

# SURVEY

Survey dedicated to the identification of needs  
and potentials of SGBV survivors  
for their participation in Governance and  
employment opportunities in Kosovo

## **FINDINGS REPORT:**

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## Definition of key terminology

While there is no single agreed understanding of the key terminology, social integration, social inclusion, social cohesion and social participation, the following definitions are used in this survey.

- Empowerment- *is grounded in the belief that women SGBV violence should have access to information, education, and other necessary social and economic support to make informed decisions that best reflect their interests and needs. Rather than to deal with their status, the empowerment approach uses knowledge dissemination, training and counseling to create a set of services that victims control, such as post-victimization assistance and risk minimization. This approach can also be extended to communities, allowing them to take action collaboratively to address specific inclusive interventions.*
- Economic Empowerment- *Economic empowerment is the capacity of women and men to participate in, contribute to and benefit from growth processes in ways which recognize the value of their contributions, respect their dignity and make it possible to negotiate a fairer distribution of the benefits of growth*
- Social Inclusion- *is interpreted as a process by which efforts are made to ensure equal opportunities for all, regardless of their background, so that they can achieve their full potential in life. It is a multi-dimensional process aimed at creating conditions which enable full and active participation of every member of the society in all aspects of life, including civic, social, economic, and political activities, as well as participation in decision- making processes<sup>1</sup>*
- Social Integration- *is interpreted as a dynamic and principled process of promoting the values, relations and institutions that enable all people to participate in social, economic, cultural and political life on the basis of equality of rights, equity and dignity. In a way – building communities and societies that are based on the promotion and protection of all human rights, as well as respect for and value of dignity of each individual, diversity, pluralism, tolerance, non-discrimination, non-violence, equality of opportunity, solidarity, security, and participation of all people, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and persons<sup>2</sup>.*
- Social empowerment is understood as the process of developing a sense of autonomy and self-confidence, and acting individually and

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<sup>1</sup> White Paper "Kosovo Social Inclusion Challenges" <http://www.kuvendikosoves.org/common/docs/kosovo-social.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Integrated guidelines for the economic and employment policies of the Member States , Guideline 10: Promoting social inclusion and combating poverty; page 22; <http://ec.europa.eu/eu2020/pdf/Brochure%20Integrated%20Guidelines.pdf> last accessed December, 2016

collectively to change social relationships and the institutions and discourses that exclude poor people and keep them in poverty.

- Social Exclusion- *is understood as the condition (barriers and process) that impede social inclusion. Social exclusion is a process through which individuals or groups are wholly or partially excluded from fully participating in all aspects of life of the society, in which they live, on the grounds of their social identities, such as age, gender, race, ethnicity, culture or language, and/or physical, economic, social disadvantages. Social exclusion may mean the lack of voice, lack of recognition, or lack of capacity for active participation. It may also mean exclusion from decent work, assets, land, opportunities, access to social services and/or political representation.*
- Social Cohesion- *refers to the elements that bring and hold people together in society. In a socially cohesive society all individuals and groups have a sense of belonging, participation, inclusion, recognition and legitimacy.*
- Social Participation- *is understood as the act of engaging in society's activities. It refers to the possibility to influence decisions and have access to decision-making processes. Social participation creates mutual trust among individuals, which forms the basis for shared responsibilities towards the community and society.*

## Abbreviations and Acronyms

ATRC	Advocacy Training and Resource Center
CPHF	Centre the Promotion of Healthy Families
CPWR	Centre for the Promotion of Women's Rights
KRCT	Kosova Rehabilitation Center for Torture Victims
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SGBV	Sexual and Gender based violence
UNDP	United Nations Development Programs
USAID	United States Agency for International Development



## Executive Summary

Women's economic empowerment is a prerequisite for sustainable development and pro-poor growth. Achieving women's economic empowerment should require sound public policies, a holistic approach and long-term commitment and gender-specific perspectives must be integrated at the design stage of policy and programming. Economic empowerment increases women's access to economic resources and opportunities including jobs, financial services, property and other productive assets, skills development and market information.

The case of Kosovo illustrates the essential role women play in establishing a stable post-conflict environment and how important becomes to build a gendered human security. The today's realities show the need for more support regarding economic and financial independency of women SGBV and marginalized minorities, their needs for more education and [self]employment supported at all levels. The level of stigma, and positive discrimination have constantly raised the issue of economic empowerment as an issue of human rights and rule of law. Considering the important role that women play in the family and their unrecognized role in their communities, the need for more community-oriented interventions remain a priority for future interventions.

