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CRS/EUROPE AND MIDDLE EAST

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**YOUTH SECURING THE FUTURE**

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Cooperative Agreement:  
**167-A-00-06-00103-00**

MID-TERM EVALUATION REPORT

*November 2007 – February 2008*

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**ACRONYMS**

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CRS/EME	Catholic Relief Services Europe and Middle East
CCSD	Center for Civil Society Development
CWYC	City Wide Youth Council
EU	European Union
GDA	Global Development Alliance
GS	Galaxy Stars
IR	Intermediate Result
K-Albanian	Kosovo Albanian
K-Serb	Kosovo Serb
KAP	Knowledge Attitude and Practices
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
PB	Peace Building
RFP	Reflecting on Peace Practice Project
SO	Strategic Objective
TOR	Terms of Reference
TOT	Training of Trainers
UNMIK	United Nation Mission in Kosovo
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
YC	Youth Council
YSF	Youth Securing the Future

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## FOREWORD AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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### A. FOREWORD

CRS/EME is pleased to present the mid-term evaluation report for the Youth Securing the Future (YSF) Project. The participatory evaluation engaged 66 direct and indirect project participants and focuses on assessing the effectiveness, appropriateness, and relevance of activities implemented to-date within the YSF project and measures the contribution of this project to positive change. The evaluation aims to identify good practices to be implemented throughout duration of the current project and in future similar projects, and recommendations potential improvements to further enhance the desired impact to be achieved by the end of the project.

During the data collection process, one of the project participants described this project as potential *“stimulation for youth to have some future in Kosovo, stay here and be leaders”*. Evaluators hope that this report will demonstrate that this expectation is both realistic and possible.

### B. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Evaluation Team would like to extend sincere gratitude to all of the evaluation participants for contributing their time and effort to meet with us and respond to our questions. Their insights, openness and frankness greatly assisted us in developing this report. The CRS team hopes that the input of each participant, incorporated into this document, will further strengthen the YSF project in Kosovo, and productively contribute to the overall improvement of young peoples’ lives regardless of ethnicity.

Should you have questions or would like to provide feedback on any of the information provided within this report you are most welcome to contact:

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## I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The mid-term evaluation report aims to respond to three Evaluation Questions, two of which are oriented towards exploring programming-related issues. The Evaluation Questions are: (1) **“To what extent have project activities and/or approaches contributed to addressing factors important to ethnic conflict and the current situation in Kosovo?”** and (2) **“What early signs of project effects are emerging and how they can be amplified to enhance future impact?”** The third question focuses on examining internal management-related issues: (3) **“How effective is the current management structure in meeting project needs?”** Based on detailed findings for each of the questions and corresponding themes, this mid-term evaluation report offers recommendations for improvements that are pertinent to the success of the second phase of project implementation. Key lessons learned and a description of good practices in both programming and management will enhance organizational learning and promote the application of better methodologies during the remaining period of performance for the YSF project implementation. Revised and updated methodologies will also be applied in future programming initiatives where appropriate.

The evaluation begins with a brief Project Summary that provides key information about the YSF project goal, strategic objectives (SOs), intermediate results (IRs), and the primary strategies. The next section includes a description of the Development Problem and USAID Response explaining the proposed intervention and its relevance to the local environment of Kosovo, followed by a succinct section on the Purpose of the Evaluation that describes Evaluation Objectives and Evaluation Questions. Subsequently, the Research Design and Evaluation Methodology section provides details of the evaluation process: the composition of the Evaluation Team; the applied evaluation methodology, including sampling, informants profile, data collection tools, data collection process and data analysis; and limitations of this mid-term evaluation. The following section provides a list of specific findings from on-site data collection and includes a desk review of sampled secondary data available for this project.

Findings speak about evaluation participants’ perspectives on key factors pertinent to the current Kosovo context, including the complex political situation, economy, quality of education, social life of youth, etc. Moreover, the findings examine the extent to which each of the project methodologies addresses issues critical to the Kosovo context. Respondents also offer their views on project accomplishments in terms of peace-building within the project, but also in larger context of Kosovo’s society. Additional project approaches and foundations for sustainability are included to further enhance project effectiveness. Finally, the findings on management effectiveness of the current YSF project team and partners assess communication, decision-making, monitoring and reporting systems, as well as relationships within the project staff and with external stakeholders. Each finding consists of an interpretation, which provides insight into the issues or phenomena described in the finding statement. The interpretations are purposefully rich with quotes collected from on-site data so the reader can experience much of the first-hand information that was at the evaluators’ disposal. The Report closes with recommendations and lessons learned by the team through the evaluation process, and includes direct input from stakeholders and their respective analyses of project successes and areas of improvement. Recommendations range from simple tweaking of methodology and additional strategies to be implemented in the second phase of YSF project implementation, but also discuss peace-building issues that may not fit into the timeline and scope of the YSF project, but are considered by evaluators worthwhile enough to share with USAID and other readers of this report.

Finally, the end of this evaluation provides a series of conclusions regarding practice, process, and methodology formulated by the project evaluators. The purpose of the evaluator conclusions is to provide sound information and recommendations to guide future evaluating teams for successful and purposeful data gathering and impact analysis in support of additional project monitoring and evaluation efforts.

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## II. PROJECT SUMMARY<sup>1</sup>

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Catholic Relief Services (CRS) was awarded The Cooperative Agreement No. 167-A-00-06-00103-00 on May 22, 2006 by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to support implementation of the project entitled “Youth Securing the Future” (YSF). The project spans three years, with a period of performance beginning on May 22, 2006 and ending on May 21, 2009. The total project value is \$997,725 of which \$893,636 was awarded by USAID and \$101,630 contributed by CRS. The YSF project responds directly to the growing needs of youth institutions and organizations for capacity strengthening and mobilization to support Kosovo’s youth in effectively facing the challenges of life in Kosovo.

The YSF project was originally designed<sup>2</sup> around the following two Strategic Objectives (SOs):

**[SO1]: Youth are connected across ethnic lines; and**

**[SO2]: Inter-ethnic tolerance is increased at the local level.**

The YSF Strategic Objectives shaped the project’s intended results and were supported by the application of appropriate strategies and activities. In June 2007, recognizing the socio-political complexity of the environment in which the YSF project currently operates, and considering the growing potential for politicization of project efforts, CRS and its partners, in consultation with the USAID mission in Kosovo, revised project activities included in SO2. The revised SO2 shifts from a focus on advocacy, social marketing, and media in local participation and diversity mainstreaming to an approach that increases youth economic empowerment for pro-active participation in society, with special demographic consideration of unemployed youth. Rapid field assessments informed the re-design of the project to ensure relevance and appropriateness for the new focus and corresponding activities. SO1 remained the same. Revised Results Framework is provided as Attachment 2 to this report.

In order to successfully implement the complex YSF program, CRS mobilized two local partners, both respected and capable in their fields of expertise: Galaxy Stars (GS), focusing primarily on communities with a K-Albanian majority; and the Center for Civil Society Development (CCSD), working with communities consisting of a K-Serb majority.

In order to achieve SO1: ***Youth are connected across ethnic lines***, CRS developed strategies refined over five years of experience with youth empowerment and connecting representatives of different ethnicities in the City Wide Youth Council (CWYC) of Mitrovica/Mitrovicë. The CWYC has become a model by which youth work together to address shared problems with commonly developed solutions, and implement them together despite overarching ethnic divisions. CRS partners facilitate intensive capacity building in tolerance and acceptance, human rights, advocacy, proposal writing, and general organizational skills to ensure that youth have opportunities to expand their views, improve their knowledge, and build a platform for positive change of attitudes, behaviors, and relationships that might otherwise lead to violence. Mini-projects and various thematic activities provide practical exposure to trained youth to test their skills and abilities and simultaneously improve their school conditions, social networks, and cultural life. This approach targets 26 schools in the municipalities of North and North-West Kosovo, engages 390 students’ council members as direct project participants, and indirectly affects the general student population of almost 15,000 students.

To achieve the newly developed SO2: ***Unemployed Youth are engaged in the society***, the project seeks to provide livelihood improvement opportunities to unemployed youth. The project’s comprehensive approach is designed to connect at-risk, unemployed youth with local businesses and provide them with

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<sup>1</sup> Most information presented in this section is derived from the original project proposal and Annual Work Plan Year

<sup>2</sup> The Original Results Framework is provided as Attachment 1 to this report

formal and non-formal education through internships and apprenticeships. The first phase of project implementation includes a full assessment of employer needs and youth capacities, and well as potential matches and placement opportunities. In addition to bridging the existing gap between employers and unemployed youth, this project component provides for on-the-job learning for 50 youth that might eventually lead to permanent employment.

The YSF project targets seven municipalities in Kosovo, namely: Laposavić/Leposaviq, Zvečan/Zvečan, Zubin Potok/Zubin Potoku, Mitrovicë/Mitrovica, Burim/Istok, Peja/Peć and Vushtrri/Vučitrn. The North and North-West municipalities of Kosovo, stretching from the Montenegrin to Serbian borders, comprise a major division across ethnic lines. The international community (UN Security Council, Contact Group, and European Foreign Ministers) has rejected the concept of a territorial partition between the largely Serbian municipalities in north Kosovo and the remaining Albanian areas in southern Kosovo. Due to real and or perceived security concerns, YSF project areas are generally separated by varying degrees of freedom of movement, and in many cases, local communities are highly isolated. USAID’s CMM office described Kosovo as a “lingering low-level conflict.” This can readily be seen in the city of Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, but the conflict has also been present in Peje/Pec, Istog/Istok, and Vushtrri/Vucitrn. Northern Kosovo is a frontline of ethnic confrontation and the most likely center of potential violence as Kosovo’s future status is decided. Ethnic breakdown between K-Albanians and K-Serbs in each of the municipalities is illustrated in the table below.

Table 1: Ethnic Breakdown between K-Albanian and K-Serbs in YSF Project Municipalities

Municipality <sup>3</sup>	Total Population	Albanian Population	Serb Population
Leposavic Leposaviq	18,500	67 (0.3%)	18,000 (99%)
Zvecan Zvečan	16,600	350 (3%)	12,050 (97%)
Zubin Potok Zubin Potoku	14,900	800 (6%)	14,000 (94%)
Mitrovicë Mitrovica	112,871	95,231 <sup>4</sup> 84%	15,000 <sup>5</sup> 13%
Istog Istok	44,610	41,000 92%	540 1%
Peja Pec	91,112	78,712 86%	1,000 4%
Vushtrri Vucitrn	102,662	98,000 95%	4,137 4%
<b>Total (Rounded)</b>	<b>401,200</b> (21 percent of Kosovo’s total population)	<b>314,200</b> (19 percent of the Albanian Kosovar population)	<b>64,700</b> (48 percent of the Serbian Kosovar population)

<sup>3</sup> Statistics and estimates are based on Municipal Profiles prepared by OSCE in 2005.

<sup>4</sup> The OSCE does not provide a current estimate of the Albanian population in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë but lists 95,231 from 1998.

<sup>5</sup> According to OSCE Profile of Mitrovica, “Accurate population figures have proved impossible to obtain for the north of Mitrovica (and in general for whole municipality) and are a subject of much controversy.”



# KOSOVO



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### III. THE DEVELOPMENT PROBLEM AND USAID'S RESPONSE<sup>6</sup>

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#### A. THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

According to a survey of youth leaders conducted by Hope Fellowship, security is the main concern of Kosovo's youth. Continued uncertainty related to the future status of Kosovo perpetuates fear and mistrust between Kosovo's predominantly Albanian population and its largely Serbian minority. Particularly in the north of Kosovo, deep divisions still exist and the possibility of multiethnic disputes remains a threat. Though active warfare officially ceased in 1999, enough tension among ethnic groups still exists to potentially fuel additional conflict. The *de facto* physical and social separation of K-Albanians and K-Serbs translates into dysfunctional social, governmental, and civil society-based institutions. The lack of institutional communication is exacerbated by the fact that Kosovo's youth does not share a common language, and the perpetuation of political rhetoric and gamesmanship compounds the lack of tolerance between K-Albanian and K-Serb youth, sowing the seeds for possible violence along ethnic lines.

Although nearly 50% of Kosovo's population is between the ages of 15-25, they are "disenfranchised in many areas." This represents not only a deficit in democratic practice, but implies violence as one of the few remaining options for the public expression of grievances. Despite differences in ethnicity, economic status, and language, Kosovo's youth population shares several common concerns: unemployment, lack of personal freedom, and deteriorating education standards. Despite sharing these concerns, Kosovo's youth lack unified platforms for effecting change through non-violent means. For youth in the school system, even basic structures such as student councils are frequently dysfunctional. Furthermore, neither K-Serb nor K-Albanian education systems incorporate concepts of tolerance into generally applied curricula. For youth who have graduated or dropped out, access to information and opportunities for creating change is virtually non-existent. Many youth, even graduates and degree-holders, are unemployed or semi-employed and see little future for themselves. Many Kosovar youth seek to emigrate in search of increased economic opportunity, but are not organized or associated with active civil society groups and therefore feel a greater sense of isolation and are more prone to violence and manipulation.

The CRS **Knowledge Attitude and Practices (KAP) Baseline Survey**<sup>7</sup> conducted in the first phase of YSF project implementation illustrates the magnitude of the social and cultural gaps among youth in Kosovo. Although this report reflects an evaluation of southern municipalities<sup>8</sup>, where K-Albanians are the majority (92% of total number of respondents), the findings indicate cause for concern. More than 82% of 1,505 respondents/participants in the evaluation surveys have no or poor knowledge of the Serbian language. Around 30% state that they would never work in a job that involves K-Serb counterparts, while 83% do not talk to their K-Serb counterparts except through organized activities of youth councils. Of the survey participants, 55% do not know what kind of music their Serb peers listen to, and 58% never watch Serbian programs or movies. Regarding education and learning, 43% of respondents feel uncomfortable or extremely uncomfortable about attending a school that includes both K-Albanian and K-Serb students. Though Albanian and Serbian youth live among each other and share common experiences as Kosovars, the cultural and social gaps are evident and reveal the depth of ethnic divisions. Through the YSF project, CRS and USAID aim to bridge the existing gaps and incorporate tolerance, diversity, and collaboration in support of increased opportunities for participation and action in their local communities.

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<sup>6</sup> The Development Problem presented in this report is derived from the original project proposal and Annual Work Plan year 2, and from the results of the KAP baseline survey in Southern municipalities.

<sup>7</sup> The KAP Survey is a measurement tool developed by YSF project staff to assess improvement in KAP related to tolerance and thus measure progress towards achievement of SO1. Selected examples of KAP baseline results presented here are derived from YSF KAP baseline results of schools in municipalities south of the ethnic divide.

<sup>8</sup> Schools in the North are still awaiting permission from Serbian education authorities to conduct this survey.

