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KYP
Kosovo Youth Participation

Initial mapping exercise for the project “Kosovo Youth Participation - KYP”



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May 2022, Prishtinë



TECHNICAL APPROACH AND DESIGN

This document presents the Initial Mapping Exercise for the project “Kosovo Youth Participation-KYP” as a broad assessment of the needs of disadvantaged Kosovo youth regarding their better involvement and activation in the society.

Project Background

CARE International Balkans, office in Kosovo, in partnership with CARE Deutschland e.V. is implementing the project Kosovo Youth Participation Project-KYP funded by the European Union (EU). This action, implemented by CARE in partnership with SHL-Kosova (SHL-K), seeks to contribute to the active inclusion of civil society in Kosovo in promoting democratic values, inclusive governance and achievement of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The specific objective of the project is to foster democratic participation, civic engagement and social inclusion of different groups of marginalized youth, mainly from rural areas and small towns of Kosovo.

The following results/outputs are expected to be achieved by the project:

- 1) Increase the participation of disadvantaged youth in decision making, in local communities and on the central level, through: capacity building/awareness raising on human rights and activism; mentoring of youth groups for inclusion in local and national decision-making processes and local youth actions to improve the position of disadvantaged youth.
- 2) Enhance the engagement and employability of marginalized youth, in particular young women, through skills development and involvement in volunteering initiatives. The activities will include information campaigns, trainings for employment skills development (raising of employability of youth through trainings, internship and supported youth entrepreneurial activities), support to volunteering among the disadvantaged youth from rural areas and smaller towns.
- 3) Foster Democratic dialogue across Kosovo youth through raised awareness on and promotion of gender equality, solidarity, inter-cultural relations and counter stereotypes and dis-information, by: awareness raising and facilitation of debates; peer exchange; involvement in ongoing youth-led discussions in Kosovo.

In line with CARE International's request, UBO Consulting has developed the Initial Mapping Exercise for the project, as a broad assessment of the needs of disadvantaged Kosovo youth regarding their better involvement and activation in the society.

The projects Initial Mapping Exercise needs to be developed to support the overall objectives of the project: to contribute to the active inclusion of civil society in Kosovo

in promoting democratic values, inclusive governance and achievement of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

For the current research, UBO Consulting has employed a qualitative methodological approach, which is designed in a manner that helps to:

- a) make a qualified decision on the precise target regions of the project regions (mainly rural areas and small towns), where the project concentrated its activities.
- b) shape the project activities of capacity building and youth mobilization for higher participation in decision making on all levels.

The qualitative nature of this research was carried out by in-depth interviews and one forum. Moreover, desk research was also integrated on this report which served as a useful instrument for facilitating the initial broad mapping by assuring appropriate secondary data about the needs of disadvantaged Kosovo youth in terms of better participation and activation in society. Desk research enabled the identification of themes that answer to the needs of young people in general, and youth in rural and small towns, as well as the recommendation of target communities with the most pressing needs for intervention. The findings of the desk research, together with qualitative data inputs will facilitate defining baseline values for project indicators.

With the aim of identifying and mapping any democratic dialogue process on the topic of youth or involving youth, UBO Consulting conducted the thirty-two (32) in-depth interviews with relevant stakeholders and one (1) youth forum in the municipality of Rahovec/Orahovac. *(Find attached the detailed list of stakeholders in [Annex I.](#))*

The composition of the conducted in-depth interviews in the study is as follows:

1. Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport- **three (3) Interviews**
2. Small Kosovo Municipalities (Director of Culture, Youth and Sports) – **ten (10) interviews**
3. Representatives of Local Youth Action Councils- **seven (7) interviews**
4. Representatives of NGOs with focus on youth – **nine (9) interviews**
5. Regional Development Agency – **one (1) interview**

The following table shows the composition of youth forum which was organized in the municipality of Rahovec/Orahovac:

Table 1. Composition of the Youth Forum in the Municipality of Rahovec/Orahovac

Gender:	15 women 10 men	
Age	15 years old	13 participants
	16 years old	8 participants
	17 years old	3 participants
	18 years old	1 participant
Area of residence:	14 participants from urban areas 11 participants from rural areas	
Total number of participants:	25	

The following paragraphs show a collated approach of the results from the secondary data review and interviews with Local Youth Action Councils representatives, Non-Governmental Organizations, representatives from Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, and Municipality Directors of Culture, Youth and Sports. Moreover, it includes results from the forum conducted with youth members in the municipality of Rahovec/Orahovac. This report stands as an added value to the current scope of research on youth employment in Kosovo while focusing on specific baseline values of project indicators which will aid improving of the situation of disadvantaged Kosovo youth.

Results

The Republic of Kosovo has the youngest population in Europe. According to the Kosovo Agency of Statistics (KAS) data of the last census, 53% of the Kosovar population is under 25 years of age (KAS, 2011).¹ Approximately, two thirds of Kosovo's population are of working age (age 15-64). It is foreseen that the working age population is to rapidly increase over the next decade considering Kosovo to be among the countries with the youngest population in Europe (KAS 2021,).²

In the third quarter of 2020, young people in Kosovo were twice as likely to be unemployed as adults. Among persons aged 15-24 and in the labour force, 46.9% were unemployed. Unemployment was higher among young women (61.0%) than among young men (40.8%). Nonetheless, compared to 2019 unemployment in 2020 decreased from 49.4 to 46.9 (AFP TM3 2020). In 2019, looking at the gender aspect, unemployment among young women was 60.3% and among men 44.1%, while in 2020 the unemployment rate among young women was 61.0% while among men 40.8%.³

In 2021, from 39.5% (483,823 persons) of the population that was economically active, 25.8% (124,657 persons) are unemployed. During 2021, the employment rate in the age group was highest among persons of age between 35 -44 (39.9%), and lowest among youth (age 15-24) (12.0%). Young individuals in Kosovo were twice more likely to be unemployed in the first quarter of 2021, as compared to adults. Among individuals ages 15 to 24, 48.6% were unemployed in 2021, as compared to a lower rate of unemployment (46.9%) found in 2020. While both sexes aged 15-24 maintain an overall low level of employment regardless, young women are ranked even lower with only 7.7 percent of them employed in comparison to 16.1% of young males. (KAS, 2021)⁴

Kosovo's youth is commonly regarded as determinants of Kosovo's future and expected prosperity in countless ways. Regardless of the fact that they present an enormous source of untapped talent, youth in Kosovo are often misrepresented and overlooked in various decision-making processes. The voice of youth is particularly silenced in areas that concern them utmost, respectively, decision making on education. As the government's youth and strategy and action plan (Ministry of Culture, Youth, and Sports [MCYS], 2017) explains "*... young individuals residing in Kosovo are being ostracized from round tables that affect decision-making and fail*

¹ Kosovo Agency of Statistics (ASK) – Population and household census 2011. Available on: https://ask.rks-gov.net/media/2075/final-results_eng.pdf

² Kosovo Agency of Statistics (2021)- Labour Force Survey Q1 2021 Available at <https://ask.rks-gov.net/media/6355/lfs-q1-2021.pdf>

³ Ministry of Work and Social Welfare (n.d) "Plani i Veprimit për Punësimin e të Rinjve 2018 – 2020" Available at <https://mpms.rks-gov.net/wpdm-package/plani-i-veprimit-per-punesimin-e-te-rinjve-2018-2020/>

⁴ Kosovo Agency of Statistics (2021)- Labour Force Survey Q1 2021 Available at <https://ask.rks-gov.net/media/6355/lfs-q1-2021.pdf>

*to be invited in joint discussions that affect their lives and future in schools, universities and local and central governance".*⁵

Politics is considered an exclusive field for strong and experienced men to exercise their power. As such youth's involvement remains limited to electoral campaigns and allies. Despite their efforts, youth have little access to political debate processes and decision-making. Thus, their chances for participation in capacity development programs and gain practical experience continue being limited (BPRG, 2018).⁶

Proper democracy however can only be exercised if young citizens voice their opinion in the process. The discussion organized by USAID-supported European Democracy Youth Network (EDYN) vastly focused on challenges causing youth's lack of engagement in public and political life. The discussion led to a common agreement that the involvement of young individuals on political processes is of key importance as to guaranteeing proper functioning of democracy, considering the potential residing in youth in delivering sustainable progressive change (USAID, 2021)⁷

Employment being one of the most important step stones for Kosovo youth, the pandemic has had a significant impact on macroeconomic trends in Kosovo. Restricting the movement of citizens and closing down businesses resulted in a slowdown in the economy, causing problems in the labour market which has been characterized by a high unemployment rate.⁸ Particularly the unemployment rate is extremely high among young people where according to LSF 2021, 48.6% of young people were unemployed.⁹ The youth in Kosovo that remains unemployed, not in school and not trained (NEET) presents a cause for concern about youth employment considering that the latter poses detachment from any activity related to labour market.¹⁰

Further, when focusing on matters of management of technical conflict or wider conflict transformation, youth members serve as important agents. Youth led social and political movements, intermediations that serve peacebuilding and conflict-prevention interventions in the local and central level facilitate the process of building democratic societies and inclusive governance (R. Coomaraswam, 2015)¹¹.

⁵ "Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports" (2009) "Kosovo Youth Strategy and Action Plan 2010-2012" Available at http://www.youthpolicy.org/national/Kosovo_2009_Youth_Strategy_Action_Plan.pdf

⁶ Balkan Policy Research Group (2018) "Youth in Politics" Available at <https://balkansgroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Youth-in-politics-web-1.pdf>

⁷ USAID (2021) "Giving Voice to Youth in Politics" Available at <https://www.usaid.gov/kosovo/news-information/news/giving-voice-youth-politics>

⁸ "Ministry of Work and Social Welfare" (n.d) "Plani i Veprimit për Punësimin e të Rinjve 2018 – 2020" Available at <https://mpms.rks-gov.net/wpdm-package/plani-i-veprimit-per-punesimin-e-te-rinjve-2018-2020/>

⁹ Kosovo Agency of Statistics (2021)- Labour Force Survey Q1 2021 Available at <https://ask.rks-gov.net/media/6355/lfs-q1-2021.pdf>

¹⁰ Ibid;

¹¹ UN Women (2015) "Preventing Conflict Transforming Justice Securing the Peace" Available at [https://www.peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/UNW-GLOBAL-STUDY-1325-2015%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/UNW-GLOBAL-STUDY-1325-2015%20(1).pdf)

During these times, different roles may be assumed by youth, whether it be social roles and political activism to illegitimate activities.

