EVALUATION REPORT:

Women for Peace and Security: Towards Good Neighborly Relations between Serbia and Kosovo

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Project title:	**Women for Peace and Security: Towards Good Neighborly Relations between Serbia and Kosovo**
The location of conducted evaluation:	Mitrovica region and Rasina district
The time period covered by the evaluation:	12 March 2020 – 11 May 2023
The name of the organization that commissioned the evaluation:	Association of Women Sandglass
Project partners:	Mitrovica Women Association for Human Rights
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Many thanks to the female activists and local officials who shared their experience of participating in project activities and suggestions for their improvement.

Executive Summary

Project *Women for Peace and Security: Towards Good Neighborly Relations between Serbia and Kosovo* was developed to contribute to the reconciliation and the establishment of good neighborly relations between Kosovo and Serbia, **by achieving two outcomes:** 1) strengthening cooperation in peace-building efforts between women's groups from Mitrovica and Rasina regions, and 2) mainstreaming gender issues towards public officials at all levels and the general public in line with UNSC Resolution 1325 and EU integration process. **The intervention included several levels:** Capacity building of women's groups and local women activists to actively promote good neighborly relations; Establishing a joint, Kosovo-Serbia women peace network; Empowering the local public officials for the implementation of UNSC Resolution 1325 and mainstreaming gender issues within EU integration; and Connecting Mitrovica and Rasina communities through cultural and artistic cooperation. The project was developed by long-term partners engaged in peace activism – the Association of Women Sandglass and the Mitrovica Women Association for Human Rights. **The project was implemented in the Mitrovica region and the Rasina district.** The period of implementation was **from 12 March 2020 to 11 May 2023**. Originally, the project was supported **with 242,740.2 EUR** by **the European Commission, including co-funding of the Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation (5%)**.

The evaluation objective was to conduct the final project evaluation as a planned end-of-project activity, regarding the criteria: effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, impact, and sustainability and provide strategic lessons and recommendations to guide partner organizations in future actions. **The evaluation covered the entire project duration** and the territory of the Mitrovica region and the Rasina district. **The evaluation methodology** consists of 1) Desk review of relevant documents, 2) Attending the presentation of the project results at the Media Center in Belgrade (6 representatives of partner organizations and a consultant), 3) Interviews with three representatives of WA Sandglass, 4) Online questionnaire with MWAHR representatives and participants of the project activities (10 from the Rasina district and 10 from the Mitrovica region), and 5) Evaluation workshop in Miloševo organized by partner organizations (16 participants). **A total of 35 informants** participated in the evaluation. Transcripts from the interviews and questionnaire responses were analyzed through the content analysis method. **The evaluation had limitations** since the representatives of the Mitrovica Women Association for Human Rights participated in the evaluation by presenting their results at the press conference and filling out questionnaires, the same as the project participants, due to security reasons and the language barrier.

Evaluation findings: The project was implemented in difficult social and political circumstances mostly marked by the COVID-19 pandemic, election processes, difficulties in the negotiations between Belgrade and Pristina and consequently tension relations and conflicts in Kosovo, and the Russian-Ukraine war. **The effectiveness of the project is indicated by the realization of the outcomes**. First outcome – Cooperation in peace-building efforts between women's groups from Mitrovica and Rasina regions strengthened, was achieved. The Women Peace Network, an informal network of 17 women CSOs from the Rasina district and the Mitrovica region was established. They acquired knowledge on relevant issues for their participation in dialogues for the improvement of women's safety, peace dialogues, and work on reconciliation in their communities. Second outcome – Gender issues mainstreamed towards public officials at all levels and the general public in line with the UNSC Resolution 1325 and EU integration process, was achieved on a smaller scale. Public officials, especially at the local level, were informed of UNSC Resolution 1325 implementation and

