



**Community Building Mitrovica**



# OUR MATTERS

**Disclaimer:** This report presents solely the views of the project and does not in any case presents the views of PAX.

## Contents

<b>1. Background Our Matters</b> .....	4
<b>2. Debate cycle conclusions</b> .....	5
<b>3. Main observations</b> .....	5
<b>4. General recommendation</b> .....	6
<b>5. First Phase</b> .....	7
5.1 Inclusive education.....	7
5.2 Youth Violence.....	8
5.3 Youth Cultural Policy.....	9
5.4 Infrastructure/Urban planning.....	10
5.5 Patients` rights.....	11
<b>6. Second Phase</b> .....	11
6.1 Lack of public toilets.....	11
6.2 Action plan for the youth in the Northern Part of Kosovo.....	13
6.3 Communication skills - assertiveness of nurses and technicians.....	13
6.4 Domestic Violence.....	14
6.5 Traffic Safety.....	15
6.6 Nutrition Food.....	17
<b>7. Third Phase</b> .....	18
7.1 The right of Roma children and problem solving of enrollment in secondary school.....	18
7.2 Gender equality.....	18
7.3 Breathe freely, implement smoking law control.....	21
7.4 Women's rights to property and property inheritance registration.....	22
7.5 Integration and normalization processes under the umbrella of “Brussels Agreements”.....	23
7.6 Discrimination is not a joke – let’s talk about equality.....	24
<b>Need for continuation</b> .....	28

## BACKGROUND

“Our Matters” is a project implemented by Community Building Mitrovica (CBM) in partnership with the Dutch organization Pax. The project aims to increase public participation in decision making process through public debates.

- There is a need to work on public participation and interaction with local institutions;
- Directly approaching local institutions with the aim to increase transparency in general has not been very effective. It is more effective to address a specific problem in approaching local institutions; this also is more credible towards citizens.
- Civil society itself sees a need to increase its credibility and quality by being more transparent and work more professionally, for the needs of citizens;

Pax and CBM thus decides to adjust the approach and to start working bottom up on public participation,

simultaneously supporting civil society, and address specific problems by advocating towards local institutions.

Through public debates on topics related to daily life, citizens feel that they can openly voice their opinions regarding issues that most affect them and propose solutions to existing problems, thus creating a more enabling environment between citizens and the municipalities. Debates are intended to reach out local institutions: officials working on the topic of discussion to be invited to the debates.

Another important aim is to advocate regarding the outcomes of the debates. Recommendations might also be taken on board in Pax’s international advocacy, focusing on the European Union.

## **Our Matters debate cycle conclusions**

Between February 2013 and December 2015 thirteen NGOs: Youth Empowerment Center, Mission of People of Good Will, Inspiracija, Center

for Women Development, Levizja Koha, Mitrovica Women Association for Human Rights, AKTIV, Center for Legal Voluntering, Prezent Marketing, Santa Marija, ACDC and Vredne Kolasinke cooperated in the Our Matters project which was implemented in three phases. They organized public debates and street actions. Aim of these debates was to increase public participation on topics related to daily life. Through debates citizens could openly voice their opinions regarding issues that affect them and propose solutions to existing problems. Through street actions people were informed about and invited to the debates. Aim of the debates was also to provide space for interaction between local municipal officials and citizens about certain topics.

This report includes main observations resulting from the project, and recommendations per topic.

## **Main observations**

In every debate participants raised important questions already familiar to the majority of the citizens but also some new ones that needed to be

addressed to officials and relevant decision makers in Mitrovica. On each debate relevant decision makers were invited, some debates had officials present on the meeting, giving their opinions, inputs and relevant answers on the topic in the scope of their work. Debates were starting point and great tool for raising the issue on the topic chosen, but serve well for the continuation of the action and goal of the project – advocacy and lobbying. All of the organizations were raising issues in order to connect with the municipality to find out why is the common practice not to include citizens in decision making processes and how can municipality and other relevant stakeholders be connected to the citizens.

All the daily issues were well surveyed from the organizations and also “Our Matters” project team.

The street actions also served as a way to raise the awareness and inform people about the different problems that are affecting lives of the citizens of Mitrovica, no matter if they live in the north or south, the problems are same

and the concerns are same, and advocating to the stakeholders is still a gap on two parts of the city.

