

March 2005

## Project: **Support Program for Traumatized Children in Kosovo**

**Locations:** KOSOVO (12 villages and schools in  
Prizren Municipality)

**Implementing Organization:** CARE International in Kosovo

**Type of Programming:** In-service teacher professional development and community sensitization work in response to the Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptoms

**Target group/beneficiaries:** Direct beneficiaries are primary school children; in-direct beneficiaries include families, communities, teachers, and education personnel.

**Stage:** Transitional (post-conflict)

### **Environmental Context of the Program**

**SOCIAL:** The *Qualitative Poverty Assessment of Kosovo*<sup>1</sup> indicates that most “children from poor households rarely receive more than a primary and even less a secondary education.” The World Bank’s Kosovo Poverty Assessment concludes as well that, “access to education is limited for girls, particularly in rural areas, and for the Muslim Slavs, Roma and Turks.”<sup>2</sup> Retention rates of marginalized groups are apparently quite low. In the context of the rural poor this occurs for many reasons. Some children (often girls) are joint breadwinners. In other cases families who have limited financial resources, prioritize the education of older males above younger siblings and girls. Children are obliged to work on the farm in villages, or to sell cigarettes, telephone cards, and other small items in towns. For ethnic minorities this is exacerbated by the intolerance of the mainstream community, which often poses security problems inside and outside the classroom.

**CULTURAL/RELIGION:** According to the Living Standard Measurement Survey 2000, it is estimated that 60 percent of the population live in rural areas with 88% of the population defined as ethnic Kosovo Albanians. The Serbian population is estimated at 7 percent while other ethnic groups (Slav Muslims, Romas, and Turkish) account for 5 percent of the total population.

**ECONOMIC:** Kosovo is a small, landlocked territory in the center of the Balkan Peninsula and borders Macedonia, Albania, Serbia, and Montenegro. Its area is 10,877 sq km., which is about one-third the size of Belgium. Kosovo is presently divided into five regions and 30 municipalities. It is densely populated with almost 200 persons per sq. km. According to the Living Standard Measurement Survey 2000, 12 percent of the population is extremely poor and another almost 40 percent is poor. Another particularity of the population is the shortage of males, aged 20 to 50, mainly by emigration for economic reasons.

<sup>1</sup> 2001, Inter-Agency Sub-Group on Poverty, *Qualitative Poverty Assessment Kosovo – Final Report and Analysis of Data*.

<sup>2</sup> 2001, *Kosovo Poverty Assessment Volume 1: Main Report, Draft*, World Bank, July 2001.

**Political Relationships:** The United Nations is gradually handing over substantial responsibilities for autonomy in Kosovo to the local government with the establishment of an elected local parliament government and the creation of 8 ministries headed by local people. The parliament is the vehicle for the phased transfer of substantial responsibilities from the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) to the Institutions of Provisional Self Government.

### **Program Description**

**TARGET GROUP:** The project target group includes primary school children, approximately 3,000 between 6 and 16 years of age of (minority) villages that were extensively affected by the war and 150 teachers and school directors.

**MATERIAL/PHYSICAL RESOURCES:** Participating schools were provided with a collection of books for children, flip chart holders, and sports equipment to support the life skills and creative extra curricular activities. Additionally, some schools received teaching material (laboratories) and shelves and 3 schools undertook infrastructure rehabilitation.

**COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION:** The community focus of the project was to sensitize the community to children's needs and rights and work with parents to increase their knowledge and awareness regarding parenting, childcare, and children's rights at home. The traditionally extended family in Kosovo made it imperative not only to address parents, but other adult family members, particularly adult males, who took over responsibility for the family/children in absence of the male head of household.

Six short video clips on the rights of the child were arranged and filmed by a local actor (Xhevdet Doda) with the children of Krusha e Madhe, a village in the project region that had also been severely affected during the war. The topics focused on the actual life conditions in Kosovo and were based on concrete examples related to child rights, including the themes "the handicapped child", "abuse in school", "child labor", "health service", "parent influence", and "freedom of expression". They were presented from a positive and a negative perspective accompanied by a key message. The aim of these videos was to involve community members (children, adults) in group discussions and to sensitize them to the rights of the child.