the normalization of relations between Serbia and Kosovo from the local level. That was the first step in connecting mutually and raising awareness of their obligations related to the Resolution and the possibilities of working on reconciliation at the local level. Better cooperation was established with local officials in Kosovo, than in the Rasina district. Cultural and artistic cooperation did not have a large number of participants due to the impaired security, but information about the events still reached a wide audience through the media and social networks. **The project was an efficient response** of the partner organizations to the challenges and needs on the ground. They realized all the activities but had to adapt them to different circumstances. Consequently, there were allocations among certain budget lines, and the donors, in line with the spending, paid 11% less than the planned budget. However, the paid funds were adequately used. Cooperation between partner organizations was good, as well as monitoring of activities. **The project is relevant because** it was developed based on the experience of women peace activists, it contributes to the realization of the goals of Resolution 1325 and Gender Action Plan III - 2021-2025, as well as to the improvement of relations between Kosovo and Serbia, but also the Albanian and Serbian population in Kosovo. **The impact of the project** is in the developed trust among women of different ethnicities in the regions affected by the war and post-war tensions in Kosovo, and their preparedness and determination to actively participate in relevant social dialogues regarding Resolution 1325, EU integration and Belgrade-Pristina negotiation and normalization of relations, ensuring the inclusion of gender perspective. **The sustainability of project results** enables the established informal network Women Peace Network and its connection with other relevant networks, women organizations, and women activists, as well as produced artistic content and the designed methodology.

Recommendations:

- ✓ **The effectiveness** of cooperation with local officials in the Rasina district can be improved by involving the Commissioner for Equality of the Republic of Serbia and the academic community in the research and presenting results.
- ✓ **The efficiency** of the project can be improved through a smaller number of diverse activities and their process organization, sharing responsibilities among the Women Peace Network's members and the organization of events on some "neutral ground".
- ✓ **The project is relevant with all its components,** and it is important to continue its implementation.
- ✓ **The impact and sustainability of project results** can be improved by involving national actors responsible for the implementation of Resolution 1325; transforming Reports on the implementation of Resolution 1325 and the normalization of relations between Serbia and Kosovo at the local level in monitoring reports; strategic and action planning of the Women Peace Network; raising advocacy capacities through more intensive cooperation with relevant national and European networks/ organizations/ actors, including the KtK women advocacy platform, and greater connection with educational and cultural institutions.
- ✓ **The European Commission should support the activist organizations**, since in this way authentic democratization from below is supported, and it is necessary to find the best way to support them considering the demanding management of European projects.

Lessons learned: The best results for the engagement of women in the processes of reconciliation between the citizens of Kosovo and Serbia were achieved by a combination of information activities and cultural and artistic exchange. A good practice is to connect women from the Rasina district, Albanian women, and Serbian women from North and South Mitrovica since the Serbian women from Kosovo had more confidence to join the project. Moreover, connecting women activists and women local officials can improve the mutual exchange of information, and involve women more in decision-making processes. Experts for European integration were valuable sources of information

for women about the negotiations between Belgrade and Pristina, and relevant UN and EU documents. The exchange of experience with peace activists from the region and the EU additionally empowers and motivates women to be engaged in peace activism and influencing decision-makers. KtK gave a valuable contribution to conveying the "voice from the local" to relevant EU officials. Working with war trauma, as well as dealing with the consequences of everyday tension in Kosovo due to the unresolved political situation, emerged as an important topic to work on.

1. Introduction: context of the intervention

The project was realized in **very turbulent social and political circumstances** in Serbia, Kosovo and globally, which was reflected in the implementation of the project. Global turbulences were primarily caused by the pandemic and the Russian-Ukrainian war.