In order to evaluate the current development trends and the underrepresented role of women SGBV survivors and other marginalized and underrepresented women, such as RAE communities, the Center for the Promotion of Healthy families, in partnership with Kosovo Rehabilitation Centre for Torture Victims and the Centre for the Promotion of Women's Rights undertook a survey to the phenomena. The survey on Economic Empowerment and social inclusion of SGBV in Kosovo is the result of the research work planned to be implemented and to orient the interventions which has followed the implementation of a 12-months project dedicated to promote women/ survivors of sexual violence in governance and their economy through improved policy, representation, employment, education, and participation in Kosovo, an initiative supported by ATRC/USAID.

This survey analyzes the information collected during the program implementation, through interviews, meetings, local activities and focus groups dedicated to women victims of sexual violence (non)identified individuals in need for services, and their respective families which suffer in silence. Hence, the survey aims to identify the most vulnerable target groups who are more prone to social exclusion such as RAE communities/ representatives and map all interventions done by different actors contributing to the economic empowerment and social inclusion of the identified vulnerable groups. In addition the survey gives recommendations with respect to the situation of those population categories assumed to be among most vulnerable, identifying the main factors underlying their socio-economic position, education, status of health and [dis]abilities, gender, etc.

Despite achievements in the implementation of the decentralization, the Kosovo's model of the social protection is widely affected by financial constraints, a growing number of socially excluded (elderly and war veterans, persons with disabilities, persons with post traumatic stress disorder, long-term unemployed persons, women and girls in rural areas,

children as part of poor families, Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian (RAE) communities, etc)<sup>3</sup>, while the scheme is widely dependant on the contributions from the employed population.

The basic social assistance scheme is designed to distinguish between those capable of, and not capable of, work, and those with or without dependent children<sup>4</sup>, hence playing proxy to both unemployment benefits and child benefits; it is followed with the pensions scheme and the disability allowance scheme; while, specific legal framework is applied to women SGBV where acknowledging their status as war victims

Information about the observed groups was obtained by focus group discussions and interviews with two following targeted groups. The first group included 40 women who suffered the war, survived sexual and gender based violence and war atrocities, lost their family relatives in the region of the Glogovac/ Drenas when stigma and prejudices towards over 250 women survivors of sexual and gender-violence impede their integration in society

The second target group included RAE community in Gjilan/Gnjilane municipality because the issue represents a complex reality of 300 people, where women and girls are more exposed to Sexual and Gender-based Violence, forced (early marriage), physical violence, psychological abuse, denial of resources/ opportunities/ services and so on.

The Survey results of both groups show that although there is a trend to link the economic problems and lack of women's representation at all levels with poverty, yet the cases examined and human stories shared reflect more profound issues which correlate in socio-cultural or ideological considerations and impacts. In either aspects, we can say that economic empowerment could be beneficial for these categories of women as it (a) increases women's household bargaining power and ability to rebuild a life for herself and her children; (b) women learn skills that help them negotiate household gender power relations, or; (c) at the community level, it contributes to shifts in attitudes, gender relations of power and a reduction of the acceptance or impunity surrounding cases of SGBV.

On the other hand, the "unjustified" financial income for women SGBV, remain a present threat for further marginalization, isolation and fear. Presently, survivors of war-related sexual violence have limited space to be heard or to contribute to the important processes being undertaken on their behalf. Miscommunication or delayed communications and complicated legal and administrative language have also resulted in survivors being unaware of their opportunities for social and economic benefits, education and professional orientation, causing further anxiety and discontent. Access to structures and programs that may be able to assist their rehabilitation and reintegration remains difficult. In this context, the issue of Return of the displaced Kosovo Roma families and reintegration of repatriated Kosovo Roma persons still presents a serious challenge. It is worth mentioning that since 1999, the Gjilan MOCR has registered 374 Kosovo Roma returnees who were assisted through different return programs, mainly funded by different international organisations. The Ministry for Communities and Returns as well as the municipal authorities have financed construction of houses on the allocated land by municipality. Another damaging aspect that affects the return process of the Kosovo Roma is the fact

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3 UNDP Report on Social Inclusion, 2010

4 Law on Social Assistance in 2003 (Law 2003/13): Category I recipients are those families where no one is capable of work, and/or where the only adult capable of work is looking after an incapable person over 65, and which has no income and no more than half a hectare of land. Category II recipients include households where any member capable of work is registered as unemployed, and which has a child under 5 years of age or provides fulltime care to an orphan.

that most of the Kosovo Roma properties in Gjilan are damaged and/or illegally occupied. This aspect is crucial in maintaining a normal life as property presents basis for sequential problems related to marriages, violence loss of integrity etc.

There is a repeated need for more exchange/ communication between survivors and their families with local authorities, in order for them to listen to survivors on the challenges they face in accessing and maximizing access to social services and other benefits related to their status.

A series of specific recommendations to properly address the women's economic empowerment are described further in the study.

