

## YOUTH

The outbreak of violence in March 2004 demonstrated that an underlying tension continues to pose a major obstacle toward the development of democracy in Kosovo. Young people from all ethnic backgrounds were witnessed participating in riots and violent demonstrations throughout Kosovo giving very little consideration to democratic and human rights practices.

As a remedy, the OSCE Mission became increasingly involved in youth related activities and projects. Across Kosovo, the Mission has implemented projects which attempt to bring youth into the democratic fold and the tolerance building process.

The Mission is working with the PISG Ministry of Education, Science and Technology to introduce democracy and human rights teaching in primary and secondary education, and had supported the work of Law Faculties in Prishtinë/Priština and Mitrovicë/Mitrovica universities.

The Mission is also helping provide educational opportunities for young people, members of most disadvantaged ethnic groups – the Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian.

In direct contacts with young people throughout Kosovo, the Mission has made substantial steps forward in the civic education of young people of all ethnicities. It has established 11 Youth Assemblies, as well as eight Youth Human Rights Clubs at the municipal level.

Together with our capacity building efforts with the Municipal Youth Officials, the channels available to the youth for reasonable and peaceful policy discussion have been significantly increased.

At the central level, the Mission supports the work and aids the professional and political development of young people interning at the Assembly of Kosovo and working for their political party caucus.

The Mission has also implemented projects that have seen young members of all communities participating in common trainings and discussions, debates on standards, initiatives to encourage freedom of movement and the integration of RAE children into mainstream education. The general lack of willingness to engage in inter-ethnic dialogue remains an obstacle. Nonetheless, more and more volunteers for civic involvement are emerging to take down many of the remaining barriers.

With both improved democratic understanding and an increased willingness to engage with and listen to other communities, the young people themselves are making Kosovo take real steps towards a peaceful and democratic society.



*Kosovo's young people are the best promoters of inter-ethnic tolerance. The OSCE Mission implements a number of projects in their support.*



*Stand parade organized by Lipjan/Lipljan Youth Assembly in October 2005 presented the Standards for Kosovo in a creative and innovative fashion.*

### Youth Assemblies

The initiative to create Youth Assemblies is one of the main elements of the Mission's Youth programme. The youth, aged 15 to 20 years, learn about democratic values and processes, and are being taught skills necessary for their participation in democratic society. As such, this goes some way to ensuring both the inclusion of youth in democratic processes (though significant improvement is still required from the institutions) and the integration of communities, as the Youth Assemblies involve members from Kosovo's Albanian, Serb, Roma, Ashkali, Bosniak, Croat, Gorani, and Turkish communities.

The Project's central structure is a body of 25 secondary school students in each of the eleven Municipalities where a Youth Assembly has been established - Dragash/Dragaš, Gjiilan/Gnjilane, Kamenicë/Kamenica, Leposavić/Leposaviq, Lipjan/Lipljan, Mitrovicë/Mitrovica, Prizren/Prizren, Podujevë/Podujevo, Rahovec/Orahovac, Suharekë/Suva Reka and Vushtrri/Vučitrn. Youth Assembly members simulate the workings of a Municipal Assembly and its appropriate committees on a bi-weekly basis. "Over the course of the year, the members vote in a President, Vice-President and CEO and they form committees and working groups that address the most pressing issues for

the youth in their area, such as the environment, unemployment and school standards” said Aleksandar Bursač, OSCE Mission Programme Assistant with the Youth Assembly project.

To facilitate the development necessary to achieve this result with a group of young people who have received almost no civic education, significant capacity building is required. “Some training on the Municipal functions and structures is provided by OSCE staff, others, on public speaking, team building, conflict management, NGO organization and fund raising are provided by domestic experts,” added Bursač.

The Assemblies to date have implemented nearly 20 projects ranging from environmental awareness campaigns to projects which encourage people to vote. There has been a project to encourage tourism in Dragash/Dragaš and currently there is a documentary in production made entirely by the Youth Assemblies to highlight the issues with freedom of movement for all communities.

In addition, 250 Youth Assembly members convened in Žabljak,

Montenegro, from 19-26 August 2005 for the third Youth Assembly retreat in which they discussed and agreed upon the seven main problems facing the youth of Kosovo today – unemployment, lack of youth sporting and cultural space, insufficient involvement in the decision making process, early marriage, lack of access to quality educational facilities, environmental carelessness and restrictions on movement and association. “They formulated recommendations for UNMIK, PISG, local business and schools to address these problems, as well as conceiving projects to be implemented by the Youth Assemblies in the coming year,” said Sehadin Shok, National Programme Officer with the Mission.