## **B. THEORY OF YSF PROJECT INTERVENTION**

The design and application of the YSF project is founded in the following theory of change: *When youth use peaceful means for participation instead of violence, they become the major agents for peace and thus play a large role in the future of Kosovo.* This theory is based on the following assumptions:

- Inter-personal, inter-ethnic relationships developed by young people through regular interactions lead youth to value peaceful interaction;
- Common obstacles and desires identified by youth, regardless of their ethnicity, focus energy on overcoming obstacles and seeking their desires, rather than attacking other groups;
- In an appropriate space and context, youth want to participate and develop a voice to speak out for their values, and share these values with their peers;
- The adults who care for youth – parents, teachers, and community leaders – will listen, especially when youth speak with an organized voice, and
- School and community level achievements empower youth to regard themselves as agents of non-violent, positive change with a substantive and productive role to play in the larger society.

The freedom of movement, in addition to unemployment and poor education, is one of the major concerns of youth leaders and is fundamental to achieving lasting peace in Kosovo. Certainly, the question of Standards and Status cannot be addressed if security concerns remain in the territory. If youth feel secure in their future, and know community members of the ‘other side,’ they will be less likely to engage in violence and more likely to act as peacemakers if a spark for violence should occur.

## **C. PROJECT DESIGN**

To implement the YSF project, CRS has applied its hands-on experience working with multi-ethnic groups in Kosovo, and has brought to bear significant international expertise in conflict mitigation and grassroots mobilization. CRS and its partners aim to mobilize and empower youth to drive project activities and outputs whenever possible. The primary role of CRS and partners is to provide capacity-building opportunities and guidance for youth participants to take ownership of the problems faced in everyday life, to devise strategic solutions to address these problems, and finally, to implement these solutions together. CRS staff and partners bring expertise and professional skills, but the actual engine of this project is fueled by the youth themselves, transforming them from passive citizens to active promoters of behavior change to shift attitudes within themselves and among their peers. In support of this objective, the YSF project incorporates a three-pronged methodological approach: (1) CRS employs a strong cross-cutting theme of conflict transformation in all activities; (2) The YSF project is specifically designed for continuous internal learning to improve methodologies, and (3) The YSF project uses a learning-by-doing methodology.

Because the ultimate project goal is that: *Youth feel secure about their future in Kosovo*, the project is designed with and for youth to improve their overall well-being and to give them a foundation for becoming empowered and active citizens that can build a democratic, multi-ethnic Kosovo together.

### **SO1: Youth are connected across ethnic lines.**

This SO is to be achieved through the accomplishment of two Intermediate Results:

IR 1.1: Mobilized youth advocate for conflict transformation.

IR 1.2: Youth engage in joint problem solving.

Numerous strategies and activities are applied in order to achieve SO1, including:

- Providing support to YC election processes in all participating schools;
- Coordinating with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, UNICEF and OSCE;
- Strengthening the capacity of youth councils in the sectors of basic organization, conflict mitigation and management;
- Empowering student councils through TOT trainings;
- Sponsoring thematic essay and photo competitions;

- Developing mini-projects and supporting implementation to address major needs as identified by YC;
- Establishing project websites as well as audio and written materials for exchange across ethnic-lines, including a quarterly newsletter;
- Advocacy campaigns, and
- Designing joint action plans and follow-up strategies.

**SO2: Unemployed Youth are engaged in the society.**

This SO will be achieved through the following IR:

IR 2.1: Unemployed youth are empowered to take active economic role in the society.

The project strategies include:

- Assessing the needs of employers;
- Assessing youth capacities;
- Assessing availability of vocational training opportunities;
- Communication to bridge existing gaps;
- Selecting beneficiaries;
- Providing professional skills trainings;
- Providing of internships and apprenticeships;
- Mobilization of participants and their peers to participate in YSF activities, and
- Organizing of job fairs.

**D. PROJECT SUSTAINABILITY**

Due to the potentially volatile situation in Kosovo related to pending Status, and the unknown aftermath, CRS designed the YSF project to be fluid and adaptable to dynamic conditions. The program relies upon structures and attitude changes promoting sustainability, and leaves the empowered participants with flexibility to continue their work as appropriate during the project period.

Overall, the YSF project relies upon attitude and perception changes that, when successful, should be sustainable. The project implementation methodology relies heavily upon youth-driven and youth-developed messages that will change attitudes and perceptions throughout local communities. Through YSF activities, positive messages are constantly reinforced through practical advocacy efforts and are constantly refined, revised, and evaluated in a participatory manner.

The YSF project also recognizes that all advocacy structures, youth organization, and channels for communication/dissemination must be sustainable. One of the primary strategies of this project is support to Youth Councils (YCs), the student structures required by law in each of the schools. Youth Councils should continue to have a substantive role and context within the school community, even after the project is finished. Furthermore, YCs can be used to drive a variety of other student needs and interests in addition to promoting tolerance because their structure is adaptable to many thematic areas. Under Kosovo law, YC representatives also sit on the local school boards, which are decision-making administrative bodies in each school.

Once students graduate, they will be encouraged to enter the CRS-supported Alumni Club. Through the Alumni Club, incoming youth council members will apply the trainings, knowledge, and experience that they received while participating in YSF project. Members of the Alumni Club will be in a position to provide capacity building, leadership and guidance to Youth Council members.

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#### **IV. PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION**

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The mid-term evaluation of the YSF project took place from November, 2007 through January 2008. The purpose of the mid-term evaluation is two-fold:

1. **To examine the effectiveness, appropriateness, and relevance of the project, and to explore its contribution (or lack thereof) to positive change, and**
2. **To identify lessons learned and recommendations for management and implementation approaches to strengthen the second phase of the project.**

To meet the above objectives, the CRS Evaluation team, in consultation with CRS YSF project team in Mitrovica/ Mitrovicë, have developed three key evaluation questions referring to programmatic and management areas as well as for some more focused topics of inquiry as outlined below.

#### **Programming Related Evaluation Questions**

##### **Evaluation Question 1:**

**“To what extent have project activities and/or approaches contributed to addressing factors important to ethnic conflict and the current situation in Kosovo?”**

The focus of evaluation for this query will be:

- a. Identification of factors critical to the current context analysis;
- b. Linking project activities and/or approaches to factors important to the conflict/current situation in Kosovo, and
- c. Identification of lessons learned and best practices for future programming efforts.

##### **Evaluation Question 2:**

**“What early signs of project effects are emerging and how they can be amplified to enhance future impact?”**

The themes of exploration include:

- a. Key stakeholders’ views on visible and tangible early signs of project effects, both positive and negative
- b. Assessment of project vs. peace effectiveness
- c. Identification of lessons learned and best practices for future programming efforts.

#### **Management Related Evaluation Questions**

##### **Evaluation Question 3:**

**“How effective is the current management structure in meeting project needs?”**

Evaluation emphasis is given to the following management issues:

- a. Communication among program staff, with project partners and external entities;
- b. Monitoring and tracking of project activities;
- c. Project reporting system;
- d. Decision-making, and
- e. Relationship management.

The participatory mid-term evaluation is based on the **Reflecting on Peace Practice approach** developed by CRS partner Collaborative Development Action (CDA),<sup>9</sup> designed to examine the effectiveness of peace-building efforts. Terms of Reference (TOR) for this evaluation are available as Attachment 3.

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.cdainc.com/rpp/>; Collaborative Learning Projects and the Collaborative for Development Action, Inc.

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## **V. RESEARCH DESIGN AND EVALUATION METHODOLOGY**

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### **A. EVALUATION DESIGN**

The evaluation was designed to be both formative and summative in nature in order to adequately assess current project achievements and needs. The summative portion of the evaluation examines youth mobilization, empowerment, and readiness for inter-ethnic connectivity, while the formative portion explores potential improvements under SO1 and provides an assessment of appropriate strategies for unemployed youth, as prescribed in SO2. Evaluators were able to identify factors critical to the current context analysis and explore links to project strategies through a participatory data collection process that engaged key project stakeholders and implementing partners from Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, CCSD, and GS. This strategy enabled evaluators to examine current project achievements, explore relevance and appropriateness of the current project design as well as identify potential new strategies that could further improve current project approaches. The early signs of positive and potentially negative impact were sought to shape best practices and lessons learned for further improvement of program effectiveness, and will ultimately be used to enhance cumulative project impact.

The project management structure was also evaluated in order to ascertain the appropriateness and efficiency of staffing, reporting, and accountability. Internal and external communication, relationship management, reporting, and monitoring were also evaluated through individual interviews and focus groups with CRS project staff and key implementing partners.

The initial development of the Terms of References (TOR) and data collection tools/ methodologies lasted for one month and involved three CRS/EME regional staff. CRS' Baltimore-based Senior Technical Advisor for Peace Building and YSF Project staff were also consulted throughout the process to ensure relevance and appropriateness of all data collection instruments and techniques.

### **B. EVALUATION TEAM**

The evaluation was conducted by a four-member team consisting of three CRS/EME Regional experts and one CRS Agency expert based in Baltimore:

- Velida Dzino-Silajdzic, Regional M&E Manager
- Vahidin Dzindo, Regional Advisor for Project Design and Implementation
- Shereen Nasef, Regional M&E Specialist
- Tom Bamat, Senior Technical Advisor for Peace Building

All team members are considered to be sufficiently removed from the project to avoid internal programmatic bias. Mr. Dzindo and Ms. Dzino-Silajdzic served as the Field Team that conducted direct data collection from project stakeholders, partners and CRS staff. They also processed, analyzed and drafted reports for programmatic and management components of the evaluation. Mr. Bamat and Miss Nasef provided remote support during pivotal points of data collection tool design, desk review of secondary data, and finalization of the evaluation with particular focus on recommendations and lessons learned.

### **C. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY**

The Evaluation Team employed a variety of techniques, including: desk review of secondary data; on-site data collection consisting of semi-structured interviews with different stakeholders; focus groups with youth project participants, and semi-structured interviews conducted individually with partners and CRS YSF project staff. The overview of data collection mechanisms and sources used to answer each of the evaluation questions is provided in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Data Collection Mechanisms and Corresponding Data Sources for Evaluation Questions

<b>Evaluation Question</b>	<b>Data Collection Mechanism</b>	<b>Data Sources</b>
1. “To what extent have project activities and/or approaches contributed to addressing factors important to ethnic conflict and the current situation in Kosovo?”	a. Focus group b. Individual semi-structured interview c. Desk review	Youth Council Members (Serbian); Youth Council Members (Albanian); School administration or municipality; Implementing Partners Project Staff; CRS staff
2. “What early signs of project effects are emerging and how they can be amplified to enhance future impact?”	a. Focus group b. Individual semi-structured interview c. Desk review	Youth Council Members (Serbian); Youth Council Members (Albanian); School administration or municipality; Implementing Partners Project Staff; CRS staff
3. “How effective is the current management structure in meeting project needs?”	a. Individual semi-structured interview b. Desk review	Implementing Partners Project Staff; CRS staff

#### **D. SAMPLING**

The Evaluation Team used purposeful sampling for selecting primary and secondary data sources. The selection criteria for respondents were mainly based on their availability and accessibility to the field team. The documents for desk review were sampled to include all the quarterly reports and partner reports that contained analysis on the implemented activities.

#### **E. INFORMANT’S PROFILE**

A total of 66 stakeholders provided input to the evaluation team. Of the total number of participants, 33 (50%) were K-Albanian, 26 (39%) K-Serbs, 4 Bosniak (6%) and 3 (5%) Roma, and females comprised 39% of all respondents. The focus groups involved 47 youth in and out of schools with nearly equally balanced participation of both male and female participants (52% male vs. 48% female). School officials, including 5 principals – 2 working in schools with K-Albanian majority and 3 in schools with K-Serb majority – were also interviewed during the on-site data collection process. One municipal official from South Mitrovica/Mitrovicë also took part in the evaluation survey. The evaluation also included the inputs of 2 businessmen from North and one from South Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, who shared their perspectives on the SO2 project component and on the overall situation in Kosovo. Finally, all CRS and partners programmatic staff, 10 in total, were interviewed in order to learn internal views on project successes and challenges. More details can be found in the Attachment 4, List of Stakeholders.

#### **F. DATA COLLECTION TOOLS**

Data collection instruments used in the evaluation were organized around the key questions and were developed by the Evaluation Manager, with input from the Evaluation Team Members and CRS YSF Project staff prior to the data collection process. The semi-structured interviews and focus group were based on questionnaires, available for reference as Attachment 5, Data Collection Tools. They served as technical guidance for leading the interviews and facilitating focus groups.

Additionally, the CRS agency-wide Management Quality Assessment Tool served as the basis for evaluating management aspects of the project, specifically in relation to Evaluation Question #3. Key themes included in the evaluation are:

- Roles and responsibilities;
- Decision-making;

- Internal communication;
- Communication with partners;
- Information dissemination;
- Planning, setting the objectives;
- Financial management, and
- Monitoring and management for change.

### **G. DATA COLLECTION PROCESS**

Collecting data in the field lasted for nine days. The interviews were conducted in South and North Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, Zubin Potok/Zubin Potoku and in Pec/Peja. They lasted between one to two and half hours depending on the information and informant's availability. CRS scheduled all the interviews in advance, at which time the purpose of requests and the evaluation were explained to the informants.

### **H. DESK REVIEW**

The desk review of secondary data, consisting primarily of project documentation, was completed over a two-week period. The desk review was conducted prior to on-site data collection in order to identify potential topics for in-depth probing during interviews and focus groups. YSF project staff regularly document programmatic progress through various types of monthly, quarterly, and monitoring reports, and served as the main reference for the desk review, which also incorporated information from main project documents and the Annual Work Plan for Year Two. Primary emphasis was placed on CRS Quarterly Reports to USAID, which included input from all the partners. Additionally, the Evaluation Team reviewed local partner reports for cross-checking purposes and to gather additional detailed information, especially regarding programmatic delays and challenges. The following documents fed into the desk review:

#### **CRS Reports:**

- CRS Annual Work Plan – Year Two – approved in July 2007
- CRS PMEP approved in July 2007
- CRS PTS approved in July 2007
- USAID Fourth Quarterly report - January 1, 2007 through March 31 2007
- USAID Sixth Quarterly report- July 1, 2007 through September 30, 2007

#### **Partner reports:**

- Quarterly Monitoring Report I – June 1, 2007 through Aug 31, 2007 (both partners)
- Annual Monitoring report – May 1, 2006 through May 31 2007 (both partners)
- Mini-grants report Cycle I (both partners)
- CCSD Data collection Report for July 2007
- CCSD Annual Data collection Report – May 1, 2006 through May 31, 2007
- CCSD Micro- grants report Cycle I data collection
- GS Quarterly report – January 1, 2007 through March 31, 2007
- GS Data collection – August 2007
- GS Annual Data collection Report – May 1, 2006 through May 31, 2007

### **I. DATA ANALYSIS**

Field Team members conducted the preliminary data analysis and interpretation, one member leading analysis of programmatic-oriented evaluation questions and the other leading analysis of the management-related data. The data collected during on-site interviews and focus groups were categorized around evaluation questions with thematic sub-categorization specifying trends emerging from responses and/or categories of respondents. Desk review data, including monitoring information, was triangulated for the purpose of verification. The remote evaluation team members were consulted to verify findings and to validate the applicability and adequacy of recommendations and lessons learned.