The first year of the project implementation, 2020, was largely marked by a ban on movement and physical isolation as a result of the epidemiological situation caused by COVID-19. The state of emergency was declared on 15 March and lasted until 6 May 2020. Women were the most affected by the pandemic. The loss of jobs due to the pandemic affected women disproportionately more, and the most endangered were single mothers, as well as those engaged in healthcare and service activities.[1] The lack of clearly defined procedures for protection against domestic violence and the limited actions of institutions in that period, additionally put at risk women who survived violence in the family and partner context and made their protection more difficult.[2]

Russia's attack on Ukraine on 24 February 2022 started the war that is still ongoing, which resulted in a large number of human victims, the destruction of Ukrainian territory, a large number of internally displaced persons in Ukraine, but also a wave of millions of refugees towards EU countries. The war also fundamentally changed political and economic relations in the world, causing, first of all, an energy crisis and a crisis in the food market, inflation and a noticeable drop in purchasing power and living standards in Europe, strongly felt by the citizens of Serbia. Serbia's strategic direction was also being questioned because it did not align with any of the EU's restrictive measures and most of the declarations by the High Representative (HR) on behalf of the EU against the Russian Federation.

During the project implementation, **elections were held twice in Serbia and Kosovo**. In Serbia, parliamentary and local elections took place on 21 June 2020, while early parliamentary elections were held on 3 April 2022, along with the regular presidential and councilor elections for the City of Belgrade. In both cases, the process of forming the government was lengthy – four and six months respectively. In Kosovo, parliamentary and local elections were held in 2021 and early local elections in April 2023, due to the withdrawal of Serbs from Kosovo institutions and the fact that four Serbian municipalities were left without mayors.

This three-year period was also marked **by the tightening of relations between Serbia and Kosovo**, which escalated in November 2022 with the withdrawal of the representative of the Serbian list of the institution of Kosovo due to the decision of the government in Pristina to replace the Serbian license plates with Kosovo ones, as well as due to the suspension of the director of the Regional

[1] Uticaj COVID-19 pandemije i mera za njeno sprečavanje na zaposlenost i uslove rada žena i muškaraca u Srbiji (secons.net)
[2] AŽC Godišnji izveštaj o radu za 2020. godinu (womenngo.org.rs), page 4.

Police of the North of Kosovo, Nenad Đurić.[3] The municipalities with a majority Serb population in the north of Kosovo were left without mayors. In the early local elections in April, only 3.5% of voters turned out. Serbian List, the largest party of Serbs in Kosovo, did not participate in the elections and called on Serbs to boycott the elections, as well as the official Belgrade. The elected mayors were Albanians, which caused protests by Serbs. Negotiations between Belgrade and Pristina, conducted under the auspices of the EU, with the strong support of the USA, were ongoing all the time. Thus, a three-point European plan for de-escalation was immediately proposed and adopted, which includes the removal of the special police from the north of Kosovo and the withdrawal of Serbian demonstrators, the launch of new elections with the participation of Serbs and a return to dialogue.[4] Progress was achieved in the negotiations through the Agreement on the path to normalization of relations and the implementation of the annex, which provides a framework through which both countries fulfill their independent obligations. Kosovo should establish a Community of Municipalities with a Serbian majority (which has been Kosovo's obligation since 2013), and Serbia will no longer lobby against Kosovo's membership in international organizations. They will mutually recognize documents and national symbols.[5]

The research of attitudes of Serbian citizens in relation to questions of political interest and willingness to participate in democratic processes[6], has shown that they are interested only in the course of negotiations between Belgrade and Pristina. The last annual survey of public opinion on relations in the region[7] shows that almost two-thirds of respondents are to some extent afraid of the outbreak of conflict in the region in the next five years and that two-thirds of Serbian citizens believe that it is very or to some extent likely that a conflict could break out over the status of Kosovo. A public opinion survey in Serbia conducted in September 2021[8] showed that 76% of citizens do not know what Serbia's goal is in the dialogue with Kosovo, and 73% of citizens get information about Kosovo primarily by watching television, which indicates the importance of informing citizens about this topic.