Growing the intercultural appreciation, understanding and contact among young individuals that belong to different communities lingers to present a crucial challenge for Kosovar youth. Negative stereotypes and prejudicial attitudes interfere with the creation of dialogue and cooperation between distinct ethnic groups which consequently cause for isolation and stagnation (Drosopulos, 2018).¹²

The two-day event in July, 2017 that was organized by the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), with contributions from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Kosovo Team (UNKT), brought together 140 high school and university students from across Kosovo. The Youth Assembly in Kosovo was inspired by the United Nations' Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security, which distinguishes the significance of youth in sustainable peace efforts.¹³ The event is a great example of the importance of facilitation contact in building relation and combating inter-ethnic stereotypes in developing maintainable peace, best demonstrated in the following citation drawn by one of the youngsters participating:

*"Despite all the stereotypes we've been taught, all the hatred put upon us, I came to realize it's not at all like that. Now one of my best friends who I met through the United Youth Task Force is from the Serbian community. I feel like we've come together because we share the same challenges of living in Kosovo."*¹⁴

With regard to all three outputs of the project, respectively, active youth participation of Kosovo youth, employment and engagement of Kosovo youth and Democratic Dialogue across Kosovo youth, the present study found that youth residing in small municipalities tend to be less subjected to treatments and interventions that attend to their premises relating to all three project outputs.

More specifically, qualitative data in the study show that youngsters from municipalities of Suhareke/Suva Reka, Rahovec/Orahovac, Obiliq/Obilić, and Junik/Junik suffer from the lack of initiatives and interventions typically implemented in larger municipalities with regard to all project objectives. With non-governmental organizations allocating their focus of intervention, especially with regard to participation in large Kosovo municipalities, small municipalities are often overlooked; thus leaving young members ostracized from various opportunities.

¹² Drosopulos, M., (2018) "Rethinking Regional Youth Work within the Context of the Berlin Process" Available at <https://www.eubalkanforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/SALTO-Mary-D-proofread.pdf>

¹³ UNMIK (2017) "THE FUTURE IN THEIR HANDS: YOUNG PEOPLE SEEK CHANGE AT FIRST UN YOUTH ASSEMBLY IN KOSOVO" Available at <https://unmik.unmissions.org/future-their-hands-young-people-seek-change-first-un-youth-assembly-kosovo>

¹⁴ United Nations Peacekeeping (2021) "Coming together by breaking barriers: Meet the next generation of changemakers in Kosovo" Available at <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/coming-together-breaking-barriers-meet-next-generation-of-changemakers-kosovo>

Moreover, employment rates also indicate that citizens from small municipalities tend to suffer lower rates of employment, in comparison to larger municipalities. (See [Table 2. Municipality ranking by employment and education](#)). Moreover, rural youth coming from small municipalities, specifically, municipalities of Deçan/Dečani, Kamenicë/Kamenica, Malisheva/Mališevo, and Skenderaj/Srbica seem to endure the lowest rates of employment as measured by Lens (2018)¹⁵. (Refer to detailed data in the [Rural youth employment in Kosovo](#) section).

Further, with regard to the third objective, population data from the latest census in 2011¹⁶ identified the municipalities of Gjakovë/Đakovica, Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje, Pejë/Peč, Prizren/Prizren, Ferizaj/Uroševac, Graçanicë/Gračanica, Novoberdë/Novo Berdo, and Ranillug/Ranilug, as having the largest number of ethnic minorities residing in Kosovo. Respectively, the municipality of Gjakovë/Đakovica is home to 5,117 citizens from the Egyptian community, Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje (3,230 Ashkali citizens), Pejë/Peč (3,786 Bosnians and 2,700 Egyptians), Prizren/Prizren (9,091 Turkish citizens, 16,896 Bosnians, 2,899 Roma citizens, and 1,350 Ashkali citizens), Ferizaj/Uroševac (3,629 Ashkali citizens), Graçanicë/Gračanica (7,209 Serbian citizens), Novoberdë/Novo Berdo (3,122 Serbian citizens), and Ranillug/Ranilug (3,692 Serbian citizens).

Following the background information on some of the most prevalent issues endured by Kosovo youth, the following sections will elaborately entail 1) Active participation of Kosovo youth, 2) Engagement and employability of Kosovo Youth, and 3) Democratic dialogue across Kosovo youth.

Active Participation of Kosovo Youth

Kosovo youth participation in decision-making preserves to be of ample importance. Stakeholder interviews in the present study reveal that cultural and sport activities, awareness and advocating campaigns, social and political activism, volunteering and decision-making activities are vital for Kosovo youth to become proactive citizens and remain positively engaged during and upon completion of high school. Moreover, considering the persisting hardship in attaining employment in Kosovo youth, participation activities are a great mean of providing youth with networking opportunities, and keeping them away from delinquent behaviour.

Kosovo government has employed actions in generating an environment for youth participation. Kosovo's law No. 03/L-145 on Empowerment and Participation of Youth was created to promote and reaffirm youth participation in decision-making

¹⁵ NGO LENS (2018) "KOSOVO RURAL YOUTH" Available at: <https://www.ngolens.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/RYES-English-PRINT.pdf>

¹⁶ KAS (2012). Population by Gender, Ethnicity at Settlement level. Population, Households and Housing Census 2011. Available at: <https://ask.rks-gov.net/media/1614/population-by-gender-ethnicity-at-settlement-level.pdf>

processes. The latter acts as a basis for administrative instructions on youth participation in voluntary labour, licensing of youth centres and non-formal education prospects of youth (World Bank, 2018).¹⁷

Within the purpose of ensuring youth participation in decision-making, The Law on Youth Empowerment and Participation and other respective bylaws enabled the premises for establishment of youth entities. The respective entities include the Central Youth Action Council (CYAC) and Local Youth Action Councils (LYAC) in all Kosovo municipalities, and Youth Centres (YC). Moreover, the Assembly of Kosovo Youth acts as an institution with operation at both levels of governance within the aim of actively representing the needs and interests of Kosovo youth. (Law on Empowerment and Participation of Youth, 2009).¹⁸

Local Youth Action Council is an advisory youth organization, operating at a local level and represents the interests of youth and youth organizations to the municipality institutions. Central Youth Council represent an advisory structure for youth for representing the interests of youth organizations at the central government institutions and mechanisms of international youth. Youth centres in the other hand offer space for programs and activities of young people for completing activities related to education, sports, socialization, spiritual and mental development and other actions assumed by young individuals. (Law on Empowerment and Participation of Youth, 2009).¹⁹

Qualitative data in this study show however that there seems to be little systematic support allocated to empowerment of youth centres and youth-based organizations. Drawing attention on Local Youth Action Councils, the latter remain poorly active, operating in only seven Kosovo municipalities. Moreover, with Central Youth Action Centres being no longer active, this poses a serious menace to proper communication and cooperation between the local and central level. With scarce attention and resources towards the empowerment of Local Youth Action Councils, opportunities of youth toward active participation, employment and other proactive outcomes are being negatively affected.

Despite the noticeable increase of young people involvement in awareness-raising campaigns, decision-making processes and policy drafting, participation of youth in

¹⁷ The World Bank (2018) "Project Information Document/ Integrated Safeguards Data Sheet (PID/ISDS)" Available at <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/576351540905451033/pdf/Concept-Project-Information-Documents-Integrated-Safeguards-Data-Sheet-Kosovo-Youth-Inclusion-and-Entrepreneurship-P166093.pdf>

¹⁸ Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo (2009) "Law No. 03/L-145 ON EMPOWERMENT AND PARTICIPATION OF YOUTH" "The Government of Kosovo" Available at https://www.youthpolicy.org/national/Kosovo_2009_Youth_Law.pdf

¹⁹ Ibid;

decision-making processes remains a significant step-stone (World Bank, 2018)²⁰. It is apparent that there seems to be a decline of youth inclination towards political and social events when discussing youth participation and active citizenship.

Based on the findings deriving from the youth poll conducted by NDI in 2021²¹, sixty-five (65) percent of respondents declare that they would not describe themselves as socially/ politically active citizens. When broke down by age group, ages from 19-24 described themselves as utmost socially/politically active citizens with 37 percent claiming so, while ages that ranged from 16-18 state the opposite in a large scale (74%). In line with these results, it follows that younger youth are less inclined to actively participate in social and political matters. Furthermore, according to this study, young individuals that have attained higher levels of education are more prone to describe themselves as active participants, where 55% of the participants that obtained a Master degree or PHD and 46% that obtained a Bachelor degree described themselves as active participants. In contrast, only 27 percent of those who have completed high school and 19 percent that have an elementary school diploma perceived themselves as active participants. When divided by gender, more young women (35%) than young men (30%) declare that they do not consider themselves as socially/politically active citizens. Moreover, more young men (11%) than young women (10%) declare that they have volunteered in an association or NGO.²²

On a similar note, more than half of youngsters in Kosovo rarely/ never discuss matters of politics with family members and social circle (Strategy for Youth, 2019-2023)²³. The study shows that approximately between 65 and 76 percent of Kosovo youth, ages 14-29 express little to no interest in political events, which depends on the scale of the political event. The greatest interest amongst youth is witnessed towards local governance, followed by national governance politics and resorting last on curiosity towards the EU and world politics. The interest in political matters seems to increase with higher education levels and residence in urban areas (Strategy for Youth, 2019-2023).

Civil activism as being unpopular among young people is supported also by the Youth Study Kosovo (2018-2019)²⁴. Findings suggest that only 13 percent of youth has volunteered for a civil society organization and involvement of youth in political

²⁰ The World Bank (2018) "Project Information Document/ Integrated Safeguards Data Sheet (PID/ISDS)" Available at <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/576351540905451033/pdf/Concept-Project-Information-Documents-Integrated-Safeguards-Data-Sheet-Kosovo-Youth-Inclusion-and-Entrepreneurship-P166093.pdf>

²¹ NDI (2021) "Youth Conference: SPEAK YOUTH TO POWER" Available at https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?ref=watch_permalink&v=1032388577323018

²² NDI (2021) "Youth Conference: SPEAK YOUTH TO POWER" Available at https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?ref=watch_permalink&v=1032388577323018

²³ Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports (2019) "Strategy on Youth" https://www.mkrs-ks.org/repository/docs/Strategjia_per_Rini-2019-2023.pdf

²⁴ FES (2019) YOUTH STUDY KOSOVO 2018/2019 Available at <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/id-moe/15264.pdf>

demonstrations or signing petitions is significantly low (11%). Moreover, there seem to be differences amid different groups in terms of participation in social and political activism. Seemingly, youth residing in urban areas and young males are more predisposed to engage in activism. The case is similar also to youngsters that come from families with higher socio-economic conditions.

Considering the culture of Kosovar society being more collectivist, family members play a great role in individual behaviour. Qualitative responses obtained in this study indicate that more often than not, families in Kosovo are not very supportive of youth participation, especially in terms of volunteering practices. Participants declared that youth are often discouraged from partaking in volunteering, advocating and other related activities due to family members' perception of the latter. Thus, there is a great need for advocating toward these issues and raising awareness of not only youth, but also older members of the society on the importance of active participation taking into account the stigma created around volunteering and participation in general.

