –
KWN Coordinator**

In October of 2001 the AP Technical Director and KWN coordinator officially introduced the project at the monthly KWN meeting. This was not the first time the project was discussed at the meeting but it was the first time for a discussion of priorities and timelines. Attending these meetings was crucial for the project team for passing on information and for answering questions of the members.

In October 2001 in preparation for a first set of visits to KWN members the Network coordinator, at the request of AP, prioritized the list of Network members to visit. AP and the

eRider decided to stagger the training sessions and work first with the ten most active groups rather than tackle all thirty-two groups at once.

This first set of groups were regionally representative and from each of the major cities in Kosovo – Gjakova, Ferizaj, Prizren, Gjilan, Mitrovia, Peja, Dragash and Skenderaj. The groups had a strong record of actively participating in the development of KWN campaigns. They were also newer groups who had not benefited from assistance as much as the older, better established groups based in the capital, Prishtina. Many of the directors of these ten organizations would go on to become members of the KWN board. This first assessment visit would be crucial for developing a work plan for the coming months.

This process of prioritization was important in and of itself as it was the first time the KWN coordinator had put together members names, contact names, addresses and phone numbers in one spreadsheet.

Assessments and Prioritization. The first round of visits allowed the eRider and the AP technical director to assess the needs of the members, observe the conditions they were working under and introduce them to the eRider. While these visits could have been made alone by a well trained eRider, the discussions were essential for AP staff to aid in the brainstorming for the content and structure of the newsletter and website.

With the information gathered from these visits a set of goals were developed for the eRider and AP management. These goals were developed in relation to a set of benchmarks adapted from benchmarks developed by Npower, a non profit technology assistance provider based in the United States. See Annex 2 for the benchmarks. This process of goal setting allowed both AP and the eRider to set clear goals at the outset of the project.

While the benchmarks were originally adapted just for the KWN project they are being revisited for other IT capacity building projects AP undertakes. No threshold for success was determined at the beginning of the project. These goals were not part of a formal agreement between the KWN coordinator and AP. In retrospect these would have been important steps to take.

After seeing their offices, discussing their mission, activities and priorities the team had a much clearer picture of where the groups were starting from and where they could realistically get to in the nine months of the project. This visit also introduced the team to the campaigns and issues important to KWN members. These campaigns (e.g. literacy, violence, political power, employment) would dictate the content of the newsletter and website.

Information Officer. The selection of staff was crucial. With the eRider in place it was essential for the project that someone be hired by the KWN to take on information and that they be provided both training and assistance in their work. AP has found that information is often dealt with haphazardly by young networks. It was critically important to the success of the project that they treat information seriously and that they designate an information person from a member group or hire someone from the outside for the position.

Once a staff person was identified AP provided two weeks of intensive training of the information officer by an information specialist. The information specialist was an Albanian American woman named Aferdita Rakipi who had previously worked as the communications director of the National Albanian American Council, a lobbying group based in Washington D.C. She spoke Albanian, had worked in Kosovo and was familiar with the issues the KWN was tackling.

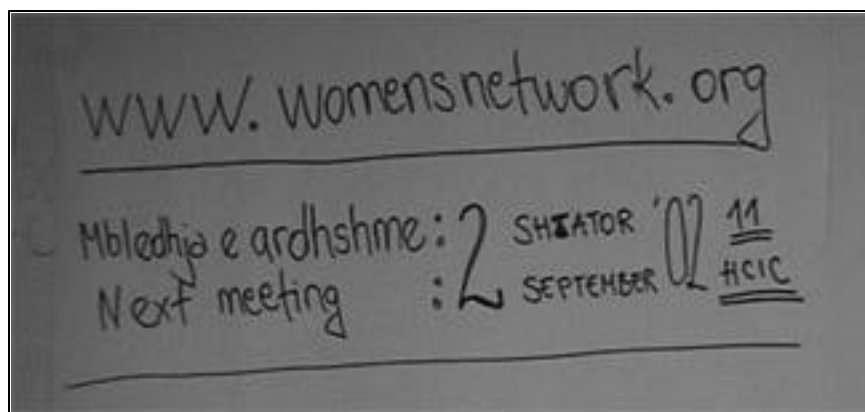
During the first month of the project the team worked extensively with the newly designated information officer, Lana Loxha. She was also a staff member of the unofficial coordinator of the network, **Motrat Qiriazhi**. Over the course of the first month AP met with both the coordinator of the network and the information officer on a regular basis. Brainstorming sessions were held about the audience for the website and newsletter, issues of language and content.

Aferdita worked with the information officer on developing content for the website and newsletter, writing editorials and developing a distribution list for the newsletter. She also worked with KWN members on the development of their organizational profiles which would eventually be posted to the KWN website.

Part of the information officer's salary was paid for by the grant for the project. It was important that the development of the website and the newsletter be a part of their job description.

A problem with this decentralized management of the project arose when the information officer was pulling double duty as both the information officer and working with the network coordinating their anti violence campaign. This campaign was launched in November 2002 just as the capacity building project began. Lana found herself increasingly overwhelmed by the amount of work she had to do.

Website. The next task was to find a local web site firm to design the KWN web site. During the first month IPKO was chosen to design the site and with the information officer the AP technical director began the development of a design document for the website.



Advertising at the monthly KWN meeting for the new KWN website

Both the information officer and technical director searched the web for data, statistics and reports about the status of women in Kosovo. During meetings extensive discussions occurred over what types of information to present on the KWN site and who was the audience. While data from outside sources was important to aggregate in one place the KWN decided that

showing the diversity of their members and their campaigns was equally important. These brainstorming sessions were important for Igballe and Lana as they explored the role information played in their work.

During the first months the information specialist worked with the ten priority network members to write their own profile for the KWN website. She developed a template and model profile in both English and Albanian and distributed this to all the members. Even with this assistance getting them to produce their own profile proved to be a difficult task. The members did not see why developing a profile was important nor could they imagine its use on the website.

The website currently has no profiles of the members because the KWN Coordinator decided that they should not be posted until all the profiles were available. She did not want to cause a problem between groups who received assistance and groups who did not. The coordinator made regular pleas to the members to provide their own profiles for posting on the site.

The relationship with IPKO proved difficult. They hired and fired two web designers whose job it was to manage the production of the KWN website. It was not until April 2002 that the site was finally launched - three months behind schedule.

A larger role for the information officer was originally envisioned to manage the website, newsletter and provide guidance and feedback to the eRider. For the reasons described above she was unable to manage the work. Instead the AP technical director took the lead and liaised between IPKO and the KWN on the development of the site.

Newsletter. It was quickly decided during the development of the project to produce a monthly e-mail newsletter. This was integral part of the package. One of the products most in demand from outsiders working to support the women of Kosovo was regular, reliable information about the work of women. Donors, representatives of UN agencies and international organizations had specifically asked for information on their campaigns, how they are collaborating, how they addressed local issues in a comprehensive manner to bring about change.

The goal was to produce the first newsletter in October 2002 in both English and Albanian. Initially the information officer had planned to produce and translate the materials herself. After just one issue this proved unmanageable. From a novice translator a literal translation from Albanian to English was unreadable and made no sense. Translation from English into Albanian made for dry reading that lacked the imagery of the Albanian language.

The KWN arranged for regular translation of the newsletter and content of the website by several young female college students at the University of Prishtina. AP submitted to OSI for additional funding for the translation and was given an additional grant to cover the costs.

In November 2001 AP sent out an e-mail announcing the launch of the KWN newsletter to its internal announcement list of 4000 subscribers. An announcement was also sent out to attendees of the KWN meetings, addresses culled from the KWN coordinator's e-mail address book, and the e-mail addresses of all the local media outlets. Over 500 subscribers signed on to the list.

AP's technical director decided to set up the distribution list using Mailman list hosting software. This simple, Open Source, free software was already being hosted by the company who was hosting the KWN website. Subscribers could subscribe via e-mail or via a form on the KWN website. During the second phase of the project the technical director planned to train the information officer in list management.