Women do not participate in the negotiations between Belgrade and Pristina, which is not in line with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 and the National Action Plan for the implementation of Resolution 1325 in the Republic of Serbia[9], which foresees the activity "2.4. 4. The incorporation of the gender perspective and the inclusion of more women in the information process and in the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina". Resolution is important since for the first time the unique impact of war on women was recognized, focuses on the protection of women and girls, and emphasizes their central role as actors for peace. The complete absence of gender issues and women's perspectives from the negotiation/normalization agenda is a consequence of women not taking part in the negotiations.

In Serbia, two national action plans for the implementation of Resolution 1325 of the United Nations Security Council - Women, Peace and Security in the Republic of Serbia have been created, for the period 2010-2015 and for the period 2017-2020. The plan is to prepare the third national action plan. Two reports on the implementation of the last national action plan were also prepared.

[3] Lokalni izbori na severu Kosova: Glasalo ukupno nešto više od 1.500 ljudi, od toga samo 13 Srba - kaže Beograd - BBC News na srpskom

[4] Eskobar: Srbija se obavezala da će učestvovati na izborima i skloniti učesnike protesta, u suprotnom - posledice - KoSSev

[5] Srbija prihvatila simbole i dokumenta Kosova, sporazum iz Ohrida otvorio vrata priznanja: Ključne poruke Eskobara pred Kongresom SAD (nova.rs)

[6] Summary Audit of political engagement in Serbia 2022.docx (crta.rs)

[7] *Barometer-2023-Serbia-2-Srb.pdf (bezbednost.org)

[8] Stavovi-gradjana-Srbije-o-odnosima-s-Kosovom-i-Albanijom-analiza-istrazivanja-javnog-mnjenja-1.pdf (bezbednost.org)

[9] 341161.pdf (osce.org), p.24.

One was done by the Political Committee on the implementation of the National Action Plan[10], and the other by the Commissioner for Equality[11]. In both reports, it was pointed out that at the local level, neither the authorities nor the citizens are sufficiently familiar with the Resolution. "Authorities at the local level want guidelines, leadership, initiative, and, above all, means for the realization of planned activities. Citizens must know what resolutions, national strategies and plans are about and must recognize and adopt them as common good (common property)."[12] There should be local safety councils at the local level, and they should have available resources. Monitoring by the Commissioner for Equality, however, showed that councils were established in 67% of municipalities, and that 29% of the council members were women. However, only 10 municipalities were provided with budget funds for the implementation of NAP. It is also pointed out that there is neither the Political Committee nor the Government Operational Group, so there is no coordination between the national and local levels. **Kosovo had an Action Plan for the implementation of Resolution 1325, "**Women, Peace and Security" 2013-2015[13], but the aims of Resolution 1325 are incorporated in the Kosovo Program for Gender Equality 2020-2024[14], as PILLAR III: Women's Rights, Access to Justice and Security, and one of objective is "Increasing women's participation in the negotiation, peace and reconciliation processes, in diplomatic missions and missions abroad."(p.64) The EU's new Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in External Action 2021–2025 (GAP III)[15] also addressed the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda, which is adapted to every country by Country Level Implementation Plan.

In Serbia, there is also a **Network of Civil Society Organizations - Women, Peace and Security in the Republic of Serbia[16]**, which brings together 22 civil society organizations, the academic community, and individuals interested in the implementation of the Resolution. The goal of the network is to develop and direct proposals and requests of CSOs to improve the safety of women and girls to public authorities responsible for implementing Resolution 1325 in Serbia at the national and local levels, as well as in international forums[17]. The Association of Women Sandglass is a member of the network. The **Kosovo Women's Network**[18] is active in Kosovo, consisting of 140 organizations, with a mission to support, protect and promote the interest of women and girls throughout Kosovo. Mitrovica Women Association for Human Rights is a member of the Network.

At the end of the project implementation, on 3 May 2023, a huge tragedy happened that shook Serbian society to its foundations - a mass murder in a Belgrade school during which a thirteen-year-old boy killed nine of his peers and the school guard. The next day another tragedy followed - a 21-year-old killed eight and wounded 14 people in Mladenovac. These tragedies prompted huge protests of citizens called "Serbia against violence", demanding the responsibility of competent authorities and relevant institutions and media.