With a focus on volunteering activities, responses from the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports suggest that despite youth being personally interested in volunteering activities, the organization premises of the latter are usually quite unstructured. Examples were drawn on activities that youth members volunteered to participate; however, the organizing entities did not provide with necessary required means to perform the said activities. Thus, the members of youth resulted discouraged to pursue similar actions in the future:

"There is willingness in the area of active citizenship and volunteer work, at least based on our research. Part of discouraging young people from volunteering is the lack of adequate organization. For example, the organizers when organizing volunteer work are not being correct. For instance, they organize the youth in delivering environmental volunteering and they send the volunteers without necessary means, such protective measures."

- Representative from the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports

In order to attend to the most prevalent needs of youth presently, interviews with stakeholders suggest that participation activities must be allocated towards activities must be related to topics with importance in our society: bullying, sexism, and topics on gender equality. With regard to gender equality, stakeholders suggested advocating activities that intend raising young women awareness on their inheritance rights across Kosovo. Other needed activities in need include sport activities in raising youth's physical wellbeing, especially considering that youth in Kosovo typically engage in inactive activities that impact negatively their mental and physical health.

Youth Perspective on Active Participation

The youth forum conducted in the municipality of Rahovec/Orahovac provided this study with a youth-based perspective on participation issues and needs concerning youth members themselves.

Primarily, it seems that youth members' needs with regard to active participation include debates, volunteering opportunities, campaigning and advocating, opportunities to partake in decision-making. They declared that the latter activities help them become more communicative and attend to their self-esteem in assuming subsequent activities toward becoming active citizens. Participants voiced their recommendation on activities after school hours that focus on informal education as a means of them continuing to be positively engaged upon completing of formal education hours. Any activity that would inherently foster the opportunity to meeting new people, developing eloquence, opportunity for expression, efficient acquisition of different knowledge seems to be of vital importance to them. Among others, participants also declared that sport activities and cultural visits present preferable activities.

Another accentuated identified necessity amongst youth was the psychological counselling offered in their schools. They declared that with bullying, mental health problems, and other related issues, seeking counselling with a psychologist is a must needed treatment. One participant declared that change begins within the person, in order to translate into changes in others and society as a whole:

"The change of mentality must begin first with oneself and then with others."

-Youth member from the municipality of Rahovec/Orahovac

Youth members partaking in the forum appear motivated to participate in volunteering activities. They declared that what counts as important to them is the benefit and value that the said activity brings to the society, rather than financial profit. Benefits that come from volunteer work are not limited to the individual, rather, they help toward the general awareness of others, networking and difference appreciation. Volunteer work, as declared by the youth participants, has impacted youth members' communication abilities, general skills, socialization, team-work and efficacy in completing tasks.

Despite individual motivation and interest toward participation in volunteering activities, youth members declared that there is a profound stigma attached to volunteering in general. Many youth members, especially women, do not have their family's support to partake in volunteering as the older generations believe that youth is being exploited to undertake unpaid labour. Consequently, it seems that there is a

great need for mass campaigning and advocating regarding volunteering practices and the latter's benefits for youth actualization.

Further, youth members took into account also contributing in policy and decision making in the local and central level of governance. Participants declared that mouth-to-mouth information concerning politics remains prevalent in influencing Kosovo youth's perception on political issues. With their presence in local level assemblies as part of a project they participated in, they got the opportunity to get properly acquainted with decision-making processes and become aware of their opportunity to contribute in the latter. Participants revealed that prior to their participation, they had little information on Assembly members' role and the responsibilities of their municipality Mayor. Thus, youth members created the attitude that by being active in political and decision-making activities, youth can be less influenced by spread disinformation and have a role in decision-making processes that impact them directly.

Nonetheless, participants declared that youth's interest in decision-making activities is being hindered by local decision-making authorities' reluctance to address their needs and requirements. Seemingly, despite youth members' efforts to participate and raise their voice on youth issues, the latter have been continuously ignored in terms of implementation. Thus, it is apparent that the aforementioned presents a prime cause for youth's general reduced motivation to actively participate and involve in politics and decision-making. Hence, it is of great need that actions are assumed toward institutional support toward youth's perspective finding implementation in policy making in local and central level of governance.

Disadvantaged youth and their opportunities toward active participation

Disadvantaged youth's active participation in decision making is embarked by many unique barriers that inhibits their opportunities in effectively impacting decision-making that typically can affect them. The results deriving from the in-depth interviews in this study reveal that the some of the most disadvantaged groups in Kosovo with respect to active participation include youth from rural areas of residence and young women. The following sections also give emphasis on different ethnicity minority youth living in Kosovo.

Ethnic minority youth and active participation

Coming from the political climate and historical narrative, inter-ethnic relations in Kosovo are often perceived in the lens of relations amongst Kosovo Albanians and Serbs. Nonetheless, smaller ethnic groups residing in Kosovo are often left out of the

equation with regard to advancing their rights and improving their rights and general state of affairs as a key requirement of building multi-ethnic and democratic society in Kosovo. Thus, the integration of ethnic minorities in the political, social and economic life in Kosovo remains a step stone.²⁵

With regard to ethnic minority youth participation, NDI Youth Poll²⁶ came to ascertain that 76 percent of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian youth do not consider themselves as socially/politically active citizens. More Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian young women (45%) do not consider themselves socially and politically active, as compared to 41% of young men coming from the same communities. Moreover, data from the same study show that 96 percent of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian youth have never been a member or volunteered in an association or NGO.

Further, with regard to the Kosovo Serbian youth, 73 percent of Serbian youth do not consider themselves as socially and politically active citizens. More K-Serbian young women (57%) maintain the latter attitude, as compared to 51 percent of young K-Serbian men. The perception of themselves as being non-socially/politically active however was found to be on a smaller scale amongst Bosnian youth (59%) and young Turks (54%). Moreover, Turkish young women in Kosovo are less inclined to consider themselves as not socially and politically active, in comparison to Turkish young men. Finally, the same study did not find any remarkable difference between young Bosnian men and young Bosnian women.²⁷

Rural youth participation prospects in Kosovo

Young people residing in rural areas are considered less privileged than other young individuals living in more urbanized areas e.g., being disadvantaged in different areas of active citizenship. These vulnerabilities infer from issues such as low development of infrastructure and other service in their communities.²⁸ Thus, enhancing active participation of rural youth has conventionally been subjected as a low priority.

Young people, residents of rural areas remain one of the groups that is very little engaged in policymaking process. There is a myriad of affecting factors that are of a demographic nature in affecting the latter outcome. Respectively, factors such as age, marital status, educational level, sex and ethnicity have a significant relationship with participation. As a result, rural youth organizations are also scarce and are

²⁵ Lirije Palushi (2020). INTER-ETHNIC RELATIONS IN KOSOVO FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF RAE COMMUNITIES. Available at: <https://www.kas.de/documents/286052/0/Policy+brief+20-08-28+Inter-Ethnic+Relations+in+Kosovo+from+the+perspective+of+RAE+Communities+%28ENG%29.pdf/948dd754-2dc9-10b9-7320-4bd28fdda198?version=1.0&t=1609941674635>

²⁶ NDI (2021) "Youth Conference: SPEAK YOUTH TO POWER" Available at https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?ref=watch_permalink&v=1032388577323018

²⁷ Ibid;

²⁸ European Union (n.d) "Young people in rural areas: diverse, ignored and unfulfilled" Available at <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/106317733/Rural-youth-study.pdf/1fde9ee6-48ce-a2f7-2985-124b44ae46e7>

subjected to many challenges as per engaging with institutions, civil society and government. The early disbanding of rural youth organizations is a consequent result of the absence of networking with modern urban contexts, respectively, government and donor staff (Trivellil & Morel, 2020).²⁹

Educated middle-class young individuals are more prone to participation activities, thus leaving young people most in need for services and support underrepresented. Moreover, with social norms playing a great role in traditional rural areas, especially for young women, they do not have access to educational and training programmes equivalently to their urban peers. Norms that are gender-based serve as inhibitors to rural young women in achieving successful outcomes in adulthood (Trivellil & Morel, 2020).³⁰

Qualitative data in the study shows that the position of rural youth has changed positively over the years due to enhanced accessibility to information. Rural youth do not seem to endure so much anymore the hurdle of misinformation on participation activities as a result of the massive surplus of information accessed in the internet via social media and other portals of communication. Nonetheless, rural youth remain posed to a myriad of issues that inhibit their opportunities of active participation.

Primarily, young people coming from more rural areas of residence often lack the necessary mobility means to access participation activities (political and social activities, campaigns, advocacy, decision-making, etc.) due to unfavourable geographical position. Rural youth persist to suffer the issue of transportation in accessing activities that are often operating in more urban areas. Typically, recreational courses and centres, activities of a political/social nature, and other participatory activities are based in larger cities with a more urban setting.

With people living in rural areas of residence also enduring unfavourable socio-economic conditions, it presents a prime cause for lack of means to afford transportation. Thus, rural youth are being denied from many opportunities toward active citizenship.

"I think that some of the barriers or obstacles faced by young people in rural areas is that they live further from the urban centre where there is a greater opportunity for inclusion, also since they in rural areas are conditioned by lower economic activity. Also, specialized organizations and schools, as well as recreational courses and centres, are more concentrated in the city, which for many young people in rural areas are costly and unaffordable."

²⁹ Trivelli, C., Morel, J. (2019) "Rural youth inclusion, empowerment and participation" Available at https://www.ifad.org/documents/38714170/41187395/05_Trivelli+and+Morel_2019+RDR+BACKGROUND+PAPER.pdf/982ce510-b38f-017c-66e3-8f02208a8ded

³⁰ Ibid;

-Director of Culture, Youth and Sports from the Municipality of Drenas/Glogovac

“The issue is the distance, the infrastructure, transportation. For example, we have villages where there's 900 houses, they have no means of transportation; there might be no bus or a similar issue, if you understand. In such cases, you might have to wait for someone else to go to the city.”

-Local Youth Council Representative from the municipality of Hani i Elezit/Đeneral Janković

The initial mapping exercise further recognized another set of challenges endured by rural youth that handicap their premises seeking participation in advocating, social and political activities, campaigning, decision-making etc. Based on the responses obtained, it appears that these groups may experience also self-prejudice and isolation due to imposed prejudice that they have been subjected to over the years. Residents of rural areas are often looked down upon by their urban counterparts only based on their geographical position. Accordingly, rural youth could tend to lean toward self-destructive behaviours and isolation, rather than actively partaking in participatory activities. Hence, systematic and individual support is required in driving these groups toward improved involvement.

“Because of the distinct prejudice developed in our society, these groups often induce self-prejudice and self-isolate in their homes and closed environments, further hindering their participation in activities. A change for the better is taking place in our society where we are constantly making efforts in support [of these groups], but they remain in the shadows. Hence, I believe the main obstacles are prejudice, improper support, or inappropriate opportunities.”

- Director of Culture, Youth and Sports from the Municipality of Klinë/Klina

In the context of Kosovo rural youth, there is limited data that presents the real situation of rural youth participation. The gap in evidence-based findings for these groups goes to show the scarcity of attention allocated to rural youth. Thus, it is of immediate emergency for intervention in these overlooked youth groups that have been a subject to several hindering factors including geographical factors, social norms and education levels.