Broadly, the recommendations are focusing towards holistic and context- approach towards the social and economic reintegration of survivors through integrating existing programs and success stories as part of a National Strategy for women' economic empowerment and development of an action plan tailored to Kosovo' Regions' priorities and communities; ensure survivors' access and participation in the design of future programs that can better assist them to rebuild their lives; continue to educate communities about sexual violence and highlight the link between past abuses and ongoing violations.

Beyond providing economic resources and technical skills training, this holistic approach could be helpful to provide women with women-only spaces that encourage the formation of social networks (where they can discuss challenges, share advice, and learn about local services).

Lastly, education and awareness-raising components should involve young generations and possibly male partners of female beneficiaries – either alone or together with women – in order to reduce the resistance and backlash that could result. Working with men should focus on encouraging less biased gender attitudes, norms, and beliefs, promoting women's rights, facilitating mutual respect and open communication, and generating common understanding about the benefits of women's economic empowerment and the harms of past abuses and ongoing violence.

## Abstract

The survey “dedicated to the identification of needs and potentials of SGBV survivors for their participation in Governance and employment opportunities in Kosovo” is the result of the research work planned to be implemented and to orient the interventions which has followed the implementation of a 12-months project dedicated to promote women/survivors of sexual violence in governance and the economy through improved policy, representation, employment, education, and participation in Kosovo, an initiative supported by ATRC/USAID, implemented by the Center for the Promotion of Healthy families, in partnership with Kosovo Rehabilitation Centre for Torture Victims (KRCT) and the Centre for the Promotion of Women’s Rights.

This Survey addresses two main research questions. The first examines how and to what extent women in Kosovo have survived the war and post-war difficulties through both formal and informal means (*information should include data and cases of war atrocities/survivals, which should have been entitled to benefit the social, economic and moral integration, reparation and compensation for all losses*). The second assesses the role women SGBV may play in the implementation of equal empowerment and furthermore, in the Kosovo’s economic reconstruction and development. By understanding their participation in the development sector and the labor market, this survey gives recommendations with respect to the situation of those population categories assumed to be among most vulnerable, identifying the main factors underlying their socio-economic position, education, status of health and [dis]abilities, gender, etc.

CPHF, Kosovo has been previously partnering with KRCT in performing the national campaign “Hear my voice”, jointly implementing activities dedicated to the access to social services and rehabilitation for women/victims of sexual violence. The CPHF, Kosovo expertise has contributed to developing standards of social inclusion and rehabilitation for women and families who suffered during the Kosovo war; helping them overcome the day-to-day trauma.

KRCT represents a non-governmental organization that operates since 1999 and offers its services to around 18 000 people. Since its establishment, KRCT operates with various partners to meet its program objectives and provides services in the field of Rehabilitation, Research & Documentation and in the field of Human Rights & Advocacy.

The Centre for the Promotion of Women’s Rights represents a local organization which works in the Drenas region with the women survivors of the SGBV.

## Introduction and Methodology

In the post-conflict environment of continued interethnic tension and unstable economic conditions, women have emerged as a social group suffering war related crimes (rape, beating, killings) and other human rights violations. The aftermath brought considerable number of undocumented stories, broken families, and destroyed and conflictual communities, which put into serious challenges the sporadic initiatives aimed at dealing with war atrocities and the past.

Raised loud by civil society organizations, such discussion on war-related atrocities and sexual violence and rape as war instrument was embraced by various levels of the government and the President of the Republic through establishment of the national Counsel for the protection of the war victims. Advocacy campaigns focused on conflict-related sexual violence, starting particularly after 2012, have served to break the previously deafening silence on SGVB and women as civilian war victims. Lobbying efforts to amend the legislation recognizing and providing benefits to KLA martyrs, veterans and civilian victims (deceased, missing and injured)<sup>5</sup>, in order to also include victims of conflict-related sexual violence, began in 2012. In 2014, an amendment drafted by the Parliament to recognize and to provide benefits to survivors of war-related sexual violence was passed<sup>6</sup>. A draft regulation dedicated to implementation of the legislative amendment to recognize and provide benefits to survivors passed in December 2015, providing the basis for the establishment of a Commission to verify the status of victims and survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, and to ensure the distribution of the benefits provided by law<sup>7</sup>.

In such context of legal framework ad multi-agency response, one might think that the real concerns were addressed and already addressed; while the current situation of the women as war victims remains in stagnation: no clear and understandable rights to be implemented, no clear defined mechanisms and most importantly, no local approach to empowerment of such categories to break their isolation.

