



***On the Record: Civil Society in Kosovo – Rebuilding After the War***

**Issue 9: The Women of Kosova, Revisited, August 7, 2000**

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**From the AP Editorial Desk by Iain Guest**

Earlier in this series of 'On the Record' we asked why women are so dominant in peace-building. Is it because they are prepared to take risks? Because they have the interests of their families at heart and think practically?

Or is it -- as we believe -- that women are forced by the very nature of today's conflicts (which are directed against civilians) to get motivated, organized, and energized?

Whatever the explanation, women hold a society together during a crisis and can be counted upon to do the same when the storm has passed -- if they are given the chance. Women provide a solid foundation on which peace can be constructed. Any international effort that ignores this is denying itself an formidable resource.

This point was made in a recent analysis of the Dayton peace process in Bosnia by Kvinna Till Kvinna (Women to Women), a Swedish foundation that supports women's initiatives in the Balkans. The report is essential reading. It makes the case that by omitting a gender perspective from the 1995 Dayton Agreement and the immediate follow-up, the international community greatly undermined its own effort to rebuild Bosnia.

This issue, ninth in our series on civil society in Kosovo, suggests that the same mistake is being made in Kosovo. Three highly respected organizations recently commissioned a gender audit of the U.N. Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). This found that UNMIK had generally failed to

'mainstream gender' into its own administration and the transitional government of Kosovo. It stated bluntly that this had undermined both the capacity of Kosovar women's groups and their willingness to work with UNMIK.

It has to be said, in defense of the United Nations, that UNMIK has probably done more for women than previous U.N. peace missions. Yet the basic charge certainly holds true. The international community has no blue print for involving women, or working with women, in the reconstruction of Kosovo. The nearest thing to a coordinated approach (with resources) has been the Kosovo Women's Initiative (KWI), the \$10 million fund of American money that was handed to the U.N. High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) to manage.

The KWI was intended to promote the recovery of traumatized women, but it has turned into a headache for the UNHCR. As past issues of 'On the Record' have explained, the KWI formula was completely inappropriate: it threw money at groups that could not use it and expected results in an impossible time-frame. The U.S. Senate then rubbed salt in the wound by withholding money from the UNHCR because UNHCR had acted like any responsible donor and asked that KWI grants be properly managed by recipients.

Recently the U.S. Senate lifted the ban after four months. This, coupled with some important refinements in UNHCR's own management of the KWI -- including the creation of an experienced and committed field team - will make it easier for UNHCR to spend the remaining KWI money judiciously. If UNHCR can repair its relationship with the women's movement in Kosovo, it might still emerge from the KWI nightmare with honor and some lessons learned for the next time around.

The main lesson must be that 'women's issues' cannot be conveniently shoe-horned into artificial aid programs like the KWI that are conceived in Washington or Geneva with the purpose of making donors look good -- particularly if the programs are vulnerable to the sort of irresponsibility displayed toward UNHCR by the Senate Foreign Appropriations Committee. Nor can they be relegated to a ministry of women.

Of course it is important that there is funding for women, that UNMIK is sensitive to gender, and that women are represented in Kosovo's transitional administration. But the real challenge is not about UNMIK, or aid agencies, or the KWI, or even structures of government that are being so laboriously created by the international community. The real challenge is building a new Kosovo out of a society that was held together by women in its darkest moments. It is about building peace around women. This is what mainstreaming gender is all about.

How could it have been done in Kosovo? First, there must be an understanding that all of the main components of reconstruction -- justice, health, welfare for the vulnerable, property, government, education, media, and housing -- have a distinct impact on women. Second, this understanding must be the starting point for reconstruction, instead of an afterthought.

If the international agencies had built a reconstruction strategy around women's needs from day one and worked with Kosovo's impressive women's movement to implement it, they might be further advanced than they are now. Women have a way of turning big concepts into manageable

programs -- and into people. That is a priceless contribution in the sort of chaos that rules in Kosovo.