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[10] *Zakljucak sednice Vlade RS i Izveštaj o sprovodjenju NAP.pdf (mod.gov.rs)
[11] *Monitoring-Report-sr-priprema.pdf (ravnopravnost.gov.rs)
[12] Ibid.
[13] (ABGJ PLANI I VEPRIMIT 1325 - tre gjuh\353.pdf) (womensnetwork.org)
[14] AGE Kosovo Program for Gender Equality 2020-2024.pdf (rks-gov.net) , The first Kosovo Program for Gender Equality was developed covering the period 2008-2013. Kosovo had an Action Plan for the implementation of Resolution 1325, "Women, Peace and Security" 2013-2015, (ABGJ PLANI I VEPRIMIT 1325 - tre gjuh\353.pdf) (womensnetwork.org)
[15] join-2020-17-final_en.pdf (europa.eu)
[16] Network of civil society organizations - Women, peace and security - Beogradski centar za bezbednosnu politiku (bezbednost.org)
[17] Ibid.
[18] Home - Kosovo Women's Network (womensnetwork.org)

2. Description of the intervention

Project *Women for Peace and Security: Towards Good Neighborly Relations between Serbia and Kosovo* was developed by two women's organizations - the Association of Women Sandglass and a long-time partner Mitrovica Women Association for Human Rights. The overall objective was to contribute to reconciliation and establishing good neighborly relations between Kosovo and Serbia. It was planned to be realized through two outcomes: 1) strengthening cooperation in peace-building efforts between women's groups from Mitrovica and Rasina regions, and 2) mainstreaming gender issues towards public officials at all levels and the general public in line with UNSC Resolution 1325 and EU integration process.

The key constraints the project wanted to address are the lack of access to information and specific knowledge regarding the ongoing negotiations between Belgrade and Pristina, as well as disjointed actions directed at local communities. Women's associations, groups, and female activists in Mitrovica and Rasina regions have suffered from long-time systemic exclusion from the ongoing normalization processes. The overt centralization of normalization negotiations led to a lack of access to relevant information, an inability to comprehend the ongoing political processes and, subsequently, challenges when attempting to influence them.

For that reason, an intervention at several levels was designed:

- Capacity building of women groups and local women activists, to be effective and accountable independent actors able to engage constructively with governments on key societal challenges. That is supposed to be realized through seminars on relevant topics (Resolution 1325, EU Gender Plan, Kosovo-Serbian negotiation, etc.), and exchange of best practices and solidarity building with other peace activists from the Western Balkans region and wider Europe (open space discussions).
- Establishing a joint, Kosovo-Serbia women network, which would serve as the primary vessel for advocacy and joint activities.
- Empowering the local public officials for the implementation of UNSC Resolution 1325 and mainstreaming gender issues within EU integration through researching their capacities and opinion on the relevant issues and presenting them the findings and recommendations for improving women's participation in decision-making and reconciliation process, as well as normalization of Serbia-Kosovo relations (two reports, one for each region).
- Contributing to the establishment of good neighborly relations between Serbia and Kosovo, through cultural and artistic cooperation between Mitrovica and Rasina communities. Lots of activities were planned: two murals with peace massage, two Women Peace Caravans, two literary events, two theater plays, and a photo exhibition on reconciliation from the perspective of young Albanian and Serbian women.

The project was implemented in the Mitrovica region (municipalities with Serbian majority – North Mitrovica, Zvečan, Leposavić, Zubin Potok; municipalities with Albanian majority – South Mitrovica, Vushtri, Skenderaj) **and the Rasina district** (Aleksandrovac, Brus, Kruševac, Varavarin, Trstenik and Ćićevac). The **implementation period of the project was from 12 March 2020 to 11 May 2023** (including two months of non-cost extension). It was supposed to be financially supported **by the European Commission with 242,740.2 EUR,** including co-funding of the Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation (5%). However, **the EC paid 204,996.65 EUR in line with the spending**.

