



Quarterly Progress Report

**KOSOVO COMMUNITY RECONCILIATION PROGRAM**

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## I. Executive Summary

The *Kosovo Community Reconciliation Program (KCRP)* builds the capacity of grassroots Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Kosovo to advocate for reconciliation. The program addresses locally identified issues of common concern related to advocacy on behalf of minorities, inter-ethnic relations, youth, freedom of movement, human rights monitoring, free and objective media reporting on human rights, cultural events with multi-ethnic communities, and cross-community cooperation.

Over the past quarter, through a combination of ongoing grants and mentoring, Freedom House has helped two CSO coalitions and two CSOs attain significant results towards achieving program objectives. These and other highlights include:

- ELSA/Media Pulse organized three training seminars on *Advocacy and Lobbying* for a multiethnic group of youth from all over Kosovo as a part of their project on *Lobbying and Advocacy for Future Sustainable Multiethnic Societies in Kosovo*. The objective of the seminars was to empower representatives of both ethnic minority and majority communities to apply relevant international standards of advocating, monitoring and implementing rights of ethnic minorities in Kosovo;
- In Vërboc/Vrbovac, Lipjan/Lipljan, Gračanica/Graçanicë, Plemetinë/Plemetina, Parteš/Partesh, Ranillug/Ranilug, Rahovec/Orahovac, Štrpce/Shterpce, Zvečan/Zveçan, Novoberde/Novo Brdo and Zubin Potok, the CSO *Our Home* has made the draft Constitution available to the public in English, Albanian, and Serbian;
- Freedom House facilitated a visit to the Parliament of Kosovo, the EULEX mission (European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo), the Kosovo Radio Television, the University of Pristina and the student organization Ligo Lex Legis on July 4 for a group of 12 participants from the Kosovo Serbian municipalities and enclaves with the aim of establishing an additional channel of communication between the institutions and minority communities. This was the first and only official visit to the EULEX mission since its establishment in Kosovo that was organized and executed by a group of Kosovo Serbian CSOs;
- The visit of K. Serbian CSOs to the Parliament of Kosovo led to the formulation of a joint project focused on establishing a team of lawyers from Kosovo and Serbia to provide legal assistance to minority communities, in response to the absence of significant legal structures dealing with minority issues in Kosovo institutions;
- The ELSA initiative, which fosters contacts between Radio Television of Vojvodina (RTV), an outlet with very extensive experience in editing programs in minority languages in Vojvodina, and the Kosovo Radio Television (KRT) was welcomed by the KRT staff and will be further developed;
- An Agreement on Cooperation was signed between the Youth Dialogue Program and Ligo Lex Legis from the Pristina Law School to enable easier and expanded cooperation between students of Law faculties in Serbia and Kosovo in the absence of official partnership;
- Inspired by the Serbian and Albanian productions of the play *The Bridge*, the Children's Theatre Centre in Skopje staged a Macedonian production of the same play in April 2008; the production was a great success for the theater initiative, as the play reached audiences outside Kosovo, and spread its message to other ethnic and linguistic groups in the region.

## II. Activities

During this reporting period, Freedom House-supported coalition activities have engaged in significant public education and advocacy initiatives, and addressed specific issues concerning reconciliation and cooperation among citizens, CSOs, and local governments to improve inter-ethnic relations. The activities are focused on raising awareness among minority groups to help them become more actively engaged outside their enclaves and create strategies to engage decision-makers in key Kosovo institutions.

### A) Advocacy Coalitions

*Advocating for Future Sustainable Multi-ethnic Societies in Kosovo* is implemented by a group of CSOs from Mitrovicë/Mitrovica (*ELSA/Media Pulse*), Prizren (*Zenit*), Rahovec/Orahovac (*Konak*) and Novi Sad (*ELSA/Youth Dialogue Program*). *Kosovo Serbian Communities: Advocating for Better Institutional Representation* is the project that engages the CSO *Our Home* (“Nasa Kuca”) and 24 radio stations of the Kosovo non-Albanian Media Association - KOSMA network (21 K. Serbian, 2 K. Bosniak, and one multi-ethnic radio station), in cooperation with the Center for Migration Studies.

#### 1. **Advocating for Sustainable Multi-ethnic Societies in Kosovo**

After four panel discussions in Prizren, Rahovec/Orahovac, Mitrovicë/Mitrovica, and Gračanica/Graçanicë, focused on raising the awareness of minority groups to ensure active engagement outside their enclaves, and to encourage minority communities to exert pressure on decisionmakers with the aim of exercising their civic rights at all levels of governance, partner organizations organized three training seminars as a part of the project on *Lobbying and Advocacy for Future Sustainable Multiethnic Societies in Kosovo*.