In failing even to consider this, UNMIK and the other agencies have squandered a great opportunity. This is why the path to peace will remain rocky long after UNMIK leaves

'Engendering the Peace Process' can be obtained from Kvinna Till Kvinna [info@iktk.se](mailto:info@iktk.se).

### **Gender Audit Accuses UN Mission in Kosovo of Lost Opportunities and 'Discrimination' Against Women**

In a serious indictment of international reconstruction efforts in Kosovo, a new report has accused UNMIK of 'discriminating' against women in its administration of Kosovo and largely ignoring the huge potential of Kosovo's highly motivated women's groups.

As a result, says the report, 'the willingness of Kosovars to assist UNMIK authorities in various fields, as well as their capacity for self-organization, has been undermined or blocked.'

The report takes the form of a gender audit of reconstruction programs in southeastern Europe -- Kosovo and the Stability Pact. It was written by Dr. Chris Corrin, a researcher from the University of Glasgow (Scotland) on behalf of three organizations that support women during and after conflict: the Urgent Action Fund, the International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development, and the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children.

Meanwhile, another recent report from the Swedish aid group Kvinna Till Kvinna (Women to Women) has found that the Dayton peace process largely ignored gender until recently -- with disastrous consequences for peace in Bosnia.

Dr. Corrin visited Kosovo in March, and her findings were released in Prishtina on July 7, at the first-ever regional conference of women organized by Kosovars. She levels a series of charges at UNMIK:

- Few women have been appointed to key decision-making posts in the transitional government. As of March only two Kosovar women headed government departments.
- UNMIK has ignored the opportunity to collect sex-disaggregated statistics, even though this is a proven first step toward integrating women and girls into the development process.
- The achievements of Kosovar women under the 'parallel system' of Kosovo in the 1990s have been largely ignored.
- In spite of their obvious and special needs in the aftermath of last year's war -- as widows, rape victims, and single heads of household -- women have been 'marginalized' in the United Nations' peace plan.
- UNMIK has imposed top-down policies, working through 'male power-brokers.'
- Far too much international aid has been channeled through international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that 'at times appear to be searching for appropriate ways to spend it.'

The first reaction of UNMIK to these charges was intense anger. One official from the Office of Gender Affairs, which advises the UNMIK head Bernard Kouchner, said the analysis 'lacked credibility,' not least because its findings were out of date by the time the audit was released (see following story). There was also some discussion about the audit's analysis of the high drop-out rate of Kosovar girls from school.

In spite of this, the audit's principal theme -- that the international community has not developed a constructive partnership with Kosovo's highly organized women's movement -- clearly struck a chord.

Relations between Kosovar women and the international aid agencies have been extraordinarily poor throughout the last year, and Kosovars blame this partly on the patronizing approach of senior U.N. officials. In a mark of their irritation, the Kosova Women's Union, which organized the recent conference in Prishtina, decided not to admit more than two representatives from international organizations to sessions at any one time. The controversial Kosovo Women's Initiative (KWI) has also become something of a lightning rod for their anger (see the story below).

In addition to its criticism of UNMIK, Dr. Corrin's audit levels some sharp comments at international NGOs, which have managed the lion's share of Western emergency aid to Kosovo over the last year.

At one stage there were 285 international NGOs registered in Kosovo. The audit claims that many exhibited their own lack of gender balance and did not provide 'suitable feminist trainers' for their training programs. The audit also cites the presence of no fewer than four women's centers on one street (in the town of Mitrovica) as an example of NGO competition and overlap.

The sense that a major opportunity has been lost in Kosovo will be heightened by the new Kvinna Till Kvinna report on the Bosnian peace process. The report finds that there was no effort to incorporate the women's perspective into the 1995 Dayton agreement, which it describes as 'gender neutral.'