The review of primary and secondary data was based on the Evaluation Questions and themes of inquiry to track trends and patterns emerging from data obtained from field visits and available project documentation. The data from all sources is organized in a coded matrix which is available upon request.

## **J. LIMITATIONS AND CHALLENGES**

The mid-term evaluation of the YSF project faced certain limitations that might have affected the findings and corresponding recommendations/ lessons learned presented in the report:

- Translation: some exact words of key informants might have been lost during the translation process.
- Sensitivity of the situation in Kosovo: at the time of data collection at the field, the decision on status was supposed to be brought (December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2007) and may have influenced some bias among certain groups of respondents.

The evaluation team tried to reduce the impact of these limitations by probing in-depth the issues and through triangulation and cross-referencing of data. Despite the potential affect that these limitations may have had on data collection and participant inputs, the evaluators believe that information presented in this evaluation represents a sufficiently realistic view of the project accomplishments to-date.

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## **VI. FINDINGS**

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The findings presented in this evaluation are organized by each key evaluation question and explore in detail the effectiveness of project activities and strategies implemented to-date, as well as planned implementation methods for the remaining period of performance. The evaluation also identifies good practices for further development or application elsewhere in similar project contexts, and provides locally appropriate recommendations to advance the long-term impact of the YSF program.

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### **VI. A. FINDINGS FOR PROGRAMMATIC EVALUATION QUESTIONS**

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#### **Evaluation Question 1:**

To what extent have project activities and/or approaches contributed to addressing factors important to the ethnic conflict and the current situation in Kosovo?

The key themes of inquiry are:

- a. Identification of factors critical to the current context analysis;
- b. Linking project activities and/or approaches to factors important for the conflict/current situation in Kosovo, and
- c. Identification of lessons learned and best practices for future programming efforts.

#### **Finding #1.1: Factors Critical to Current Kosovo Context: Political Situation**

##### **a. Finding Statement**

Both K-Albanian and K-Serb respondents list almost identical key factors that impede further progress of youth and Kosovo in general. An undefined, intense political situation and the passivity of the international community in endorsing parallel structures reveal issues of safety and security, and strains overall freedom of movement and face-to-face multi-ethnic interactions. Stakeholders living in municipalities with K-Albanian and K-Serb majorities have different experiences regarding the extent and nature of psychological pressure related to future Kosovo status, as well as differences in systemic positioning towards endorsement of joint activities.

## b. Interpretation of the Finding

### A. STAKEHOLDER VIEWS ON THE CURRENT POLITICAL SITUATION

Several respondents said that nowadays in Kosovo *“Even children in kindergarten are overwhelmed with politics.”* This statement truly describes the current situation of anxiety, stress, and nervousness on both sides as the resolution of Kosovo’s status is an unavoidable topic among respondents of all categories, with the exception of businessmen. The expression *“Economy has no borders”* proves once again to be true in Kosovo. Small businesses are running their operations across ethnic borders without any difficulties. Unlike other stakeholders, the businessmen that participated in this evaluation did not mention the issue of unresolved status before it was brought up by evaluators.

*“Unresolved status is making the situation more difficult as now everyone, including small kids, thinks about it. It affects how we think about each other and pushes everyone more apart.”*

The remaining stakeholder groups, including youth in and out of schools, principals, partners’ staff, and others experience overwhelming psychological pressure tied to every new date set by the international community for finalizing Kosovo’s status. A K-Albanian principal shared that *“This issue is very present in High Schools and even in Primary Schools. On the 7<sup>th</sup> of December I was meeting with the Youth Council when they asked me, “What will happen on December 10<sup>th</sup>, will we continue to go to school?” Psychologically it is difficult for them. I had a meeting with teachers and told them to talk to students and tell them that nothing will happen after December 10<sup>th</sup>.”*

On K-Albanian side, hope and a vision of a better future is arising from potential independence, although at the same time, this issue brings existential questions full of unknowns related to the lives of K-Serbs in the post-status stage. This is especially apparent among youth in the Northern municipalities who feel hopeless and live their lives from day to day. They are dependant on their parents for the final decision of whether the family will leave or stay: *“We can not think about the future. We live for today and think only a couple of days ahead.”*

The undefined political situation affects issues of security, safety and freedom of movement which directly influence the important project component of conducting activities across ethnic divisions. The bridge in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë remains an undefeated obstacle for many K-Serbs and K-Albanians, as many feel that they cannot safely cross it and in many cases are recommended not to. Principals are reluctant to authorize children to go to “the other side” as their primary concern and responsibility is understandably the safety of the children. The KAP survey implemented in K-Albanian municipalities reports that in the past five years only 11% of the 1,505 students who participated in the inquiry have spoken face-to-face or via e-mail with their K-Serb peers. A sample of 19 K-Albanian youth that participated in this evaluation report a somewhat higher percentage of about 35% being exposed to some type of multi-ethnic, face-to-face interactions, although some of these interactions happened several years ago. The general notion among respondents, especially principals, is that the time needs to pass until conditions for joint activities are fully ensured.

### B. DIFFERENCES IN SYSTEMIC APPROACHES

The principals testify to a considerable difference in systemic approaches to multi-ethnic issues and activities on K-Albanian and K-Serb side. While K-Albanian principals gladly endorse multi-ethnic activities, since they have full support of their superiors, the K-Serb side experiences the feeling of their hands being tied. The rare exceptions include a few principals who are trying to find legal coverage for activities and collaboration that could be conducted independently by the schools without the need for the “system” to approve.

The K-Serb side is experiencing additional challenges that stem

CRS Partner: *“The Albanian side was more empowered to do multi-ethnic activities – I would say 90%, while Serb NGOs might have it or not in their projects and plans... I would like to see more from the other side. The North would like multi-ethnic components but they are not allowed to do it, so they are scared. The hands of school principals from North are all tied by Serbian Government.”*

from a perception of NGOs as either adversaries or instruments of religion institutions, and generally unwelcome. As a representative from a CRS partner organization explained, “70% of principals are from Milosevic’s era, and they have mind-sets frozen in that time. The third sector is viewed as an enemy and any cooperation with NGOs is the subject of paranoid fear.” This view, common and present in many Balkan countries ten or more years ago, is still very much alive in Kosovo. Current project experiences prove that changing this view requires time, trust building, and long-term energy. Unfortunately at the same time, this investment in change pulls resources from other productive activities. According to a partner Representative in the North, “The system is not supportive of these initiatives. We spend most of our energy on conversations with principals, instead of having a system that understands the benefits of these kinds of things and supports the implementation of related projects.”

### C. ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

Progress, according to the evaluation respondents, is further impeded by the role of the international community, which is often perceived as “just on paper.” With the international community being a passive player, the political situation between the Serbian and Kosovo governments is revealed by extremes that are mostly apparent in Mitrovica/Mitrovicë. The systemic flaws in transforming conflict and moving Kosovar society towards reconciliation are further perpetuating the division among two sides.

Partner: “The international community, the government, and other stakeholders that were supposed to create conditions for reconciliation have not done so, hence we can not expect children to do so! UNMIK gave its blessing to a parallel system so the compromise was made at the political level, but we have different expectations at the technical/implementation level. Let’s just talk about language, which is seen as one of the important barriers to joint work. Neither education system has Serb or Albanian language as the second language. If that would have been mandatory at least the language obstacle would not exist. The whole set-up of the system is such that it does not support togetherness.”

### Finding #1.2: Factors Critical to the Current Kosovo Context: Effects of the Economic Situation, Quality of Education, and Social Life on Youth Every-Day Life and Prospects for the Future

#### a. Finding Statement

A stagnating economy, lack of job opportunities, and inadequate education create a bleak view of the future, often expressed in apathy or fear for adult life once school is finished. Social, cultural and recreational opportunities in Kosovo cities are generally poor, affecting youth and the way they spend their free time, especially in the North where cases of drug abuse are becoming more apparent. These root causes of apathy and fear and their immediate consequences are bringing a wide range of issues to the surface and affect all aspects of youth life in Kosovo.

#### b. Interpretation of the Finding

##### D. ECONOMIC SITUATION

A weak economy is cited as one of the most pervasive problems, and one that has crawled into every pore of the society. Leaving its traces in school infrastructure conditions and family well-being, the current economic situation does not give much hope to youth that graduate from high schools or even universities. “All jobs are taken”; “I have no chance to find the job”; “Finding a job is very hard” are statements coming from unemployed youth of both ethnicities. Although both sides have institutions whose mandate is to establish connections between job markets and economic opportunities, these, according to partners and employment-seeking youth,

Partner Representative: “Economic development was always an issue and it still is. This directly influences the behaviors in crisis situations. Factories that are now not working used to employ workers from both sides. By having people do something they will not have time to think about differences. For example, from the moment I wake up in the morning, I am engaged for the whole day. I work, we talk about things to be done, how to do them – I don’t have time to think about anything else. With the current economic situation in Kosovo and electricity black-outs, people have nothing to do or to think about but negative things.”

do not truly provide this service, resulting in a widening gap between youth who want a job and the local business demand for labor. The result is largely uninformed perceptions, as youth believe that job opportunities do not exist, while businessmen think that “youth does not want to work”.

The situation in North Mitrovica/Mitrovicë is very specific and due to current political ambiguities, a certain category of the population has emerged that is actually satisfied with a *status quo*. As a partner representative explained: “The Municipal Center for Employment has no interest in doing this because they receive their double salaries anyway – only now they would need to work. Double salaries were given to keep experts, however, there is no control or monitoring, so people got kind of sleepy as no one ever checks if they truly do their job.” Double salaries are paid by the Serbian government to employees in public institutions without much quality assurance or monitoring. As a result, the quality of services is low despite high wages, a scenario that also plays against political solutions and transparency and negatively affects local businesses that cannot compete with the high cost of wages. A private businessman from North asserts that, “In state companies, the salaries are higher because they receive double salaries. There is no central database to provide information on who works where. Some people hold several jobs and receive several salaries. They work for foreign organizations and in state companies. There is no flow of information and that is a problem. A workbook is required but not in UNMIK or other foreign organizations so they can get away with this. People are hardly interested to come and work in private companies.”

In such environment, corruption is flourishing. Youth feel that corruption dictates and governs the potential for change and their future, reiterated by unemployed youth of both ethnicities. An unemployed youth from South stated that, “Corruption is the biggest problem – it is like a virus. It is present at very high levels here. We have to fight it to solve this issue. A lot of teachers have inadequate qualifications. A lot of qualified people are on the streets.” A peer from the North experiences the same situation and says that “you need to have connections and you need to pay well to get a job.”

#### **E. QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

In-school youth generally experience economic depression and lack of resources, reflected in poor school conditions. Most school infrastructure has not seen major repair in years. Though the schools are supposed to be supported by the Ministries of Education, due to limited budgets they are mostly left to struggle on their own as many educational materials are considered disposable and therefore the responsibility of schools. Inadequate classroom size and condition, antiquated equipment, lack of literature and teaching materials, poor hygiene facilities, and lack of available space resulting in multiple schools and universities sharing one facility, are all everyday reality in Kosovo. Gyms or outdoor spaces for sport activities are scarce in schools throughout Kosovo. High-school age youth of both ethnicities that participated in this evaluation crave improvements to their classrooms, including windows, toilets, water taps, changing-rooms, desks, and blackboards, among other basic upgrades.

Most importantly, youth rarely have a chance to experience the practical part of their education that enables them to apply learned theory. Only a few schools have ability to provide students with practice that should be incorporated in the regular school curricula. Moreover, youth respondents that graduated from high school, testify that after many attempts of trying to find a job, they often realize that high schools have not sufficiently prepared them for this phase of their life.

Student: “We have no practical classes in technical and economic schools and imagine what that means for these types of schools. We are totally unprepared for university.”

Furthermore, the parallel systems are blocking educational reform that could have an immense effect not only on quality of a cadre coming from the educational institutions but on the work of Youth Councils, which might bolster project sustainability. Municipalities within the Serbian majority are in a particularly challenging position as they are literally left out of both Kosovo and Serbian educational reforms. Youth informants that recently graduated and are about to become YSF project participants in the internship component point to the deficiencies in the existing system whereby certain professions can not be learned at school: “Prospects for finding job for a high school graduate without a University degree is very bleak. There should be

*alternatives and solutions for this group. You can only imagine what happens to them. By involving them into the project of this kind they could see the future. It is very complex for them to find a job since the employment rate is very low in Kosovo. Lack of professional schools is also a problem. The education system does not support auto-mechanics, poli-mechanics, hairdressers, sewing, cooking, etc. There are no schools for these professions in Kosovo and there is a need for them.”*

## **F. SOCIAL LIFE OF YOUTH**

A general lack of space and the virtual non-existence of social, cultural and recreational opportunities in Kosovo cities is another factor that further contributes to overall feeling of monotony among youth populations. The evaluation informants, especially unemployed youth, principals and businessmen, readily say that their free time is wasted in bars, but that there is also no recreational alternative. In addition to jam-packed schools with a maximum number of shifts operating per day, Kosovo’s cities have no space Youth or Cultural centers.

Respondents describe general life of students as “dead.” Extra-curricular activities within the schools do not provide much opportunity either, because they are not organized on regular basis nor do they appear to be run by competent leaders. These activities are chiefly organized by private citizens and require some financial investment from already scarce family resources. A student informant admitted that, *“We have no extra-curricula activities. If something is organized it lasts for one month and not more than that. Courses, if organized, are done by other individuals out of schools.”*

Principal: *“The students don’t have any prospects for the future! There is significant psychological pressure, even eight years after the war. The students finish their education – and then there is no job for them. Kosovo institutions are not working so much with youth. They have no physical place for cultural or sport activities. I would love to see them focused more on something in those fields rather than spending time in bars.”*

Municipality: *“An obstacle is space, as there is no specific place for youth where they could conduct their activities. There is no youth center in the city. Activities are being moved from one place to another. For an organization to be truly functional you need to have central place where they can go and work.”*

### **Finding #1.3: Linking Project Approaches to Factors Important to the Current Situation in Kosovo: Changes in Perceptions**

#### **a. Finding Statement**

The issues of safety, freedom of movement, and parallel structures are not being addressed through YSF initiatives, mainly because, according to the respondents, these issues are out of their control. However, the project does inspire a sense of initiative, and promotes learning about unknown, or as one of the youth put it, “mysterious and taboo topics”, that instill a change in perceptions of “the other side.” The YSF project is engaged in capacity building to broaden student perspectives by exposing youth to the experiences and viewpoints of their peers through activities such as photography and essay competitions. In the current context, interpersonal communication between groups is rare due to political overtones. This lack of communication and social exchange represents a risk to sustaining perceptual change and transforming it into behavioral change. Once the conditions for direct multi-ethnic contact are established, youth can revert into former attitudes in the context of everyday struggles if not involved in targeted and structured activities that promote mutual understanding.