The newsletter was translated into Albanian and was distributed on a separate list set up just for Albanian subscribers. It proved difficult to manage both English and Albanian speaking subscribers on one list.

The format of the newsletter loosely followed the format of On the Record, APs own e-mail newsletter. A template was developed for a regular newsletter and modeled around the KWN's campaigns. Each month it would contain an editorial, updates on campaigns, one longer news item and a member profile. Most of this content would come from the discussions at the monthly meetings.

The first issue contained an editorial by the Coordinator announcing the launch of the capacity building initiative and the newsletter. With help from other KWN members the information officer wrote a chronology of the women's movement in Kosovo. She also wrote short introductions of the KWN campaigns and updates on how the campaigns were progressing. Legjenda in Viti, one of the only KWN members who produced their own profile, had their profile run in the first issue. See **Annex 1** for the first issue of the newsletter.

News of the newsletter began to spread. More subscribers signed on to receive the newsletter. E-mails of support such as this one poured in.

Congratulations! with your Kosovo Women's Network Letter. I am looking forward to the next issue and I wish you a lot of success! Regards, Elisabeth Meijer MP

After discussions on management and workload it was decided to develop a system where they would use the same articles produced for the newsletter to update the website. This way they were only developing one set of updates each month. While in principle this still seems the best way to go about integrating these products production updating still proved difficult.

While it is key for the long term sustainability of the products that members of the network contribute to the newsletter and the website it was clear from the beginning that the coordinator and information officer would have to take a lead role. They had no mechanism for soliciting contributions, overseeing the writing or a way for the KWN to approve content except for at their monthly meetings. The members were just beginning to be hooked up to e-mail and trained in its use.

Working with the KWN to produce this regular information proved to be one of the most difficult parts of the project. After the production of the first two issues the production of the newsletter fell off. KWN meetings, their main source of news from members, were suspended because of the bad weather. The meetings would not resume until March 2002. In the end they produced just three issues, not six.

Training. The AP technical director accomplished the training of the eRider during the initial two week visit in September 2002. This was not a formal training. Instead the technical director and eRider worked shoulder to shoulder on the assessments and evaluations of the priority list of KWN members. The eRider was an active participant in the brainstorming session on both the website and newsletter.

This type of training worked well in the initial stages of the project but proved inadequate as the complexity of the project and the relationships with the information officer and KWN coordinator grew more difficult. Although she made repeated request for guidance from them they expected once the project was launched that they did not need to provide her with support. Because of the lack of communication with them the eRider relied more and more on regular contact with the AP technical director. It was difficult to provide regular support from afar.

Using training materials developed and translated for the USIP project described earlier the eRider developed a plan for training the first set of KWN members in Word, Excel, Outlook Express and web surfing. With a small fund for equipment managed by the eRider she purchased small upgrades for the groups including modems and extra memory for their computers. After the first assessment visit the eRider scheduled the second visit for the installation of the equipment, connection to the Internet and training. Some groups required a series of additional visits for training.

Winter 2001 proved difficult for the training and connectivity. More than once the eRider was trapped on the roads as the snow fell heavily and road clearing was slow. Power outages were the norm and roads were often closed. As the thaw began the PTK began a process of installing new switches that would improve the working of the phone system. This meant that for a period of several months phone service was intermittent, phone numbers changed and dial up was unreliable. Although the eRider could train them in Word and Excel offline she was often unable



Local trainers proved key to the success of the training program

to get them online to explain the World Wide Web and e-mail. She made repeat visits to get their dial up accounts working and explain how they could send and receive mail.

After being stranded in Gjakova in a snow storm after her third visit to a group there the eRider decided to look for two local trainers to take on the bulk of the training in Gjakova, Peja and Prizren and provide ongoing technical support. The groups in Gjakova had the best experience with this kind of support. The trainer needed no additional training as he was already giving computer trainings. One KWN member in Gjakova with six computers agreed to host group training with staff from other KWN members in the same town.

By the end of March 2002, the training and connectivity had been one of the most successful aspects of the project. The seven of the original group of ten organizations were connected and groups in three cities had been trained.

The first phase ended in March 2002 with mixed results. Several key milestones had been met and several problem areas arose.

1) The KWN was consolidating -

They were developing a board. They were decentralizing the network and developing local KWN cells in each province. They had decided to raise funds for a dedicated staff member.

2) Training of the eRider was accomplished and training of the groups had worked well -

Heroina had expanded her work from the original ten members selected. She was developing innovative solutions to problems of weather and infrastructure.

3) The three issues of the newsletter were produced -

While several issues were produced, production was suspended for the winter. The information officer found it difficult to produce regular writing.

4) Development of the website stalled -

There is a limited IT support market in Kosovo. There are few trained web designers and even fewer IT project managers. IPKO is the only option for implementing complex design projects. This limited market meant that we were captive to their timelines and prioritization of the work. Because their web design manager quit just as the project was reaching the launch date and he did not hand over the files to the new manager meant the website launch was put off an additional three months.

5) Lack of contact between AP and KWN staff -

Due to a variety of factors including the demands of the anti-violence campaign, regular power outages over the winter, an aversion to using an Internet café, and hesitation about telling AP she needed money to pay for her Internet connection at home meant there were several months with no contact with the information officer.

4. The Second Phase - March 2002 to May 31 2002

It was clear that by March 2002 another visit by AP staff was necessary to kick start the production of the website and newsletter. The same problem was dogging the KWN that had dogged the USIP project with the politicians. Training and connectivity was proceeding relatively easily but the information products were proving difficult to produce. The winter

weather, suspension of meetings and absence of the information officer caused the work to slow to a crawl.

This trip was important for getting the project back on track and for identifying areas that needed attention during the last two months of the project. During this trip the technical director of AP met with the new IPKO web designer. After several meetings confusion over the file structure of the site was cleared. After a round of changes the KWN coordinator gave final approval of the draft site and it was launched in March 2002.

A third issue of the newsletter was developed and produced during this trip. A bulk of the writing fell to AP as the information officer continued her work on the anti violence campaign.

The eRider was on track with training but was finding relations with the KWN coordinator and information officer difficult. They were busy with the election of KWN board members and the restructuring of the network. This lack of communication impeded the eRider's ability to work with the KWN on the strategic use of IT in their campaigning.

At the end of this second trip an interim report was produced for OSI. This exercise was important for identifying problem areas and formulating possible solutions.

In May 2002 a third trip was made to Kosovo by the AP technical director and information specialist. The eRider and AP technical director visited with several KWN members who had been trained. While the training needs of the women were established during the assessment phase there had been neither an initial test of their skills nor a final test of their skills. This kind of testing would have placed unnecessary barriers between the eRider and the women she was training but would have been good to have for the groups that were trained by other trainers. It would have allowed the eRider to better monitor their training. During follow up visits the women trained voiced their satisfaction with the trainings and the trainers. Several members requested additional advanced training to further their skills.

During this final trip the information specialist wrote in-depth profiles of three members of KWN who got the most out of the training and support. These three profiles are included in this report. They illustrate how members of the network are using IT and what they get out of being members of the KWN.

KWN Consolidation

One of the most important developments during the second phase of the project was the consolidation of the KWN as a network.

As a result of nine months of work both as a part of this project and of their own initiative the network:

- Improved their capacity to communicate and manage their work
- Created membership criteria

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- Collaborated on joint campaigns
 - Communicated a shared mission and vision to others concerned with women and Kosovo
 - Established a representative, multi-ethnic board
 - Partnered with other networks
 - Decentralized their operations to localize decision making

All seven of these improvements were crucial for the development of the KWN. Without these improvements they would become just another top down coordinating body that did not provide real services and benefits to its members.

They now have a new board. Instead of monthly two hour meetings they will have day long meetings every third month. Board members are responsible for hosting and coordinating regular monthly meetings in their areas. As a priority in the second phase the eRider focused on getting the board members connected and trained. Between meetings they are collaborating via e-mail.

They have decided that better established KWN members will focus on providing training and mentoring for newer members and on lobbying the central government and international administration. They will play a strong role in the development of province wide campaigns such as literacy, violence against women, women in politics.