This continued into the peace-building phase in Bosnia. It was not until April 1999 that the Office of the High Representative (OHR) created a Gender Coordinating Group to address gender issues within the international aid structure. The first gender adviser in the OHR's human rights unit was only appointed in November 1999.

The Kvinna Till Kvinna report, however, is not all doom and gloom. In another finding with clear relevance for Kosovo, it notes that 'the most successful and sustainable projects in terms of gender are those implemented jointly by the international community and local NGOs.'

Following a miserable showing by women candidates in the 1997 municipal elections in Bosnia, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) worked with a campaign of 13 local NGOs known as 'Nas je Vise' ('There are more of us') to increase the number of women standing for election. Within two years, the percentage of women in the Bosnian House of Representatives had risen from 2 to 26 percent.

The message from Bosnia is that mainstreaming gender issues into a peace process -- even belatedly -- can have a profoundly beneficial impact: 'When women move from beneficiary status to economic independence and active involvement in society, all of society benefits.'

'Gender Audit of Reconstruction Programmes in South Eastern Europe' is available from the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children ([wcrwc@intrescom.org](mailto:wcrwc@intrescom.org)); from Urgent Action Fund ([urgentact@urgentactionfund.org](mailto:urgentact@urgentactionfund.org)); and from the International Centre for Human Rights Rights and Democratic Development([abrunet@ichrdd.ca](mailto:abrunet@ichrdd.ca)).

### **Dilemma Over Women's Ministry Highlights Difficulty of 'Gender Mainstreaming'**

At a time when they are being widely accused of failing to mainstream gender issues into the administration of the province, UNMIK officials are being given conflicting advice over whether to establish a new ministry of women in the province's transitional government.

The controversy, which has caused divisions among leading women activists in Kosovo, has demonstrated that gender mainstreaming in peace missions is a good deal more difficult than it might at first appear. But as with so many other challenges facing UNMIK, it has also created bad blood between UNMIK administrators and local civil society -- suggesting that a part of the problem is a lack of communication.

Twenty government 'departments' (ministries) were established earlier this year to administer the province. According to several different sources, UNMIK's Office of Gender Affairs has recommended that a new ministry of women be added to the list.

This has been strongly opposed by more than 30 women's groups that meet every month under their own independent auspices. One of their leaders, Igo Rogova, said that the group had sent a strongly worded letter to Bernard Kouchner, the UNMIK head, warning that a women's ministry would 'marginalize' women's issues.

Others expressed concern that UNMIK's main goal was to give a new ministry to a powerful member of the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), Kosovo's largest political party. This, they said, would put Kosovar women at the mercy of political parties at precisely the time when they are beginning to find their own voice.

Kouchner himself is said to be leaning toward a new women's department, because it would be viewed as politically correct and because he is determined that Kosovo's political parties assume responsibility for the administration of the province as a first step toward creating a government.

### **The Meaning of Mainstreaming**

The controversy is a measure of the difficulties that face Kouchner and his colleagues as they try to build a new Kosovo without any of the normal tools -- independent statehood, a functioning government, and responsible political leaders. But the issue of the ministry also raises questions about what precisely is meant by gender mainstreaming in a peace mission and how best this can

be achieved.

For many, it starts with political representation. In Kosovo that means participation in the so-called 'Joint Administrative Structure' (JAS), which began functioning on January 31, 2000, and is supposed to govern Kosovo until the province's legal status is clarified.

The JAS comprises four different institutions: an administrative council (cabinet) composed of Kosovo's political leaders and U.N. heads; a transitional council (parliament); 20 departments (ministries); and municipal boards.

Two women serve on the 12-person administrative council: Rada Trajkovic, who represents Kosovo's Serbs, and Feride Rushiti who sits as an observer on behalf of civil society. Six of the 36 transitional council members are women. According to UNMIK statistics, less than 10 percent of those on municipal boards are women.