All of these activities are central to the development of each individual member’s understanding of democratic procedures and structures, but also to spread awareness of the importance of participation amongst their peers from the region.

*More information on Youth Assemblies is available at*

*[www.youthassemblies.com](http://www.youthassemblies.com)*

## **Catch-up classes and Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian youth awareness project**

The right to education is one of the most basic human rights. It is guaranteed by both the Universal Declaration and the European Convention on Human Rights.

However, Kosovo’s Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian (RAE) youth and children are not in the position to fully enjoy this right; partly because they oft□

The OSCE Mission is trying to rectify this situation. Its most recent and large-scale intervention, the Catch-up Class Project, provides an intensive course of remedial extra-curricular education to RAE youth. “A poor standard of written Albanian is a barrier to attendance at school and academic performance. Our project aims to raise the children’s academic level to allow for their integration into mainstream education,” said Saskia Marsh, Mission’s project manager.

In co-operation with the Kosovo’s PISG Ministry for Education, Science and Technology, approximately 950 Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children aged between six and fifteen have been enrolled in catch-up classes in eight Municipalities -Gjakovë/Đakovica, Istog/Istok, Lipjan/Lipljan, Pejë/Peć, Prishtinë/Priština, Prizren, Suharekë/Suva Reka, and Shtime/Štimlje - since the project’s inception in September 2004. In Prizren Municipality alone, 15 percent of the enrolled students were able to go from having received no education to being able to enter regular classes with their peers from other communities. “This is a major step along the road to the integration and reconciliation of fledgling members of a traditionally marginalised ethnic group,” added Marsh.

In addition to providing for the educational needs of these communities, in 2004 the OSCE Mission carried out the ‘Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Youth awareness’ project in Prizren. “The aim of the project was to increase Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian youth’s participation in democratic processes, as well as to increase the political confidence of their communities,” said Zilha Nurkollari of the OSCE Office in Prizren.

Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian youth, mainly secondary school pupils, have increased their knowledge on areas of municipal structures, use of media, drafting of project proposals, and gender advocacy to name a few issues. Their communities, on the other hand, had a chance to discuss their concerns with municipal institutions, primarily employment opportunities, access to social welfare, as well as access to mainstream education for their children.

And while there is still a need to increase the level of RAE participation in the work of municipal governments it should be noted that a number of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian youth who participated in this project are now working with media, as well as with local NGOs, trying to improve the conditions in which their communities live.



*Catch-up classes enable Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptian youth to enroll into mainstream education.*

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### Sesame Street

One of the most successful children's TV series in the world, Sesame Street, was brought to Kosovo by the OSCE Mission and the UNICEF Office in Kosovo.

The idea behind bringing the world of Muppets such as Ernie and Bert, Cookie Monster, Elmo and Big Bird to Kosovo was to introduce an educational tool that utilizes TV as its main medium while combining fun and learning.

Fifty-two selected episodes were voiced over in Albanian and Serbian and supplemented with 26 locally produced live action films that describe everyday situations particular to different ethnic communities living here.

In December 2004, weekly shows began airing on the public broadcaster, Radio Television Kosovo (RTK), in both Albanian and Serbian languages, called *Rruga Sesam* and *Ulica Sezam* respectively.

"The Sesame Street series targets three to six year-olds and aims to teach tolerance and respect for ethnic and cultural differences," said Angela Tenbruck, who co-ordinates this project for the OSCE. "This is the first such programme and is more so unique for it has educational goals and is used to complement pre- and early-primary education curriculum," she added.

The educational goals for the series were set in January 2004. At that time, UNICEF, the OSCE Mission, Kosovo Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Sesame Workshops and a number of local NGOs working on childhood development programmes held a number of working meetings. "What came out of these meetings was a document that represented educational objectives and a specific curriculum for the Sesame Street project," said Lucia Elmi, Programme Coordinator with the UNICEF Office in Kosovo.

According to her, the curriculum relates to human diversity and includes themes that range from the appreciation of ethnic, cultural and religious diversity to human emotions such as happiness and sorrow and social relations.

To reinforce key messages and introduce Sesame Street in pre-primary and early primary education, UNICEF produced some 15,000 student kits as well as some 1,500 teacher kits in Albanian and Serbian languages. Each kit consists of an activity book, flash cards, and height charts

Ms. Besa Shehu, pre-primary school teacher in Prishtinë/Priština said that she appreciated well illustrated materials and that children have by now become familiar with the Sesame Street characters. "These days they are having fun learning with their furry friends," she said.