Apart from that we will discuss each topic finding and conclusions on the next chapter of the report.

## **GENERAL**

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Recommendations that are listed below came as a result of the each debate that was held under the Our Matters project. These are general and needed in order to improve the cooperation between institutions and civil society.

Specific conclusions go with the specific topic on which was debated.

- Municipal representatives should be open for cooperation with the civil society sector;
- Citizens should make more efforts and ask to be involved in a decision making process, especially when it comes to planning for the budget/financial year;
- Public debates organized by municipality and different

organizations/institutions are very much needed;

- Municipality should follow the rules on informing the citizens for the public debates. They should establish a standard way to inform citizens about public debates (Web pages, leaflets, Social networks such as Facebook, twitter, posters, per post, per mail, mailing list, etc);
- Citizens should be more informed about the activities organized by the municipality;
- Officials should be more responsible and open when it comes to reporting for the work they do/do not;
- Municipality in the northern part of Mitrovica should build a cooperation with other municipalities in the north and wider, on sharing the good examples they use to their daily work;
- CSOs must continue raise the issues that affect the daily life of citizens;
- CSOs should build a platform of cooperation when it comes on

lobbying and advocating for the daily life issues;

## **FIRST PHASE**

### **INCLUSIVE EDUCATION**

In February 2013, Youth Empowerment Centre organized public debates on the topic: **How to improve inclusion in our town** - A goal of the debate was to discuss different aspects of problems with and controversy about inclusive education in order to provide local decision makers more information in regard to what is inclusion and how is it administered in our town and to contribute to acceptance and development of inclusive education. Presence of relevant social figures, like decision – makers, practitioner from the educational system, and representatives of civil sector was very high.

### **Conclusions/recommendations**

➤ Recognition of certain local institutions, like schools, municipality, etc, which up to that time were not involved in providing

support for introduction of the inclusive education;

➤ A method of systematic support was supposed to enable decentralization and consideration of the problem of introduction of inclusion from the different points of view. What the process has shown is conclusion that bad experience of practitioners in the process of introduction of such complex way without systematical support was too big of a challenge to be able to decentralize and review the pro and contra arguments of the inclusive education;

➤ Law adaptability of educational system and adjustment of requirements for inclusion of children with disabilities is also followed by bad experiences of practitioners who find it hard to carry out their new role;

➤ There are symptoms of professional burn out and resistance towards law acceptance. This indicates the necessity in implementation of urgent measures which would serve to support professionals and

therefore would be in best serve for all children;

- Established inter-sectorial link between committee from Mitrovica municipality and Faculty of Philosophy Department of Psychology (University of Pristina temporary relocated in Mitrovica north);
- A functional cooperation between committee from Mitrovica municipality and Faculty of Philosophy Department of Psychology should exist. Department of Psychology (students on final faculty year and their assistants and professors) will provide trainings, different kind of educations, counseling etc. to the inter-sectorial committee and to the others involved;
- A local strategy and long- term objective for the inclusive education should be created;

## **YOUTH VIOLENCE**

Second debate was organized in March 2013 by Mission of People of Good Will,

and the topic was **Youth Violence**. The aim of the debate was getting recommendations from relevant social actors to prevent bullying and violence among youth. Through the street action, the need for such topic was identified to be raised and also the importance of gathering relevant stakeholders together around the table, to discuss openly about the problems that are affecting youth, especially the violence which is increased in the last years.

## **Conclusions/recommendations**

- It was noticed that some local resources have not been placed in service, supporting children and young people;
- There is no formal cooperation between Civil Society and relevant stakeholders regarding this topic; Therefore it's a need to establish a cooperation between civil society and schools in order to raise awareness among employees, children and youth for peer violence;
- It is needed and very important to continue organizing workshops and

trainings on the same topic with pupils and students;

- Train students and kids on the mediation where people acquire skills of nonviolent communication and conflict prevention, and this will be transmitted to their peers at school;

## YOUTH CULTURAL POLICIES

AKTIV organized debate in May 2013 on how to increase **Involvement of Municipality in cultural development of youth** based on a beforehand conducted survey among youth (elementary and high schools, faculties). Participants identified problems regarding the cultural life in Mitrovica and municipal involvement. There is a lack of cultural activities, and people are not very active on this sphere<sup>1</sup>.