In developing membership criteria the board decided to make it mandatory for each group to submit an organizational profile. Profiles have started to come in. The coordinator has decided to post the profiles as they come in to motivate others to finish theirs.

These problems brought home to the KWN that they wanted a more personal relationship with a web designer and more control over the updating of the site. In May 2002 they approached another NGO, the Humanitarian Information Center (HCIC) that was set up in 1999 by a member of the United Nations family, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (OCHA), to provide information and assistance to non profits. In 2002 as the international community downsized their presence in the region this organization was struggling with sustainability issues. They have started to do fee for service work including web design and maintenance. Management of the KWN site has passed to the HCIC.

Once this second phase was complete it was possible to see that the overall success of the project is mixed. The technical and training goals of the project were reached but the strategic and information goals were largely unrealized. The KWN has a website but they use it mostly as an online brochure. They have a newsletter but are wary of using it for lobbying. They have developed complex campaigns making good use of CDs, video and the media but not their website or e-mail.

Liria – Gjilane

It is said that necessity is the mother of invention; here in Kosovo this saying could not be truer. In the café culture that is Kosovo the streets and boulevards are filled with cafes and what goes with coffee but sugar. Liria, a women's organization based in Gjilane decided to get into the sugar packet business as a means of ensuring the sustainability of their work and as advertising of their good works.

Liria is a non-governmental organization founded in 1997 to provide women the opportunity to become economically independent and an integral part of society. They provided a series of courses to assist the women and girls of Gjilane. They worked to give them a chance to make their way in society. International donors largely fund the organization but Liria knows that this support will have an expiration date.



Liria's sweet image is all over Gjilane

The sugar packet business was launched by Liria with the help of friends and a flurry of e-mails. The factory gives Liria the means for supporting the activities of their organization and it serves as free advertising with their logo and contact information appearing on every packet with every cup of coffee served. The sugar packet industry may at first glance seem simple but as with everything in the Balkans, it is more complicated than it needs to be. The paper for the packets is made in and transported from Serbia by a Bosnian businessman. Economics triumphs over ethnic hatred.

Nazife Jonuzi, Liria's director, is excited about their new enterprise but she explains that the business comes with obstacles.

"Business owners, who are predominantly male, are not accustomed to women in the business arena. At first glance when we make our sugar pitch they do not take us seriously but we nevertheless stand our ground and are continuing on with building a viable business to support our activities at the center."

With the launch of the sugar packet factory employing three women full-time, they feel they are able to give back to the community. They are a model for other organizations trying to find ways of becoming independent. At a conference in Western Europe with other women from the former Yugoslavia Nazife shared the story of their business. The participants were impressed and wanted to know more about the work. When she returned to Kosova she sent them copies of her business plan via e-mail to use for inspiration.

As a member of the newly formed women business owners network Nazife is networking with her peers and sharing their struggles and successes. This new network grew out of a meeting on women and the economy that was partially supported by the Kosova Women's Network in October 2001. Many members of the KWN have a hand in starting businesses in their community not just to sustain their organizations but also to support women entrepreneurs.

The sugar packet business is just one way Liria is working to exploit new avenues of improving the situation of women while giving back to their society. They are also running a self sustaining garden patch program outside of Gjilane which employs 5 women. The women sell their produce in the local market. A portion of the profit goes to Liria and the rest goes back to the women.

Without e-mail the sugar packet business might never have been launched. International supporters of Liria exchanged e-mails with Nazife while she searched for someone to help her develop a business plan. One supporter forwarded an e-mail to the Kosovo Business Support service, an organization funded by USAID. KBS

provided much needed expertise and helped Liria develop a business plan that they shopped to donors. Liria received a grant from the Canadian Development Agency- CIDA. After meeting an American KFOR soldier at a local business fair Nazife exchanged e-mails with him. With his support Liria was granted a contract to provide sugar packets to the café on the US base. This has proved crucial for their garnering new clients. Securing a large contract with the base ensured they could ride out the lean times while they searched for more local customers.

Technology has made a tremendous, tangible impact on this organization as well as many others. Without the aid of computer training programs and the use of e-mail, what used to take days to get done now is a matter of a few clicks. "We can communicate with each other via e-mail and confirm our meetings with ease. Before e-mail at our center, we would have to physically confirm our meetings and physically courier our reports to our donors. With e-mail, a tremendous burden has been lifted from our shoulders, freeing us to focus on our work with women," says Nazife.

In March 2002 Liria survived an earthquake centered in Gjilane which destroyed all their computers. With a grant of a new hard drive made possible with money from the KWN eRider Nazife and her staff are now back up and running on e-mail.

The changing face of women in Kosovo is taking many by surprise. Women are breaking down barriers and entering arenas once reserved for men. Not always well received by their male counterparts, the women are undeterred in their pursuits of becoming independent businesswomen and activists, and challenging the status quo. They warn their society to take notice that this is not just a passing fancy.



Liria staff take pride in the work they do producing sugar packets

PART THREE: ISSUES, CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED.

During the project, several issues emerged that had a critical effect on its outcome, interestingly, some of the progress achieved would have been difficult to identify as goals during the planning stage.

The following are general lessons learned from this project developed to support a network of organizations make better use of information and information technology:

- A relatively small investment of equipment, software, and training can make an enormous impact on the daily operations of organizations.
- A committed and engaged local coordinator is necessary for the success of the project
- Participants require much more on-site training.
- eRiders alone are not enough. Local training and support resources are required to complement the work of eRiders.
- A dedicated and well trained network staff member is essential to produce information products
- Goal setting with eRiders and network coordinators is essential to establish the ‘successes’ of the project and clearly spell out the expectations of the participants.
- More work building the capacity of the coordinating partner is important so that their own technical needs are addressed along with the needs of network members.
- When working with large numbers of groups either have a project of a longer duration or focus on a smaller sub set of groups (i.e. board member’s organizations, only groups outside the main cities, new members, a working group collaborating on a campaign).
- eRiders provide more than just technical advice. They often suggest materials, websites or techniques for management, accounting, fundraising and project development.

1. The eRider

There were several issues affecting the success of the eRider’s work. These are issues that must be considered in the development of new projects. It is critical that the choice of eRider be based on a thorough understanding of the environment in which they will work.

Age. In most societies IT is seen as the domain of the young. Young people who grew up on a steady diet of video games and who are not intimidated by computers. The choice of Heroína as an eRider was critical. She was well educated, came from a well educated professional family,

spoke English and used computers on a regular basis. She did not intimidate the women because they had come to expect her kind of skills in young people.

It is not clear from this experience whether or not age of the eRider is a critical indicator of success of a project. What is clear is that age can contribute to the success of a project.

Rural vs. Urban. The choice of Heroína also helped with another problem, namely the rural vs. urban divide. Many of the projects implemented in post war Kosovo were top down. They originated in the cities, mostly the capital Prishtina, and were geared towards emancipating women. They were not necessarily responsive nor focused on issues of importance to women outside the capital.

In some cases outside initiatives have met with stiff resistance. This was not the case for this project although it originated in Prishtina and was implemented by someone from the capital. Many people already knew Heroína from NGO work she did as a teenager. Or they knew her father who is a prominent physician. In the complex social system of Kosovo when asked she would introduce her father as being from the village of Maleshevo and her mother as being from Skopje. This showed her to be from a diverse background with less claims to city ways. The eRider's mandate to travel to their offices was essential for breaking down the rural/urban divide. If they had been required to travel to Prishtina the project would have failed.

Training. While the best eRiders are those who already have some of the skills necessary to work effectively with non profits there are techniques and skills they should be taught before taking on working with a large number of groups.

They can be encouraged to surf the web, read articles and develop solutions that fit the circumstances but it would be best if they started with a basic framework for their work. A good training would include technical, consulting, advocacy and management skills.

Because of Heroína's experience with earlier eRider projects she was already familiar with many of the technical issues she would face such as working with poor phone lines, multiple types of modems and dial up issues. During this project we worked to develop her skills at facilitating brainstorming processes, developing websites, developing larger scale projects such as installing networks and report writing where she drew her own conclusions about the impact of her support for groups.