#### **b. Interpretation of the Finding**

## G. CHANGE IN PERCEPTIONS OF THE “OTHER SIDE.”

Due to the strained political situation, only a handful of activities were of multiethnic nature, namely meetings of CWYC attended by K-Albanian and K-Serb students, and the announcement ceremonies for the winners of each essay competition that gathered principals from both sides. Despite this somewhat discouraging limitation, many of the respondents believe that the project has some positive effects because it offers alternative ways of thinking about “the other side.” As one of the partner representatives stated: *“We also do trainings which are very significant for preparing the ground for acceptance and openness to multiethnic collaboration. We try to help them understand that multi-ethnic societies have bigger value. We are trying to set the foundation for how multi-ethnic societies should function. The students that participated in the trainings have wider horizons and knowledge in comparison to those who didn’t. The training would have had more practical value had participants from both sides seen each other and had the opportunity to work together. Even if we speak different languages, we need to reach out to each other and overcome the stereotypes that are put in peoples mind by media. At this level we were successful in establishing a foundation for future multi-ethnic well-being. We can co-exist – we came to this level.”*

Student: *“The project serves for the good of entire population of Kosovo. We had many different seminars and trainings which is a very positive aspect of project. We gained knowledge and built our capacity in tolerance. This is very important, especially because of the city division we don’t really have joint life. Through this project we gained skills for envisioning and building joint life.”*

Student: *“Tolerance training helped us with communication with our Serb counterparts, and to accept different views.”*

Student: *“We have better impression about Albanians – they are not all evil!”*

Partner: *“The project is implemented in a parallel manner. We are pioneers in cross-ethnic work. We are getting to know issues that are common to both sides since we need to build bridges using issues of common concern. These issues are education and professional skills. Civil society is exemplary for building multi-ethnic societies and how they function. Youngsters are building skills, hopefully to become future leaders. We had a CWYC representatives meeting together. We could have engaged in many more of these activities had the current political not been a factor. The children are ready but their parents are not.”*

The change in perceptions and gradual acceptance of diversity is, as experienced first-hand by the evaluation team, apparent among youth that participate in YSF project. Keeping in mind that youth perceptions about their peers from the North and South have been shaped by different influences imparted by adults and media entities, the change expressed through their readiness to do something together is very significant. The exchange of photos and essays through competition made them realize that their everyday challenges are not so different. In fact, as one of the youth participants put it, *“there is no difference whatsoever!”*

It should be noted that while perceptual changes seem to have occurred in the minds of the youth who participated directly in the photo and essay activities, the absence of sustained interaction imposes a certain risk to the longevity of such change and to any actual transformation into behavior change once face-to-face contact between youth participants is established. Reported attitude changes that are not tested in actual human interaction with the “other” tend to be suspect<sup>10</sup>. Young people who go through peace building encounters and education can easily revert to former attitudes in the contexts of everyday life struggles. These apparent positive changes in perception can be reversed in ‘real life’ experience that often proves to be difficult.

It is worthwhile mentioning that respondents unanimously feel that they have no influence at all on larger political issues, parallel structures, security and safety. *“That is beyond our control,”* they say. *“We don’t feel that it is safe to go to the North and meet with our colleagues or vice-versa – they don’t feel safe either.”*

<sup>10</sup> Drummond-Mundal and Cave, in the latest issue of the Journal of Peacebuilding and Development, an article called “Exploring Youth Engagement with Conflict and Social Change,” raises this issue, and makes reference to a study by G. Salomon published in Peace and Conflict Vol. 12 No, 2006, as well as correspondence with H. Arraf of Seeds of Peace and the International Solidarity Movement.

## H. CHANGE IN PERCEPTION OF NGOS IN NORTH MITROVICA

Although it took notable time and effort, the CR' partner staff in North Kosovo have managed to change the image of NGOs in most of the places they work in, as testified by the statements of two principals: *"Working with NGOs is, in general, hardly accepted here. It is hard to believe that NGOs are apolitical. With CRS, the collaboration is really good."* The partner applied numerous strategies, including persistence, continuity, and transparency, resulting in apparent improvements in the local perception of NGOs. As one of the principals noted, the closeness and frank relationship emphasizing the needs of the beneficiary is another contributing factor: *"This method of work is excellent. You are close and sincere to beneficiaries, yet you are modest about your work. CRS doesn't work for their own interest, but for the interest of the school."* It should be noted that both partners and CRS staff mention time as a critical factor to effecting real change and actual results.

### **Finding #1.4: Linking Project Approaches to Factors Important for the Current Situation in Kosovo: Provision of Economic and Social Opportunities and Improvement of School Conditions**

#### a. Finding Statement

The project partially addresses issues identified by respondents as pertinent to the Kosovo context, such as economic opportunities, improvement of quality of education, and enrichment of students' social life. The issue of corruption is not within the purview of the YSF project. The YSF project's practical approach to the aforementioned issues include: assistance in provision of economic opportunities through internships, improvements to school conditions through implementation of mini-projects, and enabling student engagement into Youth Council activities to expand social opportunities.

#### a. Interpretation of the Finding

### I. PROVISION OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

Through its second project objective, *"Unemployed Youth are engaged in society,"* CRS and partners are working to address gaps in this area by offering 50 Serb, Albanian, and Roma youth opportunities to serve as interns in local businesses. Placements offer practical skills training and improve livelihood prospects while establishing relationships with potential future employers. Although YSF staff faces some challenges in the full implementation of this project component, in general, 85% of 13 unemployed youth of both ethnicities that participated in evaluation of this project component express excitement about the possibility of internships and are prepared to maximize their experience even if their placement does not directly match their vocational preferences. The remaining 15% of interviewed unemployed youth state that they do not plan to participate in the project unless their particular interest is matched with opportunity. Youth participants desire skills acquisition in support of small-business endeavors such as hair/beauty salons or mechanical workshops, while businessmen express great need for additional workforce in existing businesses.

The interviewees in the North suggested that they feel more confident knowing that they are part of structured approach that will ensure a quality relationship and satisfactory treatment by businessmen, which, according to their previous experiences, can be somewhat arduous: *"We hope things will be easier after we finish this and that we would be able to make connections with businessmen. We also hope to have better treatment because things are different when there is an organization behind you. We can complain if something is not going well."*

The challenges affecting YSF implementation include:

- Size of the stipend provided to participants: *"The incentive provided to youth with 22 Euros is very small."*
- Penalties in case of damage of business property or machinery: *"If something breaks during the intern's training, is their responsibility."*
- Maintaining the motivation of businesses: *"Through SO2 work we provide economic opportunities and internships. Businesses don't have any benefit for doing so."*
- Number of participants: *"SO2 expected to involve more youth."*

Furthermore, the selection of participants in North and South Mitrovica/Mitrovicë seems to be slightly different, with the North targeting high school graduates that do not intend to continue with University and instead require additional vocational training and professional skills development. In contrast, the participants in South Mitrovica/Mitrovicë seem to be more interested in furthering their academic knowledge of particular University-related subjects (i.e. IT) and report reluctance to participate in an internship without this condition being met. Because the particular interest of youth may not correspond to what participating businesses have to offer. This issue may be isolated to specific focus group participants but should be examined more closely.

## **J. QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

The YSF Project is highly oriented towards increasing the quality of education, and most project resources have been filtered through mini-projects for school improvements. According to the YSF project methodology, the YC in each targeted school is responsible for conducting a school needs assessment and, in consultation with the school administration, must determine the highest priority needs. Two funding cycles for mini-projects are scheduled throughout the life of the project. One cycle was already completed by the time of this evaluation.

In addition to providing teaching equipment, mini-projects often establish opportunities for further student engagement and serve as an oasis of creativity that inspires youth to further explore their potential. Some of examples of mini-projects include:

- An initiative to establish regulations that guide student behavior, appearance, hygiene, and stewardship of school facilities and resources. Regulations also establish the rights of the student and school standards;
- Establishment of a school magazine and/or school radio station that serves as communication and information-sharing tool;
- Equipping classrooms with technology and facilities, i.e. computer rooms, English labs, etc;
- Expansion of schools to include new classrooms, and
- Promotion of the Arts and artistic expression.

Many of these projects, according to the respondents, have built-in modes for sustainability. For example, in one school, the school magazine is sold to fundraise for its further publishing, etc. According to a number of school principals the project activities help a lot in areas where no other resources are available: *“Conditions are difficult. CRS helps and can help us more than the Kosovo Government and Government of the Republic of Serbia. The latter give us little bit of support but not much. NGOs are investing at least something. On the Albanian side, more resources were invested. In the North, all help was politicized. There was a basic lack of understanding from the Ministry responsible for cooperation with NGOs who rejected many offers of assistances.”* Furthermore, YSF initiatives that provide rich opportunities for youth engagement improve the wider image of the school because students can be active outside of regular classes. A Principal stated that, *“We have achieved very good results in our school and the school reputation has increased due to that. Technical school usually has a lesser reputation when compared to the Gymnasium so we are very proud of this fact. Our student won a competition and traveled to the US.”* Although principals are highly appreciative of assistance provided by YSF it should be noted that the financial benefit provided by mini-projects is still relatively small considering actual needs.

## **K. SOCIAL LIFE OF YOUTH**

According to the respondents, the project enriches social life of youth as a natural byproduct of operations, and youth excitement with YSF project was apparent in the evaluation and overall impressions of project. When asked to evaluate activities on a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 being the lowest and 4 being the highest mark, the average rating of all 37 students that participated in the focus groups was 3.7. The evaluation revealed a slight difference in rating among K-Albanian and K-Serb students, with K-Albanian students rating

*Student: “We have very positive impressions because the project directly affects us. We have better working conditions; we have better hygiene, and we have better knowledge about certain things, but we need to work more to get more.”*



their impressions with an average of 3.9, while K-Serb participants rated their impressions at an average of 3.4 with the assertion that *“things can always be better.”* An additional factor influencing the K-Serb rating is linked to the desire to travel outside of Kosovo and engage in more trainings capacity building exercises.

Youth participation in self-led needs assessments, development of mini-project proposals, implementation of mini-projects, and advocacy efforts at the school level all offer alternative solutions for constructive school and social engagement. Involvement with mini-projects targeting school improvements, development and issuing of school magazines, running of school sound systems, etc., enable students to apply skills learned in trainings, and to invest in long-term engagement in activities and experiences that are unavailable without the YSF project. The opportunities provided through the project also seem to substitute for the lack of extra-curricula activities, as one student states, *“We have no extra-curricula activities so the trainings come as very positive experience.”*

Additionally, many of the thematic project activities, particularly trainings, photo and essay competitions, enabled students to look beyond their immediate environment into the lives of their peers, enabling new friendships and relationships will likely outlive the YSF project. According to one of the principals, the project has inspired creativity and initiative in students. *“Increased participation of students in project proposals created even better proposals. We also had awareness-raising sessions on drug use. One of our students prepared a presentation on the dangers of smoking. The school magazine is also an initiative that we did not have before.”*

Although issues of classroom and teaching space are significant, the solutions require sizeable investments that exceed the current mandate and resources of the YSF project. However, project staff and CRS partners are working to coordinate student use of existing available facilities. Some CRS partners currently provide youth with free access to their facilities, computers and internet. *“We don’t really address the issue of space, except for provision of CWYC office – but that is about it.”*

### **Evaluation Question 2:**

What early signs of project effects are emerging and how can they be amplified to enhance future impact?

The themes of inquiry:

- a. Key stakeholders’ views on visible and tangible early signs of project effects, both positive and negative;
- b. Assessment of project vs. peace effectiveness, and
- c. Identification of lessons learned and best practices.

### **Finding #2.1: Key Stakeholder Views on Early Signs of Project Effects: Individual Changes; YC establishment and its role; Changes in Relationships, and Mini-project Effects**

#### **a. Finding Statement**

The early signs of project effects are both visible and tangible, and are generally revealed as individual changes experienced and demonstrated by students and school administration members. Additionally, many participants point to significant improvements in relationships within the school system, especially between Youth Councils as a formal body for student engagement, and the school administration. The mutual respect and recognition of interconnectedness between these stakeholders is notable and requires further investment in order to formalize it, specifically in terms of instituting youth involvement in participatory decision-making at the school level. Mini-projects and their resulting outcomes are both products of and catalysts for change and result in multiple benefits for all involved. Though the benefits demonstrated through educational improvements, increased capacities, improved relationships among stakeholders, and individual changes are considered to be short-term and are tied to the school cycle, they are still worthwhile mentioning as YSF successes.

## a. Interpretation of the Finding

### L. INDIVIDUAL CHANGE

In addition to the change in perceptions of “the other side” described earlier in this report, students unanimously point to their respective personal development. Participants mentioned numerous knowledge-related changes as products of YSF capacity building sessions and practical training components. These changes are also noted by school administration members, and have cited a clear difference between youth that was involved in capacity building and trainings and non-participating youth. Teachers and principals have noticed the difference in terms of youth engagement, initiative, and maturity. A school principal stated that, “I noticed very advanced capacity in students for organizing their activities. The students that participate in this program are mature, precise, organized, aware of issues, and they are touching issues that are indeed critical ones. I asked myself – how come this is the case? This was not the situation before I left Kosovo. The trainings conducted by CRS and partners for students have brought them to the level of professionals. The level of their knowledge is high due to intensive support of CRS and the partner.”

Students:

*“We have enriched our personalities with learning.”*

*“We expanded knowledge on how to write project proposals and have capacity to further transfer it on our colleagues.”*

*“The project prepares us well for the university.”*

*“We have increased awareness on training topics. We have increased skills on debating and dialogue.”*

*“We learned how to protect our rights and that increased my personal involvement in protecting rights.”*

*“I am opening myself to people and the larger community. We are acting freely and expressing our opinion without feeling shy.”*

*“If the project would have been stopped we would have remained in monotony, in desert. Now after school we get together and talk about things from lectures. Now we know that idea is the most important, and we have ideas.”*

The result of YSF activities is enhanced self-confidence in youth in their own ability to grapple with everyday issues, and a transformation of these youth into truly active members of civil society who seek positive change and improvements to the future outlook of their lives. “At the beginning, we benefited from trainings and now our schools also benefit.” Although these positive changes are currently limited to the school environment, principals and partners express hope for its further impact in community life. Many principals agreed that, “The maturity of students is very impressive. They are very realistic and are addressing issues that can be solved – i.e. improvement of quality of education, tolerance among ethnicities. They help create a feeling that multi-ethnic activities and co-life must exist.”

CRS partners also emphasized positive changes, noted in the behavior of school principals. Project implementers have been positively surprised by the support received from principals?. Initial resistance and skepticism, especially in Northern schools, has been gradually replaced by more a supportive, encouraging, consultative and guiding approach adopted by principals. As one of the partners noted, “The most impressive thing is the change of attitude and opinion of principals and teachers. This is even more impressive when one knows that majority of them are from Milosevic’s era. These people who are very hard to change became more flexible.” The key factor contributing to this individual change, in addition to the continuity of CRS’ and partners presence, and the establishment of open and transparent partnerships, are the school’s mini-projects. According to partner representatives, the changing attitudes of school officials became apparent as soon as the first round of grants was implemented and produced positive results.