In order to evaluate the current development trends and the underrepresented role of women SGBV survivors, the Center for the Promotion of Healthy families, in partnership with Kosovo Rehabilitation Centre for Torture Victims and the Centre for the Promotion of Women's Rights undertook a survey to the phenomena. This survey analyzes the information collected during the program implementation, through interviews, meetings, local activities and focus groups dedicated to women victims of sexual violence (non)identified individuals in need for services, and their respective families which suffer in silence. Hence, the survey aims to identify the most vulnerable target groups who are more prone to social exclusion such as RAE communities/ representatives and map all interventions done by different actors contributing to the economic empowerment and social inclusion of the identified vulnerable groups.

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5 Law no. 04/L-054 On the Status and the Rights of the Martyrs, Invalids, Veterans, Members of Kosovo Liberation Army, Civilian Victims of War and their Families, of 8 December 2011 Kosovo,

6 Law no. 04/L-172 On Amending and Supplementing the Law no. 04/L-054 On the Status and the Rights of the Martyrs, Invalids, Veterans, Members of Kosovo Liberation Army, Civilian Victims of War and their Families, of 20 March 2014

7 Regulation no. 22/2015 On Defining the Procedures for Recognition and Verification of the Status of Sexual Violence Victims During the Kosovo Liberation War, of 2 February 2016

## 1. Vulnerabilities and Gaps

Because women in Kosovo only reluctantly spoke of sexual violence, it is widely believed that the cases documented in selected reports represent only a fraction of the incidents of sexual violence that occurred, as they were felt self-isolated, socially excluded and in an unequal opportunity for employment and integration. Stigma and discrimination accompanied those few rare cases where women dared to challenge the judiciary and court, creating more conflicts rather than sound solutions. Discriminatory approaches were shown regarding women SGBV, abandoned from their families accompanied by small children and without housing or employment opportunities. These victims used to live in such humiliating environments. No better situation was identified for marginalized and underrepresented minority women, such as the *RAE community*. This group is mostly affected by forced (early) marriages followed by multiple gender based violence incidents such as physical, sexual and psychological abuse as well as denial of access to educational opportunities and other public services.

Their poor level of education and technical skills along with cultural and social prejudices have maintained initial isolation and restricted access to economic empowerment. Both target groups in this region remain in highly difficult socio-economic situation and emphasize the need for access to productive inputs, training and employment to compensate them for the material damages and loss of earnings.

## 2. Economic Participation

Such innovative concept provides the opportunity for the women to consolidate their position as human rights holders and as economically independent households. Data show that the current situation of the interviewed women lack basic education, and/or experience and their articulated needs lack their life emergencies for support.

The economic efficiency argument<sup>8</sup> uses quantitative evidence, and it asserts that women's participation contributes to development because women are more likely to reinvest in the community and help lift families out of poverty. Including women, on the other hand, leads to higher living standards, increased productivity, and greater social cohesion.<sup>9</sup>

## 3. Economic empowerment

Economic empowerment is thought to allow poor people to think beyond immediate daily survival. For example, it enables households to make their own decisions around making investments in health and education, and taking risks in order to increase their income. There is also some evidence that economic empowerment can strengthen vulnerable groups' participation in the decision-making. The evidence also suggests that economic power is often easily 'converted' into increased social status or decision-making power.

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8 Naoko Otobe, Employment and Labor Market Policies Branch, "Resource Guide on Gender Issues in Employment and Labour Market Policies: Working Towards Women's Economic Empowerment and Gender Equality," (Geneva: International Labour Organization, 2014), 1

9 The International Bank for Reconstruction, Engendering Development: Through Gender Equality in Rights, Resources, and Voice (New York: Oxford University, 2001), 10-11.

In the Kosovo context, the economic empowerment of women might be interpreted as an opportunity to address gender inequality; the needs for technical and skill support; property rights and transformative forms of social protection.

#### 4. Social skills and personal engagement

The approach in which social and personal skills becomes quite evident where women SGBV are able to hold others to account, have no fear of their identity, hold a level of representation and a voice; have overcome their self-exclusion and have built their ability to imagine and aspire to a better future.

Women's involvement in the local community mechanisms can contribute to social empowerment by improving their skills, knowledge and self-perception. Vulnerable groups, such as the very poor, women and marginalized communities can often lack the skills and confidence to engage in community decision-making. It may therefore be important to support mechanisms designed to specifically target marginalized groups in order to ensure that they can participate. It is argued that participation in local associations can empower poor people to engage in public politics and collective action.

To fully promote such approach, the survey promotes the creation of incentive partnerships between the public-private sector, NGOs and communities that are based on mutual respect and shared values. Civil society have shown that they can fill a variety of roles as Kosovo's economic and political institutions mature, from serving as a watchdog to giving input on policy to providing social services. Services need to be delivered to the population at large and to the poor and vulnerable in particular, with gender equity as a common goal. Successful partnership will greatly increase the absorption and implementation capacity generally.