Reasonable workload. One step in the development of an eRider project must address the numbers of groups an eRider can effectively support over a given time frame. While exact figures vary 8-12 groups starting from a low skills level being supported by one eRider over a 9-12 month project is manageable. It is clear that large numbers of groups over a large geographic area must be supported with either multiple eRiders or a longer project time frame. Smaller numbers of groups can be effectively supported during a much shorter time frame.

Spare cash. Early in the development of the project it was determined that the groups would need small upgrades of equipment. It was crucial that the eRider have access to a small pool of money that enabled her to purchase these upgrades. The purchases were capped at 500 USD per group.

Qendra Per Mbojtjen E Nenes Dhe Femiut/Center for the Rehabilitation of Women and Children - Prishtina

Walking into the Center for the Rehabilitation of Women and Children, one immediately knows that this is an oasis for children. Stuffed animals crowd every drawer and cabinet while the garden walls are painted in bright colors with animal characters to stimulate a child's imagination.

The Center, located in the heart of Prishtina, was founded in 1998 and was a shelter for women during the war. The center currently offers seminars in psycho-social support, health, computer training courses, sewing courses, and English and German language courses. The center employs 22 workers and has enrolled 410 children ranging from three to fifteen years old. The center is currently offering its services to 296 widowed mothers who lost their husbands during the war and the children enrolled have either lost one or both parents to the war or are economically deprived.

An Austrian benefactor provided them with funds for the reconstruction of the center and a computer lab. At the time of the eRider project only 8 of their 16 computers were working. Others had broken CD drives or viruses. The KWN eRider assessed their needs and recommended an upgrade in hardware, a network and an Internet connection. Over the last three years, the center had trained 180 women in computer courses at the center. Most have found employment.

The Center applied for a free wireless Internet connection from IPKOorg. IPKOorg supports over 20 local organizations with free connectivity. At their last meeting in May 2002 the center was granted a 64k wireless connection. Additional equipment for the computer lab was needed to make the most of the connection including battery back ups, networks cards and a hub so that the computers could be networked. The equipment was purchased at a discount with funds from the grant made by the Open Society Institute to the Kosova Women's Network of which the center is a member. The center staff received technical training and support from Heroina Telaku, the KWN eRider, who is working with members of the KWN.

The Internet connection coming to the center was a cause for great joy. It allows staff and women and children enrolled at the center access to a tool they would not be able to afford nor have immediate access to. The staff looks forward to exchanging e-mails with donors and other groups from the ease of the center instead of always heading to the smoke filled, over crowded Internet cafes. The children are excited about the possibility of exploring the World Wide Web.

"Having the Internet connection and computer equipment donated to the center is a gift well placed and very much needed, said Arben Jupolli, the centers 18 year old computer instructor.



The Center's has trained over 180 women in computer use

“The children need an outlet to just be children and forget for a minute they are in Kosovo where they witnessed war. They need to be able to speak to children all over the world and just let their imagination explore.”

The support and aid given by international donors to local organizations has been tremendous but the obstacles they face are monumental and the work and need seems never ending. Getting international aid for these organizations is crucial for its survival and effectiveness within the communities. However, sustaining their work after the aid is gone is another threat staring them square in the face.

Through their resourcefulness, the women of the center were able to provide widowed mothers with employment, school programs for the orphaned children, while offering services to the community at large. With support from the US Funded Kosovo Women’s Initiative the Center received a small grant to launch a revenue generating onsite laundry service center. They have successfully contracted with 10 local restaurants for services. They also take in laundry from individuals. They are working hard to expand their client base. Projects such as this enable the center to look beyond the small circle of donors and rely on their own means to sustain the center’s activities.



Children in Kosovo are constantly reminded of their losses from the war. Computers and connections via the Internet give them a window into another world.

“We feel the center allows women and children to be able to express themselves without worry and in an atmosphere where they feel safe. The children lose themselves in sports such as ping-pong, basketball, and soccer and the women are able to talk with us and amongst themselves about their everyday life. Now that the center is going to be directly connected to the Internet, everyone from the staff to the women and of course the children eagerly await its arrival. Everyday children line up at the office door asking us if it’s here yet shouting ‘Internet! Internet!’,” said Merita the center’s

Director with laughter in her voice.

Future projects planned at the center include a site bakery but funds and project approval are still pending. They currently have trained 60 women and girls to provide house keeping and baby sitting services. Baby sitting services are offered not only to families with small children but families with older members in need of care. They are now in the process of soliciting contracts. The Center hopes to continue assisting women and children of the community and ensure the sustainability of its activities for the years to come.

2. eRiders and Networks

The application of eRider type services to networks of groups and advocacy organizations is something The Advocacy Project has focused on in the last two years.

AP found the technical aspects of the projects to be the most successful and results fairly easy to quantify. The mission driven advocacy and information oriented products have been more difficult to sustain and build upon.

Technical aspects mean basic connectivity, training in the use of basic software applications, troubleshooting and the setting up of e-mail distribution lists. All are new skills and tools that enable groups to do their work better.

Advocacy and information products mean websites, action alerts and e-mail newsletters all with a campaigning or networking focus. This also includes engaging groups and networks in the process of developing a common voice and strategy on a given issue.

Several of the groups AP has worked with have become more effective at producing advocacy and action alerts. **Motrat Qiriaz** on behalf of the KWN has sent out a series of letters over the last two years targeting UNMIK, the Office of Gender Affairs, UNIFEM and the UN Security Council. Their process for sending these out to other activists has become streamlined as they learned better ways to manage their contacts. Some organizations have even branched out into producing and maintaining simple brochure-like websites that they update semi yearly usually at the same time they update their donors and constituents about their work.

But vibrant campaigning sites, regular e-mail newsletters and active e-mail discussion lists are few and far between. This is not unique to NGOs in emerging democracies or countries transitioning from war. Many NGOs in the US just barely get a handle on their internal technology use when they are pressured by a funder, constituents, clients and/or board to do outreach and advocacy. Many of the groups AP works with find one issue in their community so overwhelmingly in need of action that they force themselves to begin using information technology to campaign.

None of the above is an argument for not implementing an eRider program outside the US. In fact this project shows that an eRider can be one of the best ways for NGOs to leapfrog through several stages of development. They should not just be enabled to do their existing work better and more efficiently but expand their work to reach a larger audience in a mission focused way. The technology becomes a way to encourage innovation, consolidation and focus. But project goals must be realistic and support sustained.

It is clear that the eRider model has applications outside the US. More and more non profit networks and organizations are demanding high quality consulting services including IT support. But the eRider model cannot be exported wholesale. Issues related to gender, infrastructure, sustainability and a variety of other issues must be considered when developing a project.

3. Gender and its Impact on ICT Training

During the last ten years many of the women who were trained during this project had been unable or unwilling to work in the professions in which they were educated. Many were economists, lawyers, doctors and teachers but in 1989 when autonomy was revoked many were either fired from their jobs or quit because they refused to sign loyalty oaths.

Without an opportunity to work in their fields many worked in the shadow system. Some taught in the shadow school system or work in the shadow medical system but they were rarely able to learn new skills or receive additional training.

This situation is similar to that for many women in post conflict or transitional societies. They may have been kept out of the work force because of war. They may have been refugees and unable to access advanced education. They may have chosen to fight or follow their husbands as they fought thus losing the opportunity to work.

Because of this the eRider and AP technical director designed training that was geared to the special needs of these women. By sending someone to train them on site in their offices the women were more free to speak up about what they did not know. Since trainings followed the assessments the topics were tied to their specific needs and grounded in the work they were already doing. Examples include using Word to customize and design report for funders, updates for colleagues and flyers for events. Training was geared towards making their work more effective and efficient.

Younger women wanted to focus more on being trained to use the Internet while the older women wanted to learn more about Word and Excel. The eRider had to work to strike a balance among these topics. The younger women felt they already knew everything there was to know about Word and Excel while the older women did not understand what e-mail and surfing the web could contribute to their work.