### M. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE YC AND ITS ROLE IN THE SCHOOL

Another impressive early sign of project effects with significant potential to bolster project sustainability is the more official establishment of Youth Councils within schools. Although YCs are mandated by both K-Serb and K-Albanian laws, the functionality of these entities frequently fell victim to indifference, was left to the initiative of students, or was overlooked in favor of other school priorities and initiatives. Through the YSF program, YCs are more formalized and functional entities with

Student: “We had a Youth Council before but through the YSF project and links among students, it was re-activated. The youth is thirsty for work and engagement.”

regular elections, and promote a new accountability to students to assure concrete and beneficial activities. Youth Councils have tremendous potential as a solid and formal mechanism and catalyst for future youth engagement in decision making at the school level. Such mentorship and guidance will serve to empower students to apply lessons and skills acquired through YC collaboration throughout their lives. This evolutionary process is demonstrated first-hand by a CRS partner staff member who was a former YC member and moved on after school to work for CCSD. His experience highlights the possibility that other YC members will continue to seek engagement and productive contribution to shaping their future once school has been completed.

The Youth Council is composed of one or two representatives from each of the school classes, and retains a structure that consists of a president and task forces or individuals that are charged with various issues, including: environment, discipline, school hygiene, etc. Students who participate in the YC are considered “popular” within school, which is another important factor of social acceptance and endorsement of such engagement as part of the educational experience. It should be noted that legal frameworks in the South and North do not systematize the YC role in decision-making or other activities, allowing for individual schools and student groups to develop their Youth Council using creativity and resourcefulness to make their voices heard in the school, or for YCs to become completely inactive and irrelevant without sufficient student interest. The leadership style of the school principal generally dictates the degree of democracy and activity that YCs are granted in each individual school.

While the transformation of YCs and student activism is a time-consuming, and subtle process, in Kosovo, the benefits are already resulting in obvious and tangible benefits for students. This year, a majority of YCs conducted elections on their own, with minimum assistance of YSF partners. *“YCs are now electing their members independently this year. However, long-term investment is needed. Only now, after a year and a half of investment and work, can you see results.”* Another testament to change inspired by the YSF project is provided by the aforementioned CCSD staff/former YC member who shares, *“When I was member of YC someone else needed to push us and to initiate something. Now they discuss and think on their own.”*

The work of the YC is not only recognized by the school administration but is often highly respected by the principals. Many of them recognize the huge benefits of having such a powerful body within their school can also serve as principal’s extended eyes and ears into the actual situation in the school. *“My right hand is the YC! Through them I have information about the behavior of students in the school, the successes, and the work of teachers. When I have my meetings, I first have one with the YC, then the School Council, and finally, the Teacher Council. We discuss all issues related to education and discipline. We do it in a transparent way, not secretly.”* Students are also proud of this two-way relationship. As witnessed by the field evaluation team, the students freely enter into principal’s room, consult with him/her. Their opinion is respected, their work is recognized and their contribution is appreciated.

## **N. MINI-PROJECT EFFECTS**

Evaluation informants most frequently mention the benefits of mini-project as the most obvious early sign of project effects and recognize the potential for sustainability that the projects yield to each school. A municipality official, who worked for the YSF project before her current function, shared her impressions, *“This [YSF] is not a one-day stand-alone project but a long-term sustainable project for tomorrow. In the General Gymnasium, we had a school magazine where we collected inputs from students and teachers for multiple benefits:*

- *students got to work continuously with project and manage it*
- *we were able to sell the magazine and we always secured the money for future editions*
- *the magazine now goes out twice per year and continues to be active today*

*Continuity and sustainability are the most impressive characteristics to me as well as all material goods. Even now this helps me in the municipality as I learned how to work on the magazine using computers and other technical material. “*

As mentioned above, mini-projects apparently produce multi-faceted effects on improving school conditions, building relationships, and providing a means for long-term student and faculty engagement. It

should be noted here that sustainability of this project component is linked to the condition of equipment and availability of funds, and therefore, at this time, might be considered ‘short-term.’

## O. CONNECTIONS AND RELATIONSHIPS AMONG YOUTH

The other, frequently mentioned benefit and early sign of project effect is establishment of connections and relationships among youth coming from different schools. This was apparent not only from statements made by students, but also from their behavior, observed during focus groups. This collaboration, although currently mono-ethnic, maximizes benefits of mini-projects, which clearly influence social behavior and change in the form of students reaching out to students from other schools. An example of this was discussed by a participant from a focus group in the North. Through their own initiative, students of several schools are mobilizing to create joint mini-project resources to achieve common goals. A participating student suggested, *“We are now thinking of merging our resources to start a movie theater project for all schools. The school parliament will include this as a topic for discussion on December 24 and will make decision on that date.”*

Student: *“Definitely the best were trainings and seminars, not just because of skills and knowledge but also because it was fun and we got to know other students and build relationships among ourselves.”*

### **Finding #2.2: Key Stakeholder Views on Early Signs of Project Effects: Motivation of Youth and Their Ability to Bring Change**

#### a. Finding Statement

The respondents’ opinion on motivation and the extent of student mobilization varies for different stakeholder groups. Principals are impressed by student engagement levels and their desire for change, while partners and students still see room for improvement. School-wide motivation and mobilization are tied to seasonal priorities and overall logistical challenges resulting from lack of space and minimal financial resources. Youth are clearly willing to promote positive change, however; these changes are contained within the school environment. Unfortunately, the potentially larger role for youth as community peace agents is questionable due to the political context and current role of youth in Kosovo’s societal structure.

#### b. Interpretation of the Finding

## P. MOTIVATION OF YOUTH

As in any youth-targeting project, the YSF project also experiences fluctuations motivation levels due to various factors. For students, exams and other school responsibilities and priorities competing with opportunities for engagement sponsored by YSF activities. Informant opinion regarding motivation levels differs among stakeholder groups. Principals are unanimously impressed with the youth desire to work, and with their level of engagement and willingness. In contrast, partner staff believes that student motivation could be better. Partners also connect student motivation to their own performance and view themselves as role models with influence to shift motivation of students. Students, on the other hand, express great enthusiasm but mention lack of space and financial resources as most apparent obstacle for increased student engagement. *“Material problems are all the same in all our schools. The needs are significant. We are all willing to work but logistical issues are problem.”* Self-admittedly, student motivation is largely founded in the fact that the project is for them and run by them as well as from the “energy of organizers.” According to one student, *“The approach of the organizers is very positive and it inspires youth to mobilize and be empowered by giving them the ability to create things and then make them happen.”*

Student: *“The name of the project is Youth Securing the Future – it is for us!”*

Ultimately, the ownership of mini-projects and other school activities, and ability of students to shape and develop their projects are also important factors that can inspire students and increase individual

motivation to participate pro-actively. As one of partners’ representatives pointed out, “*Students and members of the YC feel that this project is their own, and something that they can work on and improve.*”

**Q. MOBILIZATION OF YOUTH**

A desk review of the project monitoring data reveals the impressive statistic of 3,824 students involved in YSF project activities from June 2006 through August 2007. Of these participants, 3,704 joined the project in the first year and 60 new participants have joined in year 2. The enrollment of students in YSF school activities has wildly exceeded the expectation of the project team. In the first year of project implementation, the target for student participants was 90, and in the second year, the target was 150 new participants. To-date, the YSF project has exceeded expectations by more than 40 times the original target. Overall, approximately 26% of the total number of students in all targeted schools participated in the YSF project. The YSF is well on its way to achieving other targets as well, with the number of students working on mini-projects totaling 476, just 100 short of the year 2 project goal.

The success rates for the YSF program indicate a higher percentage ratio in K-Albanian rather than K-Serb schools. Of the 3,824 students mobilized as part of YSF, more than 70% were K-Albanian, about 24% Serbs, and the remaining 6% constitute other ethnicities. A slightly different percentage distribution is reported for the engagement levels of students in mini-project implementation, with 65% K-Albanian, 32% K-Serbs, and 3% other groups. This situation is explained by overall systemic differences between K-Albanian and K-Serb sides, explained earlier in this report.

**R. YOUTH ABILITY TO BRING CHANGE**

Youth willingness and readiness to effect change is indisputable. A review of the project monitoring data reveals that initial targets for student participation have been exceeded significantly, particularly as relates to the dynamic work of youth and YCs, measured using the following indicator: **ratio of the number of actions undertaken over the number of issues identified**. The planned targets and actual achievements so far are presented in the table below.

Table 3: Reporting on Indicator

Indicator	Cumulative Target Year 1 and 2	Actual June 2006 – August 2007
Ratio of the number of actions undertaken over the number of issues identified	3 / 20	14 / 115

Despite the impressive results measured at the school level, the issue of whether youth truly can make substantial change in Kosovo’s current environment remains questionable. Surveyed youth feel and demonstrate increased empowerment, including improved self-confidence, but this empowerment is retained within the school environment, due to overall status and role of youth within the current societal structure.

Though youth participants in YSF can clearly recognize the ease with which potential changes should be made, they are also aware of very real and complicated obstacles that, given their current capacity and resources, they are unable to overcome. A student stated that, “*People here live in monotony and they have kind of surrendered to the situation. There are some things here like the movie-theater and the lake and it is only our fault that they are not being fully utilized. A swimming facility could be built on lake. We have ideas, a lot of them. We would like to meet people to help us change this situation. We cannot come to the surface nor get an opportunity to express ourselves in the environment the way that it is now. People are just not interested in what we have to say, and we have no support apart from our pedagogy, which are the best in the world. Other people say why do they need this, what would they use that for?*”

The feeling that many complex changes are needed in Kosovo’s current environment is accompanied by the resigned recognition that youth cannot take on this burden alone. As one of the partner representatives put it, *“We, ‘small’ people, have to grapple with both small and big issues and structures.”* A commonly expressed hope among project implementers is that once youth graduate from school, the positive effects and changes they experienced will be used to the benefit of larger communities and will eventually spread throughout society. Nevertheless, the project implementers note that more efforts should be invested into working with different groups within Kosovar society in order for truly sustainable changes to be possible.

**Finding #2.3: Assessment of the Project vs. Peace Building Effectiveness<sup>11</sup>**

**a. Finding Statement**

Informants reported individual change in project participants, especially youth, in terms of openness and readiness for potential activities to cross ethnic lines. The YSF project is rightfully focused on two connectors – economy and quality of education, both of which are relevant and appropriate in the current Kosovo context. However, respondents point to challenges arising from the general approach towards peace building in Kosovo. Respondents assert that in addition to narrowing down the concept of tolerance between K-Serbs and K-Albanians, peace-building approaches often focus too much on certain issues with no real solution, thus limiting real progress. The YSF project success is tied directly to project participants, who, at this stage in the program, appear to be concentrated primarily in municipalities with K-Albanian majority. Municipalities with K-Serb majority experience a lack of appropriate and relevant stakeholders for potential horizontal outreach. Currently, the project targets individual changes in attitudes, values, perceptions and personal circumstances. To achieve a larger, socio-political level of change, informants believe that target groups should expand to include harder-to-reach participants, such as politicians, who pose a risk to the project but have the most power and influence to bring about large-scale change.

**b. Interpretation of the Finding**

**S. PEACE BUILDING WITHIN THE PROJECT**

Perceptual and individual changes that result in attitudinal or behavioral change mentioned above have significant effects in terms of peace-building. Though the current political situation prevents joint face-to-face activities, individuals participating directly in the YSF project are displaying clear indicators of personal change. Youth are openly expressing their opinion about potential joint activities within the Kosovo context to ‘outsiders,’ and when doing so, clearly attempt to differentiate between rumors, memories, first-hand experiences, media reports, and their own personal viewpoints. This process was also very apparent during the data collection process. In most focus groups regardless of ethnicity, in response to questions concerning multi-ethnicity, participants expressed both negative and positive responses, with dominating response being that *“it would be nice to do it”*, but with side comments being *“Parents would never allow us.”* Youth participants openly indicate that, *“We – kids – could do it, the adults are binding force!”* This trend was also brought up by the partners’ staff.

Students:  
*“It would be nice if we had more freedom to go there and for them to come to us.”*  
*“It would be nice to have joint meetings to socialize nicely so that we don’t hate them.”*  
*“There is always someone who spoils it everything. On both sides there are people who want to socialize and do things together.”*  
*“We would love to have joint activities with K-Albanians or Roma. There was always a distance that stopped us from establishing contact. It would be great to forget what happened and talk together.”*  
*“A multi-ethnic excursion would be great! Kosovo’s status needs to be sorted out for us youth to get on scene. “*

<sup>11</sup> This section is heavily based on CDA Reflective Peace Practice Project. The resource is quoted throughout the finding and its interpretation

The reconciliation process in Kosovo is moving at a somewhat unusual pace, omitting some technical steps that skilled peace-builders consider essential pre-conditions for establishing sustainable peace. A CRS partner representative stated, “*It is hard to work in Kosovo because we have not gone through all the phases of the peace building process. We have not had the phase of confronting the problem and the past, however we are expected to talk about reconciliation, tolerance, etc.*” As “Do No Harm” suggests – “there is no perfect peace program. Movement towards peace – both at macro level and project level – often occurs as “two steps forward, one step back” rather than linear progress.” However, the fact of taking the above mentioned approach in Kosovo might cause two steps forward and two steps back as every new incident brings the situation constantly back at the beginning, especially through political fueling of the incidents.

Additionally, according to one of the respondents, tolerance is one of the most important peace-building elements and takes a somewhat narrowed shape, focusing primarily on K-Serb and K-Albanian relations, while other, much wider concepts of the tolerance are relegated to a less important priority level. According to a municipality representative, “*When we talk about tolerance, we talk about it only in relation to other communities/groups but in essence it is much wider than that. Tolerance should be understood as wider concept of tolerance to the whole world around us, i.e. be tolerant to the doorman that opens us a door to enter into the building. At this moment tolerance is not looked at in such a wide sense – it is boiled down to tolerance between Serbs and Albanians. I am afraid that this might be a mistake. There is always space to improve overall tolerance – as humans we need to think about our actions towards everyone and evaluate them – where they right or not.*” Focusing concepts of tolerance in such a restrictive manner could have a long-term negative impact on citizens in Kosovo, and for democracy in the future.

One of the positive effects of the YSF project is a result of the geographical targeting of municipalities that, apart from Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, were not directly affected by any recent incidents or tension and whose current landscape is completely mono-ethnic: “*I think it is a success that we managed to spread out the peace-building ideas in other municipalities. Peja/Peć, and Burim/Istok have lived like this for the past 10 years. They have forgotten that the Serbs even exist.*”

## **T. THE DIVIDERS AND CONNECTORS**

The “dividers” or issues that bring disparate groups further apart, as noted by respondents are:

- Lack of willingness;
- Fear of “the other”, and fear of physically crossing the bridge;
- Psychological barriers;
- Language, and
- Overall politics.

Furthermore, in the current political situation, K-Albanians believe that K-Serbs are influenced and sometimes manipulated by Serbia and therefore are reluctant to really be “part of Kosovo life” or recognize the different position of K-Albanians within newly crafted landscape of Kosovo.