3. Evaluation objectives, approach and methods

The evaluation objective is to conduct the final project evaluation as a planned end-of-project activity, regarding criteria: the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, impact, and sustainability of the project, with a strong focus on assessing the results contributing to project outcomes and objectives. Furthermore, to assess what works and why, highlight intended and unintended results, identify emerging good practices and approaches, and provide strategic lessons and recommendations to guide partner organizations in future actions.

Evaluation criteria questions:

- Effectiveness: Is the intervention achieving its objectives?
- Efficiency: How well are resources being used?
- Relevance: Is the intervention doing the right thing?
- Impact: What difference does the intervention make?
- Sustainability: Will the benefits last?

The evaluation covered the entire project duration – from 12 March 2020 to 11 May 2023, and the territory of the Mitrovica region and the Rasina district.

The evaluation methodology consists of:

1) **Desk review** of relevant documents: Project proposal, including LFA; two Interim Narrative Reports with annexes; EU Progress Reports for 2020, 2021, 2022; EU and national strategies and action plans; Resolution 1325, studies/research reports, etc.
2) **Attending the presentation of the project results at the Media Center in Belgrade,** on 9 May 2023. The results were presented by the representatives of the Association of Women Sandglass - Snežana Jakovljević, Slavica Stanojlović Urošević and Maja Konstantinović; representatives of the Mitrovica Women Association for Human Rights - Vetone Veliu, Gordana Lazović and Lorida Sadiku, and Bojan Elek, Belgrade Center for Security Policy, project consultant.
3) **Interviews with the representatives of WA Sandglass –** Snežana Jakovljević (coordinator), Slavica Stanojlović Urošević (assistant) and Maja Konstantinović (PR), on 9 May 2023.
4) **Online questionnaire** (Annex 1) with MWAHR representatives and participants of the project activities (10 from the Rasina district and 10 from the Mitrovica region). The questionnaire had 10 questions, mostly open-ended. The questions related to the assessment of the quality of the activities, the importance of the Women for Peace Network, the project results, the lessons learned, the sustainability of the project results and suggestions for follow-up. It was in Serbian and Albanian. The participants were representatives of women's organizations, activists, and local officials (representatives of gender bodies, municipal administrations, councilors in the municipal assembly, etc.)
5) **Evaluation workshop in Miloševo organized by partner organizations**, 04-06/05/2023. Feedback from 16 project participants on the questions: What was your motivation for participating in this project? What have I learnt from the project? What have I learnt about myself?

Key informants were selected through consultation with the project team. **A total of 35 informants** participated in the evaluation (Annex 2). Transcripts from the interviews and questionnaire responses were analyzed through the content analysis method.

The evaluation had limitations since it was conducted immediately after two mass murders in Serbia, which shook the citizens of Serbia to the core and caused large protests “Serbia against violence” demanding the authorities to bear responsibility for the unfortunate events. For that reason, the representatives of the Mitrovica Women Association for Human Rights did not feel safe

and could not stay after the presentation of the results at the evaluation workshop. They participated in the evaluation by filling out questionnaires, the same as the project participants. The reason for using the questionnaire was also the language barrier. To compensate for that, the statements of MWAHR representatives from the presentation of the project results and the statements of the project participants from the evaluation workshop organized by the partner organizations were included.

4. Evaluation Findings

4.1. Effectiveness

The effectiveness of the project was analyzed on the basis of the achievement of two outcomes, according to Logical Framework and Activity Matrix (Annex 3).