Young women participation prospects in Kosovo

The present study further explored on the position of young women in Kosovo with regard to active participation. Generally, women in Kosovo remain subjects of significant challenges toward participation. Particularly, women are often

overlooked when it comes to active partaking in political scene and remain being underrepresented in decision-making structures.³¹

The recent Youth Poll of NDI³² found that more young women (35%) fail to consider themselves as socially/politically active citizens as compared to a lower percentage of young men (31%) whom declare equally (2021). Moreover, it seems that young women are less prone to participate in the following activities when compared to men: attending a political party meeting (31% men and 27% women), help a political party as a political activist (29% men and 23% women), participate in political rallies (33% men and 27% women), door to door campaign for a political party (14% men and 12% women) (NDI, 2021). Nonetheless, findings suggest that young women are more likely to participate in a Local Youth Action Council activity (35%) than young men (30%).

Considering the aforementioned findings, it is apparent that women's position in active participation and decision-making remains restricted. The study conducted by NDI in 2021 came to identify a number of key factors that serve as obstacles to women's political activity:

- Perceived responsibilities of women as "family caregivers" for them not being heavily involved in decision-making processes,
- Lack of formalized processes for selecting political candidates; women experience difficulties navigating informal, male-dominated processes,
- Lack of access to finance employed for campaigning and other forms of collecting support,
- Engagement of women in stereotypical roles (remaining farther from topics such as economy or defence),
- Gender-biased portrayals of women candidates in the media
- VAW-P (Violence against women in politics).

Results from the in-depth interviews in the present study support the thesis that women's participation in political activism remains a challenge. Based on the responses obtained, young women's activism in cultural, educative, social, voluntary activities does not differ substantially from that of young men. Nonetheless, it seems that there is a great reluctance identified in young women to partaking in political activity. Seemingly, young women have created a sense of mistrust in institutions and a fear of prejudice in partaking in political activities. The gender roles and stereotypical constructs ingrained in Kosovo society prevail to present a barrier to

³¹UNMIK (2019) "Women in Kosovo continue to face significant challenges, ASG Jenča hears during Kosovo visit" Available at <https://unmik.unmissions.org/women-kosovo-continue-face-significant-challenges-asg-jen%C4%8Da-hears-during-kosovo-visit>

³² NDI (2021) "Youth Conference: SPEAK YOUTH TO POWER" Available at https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?ref=watch_permalink&v=1032388577323018

young women's enthusiasm to actively partake in political and decision-making activities.

"Intellectually and academically, both genders they have capacity, but the problem lies in the mentality and conditions around, such as discrimination, parental control in terms of gender. The difference between rural and urban areas is also that there is a very large number of girls in activities in urban areas, while as a result of the mentality the number of girls participating in rural areas is very small. Moreover, women in general are scared to be active in political scene due to abovementioned."

- Respondent from youth focused non-governmental organization

Finally, this study subsequently took notice the lack of awareness and advocating on the importance of active participation amongst youth. With young women, and also youth in general being unaware of the benefits and prospects that may emerge as a consequence of active participation, their reluctance to participate may linger.

Engagement and employability of Kosovo youth

Kosovo's population endures the ongoing challenge of having a low employment rate. Measures report that out of the entire working-age population, only 29.3% of the population in 2021 was employed. With respect to gender, the highest employment rate was recorded in men, with 42.8% as compared to women employment peaking at only 15.9% (KAS, 2021).³³ With regard to age groups, the employment rate was highest among ages 35-44 and lowest among youth members ranging from 15-24 (12.0%).

Based on the first quarter of Labour Force Survey in 2021, there were 124,657 unemployed persons aged 15 to 64. Respectively, 83,141 persons of them were men and 41,516 women. The unemployment rate was estimated at 25.8%, whereas the unemployment rate for women was 29.7% as compared to that of men at 24.2%. (KAS, 2021).³⁴ *(It is to be noted that this percentage accounts for active job seekers, and does not take into account domestic and unpaid labour, mainly undertaken by women, which is the fact that prevents them from seeking for employment. As a result, only 21.1% of women were economically active as opposed to 59.7 % of men (KAS 2020)).* Based on the findings generated from the Labour Force Survey in 2021, it comes to show that youth makes up to 30.3 % of the unemployed persons in Kosovo. the 2021 EC Kosovo Report states that " Very high rates of inactivity (61.7 %), in

³³ Kosovo Agency of Statistics (2021)- Labour Force Survey Q1 2021 Available at <https://ask.rks-gov.net/media/6355/lfs-q1-2021.pdf>

³⁴ Ibid;

particular for women (79.2%), and an alarming rate of youth unemployment (49.1% for the age group 15-24) are persisting, implying structural problems such as undeclared work and misalignment between education outcomes and labour market needs."

The year 2021 marks a decrease in the number of jobseekers registered in the Employment Public Services compared to the previous year. Until 2020 there was a high increase in registrations, during 2021, the number of registered is 82,042 persons, a number that represents a decrease of 51.4% from 2020. Of these registered persons 38,568 are women, while 43,474 are men. The Employment Agency through the Employment Offices during the reporting year (2021), have registered 10,743 vacancies. Compared to last year, there was a decrease of 3.8%. During 2021, similar to the previous year (2020), the economy was closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, for a period of 10 years there is an upward trend of the number of jobs.

The total number of employment mediations conducted during 2021 is 6,252 mediations. Most mediations are carried through active measures of labour market. During 2021, the number of persons mediated was 3,297, when compared to 2020, it seems that there was a decrease of 41.4%.³⁵

The youth in Kosovo that remains unemployed, not in school and not trained (NEET) presents a cause for concern about youth employment considering that the latter poses detachment from any activity related to labour market. Non-engagement of youth in countries with high unemployment of young individuals may cause for decline in profits and may contribute to arise of social issues. Based on the latest measurements, in the first quarter of 2021, 98,730 young individuals in Kosovo (ages 15-24) were not employed, enrolled in education or training. This portion of youth counts for 29.8% of the young population (KAS, 2021).³⁶

Such high rates of unemployment cause for great consequences on the political and socio-economic stability of Kosovo in a wide scale. This impact will have damaging prospects on the overall sustainable development of the country, especially for the economic, demographic and structure in Kosovo. Kosovo is already suffering the effects of high youth unemployment, case in point "brain drain", the phenomenon that describes the migration of high-skilled workers in seek for improved opportunities for economic prospects and professional advancement (LENS, 2015).³⁷

³⁵ Employment Agency of the Republic of Kosovo (2021). Employment and Vocational Training. Annual Report.

³⁶ Kosovo Agency of Statistics (2021)- Labour Force Survey Q1 2021 Available at <https://ask.rks.gov.net/media/6355/lfs-q1-2021.pdf>

³⁷ NGO LENS (2018) "NATIONAL BASELINE REPORT Kosovo" Available at <http://www.ngolens.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/unemployment.pdf>

The transition of Kosovo from a centralized economy to a free-market economy has crafted a direct impact on the time interval from graduation to entering the workforce. The lack of coordination amongst educational institutions and companies or enterprises causes a hindering impact on the transition process from school to the labor market. Regardless of young individuals' motivation to join the labour market, a connection is required for allowing access to relevant information in order to shorten the transition process as much as possible. This gap in coordination handicaps access to practice, whom accounts for insufficient experience and eventually translates into a prolonged transition period. (Civici, Rama & Shahini, 2017).³⁸

Kosovo's attempts to establish an efficient education system have been hindered by inadequate educational infrastructure, poor curricula, unqualified teaching staff and insufficient financial means. Thus, high youth unemployment points toward education products and needs of the labour market. (European Commission, 2019).³⁹ Among the means to be employed in order to strengthen the link between education institutions and the local economy is the organization of training programs and internships. These means are quite scarce even in vocational educations. Training and internship programs offer the opportunity of students to gain contact and get accustomed to an occupational environment. The experience attained from getting acquainted with the workplace directly equips students with opportunities that can allow a more plane sailing transition process. (Kysap, 2009).⁴⁰

Findings suggest that work experience is one of the main barriers to youth employment in Kosovo. Youngsters perceive themselves as being discriminated at the jumpstart of their career due to work experience criteria set by any employer seeking to hire. A vast majority of 71.1 percent of Kosovo students report to have less than one-year work experience, 20 percent have two years of work and experience, and only 7.8% have 3 years of work experience (Hasanaj, Ahmetaj & Tërstena, 2020).⁴¹

From the employer perspective, forty-four percent (44%) of businesses in Kosovo report that they are reluctant to offer internships to young people due to inadequate training and education. Business communities also believe that it is far more convenient for them to recruit an inexperienced individual for the job, rather than a

³⁸ Halili, F., (2020) "CHALLENGES FOR YOUTH EMPLOYMENT IN TRANSITION COUNTRIES -WITH SPECIAL TREATMENT KOSOVO"

https://www.academia.edu/44603778/CHALLENGES_FOR_YOUTH_EMPLOYMENT_IN_TRANSITION_COUNTRIES_WITH_SPECIAL_TREATMENT_KOSOVO

³⁹ European Commission (2019) "COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT"

<https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/system/files/2019-05/20190529-kosovo-report.pdf>

⁴⁰ European Union (n.d) "Symposium on Youth Policy in South East Europe: the role of information and counselling in young people's social inclusion and access to rights" Available at

https://www.forumsyd.org/upload/regional_webpages/kosovo/Publications/Kosovo%20Youth%20Strategy%20and%20Action%20Plan

⁴¹ Hasanaj, P., Ahmetaj, B., Terstena, A., (2020) " Employment Challenges of the Youth in Kosovo" Available at <https://dj.univ-danubius.ro/index.php/AUDOE/article/view/387>

university graduate due to them being typically incompetent for the vacancy (World Bank, 2019).⁴²

Research has shown that sectors with potential for employment generation are manufacturing sectors such as production of garments, textiles, food and construction sector (World Bank, 2017).⁴³ Moreover, another considered sector with high growth potential is wood processing. In terms of services, the ICT industry is providing an important source of employment and embarks the potential of transforming Kosovo's economy, considering the impact of other sectors and human capital (World Bank, 2017).⁴⁴

The largest number of vacancies by professions are mainly registered for service and sales workers by 2,597 or 24.2% in 2021. Then, workers of crafts and similar occupations had 2,099 registrations or 19.55 and with an increase of 7.3% from the previous year (2020). While other professions have reflected smaller indicators in the censuses, starting from managers who participate with 210 registrations or 2.0%, and with an increase of 20.7% compared to the previous year (2020).⁴⁵

The decrease in the number of vacancies during the year 2021 (which is interesting because it reflects the COVID-19 pandemic aftermaths) is reflected only in some categories of qualifications, except for the categories of primary school and high school, who have experienced a decrease in registrations, other categories reflected an increase compared to 2020. Drops in registrations were mostly identified in the categories of primary school education of 45.5% and high school education (38.3%).⁴⁶

Concrete findings from the field:

Qualitative data obtained through in-depth interviews support that there is a great mismatch between labour market demand and skills and preparation of graduated youth in Kosovo. Although young people are more and more likely to pursue formal education, upon graduation they often find that they are not adequately prepared for the labour market. Because skills relevant to key growth sectors of the modern economy – both technical and “soft” skills – are often not covered in traditional education systems, employers often find a “skills mismatch” between the competencies youth need to succeed in the workplace and those they actually possess. Respondents in the study believe that businesses must also be cooperative

⁴²The World Bank (2019) “Western Balkans Labor Market Trends: 2019” Available at

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/eca/publication/labor-trends-in-wb>

⁴³ Republic of Kosovo Systematic Country Diagnostic (2017) Available at

<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/26573/Kosovo-SCD-FINAL-May-5-C-05052017.pdf>

⁴⁴ Ibid;

⁴⁵ Employment Agency of the Republic of Kosovo (2021). Employment and Vocational Training. Annual Report.