### Conclusions/recommendations

- To include number of CSOs and individuals who are interested to work on this topic;

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<sup>1</sup> Nenad Todorovic - Director of theater, main speaker of the debate

- To organize, create associations, activism of all, the creation of "Debate Club";
- Governmental and nongovernmental organizations, and local institutions should work together on promotion of culture;
- Creation of joint web page (institutions and CSOs that will deal with culture issues);
- Wider promotion on work of CSOs;
- Joint meetings on weekly/monthly basis of all institutions, CSOs and individuals dealing with culture matters;
- Adopt conclusions, send report to media and inform the public;

## INFRASTRUCTURE/URBAN PLANNING

CBM organized fourth public debate in June 2013 within the project cycle on "**Infrastructure/Urban Planning in north of Mitrovica – how it is and how I would like it to be**" to discuss and address issues of poor infrastructure development in north of Mitrovica with

relevant actors in north of Mitrovica reflecting on the current situation and neglected areas and neglected citizens' voice in that matter. Participants had the opportunity to discuss various problems regarding infrastructure, and the main concern about the topic was that citizens are not involved on the decision making process.<sup>2</sup>

### **Conclusions/recommendations**

- Activism is the main tool for (trying to) resolving problems in the municipality, being infrastructure or something else;
- Municipality in the north<sup>3</sup> is giving permits as well as Mitrovica North Administrative Office and the situation differs on the ground;
- Building companies do not obey the laws implemented and there is no inspection to monitor the building procedures and accordance;
- The colors of the building which affects the city esthetics should be

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<sup>2</sup> Bojana Vasic. architect, speaker and moderating the debate

<sup>3</sup> Serb run municipality

done according to the urban planning and architecture planning;

- The most urgent issue to be solved is the problem of water and electricity;

### **PATIENTS' RIGHTS**

Final topic raised in the first cycle was by NGO Santa Marija, on the topic **Patients' rights**. The aim was to inform people/participants to realize their rights under certain safe conditions, to raise awareness and to introduce service providers to the rights of citizens and patients in the health care system. Doctors had the chance to present to the citizens the rights of the patients. Participants in the debate jointly with the speakers agreed on the following recommendations to promote patients' rights.

### **Conclusions/recommendations**

- The patients' rights should be produced in the posters, flyers and brochures and to be distributed to institutions;

- Workers of health institutions need to be trained on the communication skills;
- Opening of counseling for diabetes patients, who can address their needs and consult with the professionals;;
- It is a need to continue with the work of counseling for women with breast cancer (and those who do not have cancer but need to consult) and also to secure stable funding like from the institutions or other stakeholders;

## **SECOND PHASE**

### **LACK OF PUBLIC TOILETS**

Second phase of “Out Matters” project started with NGO Levizja Koha which organized several activities regarding the above mentioned topic. Street actions, two public debates and open discussion at the High Schools made the research much more valuable, and findings and recommendations send to the Municipality of Mitrovica south were concrete and addressed very well.

The main aim of the debates was to discuss the issue of public toilets in Mitrovica and their condition at the present time. It was shown that public toilets are inspected by the municipal inspectorate and but as well their importance<sup>4</sup>. the importance of the topic was also pointed out and the problem of the lack of public toilets in Mitrovica, and usage of the existing ones by drug consumers<sup>5</sup>. After first debate, a survey was conducted in the streets of south of Mitrovica with citizens, who were asked to fill out questionnaires. There were videos made regarding the topic in order to raise the awareness of citizens on the importance of having public toilets which are well maintained. All of the recommendations raised were send officially to the Municipality, and they have been committed to improve the situation.

### **Conclusions/recommendations**

- It is a urgent need for existing public toilets to become functional;

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<sup>4</sup> Naim Hajra, Inspectorate Director

<sup>5</sup> Xhelal Shabani Enviromental representave

- The public toilets have to be continuously maintained and cleaned well;
- The spaces around the toilets must be constantly checked by the Kosovo Police, since there is a high risk of people using drugs;
- There is high risk of diseases spreading around from the public toilets;
- Local institutions should work to make public toilets functional through public-private partnership which may be more sustainable;
- A price should be paid by the users of the toilets. A minimum price which would be affordable from the citizens. The money collected from the toilet users can serve for maintenance and employers wages;

## **ACTION PLAN FOR THE YOUTH**

Ngo "Prezent Marketing" organized a public debate on the topic "Youth

Action Plan in North Kosovo". The aim of the debate was to raise awareness about the rights of young people, as well as to carry out initiatives to the competent authorities - in order to bring a unique action plan for youth and to include youth when establishing the association of the municipalities.