Outcome 1: Cooperation in peace-building efforts between women groups from Mitrovica (Kosovo) and Rasina (SRB) regions strengthened

O1 Target
1.1. Regular meetings between partners held (6), joint capacity building seminars (6), and open space discussions (3) organized; at least 13 women's groups networked in joint initiative Women for Peace Network (WPN) by 2021.
Final Value
1.1. Regular meetings between partners held (20 Skype, Zoom and Viber meetings; and 9 live meetings), joint capacity building seminars (6), and open space discussions (3) organized; 30 women from 17 NGOs networked in joint initiative Women for Peace Network (WPN) by 2021.

Cooperation in peace-building efforts between women groups from Mitrovica (Kosovo) and Rasina (Serbia) regions was strengthened through **capacity-building activities on gender-important issues** within UNSC Resolution 1325 and the EU integration process as well as by **establishing the Women for Peace Network.**

Capacity-building activities included six seminars with female activists and women (total of 155) on topics relevant to the active promotion of good neighbourly relations and **three open space discussions (OSD)** for the exchange of experiences with women peace activists from the Western Balkans and other post-conflict regions. (Annex 4) The results were the following:

- 17 female activists from each of the regions - Rasina and Mitrovica, were educated about the methodology of data collection on the basis of which they could conduct research. Three components were researched: 1) implementation of Resolution 1325 at the local level; 2) perception of dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade by local authorities and activists; 3) their opinion on how they can contribute to reconciliation in their communities.
- At least 100 women from Rasina and Mitrovica regions improved their knowledge through seminars on the following topics: the EU and the enlargement policy (Who is who in EU?); EU integration and gender equality (EU Gender Action Plan - GAP III, 2020-2025), Kosovo - Serbia Dialogue; UN Resolution 1325, Women, Peace and Security; and Art and activism.
- 87 women raised awareness about Women's peace activism in Yugoslavia, about women's participation in building peace and improving relations between Kosovo and Serbia, and about the Women's Court held in 2015 in Sarajevo, through open space discussions participated by

activists from the Western Balkan region. These talks increased understanding and empathy among female activists from the former Yugoslavia and enabled them to cope with their war traumas more easily.

I think the activities were well organized on both sides. As a participant, I felt safe on the premises where the activities were organized. Getting to know each other and sharing our experiences allowed for mutual understanding and trust. Open Space Discussion III was one of the best activities because there were guests from other countries besides Kosovo and Serbia, such as BiH, Montenegro, Slovenia, and Moldova. The exchange of experiences from each guest coming from the place of conflict, counseling and suggesting how to change things in our countries in terms of women's empowerment and communication among them, make this project extremely important to be implemented in these regions.

Evaluation participant from the Mitrovica region

The Women Peace Network was established at the meeting organized in the period 29-31 October 2021 in Vrnjačka Banja in Serbia. There were 30 participants from 17 NGOs. Zorana Antonijević, an expert in women's rights and gender equality but also in peace issues, and a very experienced activist facilitated the meeting. The first day of the meeting was dedicated to familiarizing participants with different women's peace networks in the region – *Kosovo Women Network* in Kosovo, *Roma Women Network*, *Women Against Violence*, *Women in Black* and *Rasina District Women's Network* in Serbia. The participants then defined the vision, mission, values, and principles of their network. The mission is to empower and connect the women of the Mitrovica region and the Rasina district to promote and build lasting and sustainable peace. The evaluation after the meeting has shown that women were very pleased with the establishment of the network. They said that it will empower them even more, that the network can be a common platform or a space for work and action, and exchange of information. It is not a structured network with established rules, bodies, and procedures of conduct, but it is used whenever women need to act together.

The establishment of the network was preceded by the mapping of women's groups and individuals and their interest in networking and opinions about the role and work of the network. *Sandglass* and MWAHR had meetings and contacts with at least 20 women's groups and 70 women rights activists in the Rasina district and the Mitrovica region for the period June – October. Many of them have joined the network.

I am grateful for the project, we've learned a lot about laws, about Resolution 1325, we were in Serbia, women from Serbia came to Kosovo, we talked a lot. We agreed that there are no women in the dialogue and there should be, now I have a better understanding of what Resolution 1325 means. This was a great experience.