These seminars, which brought together a multiethnic group of young people from throughout Kosovo, covered the following topics: (a) The use of advocacy techniques to influence the improvement of multiethnic relations in Kosovo; (b) The importance of youth involvement in inter-community communication; and (c) The creation of an advocacy strategy to place individual and ethnic community interests on the agendas of governing institutions in Kosovo.



The first training seminar on the *Mechanisms of protection of civil and minority rights in Kosovo*, was held in Brezovica between April 4-6, 2008. It was attended by 22 participants: 13 Serbs, 3 Albanians, 3 Bosniaks and 3 Gorani from Rahovec, Prizren, Pristina, Graçanica and Mitrovica. The objective of the seminar was to empower

representatives of both ethnic minority and majority communities and local CSO activists

to apply relevant international standards of advocating for, monitoring and implementing rights of ethnic minorities in Kosovo. The training included presentations, open discussion, group workshops and practical exercises on analyzing selected problems or examples of positive and negative practices and simulations. During the seminar, participants were introduced to basic information on minority rights protection documents and mechanisms operating through the UN, OSCE and Council of Europe.

After a discussion on the fundamental concepts of minority rights and membership, the main session concentrated on the EU framework, focusing on relevant documents and advocacy opportunities. The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) was used as a model for group exercises, with participants exploring its applicability to different minority groups around the world. Each group was asked to represent one minority community including Palestinians in Israel, Russians in Lithuania, disabled persons in Turkey, and the LGBT community in Poland. Based on the UDHR, each group was tasked with identifying five basic rights and listing them according to their importance for each community. Participants then conducted an analysis of the human rights situation in Kosovo, including a list of human rights that he/she personally had been enjoying and/or denied. Specific issues raised included the need for further analysis of minorities in decision making processes on the local and national level, discrimination on the basis of ethnic/national background, tolerance, media, education, and the return of Internally Displaced Persons.

Participants discussed opportunities for increased cooperation during the closing session. All participants expressed interest in further activities focused on advocacy models for the protection of civil and minority rights. They also emphasized the need to develop the following initiatives: (a) cooperation in human rights reporting; (b) ongoing youth education; (c) establishment of a stakeholder network; (d) strategy for reaching joint



recommendations; (e) strategic partnerships between ethnic minorities and human rights CSOs; (f) activities to raise consciousness on minority rights issues, and (g) establishment/continuation of partnerships with media actors. (See: **Appendix I – Training I: Mechanisms for the protection of civil and minority rights in Kosovo**).

The second and third training sessions on *Developing Strategies for Advocacy of Minority Interests in Kosovo* took place May 3-6. The first module of the training (May 3-4) focused on *Advocacy Techniques*, while the second module (May 5-6) covered *Strategies for Advocacy on Behalf of Minorities*. The seminars brought together 22 young participants consisting of Serbs, Bosniaks and Albanians from Prizren, Pristina, and Mitrovica.

The final two training seminars enhanced the capacities of representatives of both ethnic minority and majority communities and local CSO activists in: (a) Understanding the concepts of advocacy and lobbying and the tools necessary for applying that knowledge to the protection of human rights; (b) Developing a strategy for lobbying and advocacy for

protection of human rights in Kosovo, and (c) Building a multicultural group of committed young people to carry out the strategy.

Based on the previously evaluated human rights situation in Kosovo, the group devised an advocacy strategy based on mutual interest (majorities and minorities in Kosovo), education (Right to education), life, freedom, personal security (based on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Article of the UDHR) and standards of living. Both seminars covered public policy, institutions and organizations for human rights protection, rule of law, and basic concepts of advocacy. The particular focus was on defining target groups through the *power and influence analysis* of UNMIK, EULEX, OSCE, Kosovo Government, Ombudsperson, media, local CSOs, international organisations experts, courts, parliaments, the International Court of Human Rights, police, KFOR, and political parties.

These three training seminars connected strategy building and skills development. They helped the participants to learn about advocacy and apply best practices in crafting effective messages regarding freedom of movement, non-implementation of court orders and self-employment. Trainers took a very practical, hands-on approach, and used the sessions to provide as much practice as possible so that the participants could develop their own advocacy strategy. (See: **Appendix II: Lobbying and Advocacy Techniques & Appendix III: Strategies for Lobbying and Advocacy on Behalf of Minorities**).