## **Conclusions/recommendations**

- Youth in the area of Mitrovica are passive and uninformed due to the consequences of the war, as well as passivity of reluctance of the authorities to work on the issue regarding youth reflecting on the unstable political situation.
- Attempts from various NGOs have been done so that youth action plan/strategy is developed but was never adopted by the authorities and several attempts went in vain (one of the examples is Santa Marija NGO that did strategy in Zvecan municipality, but was never adopted)
- Young people should be encouraged on a large scale in order to be

properly socialized through activities in the area of social skills.

## **COMMUNICATION SKILLS**

*(assertiveness of nurses and technicians with patients, their families and between each other)*

“Santa Marija” raised the issue of Communication skills - assertiveness of nurses and technicians with patients, their families and between each other. The debate was a follow up of the first public debate organized by NGO “Santa Marija” in the first debate cycle on the topic “Patients’ rights” and the second one is organized to broaden the issue and raise the questions on how much patients’ rights are violated in communication skills and assertiveness of the medical workers towards patients and their families.

### **Conclusions/recommendations**

➤ Debates and public round tables organized by professors or other relevant medical workers is needed in order to raise the awareness on this topic;

- Majority of health workers are unaware of the law and regulations on how patients should be treated and the law should be respected;
- Round tables, public debates and other activities on raising this particular issue should be organized in larger scale;
- Participants in the debate have confirmed that it is necessary to work on a solution for this problem which is increasingly common in hospitals, both in north of Mitrovica and beyond. Patients are in an identical position to suffer in order to get the service they need at that moment, as they are not even aware of the rights of the patient, which they at that time had been violated. Patients are becoming more accustomed to such position that they find that they cannot change it.

## **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

AKTIV has been surveying and raised the topic on domestic violence based on a beforehand conducted findings of a study on Prevalence of domestic

violence in Northern municipalities of Kosovo.

## **Conclusions/recommendations**

- There is no temporary reception station, shelter and / or a safe house for victims of domestic violence in the northern municipalities of Kosovo.
- When it comes to inter-institutional communication and communication between individual institutions and women with the trauma of domestic violence, there is no additional time, space and staff to provide the necessary information and orientation.
- A proposal for establishing a counseling center, in which women can receive timely legal, advisory, psycho-social support and any other relevant information, was given.

- Women, in a large percentage, do not know the phone number of the police. Thus, the important role of civil society is to link all the information from different sources and to communicate directly with victims.
- There is a need to publish brochures, to inform, to approach and strengthen a woman instead of expecting for a woman to approach the institutions.

## **TRAFIC SAFETY**

The aim of this debate organized by NGO "ACDC" was to address the problem of alcohol abuse among young population in traffic from different perspectives and to promote communication with the police force and other institutions as in order to reduce the negative effects of this issue. The questions raised during the project implementation were: What is your information on statistical data when discussing accidents in traffic? What the law proposes in these situations? How is police reacting when these kinds of problems happen?

The debate yielded following conclusions: The problem exists; it affects daily life of each of us in our community. We were able to identify several factors which influence such behavior.

### **Conclusions/recommendations**

- Large influence on young people is the environment they live in, followed with local tradition.
- It is more or less a tradition to consume alcohol in various occasions;
- The availability of alcohol; There are no legal regulations saying that alcohol cannot be sold to juveniles, or after 22h;
- The number of traffic accidents is increased significantly compared to previous years;
- The police force has all the mechanisms to process each offender of the law, no matter if it is driving under influence of alcohol or reckless driving, or passing other vehicles where it is not allowed.

These situations happen in adolescence period, when young people get their driving license and start driving a motor vehicle.

- The police force is working with higher intensity compared to previous years. There is much more police officers on the streets and much more control.
- Regardless of the fact that police have all required mechanisms to prevent law offences, targeted citizens believe that the mechanisms are not adequate to solve this problem.
- One of the potential mechanisms could be a financial penalty which is not adequate;
- Generally, this is a problem of the society as a whole, a problem of the system of the value, and a problem of public institutions, schools, media etc.