#### 5. Survey methodology

This Survey addresses two main research questions. The first examines how and to what extent women in Kosovo have survived the war and post-war difficulties through both formal and informal means (*based on data and cases of war atrocities/ survivals, which should have been entitled to benefit the social, economic and moral integration, reparation and compensation for all losses*). The second assesses the role women SGBV may play in the implementation of equal empowerment and furthermore, in the Kosovo's economic reconstruction and development. By understanding their participation in the labor market, this survey highlights how women SGBV can both create and benefit from existing social and economic opportunities, how their participation can contribute at various spheres to Kosovo's economic growth, and what challenges remain.

The survey tents to provide a qualitative examination of the current situation of the women through the collection and analysis of 40 semi-structured interviews, following indicators as: situation of those categories of women assumed to be among most vulnerable individuals, main factors underlying their socio-economic position, education, status of health and [dis]abilities etc in two specific regions of Kosovo. The interviews are collected based on the women's ability to articulate the needs and difficulties.

The process of respondents was made possible by joint cooperation of the Implementing partners. Also, the venue selected for the interviews in full respect of principle “Do no harm”. 40 Women were selected from training, meetings in Drenas/Gologovac; stories which were shared by women who suffered the war, survived sexual and gender based violence and war atrocities, lost their family relatives. Special attention was paid to women and girls of RAE community in Gjilan/Gnjilane, exposed to SGBV and discrimination. By excluding men, some nuance with respect to cultural attitudes about gender roles and equality is lost. Therefore, this survey does not accomplish a gender analysis of economic participation; rather, it more narrowly examines only the role that this special category of women/survivors may play in actively engaged in the social and economic spheres of Kosovo

The semi-structured interviews were conducted in the premises of the Center for Promotion of Woman Rights in Drenas/Gllogovce, in a manner meant to strike a balance between consistency and flexibility of the gathered information. Two questionnaires –one for each research question –are tailored for each meeting based on the background, experience, and knowledge of the individual being interviewed. The questions are designed to maximize neutrality and gather as much specific information related to the research question as possible. During the interviews, the women were granted flexibility to elaborate beyond the formal questions, as this create a more collegial and conducive environment for the purposes of the qualitative research. All interviewees voluntarily participated and gave consent for accuracy and completeness.

As the confidentiality of survivors remains a key concern, details that could identify individual survivors or areas in which self-identified survivors may reside have been excluded from the data collection process.

The Survey findings remain a collegial process of review of existing legal literature and policy documents (strategies) and independent experts’ considerations. The overall process of data collection and analysis (qualitative and quantitative) on the impact of the war in the lives of women and their families was consulted with field experts and facilitators from CPFH, KRCT and Drenas Women’s Centres, namely the people who actually treat individuals from observed groups, executives who are responsible for the well-functioning of functionality of social services, and economic schemes)<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> See Annex 1: Questionnaire



## 6. Key Findings and conclusions

### **6.1 Challenging realities:**

The current realities for women victims of conflict related rapes and sexual violence remain at the limits of desperation:

Data showed that “*all 40 interviewed women report that either they know or they have experienced themselves violence, beatings, loss of family members, loss of their husbands, or rape*”. This was striking information coming from a small group of women who either approached the team voluntarily, or participated in various program activities. Women survivors represented a range of population from 32- 68 years of age, with various problems related to social economic, and civil rights. Many of them suffer psychological symptoms of PTSD, they remain quite, sometimes fearful as if the interviews would break their silent realities.

In the actual contexts, the lack of professional capacities of state institutions to access to justice and rehabilitation (Article 14 of the UN CAT) can be attributed to various identified factors:

- *Silence* of the survivors in the aftermath of the armed conflict, *fear of stigma* combined with *intimidation and threats* are repeatedly raised: all interviews raise the reluctance of survivors/ women, who experiences war crimes and rape in the same place, promising to never tell of what happened to them.
- In the absence of public awareness about gravity of the act, neither the survivors nor the ones closest to them feel safe to challenge the traditional concept of “honor and pride”; and, be able to testify in the future criminal court proceedings.
- The lack of systemic and comprehensive public support services to survivors has negative implications to victims’ lives.
- Being crimes happening long time ago, and not properly investigated, have created “imaginary” doors against access to rehabilitation and healing for the victims. Testimonies show the unconditional support that victims provide to each-other during discussions.

### **6.2 Profiling women survivors of SGBV**

Data from 40 interviewed women showed that there is always a big challenge to profile a women survivor of SGBV. The challenges remain in current lifestyle, family background, education, professional background, wealth in family, etc.

Almost 40 interviewees shared that they were grown up and raised by traditional families, with certain ethical and religious values and principles, where the role of care taker was implanted by generations.