The “connecting” factors that bring disparate groups together in the Kosovo context are:

- Safety and security issues experienced by both sides, and in similar scope and degree;
- Economy and material situation, and
- Functioning of society, particularly pertaining to relationships among different groups.

As one of the youth respondents explained, “*Aside from language, everything else we as youth deal with was the same, and we share common things and interest. In the U.S. everyone was interested by how much youth can do to help joint life. We are doing all we can.*”

When dividers are put aside and connectors are more prominent, which generally occurs when stakeholders are physically taken out of Kosovo, Kosovars are surprised by the many similarities they share and “how smooth it goes.” However, the situation remains frozen at least in apparent way, once they are brought back to Kosovo. According the respondents’ opinion, this is happening because no such example has been given by higher society levels, such politicians, intellectuals, and religious leaders are.

The evaluators noted that while most stakeholders recognize the ‘connectors’ and agree that they exist and are shared, ‘dividers’ appear to be stronger, more significant, and influential in relationship building, and that they will continue to freeze and polarize relationships between K-Serbs and K-Albanians. As a partner representative indicated, *“The project is doing everything possible at this moment to prepare the ground on both sides for future joint work. Co-existence must happen and a real way to make it happen is through this project.”*

#### U. PROJECT SCALE-UP BEYOND DIRECT PARTICIPANTS

According to the respondents, the project attempts to reach out both horizontally as well as vertically to other stakeholders and wider community, especially in targeted municipalities with K-Albanian majority. Youth share their experiences, preoccupations, knowledge learned through training, etc. with their friends and family members. Principals, teachers or school workers who are promoted import good knowledge and positive experiences related to youth activism to their newly taken positions. They continue to express their support through media and by appearing at youth-organized events. The scale-up is mainly apparent in the increased awareness exhibited in youth efforts, and through verbal or other non-financial support: *“The project is having wider influences on many existing structures. People outside of the project see that children are ready to work on their own to address their own problems. There is a lot of positive feedback visible through support to youth initiatives. The project is developing young people and supports their empowerment.”* Financial support is rarely provided due to limited budgets at their disposal.

CRS Staff: *“The project had effects on the local government in South Mitrovica/Mitrovicë – not much in the North, though. In the South, many people who used to work in schools are becoming presidents, vice-presidents (both used to be professors in schools where this project was implemented), or take other high positions. Positive effects are coming in increased support from local government to the activities that take place in schools. This also goes further, as information among local officials is also spread by these who know more about it. For example, president of executive board is always ready to support projects, even though he has never worked in the school.”*

In the case of the Municipality of Mitrovica/Mitrovicë in the South, authority figures who previously participated in the YSF project are clearly expressing ways in which youth activists can scale up to their level. *“We (at municipal level) hear about the project and its influence. Youth come here, see our projects, tell us their needs and they are then part of a decision-making process. Additional scale-up was achieved by knocking on the doors of local businesses for fundraising. Also more youth and youth organizations are informed through the web-page.”*

Furthermore, former Youth Council members take their new skills and capacities into their professional life. One example of this is the Youth Network, which presides at the national level. A student stated that, *“The Kosovo Youth Network Assembly was supported by this project through us and now with our new skills, we are a part of it. Before, it used to be an organization that was established for students but in reality there was no student participation. This organization has a board in Kosovo and now, if we disagree with something i.e. law, the legislation will not pass. There is also positive competition among schools to be better and better. Some of us are voting already and that is additional scale-up.”*

In the case of the Northern municipality, scale-up beyond direct project participants is questionable as, according to the respondents, the structure does not include enough relevant stakeholders to scale up to. CCSD has instigated some awareness-raising attempts regarding the YSF project and its accomplishments through the distribution of brochures, but this strategy was not particularly effective given the local context and situation. Municipal and public institutions are practically non-existent or strongly linked to Belgrade and Serbia and as such are not recognized by Kosovo’s government or the international community. In essence, the scaling up, information sharing, and recruiting other stakeholders is prevented by current political ambiguities.

CRS Staff: *“We work a lot horizontally, at the grassroots level of schools and municipalities. However, when we move further up the structure, we do have some relationships at the top level, and none whatsoever at central level (government in Pristina for K-Albanian side and Serbia for K-Serb). Neither of those relationships are really for lobbying.”*

Although the scale-up does happen, according to the feedback provided by respondents and evaluator observations, it is the exception rather than the rule. Furthermore, the scale-up component of the project and its effect is an



unexplored area with significant potential for supporting more substantial changes at the appropriate time, and when donor funds are available.

## V. STRATEGIES FOR AFFECTING “PEACE WRIT LARGE.”

As the evaluation methodology was heavily founded in CDA’s Reflecting Peace Practice, one of the tools used for examining current YSF peace building efforts was a simple, four-cell matrix (Figure 1) describing the basic approaches and levels of effort applied to peace activities undertaken within YSF. **“More people approaches”** aim to engage large numbers of people in actions that promote peace, while **“key people approaches”** focus on involving selected people or groups of people identified as critical to the continuation or resolution of conflict. Programs that work at the **“individual/personal level”** seek to change attitudes, values, perceptions or circumstances of individuals, on the premise that peace is possible only if the hearts, minds and behavior of individuals are changed. Programs that concentrate at the **“socio-political level”** are based on the belief that peace requires changes in socio-political or institutional structures. These programs aim to support creation or reform of institutions that address grievances that fuel conflict and to institutionalize non-violent modes of handling conflict within the society.

Table 4: Matrix for describing approaches and levels of work

	More people	Key people
Individual/ personal level	Changes in attitudes, values, perceptions, circumstances	Changes in attitudes, values, perceptions
Socio-political level	Changes in socio-political or institutional structures	Changes in socio-political or institutional structures

The respondents have diverse opinions regarding where YSF project and its peace building efforts fit into the matrix. Respondent viewpoints were largely defined by use of the matrix, either as a lens through which to observe school-level efforts or for application within larger Kosovo context. When considering the schools as institutions, the YSF project, according to the respondents, could be placed in all four quadrants, considering larger groups of youth activists as “more people,” and youth leaders and principals as “key people.” The changes that have occurred and additional anticipated changes relate to the individual but also to school or structural level of the academic institution. Stakeholders mentioned that a potential strategy for further enhancement and a wider footprint in this area should include a *“continuation of the work with youth after their graduate from high school.”* The YSF project intends to do so through continued work with Alumni Club in their Training of Trainers capacity.

However, when this matrix is applied to larger societal context, all informants agree that the YSF project does not affect the socio-political level. As one of the partners representatives pointed out, *“The system in our society cannot change on its own. It takes a lot of time and shifting of mind-sets. Everyone needs to do their job so every puzzle piece can come to its place. We work with youth, so someone else needs to work with other structures.”* At the same time, the project has obviously made incremental progress towards obtaining experience and laying a foundation for potential future activities that could affect peace writ at large. *“The whole society is ready for what we do in schools. The whole society is ready for a huge transformation.”*

Critical thinking efforts of CRS partners and staff have resulted in several ideas that might be considered for future potential peace-building efforts that target more substantial structural changes. The ideas are presented below in their original form:

- *“We need to work with hard-liners. No one wants that, not even to open that question, because everyone wants the status quo to remain, to keep our 41<sup>st</sup> place on the ranking list of quality of education. USAID will also have to change their attitude. It would be good if we could go to Belgrade during this transitional period to have a meeting with MOE. We, CRS and CCSD, are positioned the best to serve as a bridge between Pristina and Belgrade – to be a technical bridge and connector among ministries and technical people. UNMIK was supposed to perform that role by mandate but they have not done it, at least not adequately.”*
- *“The first year of the project we worked on the first level with more people. In the second year, we are moving towards the socio-political level. The mechanisms we use are working with people who are easy to reach or who we know are “supporters” of our idea. However, we don’t work with the other groups, the “hard-liners” who are actually key for achieving change at large. For example, we don’t do anything with “Bridge Watchers”, the unofficial pro-military group who monitor crossing of the bridge, and they harass, and provoke, etc. They are risky to work with but they present themselves as protectors of the civil society in the North and have very strong power to influence everything that is happening.”*
- *“We should be moving to the socio-political level but how? When Kosovo’s status is solved, the challenges will be to engage more people and to motivate them to join and work when the economy preoccupies them the most. We need to link our economy with PB. There are opportunities to do this with companies such as Coca Cola, Microsoft, USAID GDA, etc.”*

Respondents recognize the realities in Kosovo and Mitrovica/Mitrovicë that render movement at upper levels of the peace-building matrix challenging. *“Moving into any of the other quadrants would be hard because that is out of our control. Change in socio-political structures is big and influences many factors, i.e. there is Pristina and there is Belgrade and Mitrovica is sort of in the middle.”* At the same time, the importance placed on gradual advancement and efforts to reach out to challenging, but highly influential stakeholders, is widely recognized. *“Politicians are powerful and influential and thus have significant influence over the situation, making it either positive or negative. They are responsible for everything that is happening.”*

## **Finding #2.4: Project Sustainability**

### **a. Finding Statement**

The YSF project seems to have very solid potential for sustainability, rooted most obviously in strong Youth Councils. The legal existence of YCs is addressed both K-Serb and K-Albanian law; however, their role and functionality are not fully prescribed. The lack of unified operating standards presents both an opportunity – if more attention is dedicated to this particular issue, and a threat – if this issue is left to be solved without any input from youth. The City Wide Youth Council (CWYC) seems an appropriate entity that, with support from GS and CCSD, can assume a leading role in further addressing the issue of YC mandates and purviews. In addition to a legal operational framework, YCs need to streamline mechanisms to transfer knowledge and practices in order to avoid the loss of student-body capacity as the school cycle progresses. The YSF project hopes to address this issue through the Alumni Club of post-graduates.

### **b. Interpretation of the Finding**

#### **W. FUNCTIONING AND ROLE OF YC**

Several respondents brought up the issue of the projects’ sustainability—particularly those groups that YSF activities engage. Sustainability of YCs and their place in the legal framework has already been discussed earlier in this report. The project implementers believe that the clarification of YC roles and structures, especially concerning the decision-making process at the school level is a looming priority.

## X. SUSTAINING THE CAPACITY

Sustaining functionality and effectiveness of the YCs' is linked directly to the sustainability of individual capacities of participants who comprise the council. Currently, the YSF project does not have built-in sustainability mechanisms within YCs to ensure transfer of institutional knowledge and practices among members. The cyclical nature of student populations in school represents a potential threat that implies a significant loss of capacity over time. A partner representative asserted that, *"If the project stopped now in schools, we would have mechanism for student engagement. Mini-projects are sustainable so the benefits of those would also be present at the field. Active YCs would also remain – maybe not in all schools. However, it should be noted that this would remain for possibly 3 years because in 3 years, a new generation of students will enter the schools. What is really important is that we work with young people, and that guarantees long-term benefits. Young people go further and it is very possible that some of them will hold important, high-authority positions. They are our great potential for future."*

Partner: *"The sustainability of the groups we work with is under question. The school cycle naturally drains out capacity, as 80% of members change on annual basis. It takes time to gain trust and mobilize students. We base our hope on the 20% that remains to transfer their knowledge to the newcomers. The Alumni Club is another mechanism whose members have been provided with TOT and they also have moral obligation to keep this going. This can not really be a strong mechanism because they are so young. How much will they be committed – I don't know. In the first year we provided 5 training modules, in the second 1, in third we do not do and trainings, and relied only on the Alumni Club."*

### Finding #2.5: Additional Project Approaches to Enhance Project Effectiveness

#### a. Finding Statement

Respondents from both Albanian and Serbian sides had various suggestions to improve or change project strategies in order to enhance future project effectiveness. These suggestions included: as appropriate and possible promoting civil society actors cross-border collaboration to serve as model to others; adapting a more structured horizontal sharing of knowledge of trained youth; increasing the level of capacity building and exposure, and mobilization of more youth activists are just some of the many ideas that participants have shared. Some informants also pointed to a need for more improvements in existing strategies, specifically training curricula.

#### b. Interpretation of the Finding

## Y. CIVIC ACTORS WORKING TOGETHER

When asked to evaluate their overall impressions of the YSF project, participants gave different ratings depending on which group of stakeholders they identified with. On a scale of 1 – 4, with 1 representing the lowest level of satisfaction, and 4 indicating "very satisfied," partner and CRS staff almost unanimously rated the project at level 3, primarily due to delays and absence of face-to-face multiethnic activities. Both GS and CCSD noted that when political issues shift project operations into a different mode, civil society actors must collaborate more intensively across the ethnic divide. The end result would not only enhance mutual learning and exchange of experiences but also serve as model of collaboration to the other stakeholders. A partner representative asserted that, *"We have parallel institutions in both communities. There is a lack of acceptance that there is no collaboration across the ethnic divide. If we don't act strongly, we might appear that we support division... We as civil society actors can act together on integration. If we don't do it, who else will?"*

## Z. STRUCTURED TRANSFER OF KNOWLEDGE TO PEERS

Some of the youth interviewees recognized a potentially larger role for trained youth could play in spreading out positive energy and information gained from training and capacity building sessions to their reachable contacts. A student suggested, *"With the help of other students we could transfer our knowledge to other students and transfer knowledge that we gain at trainings to our family members, media. We need to learn how to accomplish this, and that is why we need more trainings. People don't want to get engaged unless there is some profit for them. We need to change our way of living for ourselves, not anyone else."*

#### **AA. MORE CAPACITY BUILDING**

Youth is traditionally hungry for learning, and Kosovo's youth is no different. They cite the importance of obtaining more skills and knowledge about the European Union as well as some other skills such as public presentation and project management. Additionally, CRS partner representatives pointed to a need for trainings on leadership and related topic, especially because the specific target group of YSF is widely regarded as the future leaders of Kosovo. More photo competitions, video material, and the development of a multi-ethnic documentary are some of the potential activities mentioned during data collection process.

Partner: *"We must invest for the long-term in non-formal education, in provision of tools and skills that youth can not gain through a regular education system. And that is what we are giving to them. We should invest further in the development of leadership skills, rules and regulations of EU and exchanges among youth regarding these issues. The children are closed, they don't have relations with external world and these sorts of opportunities have healing effects."*

#### **AB. MORE EXPOSURE**

Students and partners unanimously stress the need to expose youth to life outside of Kosovo and to provide opportunities for this. According to participants, not only can external exposure contribute to further development active students, but would also enable participants to broaden their perspectives and understand different contexts, cultures and societies that they have not previously experienced. According to a student, *"Exposure would be good for us because seeing other things makes you start appreciating what you have."* Partners and CRS staff also point out that this sort of "removal" from the current situation the youth are in, can be enormously helpful in restoring or re-establishing connections and relationships. *"Our experience has shown that in different contexts under less pressure, children accept each other more easily, they perceive their differences and quickly turn them into commonalities, they build contacts in a much easier way and relationships evolve more quickly."*

One CRS partner representatives suggested that potential visits from Serbia could have multiple effects on students but also on principals. *"It would be good to bring a dozen of the stronger student parliaments from Belgrade, Novi Sad, etc., so that they can say to our principals that they do the same thing already and all for the purpose of reform towards quality education. Not the politics but technical level. Student activism is tied to everyday educational process."*

#### **AC. IMPROVEMENTS IN CURRENT STRATEGIES**

Some respondents pointed to "dry" trainings without practical exercises. The triangulation of data confirms that this is an isolated observation, but nevertheless must be brought to attention of CRS and partners. At the same location, students shared that they do not have advanced information regarding training schedules and locales. The school principal of this school believes that this strategy ensures maximum participation because children can not avoid it nor escape from classes.