### **NUTRITION FOOD**

NGO "Mitrovica Women Together for Human Rights" implemented a project

on the topic **nutrition food**, raising the issue of importance of the quality of the food consumed and imported in Kosovo, and how much do people really know about the quality of the food they consume. Inspection of the municipality regularly inspects the food that is currently on the market, and there is couple of cases where the food was confiscated, due to the bad conditions<sup>6</sup>. MWAHR has been doing a research also with the doctors about Nutrition Food, and findings were presented in the debate, in front of the municipal representatives of south of Mitrovica. Debate yielded with several recommendations:

### **Conclusions/recommendations**

- Health education is very important for citizens and the motto is “ Informed consumer – it is self protected consumer”
- Sanitarian Inspection – should follow what kinds of food are served from the businesses in the market.

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<sup>6</sup> Genc Kadriu, food inspector

- Raise the awareness to the business owners and consumers about quality and production of food.
- Citizens should stop buying food from ambulant sellers.
- Food should be protected and kept by the standards that are clearly stated by the regulations;
- Implementation of Consumer Protection law is in a urgent need, in order to protect the citizens from unhealthy products;
- The Customs have to have more strict rules on controlling imported food.
- Citizens must cooperate with local government institutions/food inspection on reporting and addressing problems regarding unhealthy food;

## **THIRD PHASE**

### **THE RIGHT OF ROMA CHILDREN AND PROBLEM SOLVING OF ENROLLMENT IN SECONDARY SCHOOL**

Ngo "Inspiracija" has been working on the issue of **the right of Roma** during November 2015. The goal of the project was to give public contribution and to raise awareness of Roma people on importance of school attendance and their role on influencing social changes for all community.

It was pointed out that Rule of Law for the Education is very well defined regarding inclusion of ethnic minorities in high schools.<sup>7</sup> The quality of life of Roma Community from deprived categories of population is on low level and needs urgent improvement.<sup>8</sup>

## **Conclusions/recommendations**

- It seemed that Roma children live in a very bad conditions, they need help and urgent improvement of the living conditions;
- Civil society organizations and institutions should help to integrate

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<sup>7</sup> Blagica Radovanovic, Assembly Member

<sup>8</sup> Tatjana Ivaz, a teacher in the primary school "Vuk Karadzic" of Zvecan,

Roma children into daily life activities ;

- Institutions and other stakeholders should help Roma children to leave the streets and live a decent life;

## **GENDER EQUALITY**

As a prelude to the **16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence**, November - December 2015, **Center for Women's Development** worked on Gender equality. Issues that were brought to the discussion in the debate organized by the abovementioned organization were mainly focused on the status of women in the society.

- Assessment of the current political, social and economic position of women in North Mitrovica needs to be developed;
- There is a need to include women in different spheres, that have more influence, such as in politics - an associate or an ally to their male colleagues, in executive and legislative power; and also in management positions;

- Women in rural areas, women without permanent personal income, single mothers, women with trauma of domestic violence, women with disabilities etc are financially and socially deprived;
- The relationship and communication of institutions towards women should be improved;
- It is a need for legal mechanisms which ensures gender equality and also on overcoming the challenges on the existed law which are not implemented;
- Local laws, action plans, strategies and budget planning in relation with status of women should be developed;
- Communication of women representatives in the North Mitrovica Municipality Assembly with their electoral body, especially with women in rural areas should be established and continuously maintained.
- It is needed to establish a babysitting agency, and develop future plans in

order to support establishment of a gender department within the North Mitrovica Municipality.<sup>9</sup>

Preventive educative approach in work with adolescents of both genders was presented in the debate. Other NGOs also work on changing deviant behaviors and attitudes which produce gender based violence, through trainings, theatre performances and various public outreach actions.<sup>10</sup>

Other participants also shared problems regarding gender equality, it was pointed out that one of the barriers is the limited budget that institutions have<sup>11</sup>. Also, unenviable political, economic and social position of women in rural areas, focusing on lack of adequate communication with social service institutions and local government affect the status of women<sup>12</sup>.