Given the opportunity many of the women have learned quickly in spite of their previous unfamiliarity. This is due in part because of the type of training, their appetite for learning new things and their interest in more directly participating in the workings of the network and their joint campaigns.

JETA IME/MY LIFE - GJAKOVA

Shqipe Bedullahaj, the Director of the Women's Professional Training Center in Gjakova, Jeta Ime, remains optimistic about the future although most of the time she feels she is on a high wire with no safety net. The city of Gjakova was one of the hardest hit during the war with the highest number of people missing and killed. Yet out of the ash and trauma they found the courage to begin their work and the strength to begin the healing.



Shqipe and her colleagues discuss their computer training

The center was founded in July 2000 with the aim of providing the women and girls in the community the tools and skills needed to take charge of their life. They offer courses in English and in computers that go well beyond your basic classes. A cadre of young women was trained by a local trainer in layout and graphic design. They have worked to create business cards and promotional materials for local businesses. Shqipe and her staff of five are creating an oasis meant to

stimulate and inspire the women that pass through the center.

"We want women and girls to be able to come to the center and utilize its resources, whether they are enrolled in a course or not. I do not want them to miss the opportunity of just being able to sit at our tables and enjoy the books and magazines we have to offer in a positive environment," says Shqipe.

Jeta Ime received a grant of six computers from one of their donors. They make their computer lab available for training courses and for women who use their resource library. The center staff and members of other women's NGOs in Gjakova who are members of the KWN received training in e-mail and web research as part of a capacity building program for network members. Although several young women had received advanced training Jeta Ime's staff still needed basic training. The center made their lab available to the members of other organizations for the trainings. The private lab was a safe place for these older women who were very uncomfortable with technology.

Via e-mail Shqipe and her staff are now better able to partner with other local organizations. They are better able to communicate and are better able to respond to the needs of partner organizations. With a local population roughly numbering 150,000, with 28 local NGO's, 12 of which specifically focus on women, their e-mail network has grown and has allowed them to be more effective in fulfilling the needs of their community. "It's wonderful," as she says with a smile, "I am able to debate an issue or how to proceed on a matter with a whole entire network of friends. This allows us to achieve the best possible result and look at angles they may have been hidden to us." But the high cost of using the phone and calling Prishtina still forces Shqipe to use the Internet connection at the NGO center in town. As infrastructure improves so should their access and because of the training skills will not be a barrier.

The center tries to work beyond the normal curriculum provided by other organizations. Instead of offering sewing courses, the center offered a 5 month art course tapping into the talent of the community. The course culminated in a successful art exhibition in the city of Gjakova. Shqipe and her team displayed the photos of the art expo proudly and showed example after example of women with talent. These women ranged from the age of 14 to 55, and they simply did not have the means to purchase their art supplies. "We work closely with other groups in the area and do not want to duplicate efforts. Sewing courses are a marketable skill and useful but we want to provide other opportunities not normally offered such as art which people often do not think of after the haze and trauma of war."

Jeta Ime, in partnership with other local organizations, is currently engaged in the second month of a six month long campaign designed to encourage girls not to drop out of school, re-register, and to continue their education. "That is one of the biggest problems we face right now. The number of girls dropping out of school is very high," said Shqipe. Insecurity and instability in the villages during the war made it dangerous for young women to go to school. After the war security is still questionable. Some cannot attend because their families are economically deprived. The campaign will culminate in a strong push in September when the school year resumes.

The center and its volunteers want to encourage women and young girls by being a positive example within their community. They go to schools to meet the students and tell them of their success stories. They visit the homes of young women explaining to them and their families the necessity of school and higher learning. The doors to the center are open for any who may have doubts or just to see for themselves what this organization has to offer.

Being part of a larger network and better means of communication has allowed the organization to open up entire new arenas to lobby for the needs of women. As a network member Shqipe felt comfortable asking for a meeting with the head of education in Gjakova to talk about the low enrollment of girls. She knows he took her seriously because she has the weight of the network behind her.

They have found strength and support within a network in overcoming the hurdles that lie before them. With this new sense of strength, the staff of Jeta Ime sees a brighter future for women. The problems they face not just being solely women's issues but issues that Kosovo as a whole must see as their own.



The Center's computer lab complete with voltage regulators for the unreliable electrical outlets

4. Coordinator and Coordinating NGO

In the absence of a board and paid staff it was crucial for the KWN that an individual and an organization take a lead role in the management of the network. This is also extremely important for the early success of a newsletter and website but may be detrimental to the long term and decentralized functioning of the network. Some members may feel that one group receives too much of the funding or one leader has too large of a share of the attention.

It was important from the outset that Igballe and staff of **Motrat Qiriazhi** had a strong and visible role promoting the project but as a KWN project not a **Motrat Qiriazhi** project. The services being provided to members needed to be seen as a perk for being a KWN member not an outside initiative of The Advocacy Project.

While the consolidation of the network described earlier and the IT capacity building project was essential for the continued life of the network it was difficult to have these two things happening simultaneously. The IT training and production of the information products needed a committed and available coordinator who was a part of the network. Without the local management there was no one to oversee the day to day progress on the production of the newsletter and website.

5. IT friendly environment and IPKO

This project would have been difficult to accomplish in the 9 month frame without the support of IPKO. IPKO donated several thousand dollars worth of dial up accounts for the members of the KWN. With these accounts the eRider had the ability to set up dial up accounts on the fly for groups without having to go through a laborious process of applying for additional money to set up individual accounts.

Unfortunately IPKO will not reach the entire province with local dial up until late 2002 which has meant that even free dial up access is costly due to the price of a phone call to Prishtina. In several cases the eRider contracted the services of a local dial up provider but often their service was expensive and slow.

6. Sustainability and Duration

There is a real question about the sustainability of the newsletter and the website. While both products were developed with KWN members they were largely designed and written by AP staff. The question now is whether the KWN, or other local experts can take them on themselves.

In some ways the future looks brighter, as of July 2002. The KWN is now using the inexpensive services of another non profit to keep the website updated. AP is still paying for the domain name registration and hosting of their site. Until a local reliable hosting solution is available AP will continue to provide this service.

The KWN has recently hired a full time information officer who is also a journalist who will take on the production of the newsletter and press relations. She will not work for any one member of the network. Her time will be strictly devoted to the KWN.

The development and sustainability of the website and newsletter was tied to the timing and duration of the project. It was impossible to know ahead of time that the KWN would go through such a major process of restructuring that took over 6 months. It was also impossible to know the impact of the weather on their ability to communicate, collaborate and be trained. A program of support with a longer duration or one that began in the late spring and continued through the early winter would have been better than one that began in the late fall and continued through late spring. A contract with the information officer committing her to allocating 50% of her time to the newsletter and website might have returned a better result.

Issues of sustainability have to be addressed from the outset and innovative solutions sought that focus primarily on using local resources. Sustainability is ensured when the KWN sees the need for continuing and makes it a priority.

7. Benchmarks

Goal setting was crucial for the development of this project. It was also essential for future projects that a set of benchmarks be developed. These benchmarks establish levels of competency the groups should strive for. They also serve as tool for eRiders to use for goal setting.

Benchmarking is a process nonprofits can use to assess and evaluate their organizations' practices, operations, and functions against a set of "best-in-class" criteria. **Annex 2** contains 17 "best-in-class" benchmarks divided among 4 different sections (Connectivity, Training/Regular Use, Newsletter, Website).

At the beginning of the project the eRider and AP technical director made a first attempt to develop a working draft of benchmarks for ICT use by non profits in post conflict or transitional societies. These benchmarks are modeled after benchmarks developed by NPower, a technology assistance provider network in the United States for US non profits.

Each benchmark represents the current standard for appropriate, efficient and sustainable technology use in a nonprofit organization. Collectively, they provide an example of how a technologically literate nonprofit integrates technology into its daily work.

None of the members of the KWN reached the benchmarks established. But they were able to reach almost all the goals set for this project in relation to the benchmarks. Over 70% of the members of the KWN were connected to the Internet. Of those 100% were trained to use Word, Excel, e-mail and search the WWW.