They showed low levels of technical and/or professional skills; but such situation was also comprised of insecurities to employment and property rights.

The interview process identified only 5 women capable to articulate their needs and ask for support against physical and psychological symptoms of anxiety, fear and stigma. One survivor explains that “*I feel like I want to slap my neighbor, when she walks by and doesn’t speak a word to me. While we both were raped*”. Another survivor shared her state of mind “when watching violent news and happenings, it remains so difficult to overcome it, so I get sick for the next 3 days, experiencing anxiety, headaches, vomiting, etc). Another survivor shared a personal survival strategy that she invented for herself as

*“trying to be positive that I am still alive”, “self-counseling among women who experienced the same or similar things”.*

Other 35 interviewed women remained reluctant towards a potential process of self-identification.

With a marginalized distinct self-identification, women and girls from RAE minorities report extreme poverty, lack of education and lack of acquired skills, disabilities.

As per information provided by (MOCR), and based on the 2011 population census out of 90,178 residents registered in the municipality of Gjilan/Gnjilane, 361 are Kosovo Roma, 15 Kosovo Ashkali and 1 Kosovo Egyptian, however the municipal office for communities and returns (MOCR) estimates that in fact there are over 400 Kosovo Roma community members who reside in Gjilane/Gnjilane town only, particularly in its five urban quarters. Given the low number of Kosovo Ashkali and the Kosovo Egyptian communities living in the municipality, the following assessment will focus on the situation of the Kosovo Roma community mainly, and specifically on situation of women. It was noted that the marginalised position of women of this community derives as a consequence of several complementary social factors: 1) the high rate of unemployment 2) the lack of adequate education 3) lack of vocational education- qualifications 4) socio-economic integration; 5) lack of political will to make affirmative actions in supporting women of this community; 5) and the surrounding general stigma over their status in society.

During interviews with the women, they stated that some of them were engaged in seasonal works performing agriculture and artisanal handcrafts. The poverty remains the main challenge for these women, impeding them from being able to afford civil registration and personal documents which are needed to get any potential employment. Almost all interviewees reported problems related to access to services (healthcare, social, municipal, and public services).

In a long-term and due to different overlapping problems, it is common that respective individuals of these groups often, face challenges of social and economic nature. They are also often discriminated against the access to basic services, deprived from job opportunities due to lack of proper education which consequently make them be dependent of social benefits. On top, cases of child labor, early marriages and early child birth in this community have been reported by different human rights stakeholders and media, but no precise data on those topics are available officially from the MOCR in Gjilan/Gnjilane.

### **6.3 Documenting the social damages:**

To date, many attempts are made to collect testimonies of conflict related rape on file, along efforts to identify data on war crimes and crimes against humanity in a systemic way. Despite the existing legal framework and various government and non-government mechanism, the need for proper documentation of war crimes and what impact war left remains still not solved.

23 women out of 40 interviewed showed that this was the first time *“they speak about what causes the war”*. Despite financial damages (burning houses, expatriations, loss of family economies etc) they reported problems which related to their daily lives and the closed community they live in.

For some of the women the war has changed the communities in terms of lost contacts, individualized and closed families, changes in the relations among family members. For other women, the war has taken every value the family had, they felt abandoned, with no

employment opportunities, no private economy or no help in the family. Women report for feelings of shame, mistrust in local authorities, and sometime misinformation about the rights and the status of the SGBV survivors. The stigmatization which is associated with rape and exclusion by their own communities and family members further complicated their status.

Some 31 out of 40 women also expressed concern about how they could explain where the money comes from, or how they could hide the pension from their families. Many feared that it may lead to their identification, further stigmatization, and potential violence. There are numerous social consequences of sexual violence within the family of the victim and larger community: some survivors have been abandoned by their husbands, due to stigma and disgust. One woman explains, *"I told my husband myself what happened and he left me with the children and never showed up again. Now I live on social assistance, I had to move from my place."*

Single unmarried women felt devastated indicating that they were stigmatized not only by prospective husbands, but also by prospective mothers-in-law. One survivor explains, *"Some young women who were raped never succeeded to find a husband."*

In addition, survivors also experience generalized rejection from their families, partners and communities, as well as abuse from their partners or communities. They internalize this stigmatization and abuse by isolating themselves. Also as a result of the stigma, many survivors of sexual violence remain *"closed in their houses...with the trauma still in their head."*

Overall, the lack of information, and the lack of recognition raised serious concerns for many women facing gender-based or domestic violence from their husbands/relatives. Such reality brings out the need for prioritizing crimes against women in transitional justice mechanisms, through addressing their rights to reparation (including the right to individual compensation, health, education and employment); having in mind that the fundamental obligation of such reparation scheme is not so much to return the individual to his or her *status quo ante*, but to recognize the seriousness of the violation of the equal rights of fellow citizens and to commit the government's mechanisms towards respect for those rights.