## 2. Study Visit to Institutions in Pristina

Twelve participants engaged in visits to the Parliament of Kosovo, EULEX Mission, Kosovo Radio and Television, the University of Pristina and the student organization Ligo Lex Legis on July 4, 2008. The aim of this study tour was to establish additional channels of communication between the institutions and minority communities.



The lobbying activities covered some major problems faced by young people in Kosovo today, with particular focus on communication between youth of different ethnic backgrounds. Targeted participants were from the municipalities/enclaves where the project is being implemented. Each partner was in charge of selecting young participants interested in the study tour. The outcome of these visits will be presented via e-newsletter, which will be distributed to relevant media in both Kosovo and Serbia.

The meeting at the Kosovo Parliament was hosted by a representative of the Serbian group in the Parliament (Mr. Bojan Stojanovic). The visit included a general introduction on how the parliament works, along with the most important topics such as the status and the protection of minority communities in Kosovo, the restitution of occupied properties to their lawful owners, and unemployment. One of the biggest problems identified was the failure to implement certain laws and the absence of protective mechanisms in legal frameworks. Participants devised a project that envisions the development of a team of



lawyers from both Serbia and Kosovo which will be available to provide legal help to minority communities, and serve as a resource and thereby partially compensate for the current dearth of significant legal structures dealing with minority issues in Kosovo institutions.

A visit to the Radio Television of Kosovo (RTK), hosted by Mr. Mentor Sala, editor-in-chief, and Mrs. Lule Pagarush, a coordinator for production in Serbian and Turkish, mainly focused on reporting about and by members of minority communities. The participants were introduced to an ongoing project of RTK, a second channel broadcast in Serbian and other minority languages, which will cover the whole territory of Kosovo. The initiative to establish official contacts with the Radio Television of Vojvodina (RTV) was welcomed by the RTK staff, which has very extensive experience in editing programs in minority languages in Vojvodina.

Since the establishment of the EULEX Mission in Kosovo in spring 2008, this was the first and the only official visit planned, organized and implemented by a group of Kosovo Serbian NGOs. The participants, hosted by Mr. Dominique Orsini, Chief Policy Advisor of the EU Planning Team, and Mr. Victor Reuter, Head of Press and Public Information Office, became familiar with the EULEX priorities, legal basis, programs and future plans. They all agreed that in order to normalize and improve the situation in Kosovo, the state's priorities must be the implementation of the constitution, upholding the rule of law, and ensuring legislative institutions are neutral and fair toward all communities living in Kosovo.

In the absence of official cooperation between law faculties in Kosovo and Serbia, the meeting at the Pristina-based Law School was important, because it brought representatives of the NGO Ligo Lex Legis from the Law School in Pristina together with our participants. Activities were focused on the models of multiethnic cooperation. An Agreement on Cooperation was signed between the Youth Dialogue Program, one of the NGOs which participated in the study tour, and Ligo Lex Legis. This agreement will enable easier and more regular cooperation between students of Law faculties in Serbia and Kosovo. The initiative will serve as an alternative channel of communication between students and foster academic ties in the absence of an official partnership between Serbian and Kosovan law faculties (See: **Appendix IV: Lobbying Visits to the Kosovo and EU Institutions in Pristina (Agenda and Participants)**).

### **3. Advocating for Better Institutional Representation**

The NGO Nasa Kuca, in cooperation with the *Center for Migration Studies*, established institutional cooperation between Our Home offices, the Parliament of Kosovo and the UNMIK headquarters in Pristina, regarding both ongoing and upcoming legislation relevant to minority communities.

During the reporting period, the draft Constitution was made available to the public in all three of Kosovo's primary languages at 11 offices of *Our Home*. Due to the highly tense political situation in the enclaves and the feeling of general uncertainty, the amount of time the draft constitution was available to the public was extended to the end of June 2008. After meeting Mr. Bojan Stojanovic, chairperson of the Kosovo Assembly Committee for

Community Rights, Interests and Returns, *Our Home* established a channel of communication with the Parliamentary committees. To avoid potential backlash towards the staff of *Our Home*, possible discrediting of the CSO's achievements or a downswing in popular perception of and support for the CSO in the enclaves stemming from such dialogue, the meetings in Pristina were organized in cooperation with the Center for Migration Studies, a respected Serbian CSO among K. Serbian politicians and the local community.