Most attention has been on the 20 government ministries, which have considerable power precisely because Kosovo's political parties are so ineffectual. Each department has two 'co-heads': one local, and the other from the international community. As of mid-July, four of the 20 international co-heads and three local co-heads were women.

The three local co-heads are political appointments, with the exception of Dr. Vjosa Dobruna, who heads the department of democratic governance and civil society. Dr. Dobruna is one of the founders of the Center for the Protection of Women and Children and a respected member of Kosovo civil society. The duties of her department include monitoring human rights and also serving as a watchdog over the other 19 departments, which makes it of particular importance.

One statistic cited by U.N. officials is the relatively high number of women in the local Kosovar police. According to the United Nations, 27 percent of the 1,371 Kosovar police recruited by July 17 were women. (This is four times the percentage of women in the U.N.'s own police contingent.)

U.N. officials also cite their role in redrafting Kosovo's laws, many of which are highly unfavorable to women. Under the laws currently in force (which date from before 1989), it is not a crime for a husband to rape his wife. To prove domestic violence, a woman has to show some kind of bodily injury. Harassment does not include stalking.

These laws are clearly inadequate at a time when domestic violence is on the increase. The U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF) is supporting centers for women in four hospitals, and according to one official, about a fifth of the 400 or so women who visit the clinics each month complain of domestic violence.

The lack of legal precision also hampers the work of U.N. police, who are called upon to investigate crimes. There are 49 nationalities serving in the UNMIK police force, and many have different interpretations of what constitutes domestic violence.

Pending the establishment of a legislature for Kosovo, UNMIK has the power to issue legally

binding regulations, and several interagency working groups have been established to draft new regulations on a range of topics of concern to women. These include violence against women, child care, property, and trafficking. It is significant that at least some of this drafting is being done with the help of Elena, a Kosovar women's legal aid service.

While many U.N. officials praise UNMIK's efforts to redraft the laws, some also feel that their own colleagues should set a better example. Prostitution has been declared illegal by UNMIK, and several women have been arrested, but this has not stopped international officials from frequenting brothels. There were red faces when one senior British army officer was recently caught in flagrante delicto.

### **The Office of Gender Affairs**

In terms of UNMIK's own structures, gender mainstreaming rests in the hands of the Office of Gender Affairs, whose task is to advise Bernard Kouchner. The unit comprises seven international staff (including two U.N. volunteers), and it plans to set up a network of individuals or gender 'focal points' throughout the municipalities. As of mid-July, ten had been appointed.

Such a structure would help to ensure that gender issues permeate the entire international administration throughout Kosovo and so avoid the 'marginalization' of women's issues -- at least within the U.N. system. But whether or not the issues are pushed forward vigorously will obviously depend on the power and influence of the Office of Gender Affairs at UNMIK headquarters.

One of its problems is a lack of money. Unlike the KWI, which has dispensed over \$8 million in the last year, the Office of Gender Affairs has no program funding. There are also conflicting accounts of the Office's influence with Bernard Kouchner, who is notoriously headstrong and preoccupied by his own personal image.

But Kouchner also has to weigh competing priorities, knowing full well that his every decision will leave someone dissatisfied and angry. For example, he is said to be recommending that 30 percent of the candidates for the October municipal elections should be women.

This is acceptable to the larger parties, which have their own women's branch, but not to the smaller parties, which are finding it hard to come up with suitable candidates. To put it bluntly, they fear that helping Kosovo's women might hurt Kosovo's minorities.

### **A Matter of Tone**

Reviewing UNMIK's performance on gender issues, one UNMIK official described it as 'modest but certainly better than other U.N. missions.'

This fails to impress many leaders of the women's movement because they deeply resent what they see as a patronizing attitude. 'Kouchner treats us like Barbie dolls,' complained one prominent activist. She added that until UNMIK talks to Kosovo women as equals, it will not get the credit it deserves for gender efforts.