Web-based communication across ethnic lines appears to have different dynamism for different stakeholder groups. Principals mention the internet as a useful tool and would like to increase its use, while the majority of CRS staff, partners and youth feel that internet is a barely-tapped resource, due largely to deficiencies in local networks, connects, access, and to slow internet connection, and non-developed syllabi around which communication should be focused.

#### **AD. MOBILIZATION OF MORE YOUTH**

During the data collection process, evaluators initiated many discussions related to mobilization of more youth activists. Some relatively simple suggestions for recruiting an even higher proportion of youth emerged during the conversations, which evaluators considered worthwhile enough to share in this report. Providing small promotional projects or school-based gifts could create strong incentives for the student target group. A partner volunteered that, *"Some small things could further promote activism and the work done. For example, some hats with school badges designed by the YC, a pen with*

Student: *"We should have more members; we want others to get interested too in order to activate them and socialize with them, and to spread out responsibility because the more of us that are involved, the stronger we become."*

*the name of project, etc. This brings a sense of connectedness, closeness, and further increases motivation. Children feel “I am part of this.” We need to support and promote volunteerism with these small things.”*

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## **VI.B. FINDINGS FOR MANAGEMENT EVALUATION QUESTIONS**

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### **Evaluation Question 3:**

How effective is the current management structure in meeting project needs?

The themes of inquiry:

- Communication among program staff, with project partners and external entities;
- Monitoring and tracking of project activities;
- Project reporting system;
- Decision-making, and
- Relationship management.

### **Finding #3.1: Effectiveness of the Current Management Structure: Communication, Responsiveness, and Decision-Making**

#### **a. Finding Statement**

CRS YSF team functions as a well-organized and effective unit that enjoys healthy and supportive relationship among team members. Relationships between CRS and partners can be described using similar characteristics; however, the respondents agree that direct interaction between GS and CCSD could be strengthened. CRS responsiveness to partner needs is assessed as satisfactory in general, although partners report some challenges related to complex procedural issues. Transparency and respect in mutual communication translates to seemingly participatory decision-making processes that involve all relevant parties within YSF project team, including partners.

#### **b. Interpretation of the Finding**

##### **A. COMMUNICATION WITHIN THE YSF CRS PROJECT TEAM**

According to both respondents and evaluators, the CRS YSF Project Team functions as a cohesive, efficient and effective unit. The relationships within the team are healthy and professional, and each team member knows their roles and responsibilities, and acts accordingly. *CRS staff: “We have developed excellent personal relationships amongst us.”* The team members are aware of each others’ work, including both successes and challenges, and if needed are able to assume the roles of their counterparts to provide support and assistance. *CRS staff: “If my colleague is for any reason prevented from doing an activity, I step in and help so that the project dynamics does not suffer.”* Since the team is multi-ethnic, they also serve as an example to external stakeholders, which promotes a subtle but very important message in Kosovo’s current environment.

##### **B. RELATIONSHIP WITH AND AMONG PARTNERS**

According to CRS partners, the spirit of transparency, supportiveness and professionalism also translates to a positive relationship with their CRS colleagues. The CRS YSF team in Mitrovica has developed and maintained good partnerships grounded in mutual respect with both CCSD and GS. A CRS staff assessment of partner responsiveness to requests varies, depending on issue and overall work dynamics. Sometimes, especially when it comes to CRS compliance requirements CRS assert that partners respond to requests *“sometimes better than we in CRS respond to their requests.”*

While generally positive sentiments define the relationship between CRS and YSF partners, all interviewees agree that the direct relationship between CCSD and GS could have been strengthened. One partner

representative stated that, “Other than at the monthly meetings with CRS, we do not get to see the other partner independently of CRS.” Apparently most communication and information exchanges occur through CRS rather than directly between the two implementing partners. Although everyone recognizes the potential for mutual complementary enhancement of skills and experiences, direct communication seldom happens and hardly ever without a CRS presence. According to CRS staff, “Communication among partners is difficult due to the language barrier. We always need to be involved when they meet.” Each of the partners appears strong in a particular set of skills required for YSF project implementation. GS is very enthusiastic and energetic and as such often inspires both staff and participants, but lacks some practical, hands-on experience. CRS staff asserts that “GS brings great deal of motivation and energy to this project.” At the same time CCSD, due to their strong overall capacity and technical knowledge, is sometimes viewed as stretched thin between different projects and activities. CRS staff state that, “CCSD is technically very strong, but I think they are involved to too many activities and projects, hence they sometimes struggle meeting deadlines.”

### C. CRS SITUATIONAL ADAPTABILITY AND RESPONSIVENESS TO PARTNERS NEEDS

Although partners recognize that the CRS YSF team responds adequately to their needs and inquiries, all involved consider this a potential area for improvement. Complex financial and administrative procedures sometimes cause delays in some activities or necessitate repetitive submission of documents. A CRS partner staff suggests, “CRS has very complex internal procedures that very often affect our implementation timeline or our relationships with project stakeholders (i.e. directors, students). Furthermore, the internship component was delayed since we had to wait quite a long time for CRS to sign an MOU, and provision of internet in the schools took almost 6 months due to CRS internal procedures.” A partner PM asserted that “Of all INGOs we are working with, CRS by far has the most complex financial procedures.”

Finally, partners emphasized the importance of strategic positioning and planning for the future, especially in light of political changes that might occur in Kosovo. Leadership in this issue is primarily expected from the CRS Pristina/Pristhinë office, which is responsible for overall relationship with donor agencies. A partner comment indicates that, “This project has great potential, even after 2009 when it officially ends.” In general, the political situation in Kosovo requires project staff to be alert and maintain a constant state of readiness and adaptability. CRS Staff: “For the project, until there is a status quo in terms of Kosovo’s political situation, we need to have plan A, and be ready to switch to plan B or C according to the changing situation. We need to be flexible and agile and shape our activities according to the current situation. This is difficult to do while complying with donor requirements and remains challenge that we will have to deal with throughout the project.”

CRS Staff: “What is within our management control is going well. The general situation is unstable and affects all plans we have, and even the different versions of plans. You have to be very flexible for every SO and every Output you are expected to deliver.”

### E. DECISION-MAKING

Openness and mutual respect in communication as described above, transfers into participatory decision-making. All interviewees indicate that decisions are always made in consultation with both CRS staff and partners. According to CRS staff, “We always consult amongst us and also invite partners to provide input.”

Partners also indicate that they are always consulted during the process and that they have mechanisms to voice inputs and opinions. Furthermore, it is evident that they have retained some freedom to make independent decisions but always choose to consult CRS. A partner interviewee said, “At the level of sub-components of the project, we are free make decisions independently. Nevertheless, we always consult/involve CRS in the process.”

## **Finding #3.2: Effectiveness of the Current Management Structure: Monitoring and Reporting**

### **a. Finding Statement**

The CRS YSF Team and partners regularly collect information for identified project indicators. The monthly and quarterly reporting system is institutionalized and respected by both partners and CRS. However, partners identify challenges related to relevance of some indicators, the level of effort for data collection and analysis, and the return investment in data-based decision-making processes. Furthermore, channels for information sharing among partners are more of informal rather than formal nature.

### **b. Interpretation of the Finding**

#### **F. MONITORING AND TRACKING OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES**

Due to the particularly challenging environment of Kosovo, and in order to maximize the impact of YSF investments in the current political setting, changes were made to the initial project design in area of work with unemployed youth. This change was reflected in other project documentation and systems, including monitoring tools and processes. Each of the schools and particular project activities is being tracked in terms of reporting against relevant indicators. The YSF Project Staff verifies this information directly with partners on monthly basis.

However, respondents assert that some peculiarities in monitoring continue to seek some irrelevant information. According to a partner representative, *“Even though the project has multi-ethnic component, we work more in mono-ethnic communities. Schools are mono-ethnic and that is the fact. Vushtrri/Vucitrn is 99% Albanian, 1% Turkish and Bosnian. What kind of multi-ethnic activities can you do there when community composition is such? In our M&E system we have indicators that require desegregation by ethnicity. Since there is no sense in doing so, we try to focus on multi-ethnic related issues in schools and work and report on that.”*

Furthermore, in some cases, partners consider the extent of detail in monitoring activities to be slightly overwhelming. *“The monitoring of YC work to the extent of details we do it. We have too much paperwork so sometimes we appear to be interfering i.e. Give us the minutes from your meeting, Give us needs you identified; etc. We could be perceived negatively from school administration side, too.”* This is especially important because of the intensive schedule of activities that already competes with other school activities. *“In September we come as one more thing that is happening in the school that already has a lot of issues to deal with. We compete with priorities – i.e. we want YC election while students have to focus on their marks and other priorities. Not that this shouldn’t be done – but we should be aware of this situation.”* Required attention to details also resulted in some additional capacity building that developed to hone essential skills for improved functionality of the YC. *“We had big challenges to coach YC to run a meeting and make meeting notes that are needed for M&E.”*

YSF staff shared M&E related challenges too, and suggested that one full-time person should be allocated to this particular task as it is currently dispersed among all team members and often requires significant effort to summarize and cumulatively report information against indicators. CRS staff: *“We are short of one person that will cover very demanding M&E component.”*

#### **G. REPORTING SYSTEM WITHIN THE PROJECT**

The project has a regular reporting system in place based on monthly and quarterly written reports. Partners provide CRS with monthly reports bullet-points that describe activities, challenges and corrective procedures as needed and which are discussed at regular joint meetings with CRS. Quarterly reports provide more in-depth analysis of successes and challenges occurring in that particular reporting period.

Compounding the lack of direct communication between CRS partners, there is no formal mechanism to facilitate mutual sharing of information among partners. Reports and updates are sent to CRS, occasionally

copying their partner counterparts but no one considers this a formal channel for sharing, and it is an inconsistent practice. Language barriers appear to be an obstacle in this area as well.

### **Finding #3.3: Effectiveness of the Current Management Structure: Relationship with External Stakeholders**

#### **a. Finding Statement**

At the time of the mid-term evaluation, the YSF project demonstrated well-established relationships with school principals that yield positive effects for further engagement to improve the of quality of education. Relationships with stakeholders beyond school level appear accidental and somewhat difficult due to current political ambiguities.

#### **b. Interpretation of the Finding**

##### **H. RELATIONSHIP WITH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS**

Relationships with the school administration are considered pivotal to the success of the YSF project. Partners emphasize principals' support as one of the most impressive effects of the project. These relationships, initially somewhat tenuous in municipalities with a K-Serb majority, matured gradually and now drive many successes in overall project implementation and managing the implications associated with Kosovo's political situation. According to CRS Staff, *"I had not expected such a strong support from principals. The project doesn't really give huge amounts of money but the general support is very good. Furthermore, from the very beginning we had problems with Ministry of Education (MOE) in Belgrade and with the Regional Coordinator who did not allow the project to start. One month ago he called me and CCSD and said that whoever asks if the schools will work after December 10<sup>th</sup>, tell them yes. This is a huge change in behavior of this person."* Positive movements in principals' activism are also emerging. One cited example is a coalition of principals who used newly developed networking and proposal writing skills to secure funds from USAID for their work on a strategic platform. As one of CRS staff pointed out, *"Most impressive to me are principals, who, as demonstrated through the project, express huge dedication. They want to work in spite of obstacles. The principals have developed a joint project aimed at establishing their coalition and the \$10,000 was approved by USAID. That is a testament to the skills and initiative that have become more common. Because of the current political situation, there are two coalitions, one on each side of the divide. They plan to have a couple of conferences to agree on a strategy platform. They plan to work together with CWYC. Both sides are working on this. Albanian principals have more freedom for this type of work though, while the Serb side has been influenced by the MoE from Belgrade. It is a bit harder for directors from North."*

Partner: *"In the South, all schools started to fully participate when the project started, but in the North, only at the beginning of the year did the schools get fully engaged. When I compare the beginning and the state of the project now – the changes are visible in students and principals. Maybe we could achieve more but taking into consideration the situation we are in, I would say it is very successful."*

##### **I. RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER STAKEHOLDERS**

Relationships among stakeholders in the context of the larger community appear to be better in municipalities with a K-Albanian majority. The challenges of relationship building in K-Serb majority municipalities are surfacing, specifically in North Mitrovica/Mitrović, where lack of clarity sometimes complicates relationships and slows down the activities. The mismatch between those who currently have the authority and those who are recognized by international community as the ones that should have authority creates more obstacles to productive relationship-building and limits the potential for project scale up and affecting larger community.

As a young organization, GS views the YSF project as an opportunity for further organizational development and to and distinguish themselves in the field of youth programming. A GS staff person



asserts that, “I like that we as young organization are working with youth. As we work on objectives, we are making ourselves known in this field. In the past we worked with CRS only in Mitrovica, but now we have expanded geographically to Peja/Pec, Iztog/Istok, Vushtrri/Vucitrn.”

Finally, both CRS partners and CRS staff recognizes that more focused, structured and planned relationship management is a cornerstone of peace-building activities that could promote socio-political change. The YSF project establishes the initial foundation for such efforts, provided that Kosovo status is resolved and donors invest in peace-building efforts targeting selected communities.

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## VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

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Though this mid-term evaluation reveals excellent achievements in project implementation and management, evaluators note room for improvement during phase 2 of the project. Recommendations were collected from both informants and evaluators. The following section presents an overview of recommendations with clear reference to corresponding findings and the source of the recommendation. Some of the findings do not have corresponding recommendations, instead they produced only lesson learned, simple because the finding captures high quality work without any need for further improvement within this project’s mandate.

**Recommendation #1**, (relates to Finding # 1 and 2, recommendation source: informants and evaluators)

YSF Project staff should dedicate attention to the careful development of methodologies for the revised SO2, and should incorporate principles of equity and social cohesion to avoid potential disintegration among different community groups. The following are specific issues to be addressed and suggested approaches:

- c. **Careful selection of appropriate project participants** to ensure job market demand matches the interest/ability of youth selected to participate;
- d. **Mandate contracts between employer and intern** specifying working conditions and acceptable penalties, and
- e. **Ensure regular monitoring** of this component with regular visits and interviews with both businesses and youth project participants to learn about successes and challenges so they can be addressed in a timely fashion.

The motivation of businessmen shared during on-site data collection is derived primarily from their need for quality workers that are willing and able to work. This can only be achieved through careful selection and continuous communication and feedback mechanisms for participant performance.