⁴⁶ Ibid;

in taking in fresh graduates for training purposes employing various traineeship/internship opportunities. According to them, the latter's benefits are not limited to only to young jobseekers, but also to businesses, as it widens opportunities for them to reap profits from skill equipped young employees.

Considering the evident emergent need for skill development training opportunities, interviewees believe that it is essential for Kosovo youth to be trained on business plan drafting, grant application procedures, accessing relevant grant information and entrepreneurship. According to them, there are many financing opportunities for youth that are being offered from various organizations or from the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, yet, most of them do not have the necessary skills to access these opportunities. Among other training needs listed, foreign language courses and technology and computer trainings were subsequently listed.

Amongst the capacity building needs of Kosovo youth, relevant key informants in this study further revealed that there is a gap in youth members' core skills, or commonly referred to as soft skills. Primarily, youth members need to be educated on inquiring information on job vacancies. As interviewees in the study declared, youth members seeking a job need to know where to look. Parallel to that, it is emergent also for young individuals to be equipped with relevant skills in professional writing of their Curriculum Vitae and Motivational Letter. Trainings allocated to youth must also pay ample attention toward enhancing critical thinking, problem solving, public speaking, professional writing, teamwork, digital literacy as a vital mean of preparing them for the labour market.

Apart from that, there is also a great need for vocational trainings targeted at young women that have completed high school and are not seeking a higher education. Trainings that are considered of more importance by stakeholders listed tailoring courses, agriculture and fruit picking courses. With recent start-up business grant prospects having focused their target to young women, trainings must also be allocated towards advancing skills of young women in having the necessary competencies of applying for these grants (i.e., training them on filtering information, equipping them with technical abilities for application, etc.). According to the participants partaking in the study, this group is far more vulnerable to more unfavourable outcomes in the future if actions toward their financial independence are not assumed.

With regard to vocational trainings, the latter are mainly offered by Vocational Centres in Kosovo. To date, there are eight (8) training centres in the main cities of Republic of Kosovo. Vocational Training includes two sub-measures, such as: Institutional Training in Vocational Training Centres, and Combined Training (VTC and company). Vocational training the year 2021 is one of Active Measures with the largest number of beneficiaries. This measure participates in proportional percentage with 45.3% or with 2,923 referrals in

vocational training, as well referral to combined training (VTC and Company) with 230 persons or 3.5%.⁴⁷

Vocational training during 2021 has managed to realize 3,153 referrals reflecting a trend down 8.2% compared to a year earlier (2020). This downward trend for 2021 is as a result of the global pandemic and the closing of some profiles of the Vocational Training Centres. The Vocational Training Department for some profiles has reflected the lack of trainers and in this aspect many job seekers have not been able to attend trainings.⁴⁸

With regard to age group, the data for 2021 show that the highest number of participants in Vocational Training has been focused on people aged 25-39 who make up 41.5% of all trainees. Percentages similar to the first group include also persons in the age group 15-24 with 40.85%. Regarding the degree of certification (CS) the highest percentage is achieved by persons of older age groups, respectively, persons in the age group 55+ (86.7%).⁴⁹

Youth perspective on employment

Youth Forum conducted as part of the study adheres to the findings that the education system fails to skill young individuals complementary with the requirements of the labour market. Young individuals partaking in the forum expressed that they do not feel prepared to enter the labour market upon completing their education. The skills mismatch infers from curricula not treating topics that attend to the needs of youngsters in becoming equipped with relevant knowledge and skills pursued by recruiters.

The participants also voiced that an alternative challenge with regard to their employment prospects is the selection of a degree to pursue upon completing their secondary education. They declared that this decision is often influenced by family members or friends, rather than by attaining reliable information on the prospects of the said degree. Thus, most high school students feel disoriented and confused when having to choose the subsequent steps of their education journey.

In order to alleviate the aforementioned issues endured by youth, participants in the forum voiced their recommendations for providing solutions to their needs. Primarily, participants expressed that they are in great need of trainings on soft skills, including trainings on writing a CV, drafting a letter of motivation, communication, leadership, debates. Other than that, participants expressed that a great assistance to them would be also informative activities on acquiring information on vacancies and knowing how to selectively search for job opportunities. Finally, an accentuated requirement of youth members included career guidance counselling services offered to them as a means of assisting young individuals in making and implementing informed educational and occupational choices. Career guidance will help them acquire the knowledge,

⁴⁷ Employment Agency of the Republic of Kosovo (2021). Employment and Vocational Training. Annual Report.

⁴⁸ Ibid;

⁴⁹ Ibid;

information, skills, and experience necessary to identify career options, and narrow them down to make one career decision.

Disadvantaged youth and their opportunities in attaining employment

Characteristics of a demographic nature (sex, education, geographic locations, and ethnicity) pose implications for job prospects to youth in reaching employment (Baah-Boateng, 2016).⁵⁰ The majority of rural youth are employed in the informal economy as contributing family workers, subsistence farmers, home-based micro-entrepreneurs or unskilled workers. These groups suffer lower wages, unpaid labour working only under seasonal work arrangement and can face exploitive working conditions that might urge them to seek migration in larger urban areas.⁵¹

Employment of Minority Ethnicities in Kosovo (Roma Ashkali Egyptian)

It is apparent that unemployment remains among the top pressing issues concerning citizens of Kosovo.⁵² Amongst different ethnicities in Kosovo, by far the most marginalized and discriminated groups are Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, which seem to face the most obstacles in attaining employment. Considering the overall low education scales, employment prospects to these communities remain scarce. An UNDP (2019)⁵³ study shows that more than half of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians (69%) have completed only primary school (35%) or have dropped out before completing primary school (34%). On average, the number of men who completed school is higher as compared to women. Almost half of the women from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities have dropped out before finishing primary school (41%) as compared to 27 % of men from these communities. Also, the share of men who completed primary school is 39 % as compared to 30 % of women.

Reasons for not attending education by members of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian members were lack of family support to continue studies (20%), lack of financial assistance/ scholarships (19%), personal obligations to support their family (18%), not interested to pursue higher studies (16%), family obligations conflicting with regular school attendance (16%) and early marriage (15%). Other reasons mentioned were also bullying in school (9%), ethnic discrimination and lack of transportation (7%), and transportation expenses (6%).

⁵⁰ Baah-Boateng W. The youth unemployment challenge in Africa: What are the drivers? The Economic and Labour Relations Review. 2016;27(4):413-431. doi:10.1177/1035304616645030

⁵¹ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (2022) "Decent Rural Employment" Available at (<https://www.fao.org/rural-employment/work-areas/youth-employment/ru/>)

⁵² UNDP. 2020. "Public Pulse XVIII." Prishtina: UNDP Kosovo, May 31

⁵³ UNDP (2019). LABOUR MARKET INCLUSION OF PERSONS FROM ROMA, ASHKALI AND EGYPTIAN COMMUNITIES IN KOSOVO. Available at:

[file:///C:/Users/Ubo%20Consulting/Downloads/Labor%20Market%20Inclusion%20of%20persons%20from%20Roma%20Ashkali%20and%20Egyptian%20community%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/Ubo%20Consulting/Downloads/Labor%20Market%20Inclusion%20of%20persons%20from%20Roma%20Ashkali%20and%20Egyptian%20community%20(1).pdf)

With regard to education of young women, another study⁵⁴ shows that 20 percent of them reported to have finished only some years of primary school, 14 percent completed primary school and 18 percent finished some years of secondary school. Around 33 percent of the girls from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian community finished secondary school and 7 percent finished university. Young women who were of a school age but were not enrolled in school declared that they cannot afford it (36%), do not have time to go to school due to housework (17%), their parents/family do not support their education (13%) or they have to take care of their siblings/other family members (10%).

UNDP (2019)⁵⁵ study shows that 75 percent of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians reported to be unemployed. From those employed, 46 % are working full time, 26 % are working part-time, 16 % are self-employed and 12 % are seasonal workers. Divided by ethnicity, 33 percent of Egyptian community members reported to be employed, 25 percent of Roma community and 18 percent from Ashkali community provided an equal position. Segregated by gender, 30 percent of men are employed, as opposed to 19 percent of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian (RAE) women reporting the same.

Within the RAE community, the share of men looking for a job (77%) is higher than women (38%). Out of those looking for a job, 30 % were living on social assistance.⁵⁶

The situation with regard to employment of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian women in particular is quite concerning. A study conducted by VoRAE (2018)⁵⁷ showed that eighty-eight (88%) percent of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian young women (ages 18-25) were unemployed. Moreover, only nine percent of the young Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian young women reported to be registered in the Employment Office.

Moreover, a study⁵⁸ shows that the vast majority of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian young women (82%) surveyed state that they are not looking for a job. The main responses identified with regard to the reasons justifying the latter, 24 percent declare that there

⁵⁴ VoRAE (2018). Inclusion of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Girls and Persons with Disability in Education and Employment in Kosovo. Available at: file:///C:/Users/Ubo%20Consulting/Downloads/5edf3c23a260dInclusion-of-girls-and-persons-with-disability-from-Roma-Ashkali-and-Egyptian-Communities_FINAL-FINAL.pdf

⁵⁵ UNDP (2019). LABOUR MARKET INCLUSION OF PERSONS FROM ROMA, ASHKALI AND EGYPTIAN COMMUNITIES IN KOSOVO. Available at: [file:///C:/Users/Ubo%20Consulting/Downloads/Labor%20Market%20Inclusion%20of%20persons%20from%20Roma%20Ashkali%20and%20Egyptian%20community%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/Ubo%20Consulting/Downloads/Labor%20Market%20Inclusion%20of%20persons%20from%20Roma%20Ashkali%20and%20Egyptian%20community%20(1).pdf)

⁵⁶ UNDP (2019). LABOUR MARKET INCLUSION OF PERSONS FROM ROMA, ASHKALI AND EGYPTIAN COMMUNITIES IN KOSOVO. Available at: [file:///C:/Users/Ubo%20Consulting/Downloads/Labor%20Market%20Inclusion%20of%20persons%20from%20Roma%20Ashkali%20and%20Egyptian%20community%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/Ubo%20Consulting/Downloads/Labor%20Market%20Inclusion%20of%20persons%20from%20Roma%20Ashkali%20and%20Egyptian%20community%20(1).pdf)

⁵⁷ VoRAE (2018). Inclusion of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Girls and Persons with Disability in Education and Employment in Kosovo. Available at: file:///C:/Users/Ubo%20Consulting/Downloads/5edf3c23a260dInclusion-of-girls-and-persons-with-disability-from-Roma-Ashkali-and-Egyptian-Communities_FINAL-FINAL.pdf

⁵⁸ VoRAE (2018). Inclusion of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Girls and Persons with Disability in Education and Employment in Kosovo. Available at: file:///C:/Users/Ubo%20Consulting/Downloads/5edf3c23a260dInclusion-of-girls-and-persons-with-disability-from-Roma-Ashkali-and-Egyptian-Communities_FINAL-FINAL.pdf

are no available jobs in the area, 23 percent declared that family responsibilities hinder their job prospects and 21 percent did not have the demanded experience. Further, 11 percent of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian young women stated that them not looking for a job is a consequence of their husbands not supporting their decision and 6 percent voiced that they do not have the support of their parents/family to engage in employment.