UNMIK is learning this the hard way. In one example, women's groups were so irritated by the OSCE's attempts to 'coordinate' Kosovar women that they decided to boycott the OSCE and form their own alternative forum. The forum meets monthly and includes over 30 different organizations. Each participant brings 10 DM to the meeting, and when the kitty reaches 1,000 DM it is given to a new, poor, group.

The forum members form the nucleus of the Kosova Women's Union, which organized the recent regional seminar in Prishtina. They have been unstinting in their criticism of Kouchner. They are currently contemplating a complaint about the attitude of his Office of Gender Affairs, which they find equally patronizing.

Such charges leave U.N. officials hurt and angry. What they fail to realize is that the women's movement in Kosovo is drawing strength and inspiration from its confrontational relationship with the United Nations -- and anything that strengthens civil society can only benefit the U.N.'s peace efforts in the long run.

### **US Senate Lifts Ban on UNHCR Humanitarian Funding in the Balkans, Improving Prospects for the Kosovo Women's Initiative**

The U.S. Senate has lifted a four-month freeze on U.S. contributions to the U.N.'s humanitarian programs in the Balkans, thereby easing pressure on the U.N.'s budget in Kosovo and relieving the Kosovo Women's Initiative (KWI) of some of the controversy that has dogged it for the last year.

The Senate move was made on July 26 by the Foreign Operations Subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Appropriations Committee. In immediate terms it means that the office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees will be able to spend \$20 million dollars of U.S. aid, which had been pledged to UNHCR but blocked by the Senate Subcommittee.

This will be good news for thousands of refugees from Croatia and Bosnia, whose efforts to return home are being supported by UNHCR. It will also relieve UNHCR from the necessity of making deep cuts in its Kosovo program that could have hurt women. UNHCR was so short of funds in Kosovo as a result of the Senate freeze that it was on the point of pulling out of the centers for social work, which are virtually the only source of welfare support for vulnerable women in Kosovo.

Equally relevant to Kosovo's women, the Senate move is expected to lift spirits at the KWI, the \$10-million fund of U.S. money managed by UNHCR in Kosovo on behalf of the U.S. government, which is intended to pump money into women's civil society.

As reported in a previous issue of 'On the Record,' the Senate Subcommittee froze UNHCR's Balkans funding after complaints that the KWI had failed to fund two prominent Kosovar groups: the Centre for the Protection and Women and Radio 21, which had won the admiration of Americans during the Serbian era.

UNHCR complied with the demand, and both of the groups are now receiving KWI money. But this in itself was not enough to get the Senate freeze lifted, because the controversy had escalated far beyond the original complaint. The KWI had become a litmus test of the effectiveness of millions of dollars of humanitarian aid flowing into Kosovo -- as well as a convenient stick for the U.S. Senate to use against the United Nations.

Sources say that the chairman of the Senate Subcommittee, Senator Mitch McConnell, finally relented after a series of appeals from the U.S. State Department, which provides the actual U.S. funds for UNHCR's operations. Under a condition laid down by the Senate, all funding requests for UNHCR are approved by the Subcommittee.

State Department officials explained how the \$20 million will be spent by UNHCR in the Balkans. None of it will take the form of humanitarian assistance in Serbia, which Senator McConnell feels is supporting President Milosevic.

The question now is whether the KWI can put the turmoil behind it and disburse its remaining funds successfully. UNHCR also needs to find a way of continuing to support KWI projects next year, by which time the actual KWI funding will have dried up and UNHCR will be scaling down its programs in Kosovo.

Perhaps most important, all sides need to learn some lessons from the KWI controversy. There is growing concern that all those who have struggled with the KWI -- the United States, UNHCR, and NGOs -- have been so burned by the experience that they may hesitate from supporting women's groups after future crises.