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9 Sanja Krtinić, Center for Women's Development

10 Stefan Veljković, Youth Education Club "Sinergija"

11 Adrijana Hodžić, Head of Administration of the North Mitrovica Municipality

12 Ana Marija Ivković, Senior researcher for the study: "Gender that matters: Poverty and social inclusion – social protection. Status in Rural Kosovo and Serbia", Center for Communities Development

## **Conclusions/recommendations**

- Quality of life of women from deprived categories of population is on low level and needs urgent improvement;
- Women from rural areas, engaged in the most difficult unpaid work in agriculture, have to be provided with better access to information on available supporting services;
- Institutions have to start to work more on open-door policy and to reduce communication gap in order to effectively meet needs of the beneficiaries;
- Single mothers are recognized as highly vulnerable group, facing stigmatization and auto-stigmatization;
- When it comes to local government and the Municipality of North Mitrovica as partially founded, the budget is very limited and does not express actual needs of the population;

- The Officer for gender equality has limited means to conduct any activity;
- Better access to information on the official municipality website information on laws, development strategy (central and local) and action plans (local and central) which are relevant for women;
- Information about the services and institutions available to women (local and central);
- Contact information with names and positions of officials who work on services for women;

## **BREATHE FREELY – Implementation of the Law on Smoking Control**

The purpose of this project implemented during November – December 2015 by “Levizja Koha” was to advocate for the implementation of the law on smoking control in the city of south Mitrovica.

The survey conducted showed that there is an urgent need to implement the

law on smoking control<sup>13</sup>. The main role on this regard plays the Inspection Department within South of Mitrovica Municipality. "There are five sanitary inspectors who inspect the local and city bars, and also other public spaces" said Naim Hajra Director of Inspection at the municipality. Also there are issued penalties for businesses for not implementing the law. By the everyday work of the inspection, it is seen that there is still a need for awareness campaigns for importance of the law to be respected by the citizens.<sup>14</sup>

Due to the violation of the law, also the health of the citizens is affected. Public space is not controlled, and people inhale passive smoking in public places.<sup>15</sup>

### **Conclusions/recommendations**

- There is still a need for awareness campaigns - importance of the law to be respected by the citizens;

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13 Erzen Isufi coordinator of the NGO Lëvizja KOHA

14 Naim Hajra Director of Inspection

15 Nystret Ymeri, the Institute of Public Health in Mitrovica

- The role of institution has to be taken more seriously on punishing those who do not respect the law;
- Inspection has to cooperate more with the citizens regarding this issue;
- Citizens must be much more active on reporting law violation;
- CSOs should focus on implementing projects with focus on implementation of law on smoking control;

### **WOMEN'S RIGHT PROPERTY - PROPERTY INHERITANCE REGISTRATION**

MWAHR has implemented the project throughout the city. The research prepared had shown that citizens are not informed about the law framework on women's right property, even though they are ready and willing to accept that women have the same right to property as men do.

Due to patriarchal traditions and transition, not more than 10% of women have property in their name.<sup>16</sup> Even though there are laws which regulate

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16 Besa Veseli, gender officer in Mitrovica south municipality

the right on property, the debates why are these low not executed in practice remain still silent.<sup>17</sup> Also, there are rare cases when a husband registers the property in the name of his wife, as well, and when it happens, it is impossible for geodesy department to do so, due to the contract signed only in name of the husband.<sup>18</sup>

### **Conclusions/recommendations**

- Municipal officials have to work on preparing the family tree, and this will serve for the institutions and citizens to know who belongs to which family;
- The inheritance law should be implemented and familiar to the citizens;
- The agreement on property should be in the name of both spouses;
- Awareness campaigns for the citizens for the property rights, should be organized in continuation;

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17 Ubejd Gashi, Lawyer

18 Hasime Barku, representative of Department of Geodesy, Cadastre and Property

- The main reason why women do not have property in their name is due to the patriarchal society;
- It is a need to continue with other activities as round tables and other public events, and invitees should be also a Sociologist, , Theologian who will give more professional explanation about the problem;

### **INTEGRATION AND NORMALIZATION PROCESSES UNDER THE UMBRELLA OF “Brussels Agreements”**

NGO **Center for Legal Voluntering** has been implemented the project about **Integration and normalization processes under the umbrella of “Brussels Agreements” and their practical implementation at the local level**, with the main focus on “Integration of judicial, educational and health systems into the Kosovo institutional system – methodology, timeframe, obstacles and expected outcomes of concern to the benefit of local communities in the northern Kosovo”

Questions raised during the project implementation, for which there are still missing answers, are:

- In which way “Brussels Agreement” defines return of occupied property and is this topic a part of the Agreement at all?
- Is Municipal Court in North of Mitrovica, which is supposed to be integrated in Kosovo Justice System going to be established and when?
- Will the cases from Serbian Court be transferred to the new established one?
- Will Serbian Government continue with payments for employees in health departments or will they be obliged to sign new Working Contracts with Kosovo Ministry of Health and receive payments only from Kosovo?
- Are people in the north are going to have to get KS or RKS registration plates and what is the deadline for that? Are there any fees or extra insurances which people in the north of Mitrovica will

have to pay if they use vehicles with such plates when they enter Serbia?