Two laws of great interest and importance to the Kosovo minority communities, the Law on Communities and the Law on Decentralization, are still in parliamentary draft phase and should be sent to Nasa Kuca offices by July 10. By making the legislation of interest to minorities in Kosovo available to the Kosovo Serbian public, *Our Home* has helped members of the Kosovo Serbian community participate in the social and legislative processes. Feedback from the Serbian enclaves on the relevant legislation, ultimately, will create a more balanced picture of the relevant laws on minorities and their practical implications in the hopes that the Kosovo Serbian communities will exercise their political rights.

This project envisions that public discussions will be organized and held in July, followed by the crafting of policy recommendations for the Kosovo government. Invitations to participate in the public discussions were sent to numerous institutions, including representatives of the Kosovo Serbian communities from the Kosovo Parliament, Kosovo Deputy Ombudsperson, law experts from both the international community in Kosovo and Kosovo Serbian communities, and the media (including local non-Albanian media as well as B-92).

## **B) Artistic projects**

*ARROW Kosova/o*: Two theatres, the Pristina-based Centre for Development of Children's Theatre (CDCT) and the Ghetto Theatre from Lapje Selo, successfully finalized the project *Arrow Kosova/a*. *The Bridge* was performed on July 24 at the Puppet Theatre in Mostar. Moreover, the performance served as an extraordinary illustration of socially engaged theatre for young audiences at the Theatre Epicenter Playwrights Forum, which brought together young participants from Central and Southeastern Europe. The forum, organized by the Theatre Epicenter Croatia, took place in Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina between April 23 and 26.





Using unconventional methods towards reconciliation, production of the play engaged different artistic groups and illustrated the specific role art can play in seeking creative approaches to bring communities closer together. Inspired by the Serbian and Albanian productions of the play, the Children's Theatre Centre in Skopje staged the Macedonian production of the same play in April. This has been a great success for the program, as the



play has now reached audiences outside of Kosovo, and thereby spread its message and promoted ethnic reconciliation and engagement throughout the region. So far, around 3000 children (Albanians, Macedonians and Turks) have seen the performance in Skopje.

*The Guardian* published a very positive story on May 9, 2008 about the project *Arrow Kosovo/a* (See: **Appendix V: Success story: We shall overcome: Center for Development of Children's Theater**).

### C) Baseline Survey

The Kosovo Chamber of Commerce (KCC) conducted a public opinion survey in Gjilan, Lipjan, Rahovec, Skenderaj, Mitrovica North and South, Pristina, Kamenica, Ferizaj/Uroševac, Janjevë/Janjevo, and Kline/Klina during April and May of 2008. The survey will gather community perceptions towards actual problems, such as reconciliation, inter-ethnic relations, freedom of movement, cross-community cooperation, business relations, education, cultural exchanges, living conditions, property issues, IDPs, and opportunities for young people in municipalities covered by the program. The final report is expected by July 31.

### III. Upcoming activities



During the next quarter, Freedom House will:

- Take part in organizing public debates on draft legislation of interest to the minority communities in Kosovo, in cooperation with the Center for Migration Studies (CMS) and Our Home;
- Evaluate the overall impact of the Center for Development of Children's Theater, Our Home, ELSA/Media Pulse, and the Center for Migration Studies upon conclusion of their projects;
- Present the results of the second baseline survey in August 2008.

**Contact:** Damian Murphy  
Senior Program Manager, CEE  
Freedom House  
1301 Connecticut Ave., NW, 6th floor  
Washington, D.C. 20036  
Tel: 202.747.7042  
Email: [murphy@freedomhouse.org](mailto:murphy@freedomhouse.org)



**Appendix I: Mechanisms for the protection of civil and minority rights in Kosovo**

**TRAINING SESSION  
Hotel MOLIKA, Brezovica, April 04 - 06, 2008**

**Friday, April 04**

- 12:00 – 14:00 Arrival and registration of the participants  
14:00 – 15:00 Lunch  
17:30 – 19:00 **Introduction to the training session**  
**Presentation of the Advocacy project and the Seminar program**  
**Introduction of participants and team**  
19:00 – 20:30 Dinner

**Saturday, April 05**

- 08:00 – 09:00 Breakfast  
09:30 – 11:00 Workshop  
**What are human rights?**  
**Universal Declaration of Human Rights**  
11:00 – 11:30 Coffee break  
11:30 – 13:00 Workshop  
**Human Rights and Human Wrongs in Kosovo**  
13:00 – 15:00 Lunch  
17:00 – 19:00 Workshop  
**Practices from around the world – Mechanisms for human rights protection**  
**Mechanisms for the protection of civic and minority rights in Kosovo**  
19:00 – 20:30 Dinner