### **Disbursing KWI Funds That Remain**

Even before last week's Senate decision, UNHCR officials were expressing confidence that the KWI was on the right track. As of May of this year, a total of 86 local projects had received KWI funding, and KWI works directly with about 200 women's groups, of which 56 are formally registered as NGOs. This, says UNHCR, is an important contribution toward rebuilding civil society in Kosovo.

They also take pride in the range and variety of KWI grantees, which include large established networks, like Handikos (the association of handicapped) and small multiethnic groups. KWI grants have also ranged in size, from as high as \$100,000 to as low as the 350 DM (\$175) that was given to assist women to travel from Gnjilan to Gjakova. KWI has also disbursed \$466,000 in microloans. According to officials, the rate of repayment has been spectacular -- 100 percent.

'It is too soon to declare the KWI a success or failure, but right now it seems to be on the right track,' said Maureen O'Brien, the KWI coordinator, in a recent discussion with 'On the Record' in Prishtina.

The immediate challenge, according to O'Brien, is to apply the lessons learned in spending the remaining KWI funds. There is \$1.8 million left from the original \$10 million grant, which according to the conditions imposed by the U.S. State Department is to be spent by the end of

this year.

Judged by the last year, this may be difficult. Most Kosovo women's groups are too small to absorb large amounts of money -- particularly if the grant comes with burdensome reporting requirements.

>From its side, UNHCR will be helped by being able to deploy an experienced team of field officers to discuss KWI proposals, give advice, and follow up projects. This was not possible in the early days, because no provision was made for UNHCR's administrative expenses in the original KWI grant.

In addition, the U.S. State Department plans to loan UNHCR an official to handle KWI reporting. Some NGOs view this as an encroachment on UNHCR's multilateral character, but UNHCR appears to feel such support is long overdue.

### **Lingering Distrust**

Even if UNHCR's own staff is now better equipped to disburse KWI funds, it will still need to work in partnership with Kosovar women if the next few months are to be deemed a success. This may very difficult. There is a lingering distrust on both sides.

One reason is that UNHCR works through intermediaries -- or 'umbrella agencies.' These are international NGOs who manage KWI projects for UNHCR. UNHCR had no alternative, because it does not implement projects directly and was given no administrative funds under the KWI. But this remains a bone of contention for many prominent Kosovar women.

UNHCR selected three umbrella NGOs (Oxfam, Danish Refugee Council, and Malteser Hilfsdienst), which were paid large sums up front (\$400,000 in one case). There were no objections from small groups outside Prishtina, but some leaders of the women's movement in the capital were outraged. As noted in previous issues of 'On the Record,' they could not understand why they were not taken on trust and funded directly from the KWI, instead of having to go through international NGOs.

Motrat Qiriazhi was one of several well-established groups that asked for KWI funding in Has, a region where it has worked since 1995. UNHCR came back with a series of questions and conditions that struck Motrat Qiriazhi as irrelevant and even impertinent. Motrat Qiriazhi then gave up and easily found the money elsewhere. It now operates several of its own centers in Has.

UNHCR officials reply that they had an obligation to ensure that KWI money was well managed and that proposals were sound. This was often not the case. Last December, Sevdie Ahmeti, who heads the Center for the Protection of Women and Children, asked UNHCR for well over \$1 million to support about 15 women's centers. UNHCR officials felt this was far more than the Center could manage and suggested reducing the number to five, but Ms. Ahmeti never replied. UNHCR officials heard that she was ill. They were staggered to learn that she had gone behind their backs and complained to Senator McConnell, provoking the Senate freeze.

Another group, Liria, asked for \$300,000, which UNHCR officials examined and reduced to a more realistic \$90,000. According to UNHCR officials, the head of Liria, who is influential in Kosovo's transitional administration, then took advantage of UNHCR's predicament with the U.S. Senate and publicly upped the request to \$300,000, to the great embarrassment of the UNHCR Special Envoy Dennis McNamara. It required more time and expense to renegotiate the figure back down to \$90,000.