Though "only few women have had the luck to have support from their families", some families and communities treat survivors better than others. As one survivor indicates, "how people look at women who experienced this violence depends on the mentality. Some see them as criminals and that they should be ashamed. I would like to have TV shows to show people that we are not bad." This point out the need for awareness-raising to fight stigma and prejudice, discrimination and abandonment to conflict-related sexual violence, in particular within the family and community.

#### **6.4 Legal and institutional contexts:**

In the context of Kosovo, the existing legal and institutional framework regarding women's rights, empowerment and social inclusion for vulnerable groups remain up-to-date and modern. In compliance with these developments, the amendments and supplement of the Law no. 04/L-172 on amendment and supplementation of the Law no.04/L-054 on the Status and the Rights of the Martyrs, Invalids, Veterans, recognized the status of the civilian victims and personal benefits for the victims of the sexual violence.

Responding to the recommendations of civil society (including organizations providing services and women movements organizations that represent the women survivors), several initiatives and awareness campaigns were initiated by the office of President of Republic, culminating with the establishment of the national Council for the Survivors of

Sexual Violence in War, acting as a coordination and support mechanism with regards to status and the rights of victims of sexual violence during the war, access to justice and opportunities for economic empowerment. This process was followed by the development of secondary legislation that provides for a commission to be established that will verify the status and recognize survivors of sexual violence

Despite the existing legal safeguards, the interviewed women find it difficult to access information about the legal framework to provide official verification of being a survivor of conflict-related sexual violence and the processes being undertaken to establish the Commission and benefits.

They find it difficult to follow periodically the information provided by authorities. They also remain at very low profiles regarding the accuracy of information. Such, misinformation about the processes further compounds this challenge and heightens frustrations, and discontent with the government.

When asked about any other program or services dedicated to reparations programs, they do hesitate to comment, apparently due to lack of information about what reparation means for them, but also due to the fact that such rhetoric remain at high policy levels and they do not come with clear strategy and clear impact at the local levels.

### **6.5 Economic empowerment as response to social exclusion:**

The study analysis and data collected has quantified specific indicators which generate economic empowerment and self-sustainability:

Almost all 40 women who participated in the interviews and meetings shared their desire and willingness to work, mostly dependent by their place of residence (rural/urban).

Most Women shared their willingness to working in handicrafts, farming, beekeeping, tailoring, hairdressing, or food processing. Such support may not empower them to buy new house or open an enterprise/ small business (shop), but it builds the sense of ownership and also group- work (*which was stated as tempting to be lost, or difficult to be maintained*)

All of 40 women shared the need for practical information regarding the economic rights and pensions, regarding the status of the civil war veterans. Some of them knew the process as strictly related to the financial support, where others needed more information about potential support to health, and education for their children.

24 women linked the economic empowerment only to the municipal support to women, through local programs, and training courses for women in order for them to run small family businesses and support their integration and rehabilitation of the women as war survivors.

Neglecting the needs of the survivors of sexual violence during and after war and post war' trauma was also raised as a serious concern, including the absence of adequate services. Inability to access education, training and employment opportunities has negative consequences for survivors and their families. It also has the potential to cross generations, limiting the opportunities and survival of future generations.

Despite self-employment efforts, some women reported that in order for them to maintain income- generation activities, they suffered of the possibilities to sell their products. The need for a local strategy to address local businesses or self-sustainability activities remain a real concern, which calls for the whole social service sector to act and search for solutions.

## **6.6 Social economy and role of civil sector as response to crisis of welfare state**

In a concept of self support groups and community engagement, the role of Civil Society actors becomes crucial for advocacy actions and the opportunity to mobilize citizens, and local communities towards direct responses.

This is the case of Kosovo, where organizations may be run as an opportunity in building social capacity (e.g. through employing or training socially disadvantaged groups) and responding to under-met needs (e.g. housing for low-income families, vocational training for women survivors, micro financing for the opportunity of self-employment etc) –in the context and active participation of citizens in the social and economic well-being of local communities.

Such indication comes from all 40 replies from the interviews stating that the needs for local economic regeneration (cooperatives, partnerships) and job creation (self-help projects) may be realized only through the support of municipalities, and local authorities in cooperation with NGOs operating in the field.

The survivors shared that 13 of them had previous training on how to run a small business, tailoring courses, handcrafting courses, yet the difficulties remains in finding the support for the supplies and equipment at the start-up phase and also selling out their products.

17 survivors also complained the lack of employment opportunities for their children. Without employment opportunities for their children, the future security of their families is uncertain. Several participants noted that their children wanted to go abroad as “an escape” from their problems and current situation.