- Are citizens in the north obliged to pay electricity to Kosovo Electro distribution Company? In case citizens do not pay every month will the electricity will be cut.
- What is happening with former members of Civil Guard which are not yet integrated in Kosovo Institutions?
- Is the Agreement allowing Serbian Government to continue with payment of Kosovo supplement?
- What is going to happen with employees of public companies owned by Serbia? Will they continue to have their years of service?
- Until when will Temporary Municipal Management will be on power?

## **Conclusions/recommendations**

- 1) Vast majority of participants concluded that the entire process of

the Agreement was non transparent from both sides and that citizens were not included in open discussions, resulting unawareness in most of what was agreed and what has great impact on their everyday lives.

- All participants have welcomed this Round Table as the legal adviser, present at the debate, was able to answer some of the questions raised.
- This sort of informative sessions should be organized on regular basis, not only on Open Debates, but also through media, where local experts would explain to broader audience parts of the Agreement which influence directly citizens' lives.
- It is recommended to organize several Open Debates using same methodology, but with participation of local politicians which could answer questions on issues related to local government;

## **DISCRIMINATION IS NOT A JOKE – LET’S TALK ABOUT EQUALITY**

Under the project **Discrimination is not a joke – let’s talk about equality**, NGO **Vredne Kolasinke from Zubin Potok municipality**, have been implementing lots of activities with the main purpose to highlight the issue of discrimination and the problems of equality in our society. Starting from theater performances<sup>19</sup> children had identified diversity and discrimination. The performance raised children’s awareness about discrimination; they accepted the diversity. It was realized that this is the right way to begin with eradicating the discrimination in society from an early age.

During the project it the issue of law implementation was raised, which is below the average of standard implementation. Due to the lack of the implementation of Law, citizens are facing discrimination and not the equal treatment from the institutions and society as such.

## **Conclusions/recommendations**

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<sup>19</sup> There was a theater performance, presented by a group of 10 volunteers, students of Faculty of Philosophy. They performed show “Ugly Duckling” at the pre-school institution “Nase Dete” for children, teachers and their parents.

- Discrimination is a big issue. They were talking about application of the law, which is not implemented due to low understanding of the law itself, the discrimination it is happening very often;
- Employees in the kindergarten are well educated; they regularly have seminars and workshops about working with children with disabilities and their inclusion in pre-school and society;
- Employees in the kindergarten lack on appropriate infrastructure and necessary equipment for implementation of their knowledge learned on the formal and non formal education;
- The Social Welfare Center is also dealing with discrimination issue but there is a need to take this problem as a general social problem and should find an interesting way to raise the awareness of children and citizens;
- Lobby to the local self-government for children with disabilities, so pre-

school institution will be encouraged for financial support, to improve working conditions and conditions and empowered to work;

## **NEED FOR CONTINUATION**

Based on the three phases of the project and the topics developed so far, a further process needs to be developed.

Possible ways for follow up are:

- To use topics and recommendations in the first series of debate to stimulate intensive and permanent dialogue between local institutions and citizens to solve problems on these issues and stimulate a participatory culture;
- To develop series of debates into a permanent cycle, aiming to become well known (a real brand), involving large groups of people thus increasing a participatory culture and stimulating a permanent public debate on local services in Mitrovica;
- To develop a platform of public debaters on the issue raised so far, so the institutions and citizens are

continuously part of the discussion related to the daily life problems;

- NGOs part of the project to create a non formal coalition/network possibly with the same name of this project “Our Matters”, which will serve to identify and raise different problems that affect the life of citizens;
- Creating the strategy for lobbying and advocacy, this will be used from the NGOs as a toolkit for keeping the institutions accountable and transparent.



# Community Building Mitrovica

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