It is clear that benchmarking is an important process to engage in. Setting goals in relation to the benchmarks can aid in determining the levels of success in a project. They also help eRiders to think about not just what they can accomplish over the life of the project but what they should be helping groups to accomplish over the life of their organizations.

8. Strategic Use of ICTs and Information

It proved nearly impossible to support the KWN to make strategic use of the Internet in their work. Most members of the network including the coordinating organization were starting from a very low level of skill in using technology. They were also struggling with management and governance issues that made it difficult to focus on their campaigning.

That said, by the end of the project, they were making interesting use of technology. A subset of groups in the network who attended a conference together in Croatia created an informal e-mail group. In the spring they used the list to debate the top three issues affecting women in Kosovo. These issues and how to address them were then presented to Parliament.

This same group collaborated via e-mail on a letter on women's issues to the editor of the largest distribution daily newspaper. Members of the list are some of the most IT savvy members of the KWN. Currently the KWN board is holding e-mail board meetings where they discuss the appointment of new board members and the regionalization of the network.

While it is clear that there are many undocumented instances of the use of e-mail in their work the KWN has not made consistent and public use of the newsletter nor the website. There have been opportunities over the last few months to use the newsletter to campaign on issues such as accountability of international donors, breakdown in the prosecution of internationals who raped and killed several young women, and even publicizing on a regular basis their own work.

This failure leads AP to the conclusion that some staff within the coordinating organization and within member organizations need to be trained in a more systematic and in depth way over a longer period of time. Several of the younger staff members in KWN member organizations expressed an interest in receiving more training in web design, management, and electronic advocacy. A component of a project could be a workshop for these staff to elevate their skills working on a concrete campaign of the network.

9. Timing of outside support – best time to intervene

The goal of this project was to avoid the usual pitfalls that happen when outsiders come in and impose their own models. But interventions such as this need just the right amount of support to reach the goals set but not so much support that it impedes the management by eRiders and coordinators in the field.

At several critical points the AP technical director needed to intervene with the web designer, the coordinating organization and the eRider. In one case she made an unplanned trip to the region to bring the project back on track. E-mail and telephone management proved to have limitations.

10. Infrastructure

Never underestimate the number of problems that will arise due to poor, neglected and in some cases destroyed infrastructure. Months were lost due to power outages, changes in the phone system, bad weather and poor roads. These issues are out of the control of the eRider but have to be factored into the goal setting and timeline development process.

Problems of this magnitude force you to think creatively about where the eRider should work, how identifying regional resources becomes crucial and how some groups may never be reached in an appreciable way.

*

As an update to the project, the KWN eRider has recently been hired part time by IPKOorg. Her job is to evaluate the services IPKO provides to NGOs and make recommendations on how to better support them. This is a natural position for an eRider to undertake. It allows her to continue her support of NGOs from a strong institutional base. By working through a larger organization whose goal is to create an environment for the use of IT by civil society the eRider will be supported to develop more programs to support NGOs.

Conclusions

The Advocacy Project is working to expand the quality of the IT support it provides to partners and improve the other aspects of support including advocacy and information capacity building. Two of our newest projects are more integrated in terms of the IT, information and advocacy components. Each component works in tandem with each other to provide a package of support for a network of refugee return organizations in Srebrenica, Bosnia and a network of women's organizations in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

AP strongly feels that the extra effort needed to work with networks and advocacy organizations is essential and justified. Networks are force and information multipliers. What could not be done alone becomes possible when a network takes it up. Advocacy groups help to bring about change not charity. They tend to be the least dependent on donors and the most responsive to the needs of the grassroots.

As the movement expands and more eRider projects come online issues of the professionalization and scaling come to the fore. How can more eRiders be trained and supported to work with groups all over the world? How can more funders be educated of the cost savings and large scale impact that eRider services can provide? How can more groups benefit from these types of services? How can eRiders support groups to move beyond just basic use to using the Internet strategically in their work? These questions all point to a larger support system for eRiders and eRider projects.

The Advocacy Project
August, 2002

Annex 1: Short Group Descriptions

DERA E HAPUR, Prishtina - has a computer training center with 6 computers. They organize computer courses for women. The staff is capable to operate basic computer programs. They only had a few small problems with Internet. The eRider organized a short training on the things that they were having difficulties in.

They have a cable Internet connection allowing them to check e-mail and surf the web on just one computer. After the assessment the eRider purchased a hub and installed a peer to peer network. They can now share files and surf the web on all the computers.

AUREOLA, Prishtina - Aureola's main office is located in Prishtina but they also have two centers in Glogovac and in Obiliq. Their main office, as well as their centers, had computers. Their staff had a basic knowledge about computers but they needed training to enable them to use the computers better. They have dial up Internet access in their main office in Prishtina.

After the assessment it was clear they needed training in Excel and the Internet. This training was successfully completed.

FEMRAT NE VEPRIM, Podujevo - This organization has three computers, which they were unable to use as they had not received training. They did not have a working phone line nor an Internet connection.

They have been trained and an Internet connection installed on their newly installed phone line.

LIRIA, Gjakova - Liria has three computers and only a few people working there had basic knowledge about computers. They have a working phone line but no Internet connection. They needed training for Excel and Internet.

Everything went smoothly until they lost all their computers from the earthquake that happened in Kosova in March. There was money available from our equipment fund so the eRider bought them a new hard drive. They now have one working computer with a modem. They are online now using an ISP in their town instead of IPKO. This reduces their dial up costs.

LEGJENDA, Viti - Legjenda has 7 computers. Their staff already received computer training similar to the one planned but they needed a refresher and more in depth training. This training was less formal than others. The eRider ran a question and answer session where staff asked the eRider about all the problems and difficulties that they face while using a computer.

They had a working phone line but didn't have Internet access. They agreed to install a modem but this never happened. After waiting several months the eRider purchased and installed the modem herself. They are connected with the Gjilan ISP.

AFRODITA, Ferizaj - Afrodita has one computer. Their staff can operate computers fairly well. They didn't have a working phone line nor Internet access in their office. However they have e-

mail addresses in Hotmail and Yahoo, which they check in IOM and KFOS Internet centers, and Internet cafes.

They had a phone line installed and the eRider installed the Internet connection. After the assessment it was clear that while they were proficient in most of the programs they needed some help on Internet and Excel. They have been trained and are now online.

SHPRESA, Glllogovc – They have 4 computers in their office. Their staff could operate them well however an assessment of their skills was necessary to ensure they did not have any difficulties. They needed a basic Internet course which was successfully completed.

Shpresa didn't have a working phone line in their office however the coordinator of the group has a working phone line and a PC at home. The eRider connected her to the Internet at home to be used for group purposes.

HAREJA, Orahovac – This group had two laptops and one desktop. After an assessment with their staff it was concluded that they only needed an Internet training session which was organized with a local trainer.

They have dial-up connection with a provider from Prizren and the eRider paid for one month of service.

QENDRA E KESHILLIMIT, Prizren - They have one lap top computer. They also have a dial up Internet connection. The staff needed training since their computer skills were very low.

Qendra e keshillimit and Teuta in Prizren were trained together since both groups have only one computer. The eRider rented space in an Internet Café for the training sessions. They were trained and supported by a local trainer. Teuta required a modem, which was installed by the local trainer. The trainer also connected them to the Internet.

The eRider visited both groups after their training to ensure they were satisfied with the training. It proceeded smoothly. The modem was installed for Teuta and they have a dial up connection now.

SHTEPIA E SIGURTE and JETA IME, Gjakova - The training took place in the offices of "Jeta ime" since they have more space and more computers. Both groups needed training in Excel and the Internet. Both of the groups had modems and the trainer connected them to the Internet.

Both groups are connected to the Internet and are up and running. Technical support is being provided to both groups by the local trainer.

QENDRA PER MIREQENIEN E GRUAS, Peja - A local trainer was hired for this group as well. The training has completed successfully. The eRider did the final assessment together with the local trainer and was satisfied with the results. They have a new phone line and are now connected to the Internet.