## Conclusions

Despite the existing legal framework and various government and non-government mechanism, the need for proper documentation of war crimes and what impact war left remains still not solved.

The current realities for women victims of conflict related rapes and sexual violence remain at the limits of desperation. It is common to individuals from these groups that, due to different overlapping problems, they are often in a long-term, adverse social and economic situation. They are also often discriminated against in the access to basic services, have problems getting employment, are commonly long-term unemployed and remain permanently dependent on social benefits.

The victims represent women who were grown up and raised by traditional families, with certain ethical and religious values and principles, where the role of care taker was implanted by generations. They showed low levels of technical and/or professional skills; but such situation was also comprised of insecurities to employment and property rights. With a marginalized distinct self-identification, women and girls from RAE minorities report extreme poverty, lack of education and lack of acquired skills, disabilities.

The lack of information and the lack of recognition raised serious concerns for many women facing gender-based or domestic violence from their husbands/relatives. This point out the need for awareness-raising to fight stigma and prejudice, discrimination and abandonment to conflict-related sexual violence, in particular within the family and community.

Their poor level of education and technical skills along with cultural and social prejudices have maintained initial isolation and restricted access to economic empowerment. Both target groups remain in highly difficult socio-economic situation and emphasize the need for access to productive inputs, training and employment to compensate them for the material damages and loss of earnings. Within this context, it is therefore crucial to alternate institutional developments with continuous adequate gender-sensitive rehabilitation to survivors as an end, and also as a means to support their access to empowerment and advocacy, education, employment and income.

It also brings out the need for prioritizing crimes against women in transitional justice mechanisms, through addressing their rights to reparation (including the right to individual compensation, health, education and employment); having in mind that the fundamental obligation of such reparation scheme is not so much to return the individual to his or her *status quo ante*, but to recognize the seriousness of the violation of the equal rights of fellow citizens and to commit the government's mechanisms towards respect for those rights.

The lack of systemic and comprehensive public support services to survivors has negative implications to victims' lives. With estimated % of high and underreported cases of SGBV, the victims will continue to be as such if there will be no clear response on the Government commitment to give an end to neglect and discrimination and provide a policy dedicated to women' economic empowerment and social inclusion.

In a concept of self support groups and community engagement, the role of Civil Society

actors becomes crucial for advocacy actions and the opportunity to mobilize citizens, and local communities towards direct responses. This is the case of Kosovo, where organizations may be run as an opportunity in building social capacity (e.g. through employing or training socially disadvantaged groups) and responding to under-met needs (e.g. housing for low-income families, vocational training for women survivors, micro financing for the opportunity of self-employment etc) –in the context and active participation of citizens in the social and economic well-being of local communities, demonstrating that the cultural and normative factors impeding women survivors from fully participating economically may be overcome and properly addressed through legislation and crosscutting strategies dedicated to women's economic inclusion and empowerment.

## Recommendations:

- Ensure active participation and engagement of survivors in the process of recognition, bearing in mind that victims have rights and not just needs, which should be respected by duty bearers (e.g., by the state, by non-state actors, by the community, by the family and other individuals).
- Guarantee the right to truth and reconciliation for the unidentified victims; reassuring that re-victimization will never happen
- Provide a comprehensive and holistic approach towards their rights to compensation in compliance with “Do not harm” principle
- Empower survivors through prioritizing their autonomy and participation in decision-making processes, and adapt to their evolving capacities
- Provide equal opportunities to education and employment and human rights based approach to policy and decision making process and programming.
- Prioritize the inclusion of survivors in job creation strategies and economic development activities
- Build partnerships and strengthen complementarities between public and private entities with interaction of municipal offices-, namely through MOCR as services need to be delivered to the population at large and to the poor and vulnerable in particular, with gender equity as a common goal. This will lead to a successful partnership will the absorption and implementation of municipal capacity generally
- Increased responsiveness of key municipal stakeholders in compiling a set of identified needs to be carried by the MOCR especially regarding plans on gender responsive budgeting
- Initiation of interaction and cooperation amongst Kosovo Roma women of Gjilan municipality and the municipal officials and their respective Institutions, as well as the NGO sector to have mentorship programs from experienced NGOs
- Integration of recently-returned Kosovo Roma families into the larger community plans especially in cooperation with the municipal officer for gender equality and the committee on gender equality
- Initiation of activities to include Roma women in training on small businesses provided by municipal directorate of economy and agriculture as they soon, namely on the 8 March 2017 will launch a strategy on how to support women in business
- Women economic empowerment to be included in the national economic policies level such as employment opportunities and their integration
- Implementation of legislation, to be applied in terms of health, education, rehabilitation, and employment
- To organize awareness rising campaigns in regard to information and recognition of victims rights that are legally binding
- This study to be included at national level



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