At the time that this report was issued, recommendations a. and b. were already fully addressed to ensure equal access to opportunities to vulnerable youth, while the recommendation specified under c. was under development.

**Recommendation #2**, (relates to Finding #1.3, 2.3 and 2.5; recommendation source: informants and evaluators)

YSF project participants suggested several additional project strategies that could be explored in collaboration with USAID to further strengthen project impact. These are:

- a. **Horizontal outreach of trained youth**, which could be achieved by adding end-sessions to regular trainings, during which time participants would develop Action Plans for outreach to their peers, friends and family members. A similar approach has been applied in the USAID-funded Partnership Against Trafficking Project, implemented by CRS/Kosovo.

- b. **Capacity building through new trainings** that expand to include topics such as: public speaking/presentation skills, leadership skills, project management skills, and tutorials in EU standards. These examples were suggested by informants but would also strengthen the sustainability of all groups that YSF works with. If additional capacity building activities are initiated and the resources are available, these are topics for consideration.
- c. **Initiate exposure visits for selected participants** of both ethnicities, depending on availability of funds. If resources are available, visits could focus on future planning and provide opportunities for real-life testing of the extent of perceptual transformation and attitudinal change in tolerance for ‘the other.’”

The YSF project should explore links with other, similar youth initiatives and try to establish connections to create a forum for personal exchanges regarding experiences and perspectives. Minimally, this might be achieved via internet and e-mail communication, although if circumstances allow, the physical gathering would be considered as more beneficial.

**Recommendation #4**, (relates to Finding # 1.2; recommendation source: evaluators)

If circumstances allow and if project participants identify lack of space for youth activities as a high priority issue, potential advocacy efforts directed towards municipalities could be developed to secure a more permanent solution to space and capacity issues, apart from current temporary use of space within partners and CWYC offices.

**Recommendation #5**, (relates to Finding #2.1, 2.3, 2.4 and 3.1; recommendation source: informants and evaluators)

CRS YSF staff and partners should continue to build YSF sustainability as identified under Lessons Learned, Lesson #4, and should develop a full sustainability strategy. Though implementing the strategy in full may not be possible during the remainder of the YSF project, some steps can be taken towards future investments in sustainability.

Youth Councils are recognized as the cornerstone for ensuring sustainability of YSF project activities. Evaluators assert that CWYC appears to be the most appropriate entity to lead this initiative as they truly represent voice of youth and can share experiences and assist each other across ethnic lines. An initial step in this process is revisiting the YC legal framework to clarify YC roles according to current law, especially regarding participation in school-level decision-making processes. CWYC can activate connections with Youth Councils at the grassroots level to explore youth views of their role in decision-making in their own schools, while partners and CRS can facilitate discussions with principals and government entities responsible for this particular issue. Furthermore, if other priorities allow and if appropriate resources are allocated, advocacy skills gained through trainings and so far applied at the school level could be put in practice to realize desired changes in the law.

A sustainability strategy also needs to offer mechanisms for transferring skills, knowledge and practices between old and new YC members to avoid capacity loss due to school cycle. The Alumni Club seems to be a solid initial component and a stepping stone for retaining institutional knowledge, practices, and capacities. Efforts should focus on strategic or key alumni members moving into positions of influence.

Finally, the YSF staff should work with principals so they recognize and permit a YC role in the school’s decision-making process in order to fully institutionalize potential change.

**Recommendation #6**, (relates to Finding #1.1, 1.2, 2.3 and 3.1) recommendation source: evaluators

Evaluators strongly recommend that project staff conduct frequent stakeholder analyses to determine the degree of power and influence that each stakeholder wields in the dynamic context of Kosovo. These analyses should provide a context-specific foundation for project adjustments rather than mitigate the

implications of turbulent political shifts. Additionally, stakeholder analyses gathered over the course of implementation can be applied in strategy development to enhance project impact and support methodologies that encourage change at the socio-political level. Donors, CRS staff, and partners will have to maintain a degree of flexibility in order to maximize the benefits of the YSF project, particularly if circumstances in the region continue to change rapidly.

**Recommendation #7**, (relates to Finding #2.3 and 3.3); recommendation source: informants and evaluators

This recommendation refers more to future investments in peace building efforts than to the YSF project directly, given that the YSF project duration and political circumstances may not allow for its implementation.

For true substantial structural change to happen, a multi-faceted approach is an essential pre-condition that targets several entry points of the social pyramid. As noted by respondents, real change can not be achieved by focusing only on youth participation. Reflecting on the Peace Practice (RFP) Project revealed that “work that stays within any one quadrant of the matrix is not enough to build momentum for significant change. Any individual program aiming to contribute to peace will have more impact if its effects transfer to other quadrants of the four-cell matrix. Two kinds of linkages were found to be particularly important for programs to have impact on “peace writ large”:

*Individual/Personal --> Socio-Political.* First, RPP revealed that programming focused on change at the individual/personal level, but that never links or translates into action at the socio-political level has *no discernible effect* on peace. Peace-building efforts that focus on nurturing relationships and trust across conflict lines, increasing tolerance, and increasing hope that peace is possible often produce dramatic transformations in attitudes, perceptions and trust. But evidence shows that impacts for the broader peace are more significant if these personal transformations are translated into actions at the socio-political level. Does work at the socio-political level likewise need to transfer to the individual/personal level? Evidence suggests that sometimes, but not always, work is necessary at the Individual/Personal level to ensure that socio-political changes are internalized in the behavior of individuals to be durable. The linkage needed from the Socio-Political to the Individual/Personal to impact “peace writ large” is less strong.

*More people --> Key people.* RPP found that approaches concentrated on More People but do nothing to link to or affect Key People, as well as strategies that focus on Key People but do not include or affect More People, do not “add up” to effective peace work. Activities to engage More People must link, strategically, to activities to engage key people, and Key People activities must link strategically to activities to engage More People, if they are to be effective in moving toward peace writ large.<sup>12</sup>

Once donors and the overall political situation allow for increasing the extent to which a project affects the potential for peace, more resources will be required in order to work with other groups of stakeholders identified as key to achieving change at individual and socio-political levels. Progress towards peace will also require close and collaborative working relationships among different organizations that target different components of change.

**Recommendation #8**, (relates to Finding #2.5; recommendation source: informants)

The YSF project should explore additional techniques to inspire and increase motivation. Although current motivation appears to be at satisfactory level in most locations, providing small promotional materials to students and participants could further enhance the desire to participate. For specific suggestions, please refer to section Finding 2.5, Mobilization of More Youth.

<sup>12</sup> CDA Reflecting on Peace Practice Project, Linkages and Leverage, [http://www.cdainc.com/rpp/linkages\\_and\\_leverage.php](http://www.cdainc.com/rpp/linkages_and_leverage.php)

**Recommendation #9**, (relates to Finding #2.5, 3.1, and 3.2; recommendation source: informants)

Direct interaction between partners specifically around technical areas of project implementation should be formalized through joint face-to-face meetings and information-sharing mechanisms. This would not only allow for productive exchange of skills, capacities and experience but will also serve as a functional example of joint work across ethnic lines of divide.

**Recommendation #10**, (relates to Finding #3.1 and 3.2; recommendation source: evaluators)

YSF challenges with procedural issues may not be addressed due to the need for compliance with US regulations that may be complex, but also ensure that project is implemented in full accordance with policies and processes specified within grant agreement. Possible improvements may come from more scrupulous explanation to partners as to why procedures are required. Evaluators recommend similar strategy to address the challenges presented by the required level of detail in CRS' monitoring systems. CRS should work with partners to understand the purpose of the monitoring data and its utilization in project management as well as the way each piece of information feeds into larger picture.

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## VIII. LESSONS LEARNED

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The mid-term evaluation reveals many good practices that could be universally applied in implementation and management of similar projects or that can be further developed or replicated as part of the YSF project. Evaluators consider the following key lessons learned to be of use to both CRS/EME and USAID:

**Lesson #1**, (relates to Finding # 1.1, 1.3 and 2.3) – **Programming Areas in Politically Unstable Situations**

In situations of political turmoil, peace-building efforts will be more successful if grounded in shared concerns and issues that transcend borders and ethnic lines and at the same time can be seen as “politically safe” issues for international and local NGOs can deal with. In Kosovo, these issues include the quality of education and economy and are seen as burning needs that continue to represent priority concerns with little or no government involvement. At the same time, these areas of focus can surface as forceful link between disparate groups if subtle peace-building components are appropriately imbedded in the project methodology.

**Lesson #2**, (relates to Finding #1.3, 2.1 and 3.3) – **Turning Difficult Cooperation with Officials into Positive Relationships**

The YSF project proves that an initially challenging rapport with school officials can be transformed into a relationship of mutual appreciation and support. Apparently, the strategies that worked well, according to the partner were:

- Focusing collaboration at the “technical level” of quality of education;
- Constant presence in school, persistence, frequent conversations with principals;
- Maintaining realistic expectations, and not giving false or unrealistic promises, and
- Selecting the right target group to initiate change.

In addition to the above the most important component of successful cooperation is sufficient time to instill these strategies and allow transformation of the relationship.

Although the selection of youth as a target group that is “open to change” was a useful approach, any organization addressing peace-building should be aware that selection of only one target group cannot bring societal and structural change to bear in isolation, but provides a foundation to expand the impact of positive experiences and practices at the appropriate time.

**Lesson #3, (relates to Finding #1.3 and 2.1) – Individual Change**

The YSF project suggests that individual attitudinal change among youth can happen through carefully designed capacity-building activities. The selection of appropriate training topics that are not covered through other programs or curricula, and that are of interest to the target group seem to be an essential pre-condition for attitudinal changes to take place. Furthermore, providing opportunities for the practical application of learned skills proves to be a crucial project component in youth programming, and contributes not only to the realization of change but also to increased motivation and self-confidence in participants.

**Lesson #4, (relates to Finding # 2.1) – Establishing a Foundation for Sustainability**

CRS' YSF project established a solid foundation for the potential long-term sustainability of project objectives. First and foremost, the project has chosen to work with Youth Councils, formally recognized in laws of both K-Albanian and K-Serb side. This ensures the necessary support of a legal framework for further engagement of YCs. As one of the principals pointed out, "*The YC is the future.*" Partners stress that continuous multi-year investments are needed to allow sufficient time for the actual self-sustaining, functional, YC evolve. Finally, mini-projects provide additional means for the true institutionalization of YCs and visible recognition of their work.

**Lesson #5, (relates to Finding #2.1) – Relationships among Project Stakeholders Can Increase Project Impact**

Projects that enable the development of relationships among stakeholders prove to have larger effects. This is especially true for projects such as YSF that work with youth. Student creativity is enhanced by opportunities for interaction and relationship building which often results in maximizing financial resources.

**Lesson #6, (relates to Finding #2.2) – Youth Motivation, Ownership and Protagonism**

Maintaining and sustaining motivation at sufficiently high level throughout the project is an important component of projects targeting youth. Specific project strategies that specifically target this part of the project implementation should be developed. Some of the strategies that proved to be effective within YSF are:

- Ownership of project; (If the participants take part in the project they become part of the project)
- Enthusiastic and motivated organizers to serve as mentors and role models;
- An inspirational project name that is meaningful to the target group;
- Adjusted activity plan according to the seasonal school activities and requirements (i.e. exams, holidays);
- Capacity-building component tailored to interest of target group, and
- Project methodology that includes specific and concrete project opportunities for youth that yield tangible and visible results (i.e. mini-project development, and implementation).

**Lesson #7, (relates to Finding #3.1) – Efficient Project Team**

The YSF project team demonstrates characteristics of cohesive and efficient team that is well-organized and fully uses existing resources and capacities. The key factors that appear to have shaped this successful team dynamic include transparent, clear and timely communication, participatory decision-making with consultation of all relevant parties, and mutual respect of each others work.

**Lesson #8, (relates to Finding #3.1) – Fruitful Partner Relationships**

The YSF project demonstrates strong and productive relationships with partners. The key elements of such relationships, as identified by both CRS and partners, are related to transparency and mutual respect in communication, supportiveness, and participatory decision-making that value partner contributions and allow for partners to have a substantive voice.

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## IX. EVALUATORS' CONCLUSIONS

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Based on field visits, interviews with project participants, reviews of secondary data, and numerous interactions with YSF project staff and partners, evaluators unanimously agree that YSF project is doing the best work possible given current local circumstances. The shift in project design on provision of livelihood opportunities to unemployed youth appears relevant, needed, and appropriate for the current circumstances. Given that the economy represents one of the most powerful connectors across ethnic lines, the focus on this particular area can bring multiple benefits in terms of initiating and expanding potential links among K-Serbs and K-Albanians. Furthermore, although current tolerance-related activities are conducted in mono-ethnic settings, they bring impressive results that could serve as solid basis for further development once the conditions for direct inter-ethnic connections interactions are in place. In a situation as complex as the Kosovo context is, programming requires a multi-faceted approach that requires long-term investment and broad stakeholder involvement at all levels in order for positive change to occur. Apart from working with youth under YSF, additional interventions are needed to reach those groups or individuals that are crucial for achieving and sustaining substantial social change.

In addition to demonstrating good progress towards achieving its objectives, YSF project could also serve as a learning source for projects that are similar in nature and implemented in similar contexts, as well as for the development of a new generation of projects aimed at securing safe, peaceful and prosperous futures for youth. Operating and working on improvement of tolerance under extremely difficult political situations, fostering supportive relationships with positions of authority, instigating individual changes into minds of project participants, maximizing use of financial resources, and awakening and maintaining motivation of youth in challenging environments are just some of good practices noted by evaluators that could be applicable under many similar projects.

Evaluators would also like to bring to the readers' attention the great potential for mirroring successful strategies for the establishment and maintenance of genuine partnerships with implementing partners and a solid approach to the development of effective and cohesive project teams to other similar efforts.

This evaluation may serve as a baseline for a final YSF evaluation should the Project Manager and USAID decide to conduct one. In addition to further exploring the progress of youth connecting across ethnic lines, the future evaluation should examine the effects of economic empowerment that began at the time that this evaluation was conducted.

Finally, the evaluators would like to commend the commitment of the CRS YSF project team, CCSD and GS to the project goal and objectives, which is often considered the most important prerequisite for project success.

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## X. CODE OF CONDUCT/CONFIDENTIALITY AND RIGHTS OF INFORMANTS

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All data gathered through the on-site data collection process guarantees confidentiality of informants to the maximum extent possible. Raw data is appropriately coded and available upon request. However, coding is not applied to all inputs and allows for target communities/stakeholders to remain named in order to ensure usefulness of the report.

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## XI. DISTRIBUTION POLICY

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**The data collected and contained in this report remains USAID and CRS property and should not be distributed without prior notice.** For any further distribution within CRS please contact Petar Prica, e-mail: [pprica@eme.crs.org](mailto:pprica@eme.crs.org).

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**XIII. ATTACHMENTS**

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- Attachment 1 YSF Results Framework 1
- Attachment 2 YSF Results Framework 2
- Attachment 3 Terms of Reference
- Attachment 4 List of Stakeholders
- Attachment 5 Data Collection Tools