**Sunday, April 06**

- 08:00 – 09:00 Breakfast  
09:30 – 11:00 Workshop  
**Conclusions and follow-up**  
**Evaluation of the training sessions**  
12:00 – 13:00 Lunch  
13:00 – 14:00 Departure of the participants



## **Appendix II: Lobbying and Advocacy Techniques**

### **TRAINING SESSION Hotel MOLIKA, Brezovica, May 03 - 04, 2008**

#### **Saturday, May 03**

- 12:00 – 14:00 Arrival and registration of the participants  
14:00 – 15h00 Lunch  
17:30 – 19:00 **Introduction to the training session, expectations and goals**  
**Introduction of participants and training team**  
**Results of the previous seminar**  
19:00 – 20:30 Dinner

#### **Sunday, May 04**

- 08:00 – 09:00 Breakfast  
09:30 – 11:00 Workshop 1 – **Analysis of Public Policy Community**

**Introduction to Public Policy Community**  
**Recognizing the working mechanisms and institutions for Human Rights protection**  
**Public Policy and Rule of Law – part I**

- 11:00 – 11:30 Coffee break  
11:30 – 13:00 Workshop – **Introduction to Advocacy**

**What is advocacy?**  
**Steps in Advocacy**  
**Differing concepts and Advocacy (Public Policy and Rule of Law – part II)**

- 13:00 – 15:00 Lunch  
17:00 – 19:00 Workshop – **Advocacy in practice (part I)**

**Defining Advocacy Topic(s)**  
**Defining Advocacy goals and tasks**

- 19:00 – 20:30 Dinner



**Appendix III: Strategies for Lobbying and Advocacy on Behalf of Minorities**

**TRAINING SESSION  
Hotel MOLIKA, Brezovica, May 5 - 6, 2008**

**Monday, May 05**

08:00 – 09:00 Breakfast

09:30 – 11:00 Workshop 1 – **Advocacy in practice (part II)**

**Defining target groups  
Power and influence analysis**

11:00 – 11:30 Coffee break

11:30 – 13:00 Workshop – **Introduction to Communication Skills**

**Verbal and non-verbal skills  
Advocacy statement  
Best practices in delivering the message**

13:00 – 15:00 Lunch

17:00 – 19:00 Workshop – **Introduction to Lobbying**

**What is Lobbying?  
Types of Lobbying  
Lobbying simulation  
Action planning (part I)**

19:00 – 20:30 Dinner

**Tuesday, April 06**

08:00 – 09:00 Breakfast

09:30 – 11:00 Workshop – **Closing the training**

**Action planning (part II)  
Conclusions and follow-up  
Evaluation of the training session**

12:00 – 13:00 Lunch

13:00 – 14:00 Departure of the participants



**Appendix IV: Advocacy Visits to the Kosovo and EU Institutions in Pristina**

July 4, 2008

**Agenda**

<b>09:45</b>	Gathering of members of youth lobby group in front of the Kosovo Assembly building
<b>10:00 – 11:00</b>	Meeting with representatives of Serbian MPs from the Kosovo Assembly
<b>11:30 – 12:30</b>	Visits to Radio Television of Kosovo
<b>12:30 – 13:30</b>	Lunch
<b>14:00 – 15:00</b>	Visit to the EULEX Mission in Pristina
<b>16:00 – 17:00</b>	Visit to the University in Pristina and the Law School, meeting and discussion with students

**Participants:**

1	Aleksandar	Stojanovic	CCSD
2	Aleksandar	Miletic	ELSA
3	Marjan	Saric	Konak
4	Edina	Bajrami	Zenit
5	Alida	Mustafu	Zenit
6	Edis	Mustafi	Zenit
7	Mirza	Sagdati	Zenit
8	Dejan	Boric	YDP
9	Vanja	Milanovic	YDP
10	Srdjan	Vezmar	YDP
11	Igor	Aritonovic	CSD
12	Milan	Branovic	Media/Pulse

## Appendix V:

### We shall overcome

*Haroon Siddique finds Kosovan people working quietly within small communities to build a sustainable peace.*



Actors in the Kosovan play *The Bridge*. Photograph: Jeton Neziraj

"If you see Kosovo, you see Iraq," Agon Maliqi says wearily of the perception of his homeland.

He knows all too well that references to the former Yugoslavian territory are usually incomplete without

an accompanying epithet such as "war-torn" or "troubled".