For the time being the signal of the public service broadcaster RTK does not manage to reach out to all children as it does not cover a number of mountainous areas. "To bridge those gaps, we reached a license and copyright agreement with Sesame Street in New York and local TV stations such as DTV, TV Most and RTV Herc now broadcast the series to the audience outside of RTK's reach," said Ms. Tenbruck.

These three TV stations reach Serbian children in the northern and southeastern areas of Kosovo.

However, some children in Kosovo live in an almost complete media blackout and receive no terrestrial TV signal. The village of Çabër/Čabra, located in the Kosovo Serb-majority municipality of Zubin Potok, and villages in Gora region in the far southern municipality of Dragash/Dragaš are a good example. In these locations the OSCE has organized mobile cinemas that visit villages on weekly basis and screen the series.

The 52 episodes cover twelve months, December 2004 to December 2005. To secure airing of Sesame Street in 2006 the OSCE and UNICEF will provide further financial support.



*Kosovo's children play with and learn from Sesame Street characters at school and at home.*

## Human rights education

*OSCE helps the Ministry of Education Science and Technology introduce human rights teaching in civic education classes*

Democratic institution building and protection and promotion of human rights are the key tasks of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo (Pillar III of the UN Interim Administration).

These tasks are often perceived as something that has to do with politics and politicians only, yet it is the common people that constitute a society and determine its quality. In other words, politicians and politics, though very important, cannot create on their own a democratic society that upholds human rights. These values need to be embraced by everyday people. In addition, for a human rights culture to be successful, it is necessary for everyone to learn how to use the law in order to have their rights protected.

And rather than embracing these values at an older age, human rights and democracy can best be understood in early stages of life. In fact, human rights learning can begin in pre-school and should continue through primary, secondary and higher education.

Kosovo's education system and curriculum developed following the 1999 conflict and the establishment of UN's Interim Administration was updated from the former Yugoslav one. However, human rights teaching was not part of it.

In attempt to bring human rights as a subject matter to primary schools, back in 2001, the OSCE Mission, jointly with the Council of Europe, organized a Human Rights Calendar Campaign. OSCE's officers went to schools around Kosovo explaining and leading exercises and discussions about human rights and helping children come up with their own expressions of what these rights meant to them. The most creative ones made it to calendar pages, which were exhibited in schools and cultural and community centers throughout Kosovo.

Yet this attempt was not a sustainable one. Human rights teaching could not be left to OSCE officers.

During school year 2003/2004 a Human Rights Education pilot project was organized Kosovo wide bringing human rights work books for students, teacher's guides and teaching methodology books to 70 schools. All these materials were developed by the OSCE's experts in co-operation and with the approval of Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MEST).

"A year of teaching showed to be effective. Evaluation of the pilot project was positive and with small improvements to the materials MEST decided to incorporate human rights teaching in the civic education curriculum for sixth graders," says Ronald Hooghiemstra, Chief of the Human Rights Capacity Building Section at the OSCE Mission.

The school year 2004/2005 was used for reviewing of the content



*Human rights education is best introduced in primary education. The OSCE Mission assisted local authorities in developing a human rights curriculum.*

and actual production and printing of teaching materials that will be sufficient for two school years yet to come (some 90,000 student books, 2,000 teacher guides and methodology books).

As of September 2005, all sixth graders in Kosovo will learn about human rights and their meaning for their lives and lives of their families. To ensure quality of teaching MEST and the OSCE will train close to 2000 civic education teachers in teaching methodology and substance of human rights curricula using MEST's seven regional training centers.

However, problems in this area still do exist. They derive from a complex political situation and the existence of parallel systems. Schools that deliver education in the Serbian language do not co-operate with MEST and do not use its curriculum (they use curriculum applied in by the Ministry of Education of Serbia).

And although a draft translation of these human rights teaching materials exist in Serbian, the OSCE has not yet been able to arrange to have this approved and finalized for use in classes of schools which teach in Serbian language. Children attending these schools are therefore denied access to human rights classes.

Furthermore, schools that deliver education in Bosnian language may delay human rights teaching until translated books are provided.

An additional outstanding question is what will happen with human rights teaching once books supplies provided by the OSCE for two schools years run out.

These questions will be something for politics and politicians to take care of when discussing and approving future budgets for education of its youth.