As a result of the Senate pressure, UNHCR has agreed to work directly with three local organizations: Radio 21, Elena (the group of women lawyers), and the Center for the Protection of Women and Children.

But this may not automatically dispel the distrust. Some UNHCR officials will resent the fact that they were forced to capitulate under pressure from the U.S. Senate. More to the point, they will argue that the new arrangement will not necessarily enhance the quality of KWI projects.

For example, the Center for the Protection of Women and Children is receiving \$100,000 for training, and UNHCR is already finding it hard to monitor the expenditure. Radio 21 is receiving \$41,000 to make a series of 30-minute radio programs on KWI, which are being broadcast every Sunday from Radio 21's studios. Many would argue that subsidizing Radio 21 to make radio programs is not the way to develop a competitive media in Kosovo.

But none of this will matter much to the two beneficiaries. Sevdie Ahmeti and Aferdita Kelmendi, the founder of Radio 21, will argue that they have paid their dues throughout the hard years and can certainly make better use of the money than UNHCR's international NGO partners. They will not necessarily feel better disposed toward UNHCR because it has handed over a large amount of American money -- something that should have been done long ago.

Ultimately it is not about money or projects, but about respect. Kosovar women who faced up to Serbia will not be talked down to, or patronized, by U.N. officials in their own country. Nor will they be treated as recipients and victims. This seems hard for donors in Kosovo to understand, but it may determine the success or failure of the KWI over the next few months.

At the very least, UNHCR needs to do more listening and also keep Kosovar women informed about the broad sweep of its work in Kosovo. Some women's leaders were astonished to hear that their KWI protests had created a crisis in UNHCR funding that might have penalized Kosovar war widows. UNHCR had not thought to tell them or enlist their support -- which they probably would have given. Clearly, there needs to be more dialogue in the months ahead.

### **Follow-up**

Another major concern must be the sustainability of KWI projects -- particularly those that were designed specifically to take advantage of KWI funding. Once the KWI kitty is empty, there may be no other source of funding. Indeed, one of the criticisms leveled at the KWI is that by promising so much, it has discouraged other bilateral donors from funding women's projects in Kosovo.

Next year will undoubtedly be difficult for KWI grantees. They will need support and advice. Part of this, clearly, will be provided by UNHCR. But UNHCR will also start scaling down its programs in Kosovo as the emergency recedes. Even as it is nurturing KWI projects, UNHCR must also identify partners who can take them over.

This is the perennial dilemma that faces the international community once an emergency begins to give way to longer-term reconstruction. It will be more acute in Kosovo, precisely because the KWI is an emergency response instead of a deliberative step on the road to reconstruction.

While several international bodies would like to get their hands on KWI money -- notably UNMIK's Office of Gender Affairs -- there are no obvious international partners with the means or skills to monitor scores of KWI projects, particularly if they need further funding.

In an ideal world, KWI projects need to be incorporated into some kind of national structure or development plan, but in the absence of a government in Kosovo that seems a long way off.

This could be particularly serious when it comes to the KWI funding that has gone into microcredit. Much of this appears to have been used very responsibly. All of the first loans have reportedly been repaid. But where does it go from there?

There is, first of all, no emerging policy or even consensus on where microcredit fits into Kosovo's reconstruction. Some see micro-loans as the perfect vehicle for helping individuals -- particularly women -- to start moving from dependency to self-sufficiency. Small loans can also help a woman buy her own wool and move from knitting sweaters to selling them. They can also help a family repair the small stores that were systematically destroyed by Serbian forces as they retreated from towns like Gjakova.

Others disagree strongly. They feel that there is plenty of petty cash circulating in Kosovo's service economy. What is needed, they say, are small business loans of \$10,000 instead of microloans of \$100 -- not to mention technical advice, banking facilities, and a marketing strategy. (At present, only one bank - the Micro-Enterprise Bank, provides loans to small businesses, but at an interest rate of 24%. 6 other banks have received preliminary approval in July, 2000 to operate in Kosovo but none have opened offices.)