KALABRIA, Prishtina - This group required training in Excel and the Internet. They also needed a modem. The eRider purchased this for them, installed it and they are now connected to the Internet.

SHOQATA E PAVARUR E GRUAS, Suhareke – At the beginning of the project this group had nine computers but their offices burned down last year. They found a suitable place for the training and the eRider rented the space for them for a month so they could set up their computers and complete the training. The training took place and was successfully completed. The members of this groups were very happy with the training. They recently rented a new office now and the eRider installed a dial up connection for them with Prizren.

NORMA and QENDRA PER MBROJTJEN E GRAVE DHE FEMIJEVE, Prishtina - These two organizations have an Internet connection and the skill of their staff is high. The eRider needed to do one session on the Internet training with a few members of their staff. The session for the Internet was completed successfully.

QENDRA PER MBOJTJEN E NENES DHE FEMIUT, Prishtina – This group runs a large community center and provide assistance to widows and children who lost one or both of their parents during the war. They have 16 computers and approximately 150 kids frequent their centre. During the most recent IPKOorg board meeting IPKOorg decided to donate a free wireless Internet connection to this group.

The eRider installed network cards, a hub, cable and a peer to peer network so they can share this connection among their 16 computers. They have a computer teacher who can maintain the network.

HANDIKOS – Women’s Section – The training for this group took place in May and was successfully completed. They were connected to the Internet.

FLAKA, Lypjan – LULEBORA, Prishtina, and ESTETIKA, Shkabaj - are organizations that do not have any computers. The eRider advised them on potential donors for equipment but they were unable to secure a donation of equipment.

Annex 2: ICT Benchmarks

CONNECTIVITY

- 1) Each group should have at least one computer connected to the Internet
- 2) The organization should have e-mail accounts for each staff person.
- 3) Each group should have a 2/3 year written technology plan that is integrated into their larger organization development plan

The plan should include:

- Technology vision statement for the organization.
 - Statement describing the organization's mission and programs.
 - Statement describing the organization's current use of technology and how it supports program operations.
 - Inventory of the organization's current hardware and software.
 - Inventory of staff computer skills.
 - Technology training plan to improve staff computer skills.
 - Statement of long and short-term technology goals.
 - Strategy for meeting the plan's goals.
 - Timeline for meeting the plan's goals.
 - Budget detailing the costs of implementing the plan.
 - Evaluation criteria to determine whether the plan's goals have been met.
- 4) The organization should have adequate funding to develop their plan or a plan to raise the funding.
 - 5) The organization should identify someone who is responsible for implementing the technology.

TRAINING/REGULAR TASKS

- 1) All staff members should have easy access to the computer software and hardware they need to do their jobs effectively.
- 2) The organization should have adequate backup systems
- 3) All staff members should have desktop access to the Internet resources they need to do their jobs effectively.
- 4) All staff members should have ready access to the technology training needed to meet minimum levels of technology competency.

5) Staff members should use a database to keep track of individuals associated with the organization, such as: clients, members, volunteers, contacts, funders, major donors

6) An organization with five to ten staff members in one office should, at a minimum, have a peer-to-peer network.

NEWSLETTER

1) The Network should have a regular vehicle through which they can do their information and advocacy work (newsletter)

2) The contributions of the Network members should be integrated into the communications strategy of the KWN.

WEBSITE

1) Members of the Network should have their own sections of the KWN website that act as an online brochure.

2) The KWN should have its own website that is integrated into its overall communications strategy.

3) The organizations website should be updated regularly.

Annex 3: First KWN Newsletter

KWN VOICES: Your link to the Women of Kosova

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IN THIS ISSUE:

- * Editorial: Making Our Voices Heard - The Women of Kosova
- * Network News
- * Chronology of Key Events for the Women's Movement in Kosova
- * Member Profile: Legjenda in Viti
- * About KWN Voices

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FROM THE EDITORIAL DESK: Making Our Voices Heard - The Women of Kosova

Important news - Women of Kosova exploit the Internet!

As events change in Kosova, it is giving rise to a miraculous change in the status of women. Thanks to new technology, Kosovar women can now make their voices heard. This helps them to participate more fully in building the society, which silenced them for decades.

The women of Kosova are playing a vital and integrated role in the political, cultural and financial development of their country. Their emancipation is making it possible for the Albanian people to utilize a marvelous talent.

In fact, this process began in the 1970s with the opening of the University of Prishtina in Kosova. The university began to provide Kosovar women with the opportunity to enjoy a professional career, in areas that were once taboo - as doctors, journalists, politicians and other professions.

The existence of Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs) has also allowed Kosovar women to become involved in fields such as education, cultural activities, and legal rights. In these capacities they help and support fellow woman to build decision-making skills and advance within their family and in the workplace. This process of participation has led to economic independence for many Kosovar women.

Now, the Kosova Women's Network will have its own web site

(<http://www.womensnetwork.org>), newsletter and information network. What will this do for the women of Kosova? It will create a bridge of partnership and friendship with other organizations that work inside and outside of Kosova, without distinction of race, faith, or background. It will enable direct communication and information sharing between women. They will be able to remain in direct contact with friends.

Having this ability to communicate will help to soften their pain, by providing them with the means to share their experiences, including their suffering. They will be able to discuss their vision, their hopes, their loves, their families, and learn from the knowledge of their experiences to make a difference in their future.

The world will now be linked with Prishtina, the newest capital in Europe. It will be able to witness the success and triumphs of Kosova and its women.

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>>> Each month we plan to publish KWN Voices in both English and Albanian. Due to some difficulties with translation we are putting out this first issue in English only. The Albanian version will come out later this week.

We plan for each issue of the newsletter to contain an editorial, news about the Network and its campaigns and a profile of a Network member. We hope that over time Network members and those working with women in the region will contribute articles and commentaries.

We can be contacted via e-mail at info@womensnetwork.org <<<

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NETWORK NEWS -

Women make up over 50% of the population of Kosova. They come from diverse ethnic backgrounds, from the cities, towns and villages, with all levels of education and from different economic backgrounds. These women have come together in the Kosova Women's Network (KWN) not to share their problems but to share their strength and their work.

The Kosova Women's Network is engaged in six campaigns: Education, Women in the Economy, Violence Against Women/Domestic Violence, Coalition: NGOs and Politicians, Trafficking in Women and Refugee/IDP Women. While individual Network members may be working on other

issues these campaigns are the primary focus of the Network.

EDUCATION:

A campaign to end illiteracy in Kosova was launched in October 2001 by 19 local NGOs including several Network members with UNICEF and the Kosova Foundation for an Open Society (KFOS). The coalition of groups has produced a book, to encourage learning among women. The targets of this campaign are the women who did not finish school and their children.

WOMEN IN THE ECONOMY:

Women in the Economy conference to be held November 29-30th 2001. Over 30 KWN members will participate. This will be the first conference of its kind in Kosova that specifically targets women and their contribution to the economy.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN/DOMESTIC VIOLENCE:

The KWN will launch a multimedia campaign on November 25, 2001 (International Day Against Violence Against Women). Music, television spots, posters and a play modeled on Eve Ensler's Vagina Monologues (<http://www.vday.org>) are in development. Over 30 groups are participating in this campaign. We will provide additional coverage in next months newsletter.

COALITION: NGOs and POLITICIANS:

Province wide parliamentary elections will be held in Kosova on November 17, 2001. Women's NGOs in partnership with their local politicians are educating their representatives on issues of concern to them.

According to UNMIK Regulation No. 2000/39 over ¼ of the parliamentarians must be women. The KWN is working hard to support women politicians who can represent not just women's issues but issues of importance to everyone in Kosova.

TRAFFICKING IN WOMEN:

In partnership with IOM, KWN members are providing support for women who have been trafficked to Kosova and wish to return home. In several cities in Kosova, KWN members are providing shelter for these women.

REFUGEES/IDPs:

Over 30,000 refugees and IDPs are still in Kosova. Many of them are receiving aid and support from Network members.