To most people Kosovo is a country yet to recover from the bloody 1996-99 conflict and riven by ethnic tensions.

But in order to move on, non-governmental organisations want to see a change of focus, with the emphasis on future possibilities rather than past troubles.

"In the US and UK they have stories of people doing theatre but they don't have stories of people killing people," says the playwright Jeton Neziraj. "That's why they have to find stories in Kosovo."

If Neziraj's assessment sounds over-simplistic, his sentiments – shared by many others in Kosovo - are understandable.

The last time Kosovo made it on to the front pages was in February when the government declared the region an independent state, to the fury of Serbians.

Now it is poised to hit the headlines again as Serbia holds elections on Sunday that will be extended to Kosovo in defiance of the declaration of independence, bringing with them the possibility of more unrest.

Meanwhile, the work of people like Neziraj and Maliqi, who are busy trying to overcome historical conflict and prejudices, goes largely unnoticed.

"It's usual for a conflict area when you get that brand - as a war area - that media attention comes only when the tension is coming," says Maliqi, who is the programme director for



the Youth Initiative on Human Rights (YIHR) in Kosovo. "It does hurt Kosovo and it hurts investment and the economy - the key thing is to remain out of the news."

He describes YIHR's mission as "dealing with the past as a way of promoting better cooperation in the future".

One of the ways it tries to do this is by running exchange programmes between Albanians in Kosovo and Serbians in Serbia. The participants range from musicians to journalists.

"We have had a lot of journalists come from Serbia," he says. "They used to have a lot of fear about coming to Kosovo. Now they know it's pretty safe. And we sent a Kosovan Albanian journalist to Serbia who decided to stay there as a correspondent for Albanian media."

Culture is one of the most valuable tools employed by NGOs as they attempt to break down barriers between different ethnic groups.

Neziraj, who is the director of the Centre for Children's Theatre Development (CCTD), says the power of theatre "has been proved throughout history".

Last year he wrote *The Bridge*, which he describes as a story about reconciliation. The play was performed by two groups, one Albanian and one Serbian. Although members of the different ethnic groups made separate productions - partly due to the language barrier, says Neziraj - the idea was that they would address the same issues.

"People [on both sides] were saying, 'It's not us who started the war'," he says. "Those are some of the questions, some of the problems, we face in our work."

He says that on a daily basis there are "more good things than bad things" in Kosovo. While the government's declaration of independence sparked violent protests by some Serbs, Neziraj says his feared "worst scenario" did not materialise: Serbs leaving Kosovo.

Despite the fact that Maliki and Neziraj would like to see more emphasis on Kosovo's culture in the international media they are not blind to the challenges that remain.

Serb-dominated northern Mitrovica - which saw the worst of the unrest within Kosovo after the independence declaration - remains the biggest potential flashpoint.

Both YIHR and CCTD, which are based in Pristina, have only limited contact with northern Mitrovica because of the safety issues in the area.

One charity that has persisted with its work in the north is Community Building Mitrovica (CBM). The executive director and founder, Valdete Idrizi, was honoured for her work by the US state department when she won an International Women of Courage award in March. She readily admits there is tension and fear, but adds: "In a way life is just going on".



She cites the example of CBM's children and women's centre in northern Mitrovica, which re-opened a week after February's declaration, despite fears of a violent backlash by Serbs.

Like Maliqi and Neziraj, she would like to see a focus on the success stories, namely the areas where Serbs and Albanians live side-by-side in northern Mitrovica without any problems.

She says there are "many things to be concerned about" but politics is the problem rather than individuals. Serb individuals will happily get involved with CBM as long as they detect no trace of the Kosovan Albanian government or the European Union, which is seen as complicit in the declaration of independence, says Idrizi.

"With individuals we can work really well, informally you can reach all people and get them to participate in many activities," she says.

"When it comes to the human relations I am positive that we have overcome many things and we will overcome the next challenges."

Lucy Ashken, who runs Insight on Conflict, a website which profiles grassroots projects in conflict areas around the world says headlines about death and destruction "only tell half the story of what's happening in Kosovo".

She blames the lack of coverage of the positive work on a lack of appreciation of the significance of the work done by grassroots NGOs.

"We don't really know about them because we think peace is 'made' by a couple of old men in suits signing a bit of paper," she says. "But in reality it's the local people doing small money, big impact projects who really have the capacity to build a sustainable peace."

Friday May 9, 2008

[guardian.co.uk](http://guardian.co.uk)