From 12 percent of those who work, 65 percent have/had no working contracts, 69 percent are/were compensated in cash, and forty-six percent are/were part-time employees. Some of the challenges the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian women faced during becoming employed were: finding a job suitable to their qualifications/skills (28%), lack of work experience (23%), to convince parents/family to support their employment decisions (15%), and to pass the recruitment process/overcome ethnic discrimination (14%).⁵⁹

Rural youth employment in Kosovo

Approximately, 64.8 percent of young individuals live in rural areas of residence in Kosovo (KAS, 2018).⁶⁰ Thus, unemployment of rural youth makes up for a vast majority of unemployed young people in the labour market.

In 2018, NGO LENS⁶¹ conducted a study on Kosovo Rural Youth with the aim of identifying employment opportunities, barriers and need. The said study included a sample of 603 respondents in municipalities with more than 60 percent of youth population living in rural areas. The sample was designed using a stratified probability sampling method, and has a 4.0 margin of error.

Findings from LENS, 2018⁶² suggest that 24.6 % of rural youth in Kosovo is employed, leaving 75.8% of rural youth unemployed. With regard to gender, 80.5 percent of young rural women are unemployed, while a lower percentage of young rural men (67.7%) being unemployed. Compared to men, rural women in Kosovo are more involved in

⁵⁹ VoRAE (2018). Inclusion of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Girls and Persons with Disability in Education and Employment in Kosovo. Available at: file:///C:/Users/Ubo%20Consulting/Downloads/5edf3c23a260dInclusion-of-girls-and-persons-with-disability-from-Roma-Ashkali-and-Egyptian-Communities_FINAL-FINAL.pdf

⁶⁰ KAS (2018). Agjencia e Statistikave të Kosovës, as cited in NGO LENS (2018) "KOSOVO RURAL YOUTH" Available at: <https://www.ngolens.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/RYEO-English-PRINT.pdf>

⁶¹ NGO LENS (2018) "KOSOVO RURAL YOUTH" Available at: <https://www.ngolens.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/RYEO-English-PRINT.pdf>

⁶² Ibid;

unpaid housework and care for family members, on top of unpaid agriculture work.⁶³ Moreover, more than half of rural youth that are employed, work without contracts.⁶⁴

An estimate on 81 percent of unemployed rural youth have their parents as the main source of income, 7.8 percent list siblings, 3.5% parent's parents, 9.2% list remittances, 5.7% list income from remittances, 5.7% comes from social assistance and 4.9% from their partners. Thus, it can be declared that the dependency on parents amongst rural youth is extremely high.⁶⁵

Lack of opportunities, prospects for part-time jobs, flexible working hours, adequate transport and lack of suitable skills present some of the obstacles that rural youth faces in attaining employment. The majority of rural youth declare that their village does not provide them with suitable job prospects. While most unemployed youth are in grave need of employment, they lack required job skills such as writing a CV, internet usage, career advice, and other necessary skills for entering the labour market. Rural youth population appears to be in most need to access a job (54.6%), write a CV (42.9%), evaluate their own skills (69.4%), use a computer (35.1%), use internet to find a job (38.5%), to obtain career advice (56.6%), facilitation for employment (45.4%), open a business (33.8%), expand business (9.8%), learn to work in agriculture (14.2%), and learn to take care of animals (19.1%).⁶⁶ Particularly indicative for the problem analysis concerning young rural women is that in spite of general recognition of their particularly difficult position regarding employment, there are insufficient data around this issue.

Qualitative data in this study attend to the finding that transportation presents an issue toward rural youth in accessing capacity building trainings. Rural youth despite being motivated to access trainings and internships that could enhance their future prospects of being employed, are inhibited by mobility means and financing capability. The latter issues however seem to pose more of a problem for high school graduates rather than to those of rural youth that are still attending high school. Based on the responses retrieved, high school students are more exposed to capacity building activities facilitated by education institutions. Moreover, they are able to attend trainings/activities after completing their school hours. High school graduates from rural areas in the other hand may become detached from information and networking to approach capacity building activities. Thus, it is considered of ample importance that non-governmental organizations are provided with funds to implement activities with closer physical proximity to more isolated rural areas.

Cultural norms also serve as inhibitors in youngsters' youth participation in activities. The pressure of cultural norms seems to fall more on rural youth and specifically

⁶³ Promoting Private Sector Employment (2019). Women of Resilience and Vision -Rural Women in Kosovo Creating Jobs and Better Lives. Available at: <https://ppse-kosovo.org/women-of-resilience-and-vision-rural-women-in-kosovo-creating-jobs-and-better-lives/>

⁶⁴ NGO LENS (2018) "KOSOVO RURAL YOUTH" Available at: <https://www.ngolens.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/RYEO-English-PRINT.pdf>

⁶⁵ Ibid;

⁶⁶ Ibid;

women from these areas. Participants declared that there are cases where young women are denied the possibility to attend activities that include male participation. Traditional norms, typically enforced by families residing in rural areas, but not only, result in young women's exclusion in opportunities that attend to capacity building and training.

As seen in the table below, employment rates in Kosovo vary with respect to different municipalities and levels of education. From the data generated from the latest population and household census 2011⁶⁷, a trend is observed that generally shows that Kosovo smaller municipalities tend to be ranked lower with regard to employment rates when compared to larger municipalities' counterparts. Moreover, despite the difference in education levels among different municipalities being slight, employment rates persist to vary depending on municipality. It should be noted that in the municipalities of Zubin Potok/Zubin Potok, Zvečan/Zvečan, Leposaviq/Leposavić and northern Mitrovica/Mitrovica, there was insufficient cooperation from the local leaders and population to allow the census to proceed.⁶⁸

Table 2. Municipality ranking by employment and education

Municipality	Ranking	Employment rate in %	Unemployment rate in %	% of people with upper second. Edu.	% of people with tertiary education
Prishtina	1	40.7	27.7	42.5	17.7
Graçanicë	2	36.3	36.9	49.6	7.0
Fushë Kosovë	3	33.4	36.1	41.9	8.3
Pejë	4	25.8	43.5	36.8	8.1
Ferizaj	5	26.1	43.7	40.2	5.2
Obiliq	5	27.2	46.7	44.3	4.7
Gjilan	7	26.4	45.6	35.1	7.3
Istog	8	22.5	44.3	32.1	5.4
Prizren	9	25.4	43.4	25.5	4.9
Mamushë	10	34.7	2.8	8.8	2.0
Mitrovicë	11	22.5	51.5	42.4	5.9
Rahovec	11	23.1	41.1	20.4	4.2
Klllokot	13	23.0	41.5	37.4	4.5
Vushtrri	13	21.5	55.7	39.9	5.3
Kamenicë	15	21.1	48.7	33.5	5.0
Gjakovë	16	22.6	48.8	31.5	6.2
Novobërdë	16	27.6	51.6	34.7	3.9
Viti	18	23.0	48.0	32.4	5.0

⁶⁷ Kosovo Agency of Statistics (2011) "Kosovo Population and Housing Census 2011" Available at https://ask.rks-gov.net/media/2075/final-results_eng.pdf

⁶⁸ European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo (2012). Minority Communities in the 2011 Kosovo Census Results: Analysis and Recommendations. Available on: <https://www.ecmikosovo.org/uploads/3engA.pdf>

Shtërpçë	19	21.9	59.9	35.4	5.2
Lipjan	20	22.0	49.4	34.9	4.6
Partesh	21	20.4	50.1	41.4	4.6
Kaçanik	22	19.4	49.5	38.7	4.1
Podujevë	23	19.8	49.6	34.9	4.7
Ranillug	24	19.1	58.6	41.4	5.9
Suharekë	25	21.1	46.4	26.7	4.8
Deçan	26	16.5	59.0	32.8	6.8
Glogoc	26	19.3	56.0	38.1	5.0
Dragash	28	20.1	45.1	22.4	3.6
Klinë	29	15.6	57.7	26.3	4.4
Skenderaj	30	15.9	55.8	32.9	4.3
Hani i Elezit	31	19.2	53.1	33.2	3.3
Shtime	31	18.9	53.2	32.9	3.8
Junik	33	13.5	58.0	32.4	4.2
Malishevë	34	14.4	53.0	20.6	3.5
Leposaviq	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Mitrovicë Veriore	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Zubin Potok	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Zveçan	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a ⁶⁹

With regards to employment rates of rural youth in Kosovo small municipalities, it seems that the municipality of Lipjan holds the highest rate of rural youth employment with 58.1 percent. Subsequent to the municipality of Lipjan, Hani I Elezit is rated second with 50% of rural youth employed and Kaçanik with 46.2 percent of employed rural youth. Contrastingly, the most underperforming municipalities with respect to rural youth employment list the municipality of Deçan (13.3%), Kamenicë (10.7%), Malisheva (10.4%) and Skenderaj (9.7%) (LENS, 2018).⁷⁰

Qualitative data in the present study support the premise that smaller municipalities in Kosovo are in greater need of intervention, when compared with larger urbanized municipalities. With the focus of interventions, organizations and institutions industrialization in larger cities, smaller municipalities are typically ostracized from interventions and young people are to suffer from the lack of opportunities to take part in employment and other engagement activities.