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A CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS FOR THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT IN KOSOVA SINCE 1989

1989

The Serbian Regime, led by Milosevic, revoked Kosova's autonomy and removed Albanians from the parliament in Prishtina. 90% of the population of Kosova (Albanians) were fired from their jobs including in health care, education and media. Albanians protesting for equal rights are met with violence from the police and military. The Albanian community began over ten year's of passive non-violent resistance to state oppression.

Albanian Civil Society starts organizing. The first Albanian NGOs are founded. Among them the women's group MOTRAT QIRIAZI, the Paraplegic Association and the Mother Theresa Humanitarian Association.

1995

Women's rights activists found the CENTER for the PROTECTION of WOMEN and CHILDREN in Prishtina. They provide specialist advice, health care, and documentation to women victims of human rights abuses.

International women activists and women's groups including women's groups from Former Yugoslavia begin to give more support to women organizing in Kosova.

In Viti region, Oxfam UK/I helps set up the rural women's group LEGJENDA.

Albanian women from Kosova begin what becomes a long-term involvement in the Belgrade WOMEN IN BLACK AGAINST MILITARISM annual meetings.

1997

AUREOLA rural women's group is founded, working in Obiliq. ELENA, group for women's rights is founded, based in Prishtina.

OCTOBER 1997

Serbian military begin clandestine preparations in Kosova for ethnic cleansing of Albanians and war.

Albanian students and civil society organize large-scale non-violent demonstrations throughout Kosova.

FEBRUARY 1998

The Serbian Army start military operations against Albanian civilians in central Kosova (Drenica region). Tens of thousands flee the war to other parts of Kosova. Massacres, murders and rapes begin. The sixteen month's of violence cause the deaths of almost ten thousand civilians and include the rapes of many thousands of women.

Kosova NGOs, women's groups and human rights organizations immediately organize helping displaced people with food, medical care, shelter, and education.

In these days, women's NGOs begin regular monthly meetings to support each other and share experiences.

THE CENTER for the REHABILITATION of MOTHERS and CHILDREN is founded specifically to work with displaced from Drenica.

SEPTEMBER 1998

Kosovar rural women's groups organize as a network comprising Aureola, Elena, Legjenda, Liria, Motrat Qiriazi. As the 'Rural Women's Network' they develop a common program in order to provide more support to women and girls in the conflict areas of Kosova, and to increase networking with feminist women's groups outside of Kosova.

Women with disabilities begin to self-organize by founding their group 'ZGJIMI (awakening)'.

MARCH 1999

NATO begins its response to the human rights abuses being conducted by the Serbian authorities in Kosova. Military targets in Kosova, Serbia and Montenegro are bombed.

Paramilitaries acting together with military forces intensify their attacks on civilians, deporting Albanians from their homes, and murdering many others. More than half the Albanian population are forced, in many cases on foot, into the mountains, and on terrible

journeys to safety in Macedonia, Albania, Montenegro and Bosnia Hercegovina. Kosovar women's groups, themselves refugees, begin to fundraise, and to organize humanitarian and empowerment work in camps and communities in these places.

JUNE 1999

The Kumanova agreement is signed by the Yugoslav state, signaling their submission to NATO's authority, and the beginning of their military withdrawal from Kosova. The agreement fails to include hand over of political prisoners. As a result many women cannot be reunited with their men folk, who remain in jails in Serbia, in many cases until 2001. Political prisoners also include some women. Albanians begin rapidly to return to their burnt homes and decimated villages. They start to rebuild their lives. Serbs and Roma begin to leave Kosova fearing reprisals.

OCTOBER 1999

Women's groups become increasingly disaffected at the way the international community is failing to include them as equal partners, and instead is marginalizing them. The groups struggle against the neo-colonialism functioning under the auspices of the UNMIK and the OSCE, which gives little respect for the years of self organizing by the Albanian community.

JANUARY 2000

A few individuals within international institutions give support to women in their self organizing. One of these initiatives results in the formation of the Kosova Women's Network (KWN), an umbrella organization, which represents over 32 women's groups, most of them founded in 1999. Its regular monthly meetings include women from these groups and from international organizations.

JUNE 2000

KWN organizes the first regional Albanian women's conference. Its topics include health, education, violence against women, trafficking in women, legal rights.

JUNE 2001

At their request KWN supports minority women's groups to organize. KWN expands to include women's groups from Turkish, Roma, Ashkali, Egyptian and Serbian communities.

NOVEMBER 2001

KWN organizes the second women's conference with the topic of 'Women and the Economy'.

KWN organizes their second annual Kosova wide campaign against domestic violence. The innovative campaign features pop songs, tv spots, monologues, posters and other media/cultural activities.

The KWN launches an e-mail newsletter, KWN VOICES and a website <http://www.womensnetwork.org>

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PROFILE: Legjenda in Viti

Each month we will profile a different member of the KWN. In this way we hope to show the depth and breadth of the women's groups working in Kosova. These profiles along with pictures and additional information about their programs in both Albanian and English will be available in the PARTNERS section of the KWN website once it is launched (<http://www.womensnetwork.org>)

>>>'In 2001, 400 women and 80 children in Viti alone participated in projects at our center, where we have provided them with the opportunity to acquire sewing and computer skills as well as being able to organize meetings and forums that were of importance to the community. Five hundred secondary school children participated in 4 organized sessions where experts provided psychosocial information regarding youth deviance from social norms. Almost 90% of the villagers participated in these sessions. Our motto is, 'Give me an educated woman and you will find a civilized nation.'<<< From Legjenda Director, Latifir Neziri.

The Women's Organization 'Legjenda' was founded in October of 1996 and is a non-governmental organization based in Viti and works heavily within its surrounding villages.

At their center in Viti, women, children, and teenagers from all ethnic and social backgrounds have the opportunity to acquire skills in computer training, sewing courses, psychosocial assistance, as well as being able to discuss various problems they are currently coping with. We are especially focused on villages that are high in the mountains and have minimal access to various programs surrounding Viti. We maintain constant communication with the women of these

villages and provide support in helping them to achieve their goals.

VISION: Our vision is to increase the participation of women living in villages to take an active role in Kosovar civil society.

PROCESS: Legjenda carries out psycho-social programs, health care and education training, and helps women to become economically self-sufficient through job training programs.

REGIONS OF WORK: Legjenda works with the women of the community in Viti including the 42 surrounding villages.

THE ACTIVISTS: Legjenda currently employs a Director, Assistant Director, and 5 project assistants. International and local experts have been engaged to organize and supervise some of our workshops.

WHO DO WE WORK WITH? Legjenda works predominately with women and children from various ages, specifically focusing on women in the villages.

SUPPORT: Legjenda has received financial support from the following donors:

OXFAM, Kosova; Kosova Women's Initiative (KWI), Kosova; GFW, New York; CDF, Kosova; Star Delhi International, Serbia; AID Kosova; Norwegian Church, Kosova; Soros, Kosova; Motrat Qiriazi, Kosova; Mother Teresa Organization, Kosova; as well as various donors from the community of Viti.

HIGHLIGHTS OF OUR WORK:

- * Health Education for 20 villages with 7500 women participating
- * Provided free transportation to 74 girls enabling them to attend secondary school
- * First Aid Courses to 108 women of 9 villages
- * Information sessions focusing on youth violence to 360 girls of 6 villages
- * Cultural and sport activities to 134 girls of 6 villages
- * Workshops on women's rights 270 women of 6 villages
- * Psycho-social support to rural women in 8 villages
- * Sewing workshops for dislocated women 37 women of 8 villages

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About the KWN Voices

KWN Voices is published monthly by the Kosova Women's Network (KWN). The KWN is made up of over 32 women's groups from throughout Kosova. We hope that you find the information we disseminate of value and that when we make a call for action we can count on your support. Please forward this newsletter to others and encourage them to join.

TO SUBSCRIBE: send an e-mail to kwn-news-request@alb-net.com with only the word 'subscribe' in the body of the message or visit <http://www.alb-net.com/mailman/listinfo/kwn-news>

Inquiries and submissions can be sent to info@womensnetwork.org. Back issues of the newsletter can be found at <http://www.womensnetwork.org>.

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