Until this fundamental strategic disagreement is resolved, it will be difficult for UNHCR to lock in institutional partners. There are reports that the renowned Grameen Bank, which pioneered the use of microcredit in Bangladesh, plans to open in Kosovo. The U.N. Development Program (UNDP) and the World Bank are also reportedly interested in microcredit.

But neither the UNDP nor World Bank will want to make a major commitment to microcredit, or go looking for the required capital, in the absence of an economic strategy or a final determination of Kosovo's legal status.

### **Looking to the Future**

Looking back over the KWI's stormy history, UNHCR and its partners must draw the appropriate

conclusions, if only to ensure that the same mistakes are not repeated.

First, they must distinguish the end from the means. One senior official in the U.S. State Department, which has borne the brunt of the Senate disapproval, told UNHCR officials bluntly 'never again.' If this refers to the KWI, it seems reasonable. But if it refers to the underlying goal of supporting women in the aftermath of war, it would be catastrophic.

Neither UNHCR nor the State Department has managed to explain clearly how and why donors should support women's civil society in the aftermath of a war (something that is clear, for example, from the Kvinna Till Kvinna report on Bosnia referred to earlier). Instead, the discussion has returned obsessively to the modalities of the KWI -- and to project management.

This was probably inevitable because the KWI is such an administrative nightmare, with its four different levels of project management. But UNHCR was usually tongue-tied when it came to the larger vision -- and hence no match for its visionary critics, like Sevdie Ahmeti, Aferdita Kelmendi, and Igo Rogova.

For an agency that prides itself on its public relations and recently adopted a new proactive evaluation policy, this is a singular failure. UNHCR produced no editorials, promised no evaluation of the KWI, made no moves to learn from the experience, or explain that Kosovo's women were likely to be the first victims of the U.S. boycott. Instead, it was always on the defensive, acting hurt and misunderstood.

It is not too late. Indeed, UNHCR would be well advised to start an assessment of the KWI now, while there is still money in the kitty -- taking care to engage Kosovar women in the process. A dialogue of this kind would help to heal the wounds and identify some of the priorities for KWI funding over the next few months. It would definitely help the international community to develop a strategy on supporting women in emergencies.

That case can and must be made. As noted earlier in this issue, Kosovo is the best argument to date for building reconstruction around women -- for mainstreaming gender -- instead of funding piecemeal women's projects through an aid device like the KWI.

This is not to say that the women's movement has no faults or needs. Many of Kosovo's current women leaders are competitive and even intimidating. They can be arrogant and ungrateful. They do not delegate easily, and they want to control. Some understand the importance of developing a new generation of women leaders and of getting resources out to the villages. But others are less confident and see this as weakening their own power.

But their strengths far outweigh these flaws. In terms of their commitment to Kosovo's future, their work ethic, their capacity to manage, and their stamina, Kosovo's women are in a league of their own. They certainly compare favorably with Kosovo's politicians and other sectors of civil society like the media or private sector.

If the KWI wanted to make a lasting impact in the months that lie ahead, it would develop a comprehensive twofold strategy in partnership with these women. The first goal would be to help

veterans of the women's movement, like the Center for Protection of Women and Children, improve their management and administration -- far and away their weakest feature. Second, KWI needs to help these veterans to support and network with the scores of small initiatives that have formed outside Prishtina. This is the best guarantee that KWI's 200 local contacts will survive the end of KWI funding.

This kind of 'capacity-building' should not be done by Western consultants. It would be far more effective, and far more acceptable, if coming from some of the pioneers of women's civil society in Bosnia and Croatia who have been down the same path.

The lesson for UNMIK and for future U.N. peace-building missions, is much more simple: work with the women's structures and organizations that emerge from war, instead of trying to impose unsuitable aid programs under the guise of humanitarian assistance.