⁶⁹ Kosovo Agency of Statistics (ASK) –population, education and labour market, e.g. population and household census 2011. Municipal Competitiveness Review (MCR) - Measuring the competitiveness of municipalities in Kosovo. Available on: <https://www.kmuforschung.ac.at/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/KOSME-MCR-Report-fin.pdf?lang=en>

⁷⁰ NGO LENS (2018) “KOSOVO RURAL YOUTH” Available at: <https://www.ngolens.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/RYES-English-PRINT.pdf>

Young women employment in Kosovo

Young women employment in Kosovo persists to present an obstacle. The latest Labour Force Survey (2021) data show that the employment rate amongst young women (ages 25-34) is 22.3 percent as compared to young men (ages 25-34) standing at 48.9%. Further, while both sexes aged 15-24 maintain an overall low level of employment regardless, young women are ranked even lower with only 7.7 percent of them employed in comparison to 16.1% of young men. (KAS, 2021).⁷¹

Research suggests that women's participation in the labour market is hindered by various obstacles ranging from limited access to affordable child care and responsibilities toward elder care, gender norms and discrimination, low levels of education and overall work experience, labour law inhibitors (high cost of maternity leave for employers) and women's limited access to assets (World Bank, 2018).⁷²

Besides being able to land a job, holding on to a job position is also seen as a great issue for women. Considering those unskilled individuals and those with only secondary school make up for the largest part of jobseekers, vocational trainings and capacity-building trainings are seen as the main priority for prompting the opportunities of women in attaining sustainable employment. The majority of all youngsters (53.5%) rely on their network of family and friends when seeking employment while direct communication with employers (19.8%) and responding to advertisements (15.0%) come as second most employed methods when job hunting. Thus, the latter reflects the lack of public mediators in communicating information to young jobseekers regarding job vacancies. Men seem to use their network of friends and relatives in attaining employment more than women, and they similarly often acquire jobs through direct contact with employers. (Pastore et al 2013).⁷³

The majority of all employed women (48%) are employed in education, healthcare and trade sectors. Meanwhile, manufacturing, construction and trade sectors are comprised by 46% of all men. Moreover, women also lack representation in the agriculture sector with only 5% women of licensed farmers. Despite the improvement, women remain owning less substantial property (17% of properties) than men. Thus, the absence of property ownership, low education levels, unregistered labour and lack of access to information regarding subsidies and socialised gender roles hinder women's official participation. Kosovo Women's Network, 2018)⁷⁴

⁷¹ Kosovo Agency of Statistics (2021)- Labour Force Survey Q1 2021 Available at <https://ask.rks-gov.net/media/6355/lfs-q1-2021.pdf>

⁷² The World Bank (2018) " Promoting Women's Employment in Kosovo" Available at <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/kosovo/brief/promoting-women-employment-in-kosovo>

⁷³ Pastore, F., Sattar, S., Tiongson, E.R., (2013)"Gender differences in earnings and labor supply in early career: evidence from Kosovo's school-to-work transition survey" IZA Journal of Labor&Development 2, Available at <https://izajold.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/2193-9020-2-5>

⁷⁴ Kosovo Women's Network (2018). Kosovo Gender Analysis. Available at: <https://womensnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/womens-network.pdf>

Data desegregated by gender shows that more men reap benefits from Vocational Training Centres in comparison to women, with women resulting higher also on dropout rates from Vocational Training Centres (Nicole Farnsworth, 2015). Nonetheless, study shows that women in Kosovo seem to allocate more importance to vocational trainings when compared to men, respectively, 63% of women perceive vocational trainings as very useful as opposed to a lower percentage (58%) of men. (UNDP, 2021).⁷⁵

Cultural beliefs concerning women's role in society, and particularly their primary responsibility for care of children, elderly and persons with disabilities act as significant barriers to accessing and developing services. In rural areas and among Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian families in particular, community perceptions of the role of women often leads both families and service providers to believe that these women should be providing unpaid childcare.⁷⁶

Data show that childcare and elderly in the family (53.2%) is the main reason why individuals think women are inactive in the labour market in Kosovo. Lack of employment opportunities for women (46.8%) and the belief that women are less likely to be employed compared to men (30.1%) are the two the main reasons identified. Whereas, only 21% of respondents think that the discrepancy of education with the demands of the labour market is the reason why women are inactive. Divided by age, 60.2% of respondents, in the age group of 25-34, thought that caring for children and the elderly is the main reason why women are not active in the labour market.⁷⁷

Study conducted by Riinvest (2017)⁷⁸ revealed that women, spend on average 7 hours and 28 minutes working in paid work, and 2 additional hours and 57 minutes, taking care of the family and doing unpaid housework. Thus, on average, women spend 10 hours and 25 minutes working. A method of exemplifying the women's unpaid labour is the estimation of the time they spend on this type of work, within the market value of their wages. Considering that the average wage of women in the survey is € 387 per month, taking into account that the time of monthly spent on full-time work is 180 hours, women surveyed are paid an average of € 2.15 per hour working in the market. On the other hand, women engage approximately 3 hours a day in unpaid work. If unpaid work would be compensated, based on the market-

⁷⁵ UNDP Kosovo (2021). Youth Challenges and Perspectives in Kosovo. Available at:

file:///C:/Users/OnLine/Downloads/YouthChallengesandPerspectivesinKosova_ENG%20(1).pdf

⁷⁶ UNICEF (2017). Analysis of the Situation of Children and Women in Kosovo (UNSCR 1244). Available at:

https://www.unicef.org/kosovoprogramme/sites/unicef.org.kosovoprogramme/files/2019-01/Raporti_unicef_ENG.pdf

⁷⁷ Democracy for Development (2017). Inactivity of women in the labor market. Factors that keep women out of the labor market. Available on: https://d4d-ks.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/D4D_PI_12_W4D_SHQ_WEB.pdf

⁷⁸ Riinvest (2017). WOMEN IN THE LABOR MARKET. Conditional analysis of work for women in Kosovo. Available at: <https://www.google.com/search?q=google+translate&oq=google+tr&aqs=chrome.69i59j69i57j0i20i263i433i512j0i131i433i512i2j69i60i3.1126j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8>

determined time estimate, the women would have earned about € 135 per additional month, or would experience an increase in income by 35 percentage points.

The pandemic also seemed to cause an impact on women's increase of unpaid labour and domestic work. Even before the pandemic, 43% to 50% of not active women highlighted personal, family obligations, and patriarchal society as the primary reasons for their non-engagement in the labour market.⁷⁹ Ensuing the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic, women have been spending more time on cleaning (+24%) and cooking (+18%) than men (13% and 6% respectively).⁸⁰ In addition, women under 23 years old, married with no education, and residing in rural areas, have been more prone to be inactive in the labour market.⁸¹

In-depth interviews in this study attend to the finding that young women in Kosovo are vastly motivated to engage in the labour market. Stakeholders in this study reveal that there is generally a greater interest shown by women in partaking in capacity building activities than that of men. Nonetheless, women face many more obstacles in their roadway to acquiring employment and becoming self-actualized. With gender roles, stereotypes and prejudice remaining present in Kosovo, women experience more hardship when partaking in volunteering activities, capacity-building trainings, and even becoming employed. The interviews in this study pointed that there is generally a greater interest shown by women in partaking in capacity building activities than that of men. Nonetheless, women face many more obstacles in their roadway to acquiring employment and becoming self-actualized. With gender roles, stereotypes and prejudice remaining present in Kosovo, women experience more hardship when partaking in volunteering activities, capacity-building trainings, and even becoming employed.

"One phenomenon we have noticed is that the greatest willingness to get involved in activities and trainings belongs to girls, while the male gender has fewer barriers to be part of these activities, however, they lack the motivation and interest."

-Representative from the Local Youth Action Council in Kaçanik

⁷⁹ Democracy for Development (2017). Inactivity of women in the labor market. Factors that keep women out of the labor market. Available on: https://d4d-ks.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/D4D_PI_12_W4D_SHQ_WEB.pdf

⁸⁰ Dr. Nicasia Picciano (2021). Policy Analysis. WOMEN AND THE PANDEMIC: HEALTH-RELATED, SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACTS WORLDWIDE. WHERE DOES KOSOVO STAND? Available at: http://www.legalpoliticalstudies.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Policy-Analysis_Women-and-the-Pandemic_GLPS-1.pdf

⁸¹ World Bank. Improving the integration of women in Kosovo's labor market. What can the Public Employment Agency do?, 21 June 2018 [online] Available at: <http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/147651536212494453/pdf/129765592018155358WBImprovingwomensemploymentKosovoWhatCanPublicEmploymentAge>

Democratic dialogue across Kosovo youth

Dialogue is the foremost mean of resolving and evading any type of ongoing or past conflict. Democracy differentiates from other political philosophies grounding on the principle and practice of resolving inconsistencies through dialogue only.

Dialogue is set on the basis of inclusivity of all different approaches to a shared issue. A lack of inclusive dialogue brings upon rejection and frustration. Dialogue and inclusiveness are essential components of a culture of democracy. These elements are qualities that need to be progressively nurtured and reinforced in everyday life. Thus, the education of young people on the principles of democracy presents a vital mean toward building a democratic culture. Respect toward the law and respect to other people are fundamental notions of democracy that must be executed accordingly and equally to all people, regardless of the position in society. The education of young people on these notions is an ongoing process and does not end upon completing various education levels.⁸²

More than twenty years have passed after the end of the war between Kosovo and Serbia, more than ten years upon Kosovo's declaration of independence and several years after the launch of the EU facilitated dialogue, Kosovo and Serbia have a long way to go toward reconciling their relations. Kosovo has achieved recognition by 117 countries and is considered part of several international organizations, nonetheless, Kosovo's journey toward becoming an UN and EU member is conditioned by Serbia's indirect consent. Thus, for Kosovo to be able to enter the EU, it is mandatory for the countries to reconcile and normalize their relations (Tadić, 2019).⁸³

The Kosovo-Serbia Dialogue is one of the key step stones for Kosovo and Serbia's advancement toward the European Union membership. Upon commission of the dialogue, it is evident that the process aiming at normalization of relations maintains to be of crucial important for European advancement of both countries.⁸⁴

Some of the projects identified in the study that treat matters of democratic dialogue include Kosovo Youth Dialogue implemented by USAID, a 30-month project with the main goal of empowering young people to actively participate in the dealing with the past and reconciliation process in Kosovo by encouraging inter-ethnic communication, interaction and cooperation, addressing common interests, building confidence and promoting mutual understanding and positive attitudes.⁸⁵ Moreover, the Balkans Group,

⁸² Inter-parliamentary Union (2012) "Dialogue and inclusiveness - central to democracy" Available on <http://archive.ipu.org/idd/dialogue.htm>

⁸³ Tadić.K . (2019) "Understanding the international dialogue on Kosovo in Serbia" Available at http://eprints.bournemouth.ac.uk/33846/1/2019%20KFOS_Local-and-International-Determinants-of-Kosovo%E2%80%99s-Statehood-WEB.pdf#page=240

⁸⁴ European Commission (2019) "Commission staff working document" Available at https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/countries/package_en

⁸⁵ USAID (2021). Kosovo Youth Dialogue. Available at: <https://www.usaid.gov/documents/kosovo-youth-dialogue>

within the framework of the "Regional Cooperation and Good Neighbourly Relations component," organized a focus group "Youth and Kosovo-Serbia Dialogue". Youngsters who were part of this focus group participated in the campaign of the Balkans Group: "Friends of Dialogue". This campaign aimed to promote dialogue between the two countries (Kosovo and Serbia) and their societies.⁸⁶