A school holiday program was carried out in the five project communities by the NGO "Smile" from Prishtina, with the support of teachers, volunteers and the project staff. The principal objective of the summer program was to help children to improve their self-confidence and to strengthen the social network through group work and interactive games. Kosovo artists' NGO "Close to Children", which consists of five famous Kosovo artists (musician, actress, painter, poet, film director) worked with school children in creative workshops. The NGO gave performance, recitals and other artistic presentations in the classrooms with the aim of helping children to relax and to focus on something other than their war memories.

**TRAINING CURRICULUM:** Training workshops focused on improving the professional development of in-service teachers (e.g., group work, child-focused teaching activities, etc.) and creative and recreational activities for children, including afternoon sessions in creativity and building social skills. The training also focused on PTSD therapy elements such as positive thinking, assertiveness training, distraction, and relaxation. The project's holistic activities provided trauma therapy work on a group basis thus avoiding isolating (and

stigmatizing) the most severely affected children. In the teacher training workshops, children with emotion and behavioral disorders and difficulties in learning were mixed with children without difficulties.

The objective of the training was to provide teachers and education officials with knowledge on how to use the school as a vehicle to improve the psychosocial well being of children and to change attitudes in education and child care. The training of teachers in creative teaching skills and recreational activities consisted of four key modules: 1) psychosocial assistance for traumatized children in school; 2) communication skills and creative techniques for solving problems in schools; 3) social-creative activities for children; and 4) tolerance, human and children's rights and peace building. This last module in particular was perceived as a key step towards reconciliation.

### Programming Interventions: Impact and Effectiveness

**MANAGEMENT:** Almost two-thirds (63%) of the teachers now think they are able to deal with trauma and stress in school children while 37% believe they are partly able. Teachers indicated that the most important elements of the training helped them to understand children's well-being, conflict resolution and communication skills, and tolerance and respect.

**QUALITY:** 75% of teachers thought their own behavior changed and 20% replied that it had changed partly. 69% stated that children's behavior changed and 29% thought that it had changed partly. More than three-quarters (81%) of the teachers confirmed that these changes are mainly because of the project and rated the changes very positively.

When asked for changes in the classroom, children reported the introduction of group work, less aggressive teacher behavior (e.g., reduction of shouting and corporal punishment) and an improvement in teacher's ability to get the lessons across to their pupils. Compared to before the war, teachers were considered more committed, less aggressive, more tolerant, polite and respectful towards students. In almost all schools improved achievement levels and school success was reported as well.

In the interviews, 91% of teachers and 68% of children confirmed that the aggressiveness in the school was definitely decreasing. In particular the group activities taught them that problems could be solved without violence. Children did not offend each other and teachers were more tolerant. The communication between teachers and parents also improved and contributed to a better school atmosphere; 48% of children and 47% of teachers confirmed that parents would now participate more frequently in school activities and meetings.

**OVERALL PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS:** Children as well as teachers and parents reported that children benefited from the activities and are more relaxed and self-confident now. They laughed more and stopped thinking and speaking only about the war experience. Teachers reported that children were more active now during regular classes, they openly asked and expressed their opinions freely, were more respectful and cooperative with their schoolmates and generally with other people. They learned more, were more disciplined and apologized for making a mistake.

**EQUIP1: Building Educational Quality through Classrooms, Schools, and**

**Communities** is a multi-faceted program designed to raise the quality of classroom teaching and the level of student learning by effecting school-level changes. EQUIP1 serves all levels of education, from early childhood development for school readiness, to primary and secondary education, adult basic education, pre-vocational training, and the provision of life-skills. Activities range from teacher support in course content and instructional practices, to principal support for teacher performance, and community involvement for improving school management and infrastructure. EQUIP1 works with food for education issues and contributes to the provision of education and training in crisis and post-crisis environments.

The American Institutes for Research (AIR) is the lead organization responsible for implementing EQUIP1 and is joined by fourteen outstanding partners: Academy for Educational Development, Aga Khan Foundation USA, CARE, Discovery Channel Global Education Fund, Education Development Center, Howard University, International Reading Association, The Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation, Juárez & Associates, Inc., Michigan State University, Save the Children, Inc., Sesame Workshop, University of Pittsburgh, and World Education, Inc..

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