The dialogue facilitated by EU has managed to address significant topics affecting youth. Primarily, one of the first topics tackled in Brussels 2011 was the recognition of university diplomas. Considering that there is lack of Albanian teaching opportunities in Serbia, most of Kosovans that live in Serbia complete their studies in Kosovo. The mutual recognition of diplomas was an important milestone that contributes to employment of citizens from both countries, regardless of the country they complete studies in.⁸⁷

The agreement on the freedom of movement had also a major impact on the lives of young people residing in both countries. The respective agreement granted Kosovo and Serbia citizens to freely cross countries using only ID. This barrier removal agreement paved the way for greater contact opportunities between both countries through cultural visits, exchange programmes and other related contact opportunities. The enabled contact between youth members posed the opportunity for reducing stereotypical attitudes, outer-group thinking and building of friendship and networking.⁸⁸

In the face of benefits that Kosovo youth reaps from the dialogue process, the involvement of youth perspective is yet to be involved. By employing means of network and associating, Kosovo youth can bring closer important solutions and contribute merging the societies closer. Having youngsters devoted to building sustainable peace between the two countries may contribute to the dialogue and better implementing of agreements.⁸⁹

Findings generated by NDI Youth Poll (2021)⁹⁰ suggest that 57 percent of K-Albanian youth maintain hopes that ethnic relations within Kosovo are to improve. More males (58%) maintain the latter belief in comparison to a slightly lower number of young women (56%). Despite the aspirations of youth for the improvement of situation with regard to inter-ethnic relations, the same study revealed that a majority of K-Albanian youth (57%) do not have a friend that is from a different ethnicity. Yet again, more male respondents (45%) report to have a friend from a different ethnical background, than young women respondents (40%) whom declared equally.

⁸⁶ Balkans Group organized a focus group with youth on the Kosovo – Serbia dialogue. Available at: <https://balkansgroup.org/en/balkans-group-organized-a-focus-group-with-youth-on-the-kosovo-serbia-dialogue/>

⁸⁷ Balkans Policy Research Group (n.d) "The Youth, the Agreements and the Dialogue" Available at <https://balkansgroup.org/en/the-youth-the-agreements-and-the-dialogue/>

⁸⁸ Ibid;

⁸⁹ Ibid;

⁹⁰ NDI Kosovo (2021) "Youth Conference: Speak Youth to Power" Available at https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?ref=watch_permalink&v=1032388577323018

When asked whether K-Albanian youth would consider becoming friends with members of other ethnicities, 49 percent declared positively, while 44 percent provided with an opposite response.

In the other hand, findings by the same study reveal that a larger number of K-Serbian youth believe that the ethnic relations within Kosovo will remain the same (42%), and 37 percent believe that they will be worsened. Only 14 percent of K-Serbian youth believe that the inter-ethnic relations within Kosovo will go on to be improved.

Moreover, data from the NDI Youth Poll⁹¹ also show that a majority of K-Serbian youth (59%) do not have a friend from another ethnic community. When asked whether they would consider becoming friends with member of other ethnicities, 55 percent of respondents declared that they would not become friends with someone from a different ethnicity and only 12 percent declared that they would be prone to such action.

Finally, a study conducted by Debate Centre in 2021⁹² shows that a majority of Kosovo youth (52%) believe that peace with Serbia is very important. However, the same study shows that only 35 percent of Kosovo youth believe that there is a need for establishment of a process of reconciliation between Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo (DC, 2021)

Scoping further into inter-ethnic relations, according to the last official Census⁹³ in Kosovo, in addition to the Albanian majority (92.9%) and Serbs (1.5%) there are also six recognized ethnic groups: Bosniaks (1.6%), Turks (1.1%), Ashkali (0.9 %), Egyptians (0.7%), Gorani (0.6%), and Roma (0.5 %).

Building relations and harmony in post-conflict societies is a challenge, and Kosovo does not present an exception. Relations amid distinct ethnic groups remain fragile and sensitive, and call for immense work in order to attain sustainable ties. This situation can particularly present a challenge with regard to young individuals. Different languages and lack of joint events result in limited interactions, contact and getting to know each-other. Thus, the creation of such environment enables building stereotypes and prejudice, which causes for further division among different ethnical groups residing in Kosovo.⁹⁴

Data from the in-depth interviews in this study indicate that there has been little intervention generally conducted with regards to involvement of youth with regard to youth inter-ethnic relation, combating stereotypes and prejudice, disinformation, dialogue processes. A majority of stakeholders in the study declared to not be aware of

⁹¹Ibid;

⁹² Hoxha, E., Shatri. A., Sejdiu.V., Kiqina. F. (2021) "Kosovar youth perceptions of relations with Serbia, transitional justice, reconciliation and dealing with the past" Available on <https://debatecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Kosovar-youth-perceptions-of-relations-with-Serbia-transitional-justice-reconciliation-and.pdf>

⁹³ KAS (2012). Population by Gender, Ethnicity at Settlement level. Population, Households and Housing Census 2011. Available at: <https://ask.rks-gov.net/media/1614/population-by-gender-ethnicity-at-settlement-level.pdf>

⁹⁴ OSCE (2015). Tolerance matters: Kosovo youth breaking down prejudices. Available on: <https://www.osce.org/kosovo/203236>

any initiative that greatly focuses on democratic, inter-ethnic relations and combating of disinformation. Moreover, it seems that there is little informing amongst stakeholders on youth participation in activities related to the said issues.

With the latter being, it is evident that youth from different ethnicities might show little enthusiasm toward these issues, as stated by stakeholders in this study. Although there is a general perception that younger generations might be more open to democratic dialogue and tackling past issues, hesitation of youth to participate on these issues lingers.

The participants in the study believe that youth are a vital mean toward democratic development, especially considering that the latter can act as an active force for future combat of disinformation and breaking the stereotypes dividing different ethnic groups living in Kosovo.

“The development of these [democratic] processes is extremely important, especially in regard to a culture that more or less limits us on topics of gender stereotypes, intercultural dialogues, and other. The prospects of youth are numerous, and this has encouraged them to put forward key topics relevant for our country, also it has stimulated them to get involved in these processes to achieve change for the better.”

Responses attained from the youth forum indicate that youth members do allocate importance to inter-ethnic relations and combating disinformation, stereotypes and other dividing behaviour. More specifically, participants seem very motivated to engage in activities that include members from other minority communities living in Kosovo such as the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities.

Conclusions

The current research intends to provide a broad assessment of the needs of disadvantaged Kosovo youth regarding their better involvement and activation in the society. Youth democratic participation, civic engagement and employability of the youth members, and social inclusion of different groups mainly from rural areas and small towns remain the focus of the present study.

Youth participation in social and political activism and decision-making processes, in general, remains a considerable stride forward. The reluctance of local decision-making authorities to recognize the needs and requirements of youth influences their willingness to participate in such activities. As a result, despite the efforts of youth members to participate and speak out about youth issues, the latter have been consistently overlooked in terms of implementation. Additionally, youth engagement reluctance stems from family members who believe such activities are not beneficial for youth's development and because of the stigma associated with active participation in general.

Nevertheless, youth appear to be very motivated to participate in volunteer activities because through such activities they have improved their communication abilities, general skills, teamwork, and efficacy in performing various tasks. Volunteering is regarded as a mean of expanding their network and meeting new individuals with a variety of backgrounds and interests. Rural youth and young women, on the other hand,

continue to be the some of the most disadvantaged groups in Kosovo when it comes to active participation. Recreational courses and centres, political/social events, and other participatory activities are typically located in larger cities with a more urban setting, and as a result, they frequently lack transportation due to their inconvenient geographic location. Due to the prejudice that they have been subjected to over the years, this group may also experience self-prejudice and isolation. Whereas young women's willingness to fully participate in political and decision-making activities is hampered by gender norms and stereotypical conceptions embedded in Kosovo society.

Regarding engagement and employability in Kosovo, a significant mismatch between labor market demand and skills and preparation of graduated youth in Kosovo is evident. Even though Kosovo youth are increasingly likely to pursue formal education, yet upon graduation, they frequently find themselves not effectively prepared for the labour market. The skills gap arises from curricula that do not address issues that help young people acquire the relevant knowledge and abilities sought by employers. Additionally, youth members lack technical and soft skills which are regarded as essential when seeking employment. Further, they need training on how to obtain information on job openings, since job seekers must know where to look and whom to contact. In addition, it is critical for them to have relevant skills in professional writing of their curriculum vitae and motivational letters, which are regarded the initial steps in employability.

Further, despite the fact that young women in Kosovo are highly motivated to enter the job market, cultural norms prevent them from participating in a variety of activities and excluding them from opportunities for capacity building and training. Women confront considerably more roadblocks in their quest for work and self-actualization than males do. Because stereotypes, gender norms, and prejudice still exist in Kosovo, women face greater challenges when it comes to volunteering, capacity-building trainings, and even finding work. Cultural norms appear to exert additional pressure on youth from rural areas, particularly women in these places. Thus, women's domestic work and unpaid labour, offering care to elders and children, lack of support from spouse and family to pursue employment are amongst the myriad of factors contributing as hampering gender norms to rural young women, and women in general. Rural youth, despite their desire to participate in trainings and internships that could improve their employment chances, are limited by mobility means and financial resources.

Lastly, there has been little action in general about youth members' participation in dialogue processes. There is little information about initiative that focus on democratic, intercultural discourse, or disinformation combat. Although there is a broad notion that younger generations are more receptive to democratic dialogue and addressing past issues, there is still a reluctance among young people to participate in these issues. However, Kosovo youth are an important component of democratic growth, especially because they may act as an active force in future disinformation campaigns and shattering stereotypes that divide Albanians and Serbs.

Annex 1. List of relevant stakeholders interviewed in the study

Local Youth Action Councils
LYAC - Gjakovë
LYAC - Mitrovicë
LYAC - Drenas
LYAC - Kaçanik
LYAC - Pejë
LYAC - Hani i Elezit
LYAC - Podujevë
LYAC - Graçanicë
Non-Governmental Organizations
Kosovar Youth Council (KYC)
AZHR - Jug
Hareja - Vushtrri
SHL
Hareja - Rahovec
17-NGO
Balkan Sunflower
VoRAE
Iniciativa e femres kosovare
Roma in Action
Me dore ne zemer
Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports
Head of the Youth Policy Development Division
Head of the Division for Promotion and Development of Non-Formal Education
Head of the Division for Prevention and Social Integration
Municipal Directors of Culture, Youth and Sports
DCYS- Drenas
DCYS - Hani i Elezit
DCYS - Junik
DCYS - Kacanik
DCYS - Klinë
DCYS - Lipjan
DCYS - Obiliq
DCYS - Rahovec
DCYS - Shtime
DCYS - Suharekë



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