We have learned a lot about each other, about what peace is, about conflicts, we talked, ate together, danced, and we will leave that spirit as a legacy to new generations.

We've learned a lot. About ourselves, about our relations, about Resolution 1325, about European integration. I was in Kruševac for the first time. Now I understand everything much better.

Participants of the final evaluation in Miloševo

The network wrote an appeal[19] for including women in the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristine that was submitted to local, national and EU officials including a special rapporteur for the dialogue, *Miroslav Lajčak*. EU officials answered that they would consider their appeal.

On 17 August 2022, the network wrote another appeal to calm passions and reduce tensions between Belgrade and Pristina.[20]

The realization of these outputs and outcomes, as well as the entire project, was also contributed to by frequent meetings of partner organizations on the manner of organizing certain activities, their results, and lessons learned. Partner organizations held a total of 20 Skype, Zoom and Viber meetings, as well as 9 in-person meetings.

Outcome 2: Gender issues mainstreamed towards public officials at all levels and the general public in line with UNSC Resolution 1325 and the EU integration process

O2 Target
2.1. At least 100 officials from all levels of governance (local, national and international) have received recommendations for the implementation of UNSC R 1325 (2021). 2.2. At least 10.000 citizens of the MR and RD have participated in public cultural and artistic events.
Final Value
2.1. About 200 local, national and EU officials, were recommended to take steps on increasing women's safety and role in reconciliation in line with Resolution 1325 2.2. Tens of thousands of citizens are informed about EU and Resolution 1325 through media, social networks and participating in the project.

Gender issues mainstreamed towards public officials at all levels and the general public in line with UNSC Resolution 1325 and the EU integration process was realized through producing **recommendations for the implementation of UNSC Resolution 1325** for the Mitrovica region and the Rasina district; **strengthening of local public officials** for the implementation of UNSC Resolution 1325 and mainstreaming gender issues within EU integration; as well as through **increasing participation of women in peacemaking processes** at the local level.

In order to produce **two reports and recommendations for the implementation of UNSC Resolution 1325 and foster the normalization of relations between Serbia and Kosovo from the local level**, research in both regions was conducted in 2020. The research methodology included 6 focus groups (3 in the Mitrovica region and 3 in the Rasina district) with a total of 59 participants (21 women activists; 21 young women activists, and 17 municipal officials); interviews with 62 local officials (40 in the Mitrovica region[21] and 22 in the Rasina district); and a desk research and literature review on issues relevant to UNSC Resolution 1325. Two reports were produced and printed in 3 languages – Albanian, Serbian, and English. The reports were prepared in consultation with Bojan Elek, BCBP (expert for EU integration, Serbia) and Blerim Ahmeti (expert for EU integration, Kosovo). The findings showed that the representation of women in institutional bodies and organs at the local level has increased, however, local officials, if they do not work in bodies dealing with gender issues, are not sufficiently informed about Resolution 1325 and other relevant documents important for the safety of women. As for the negotiations between Belgrade and Pristina, they believe that the negotiations are not transparent, they are informed about them through the media and social

[19] Uključite žene u dijalog Beograda i Prištine | Udruženje žena Peščanik (udruzenjepescanik.org)
[20] https://www.facebook.com/UdruzenjeZenaPescanik/?locale=sr_RS
[21] Kosovo municipalities: 19 interviews were conducted in the municipalities with the Serbian majority – North Mitrovica, Zvečan, Leposavic, Zubin Potok; 21 interviews in the municipalities with the Albanian majority – South Mitrovica, Vushtri, Skenderaj. Rasina district: Aleksandrovac, Brus, Kruševac, Varavarin, Trstenik and Ćićevac.

networks, and they are not sure of the accuracy of the information. They think that politicians or the other party benefit from the negotiations, and that the negotiations are conducted at a high level, so that those from the local level do not have much influence. However, they are ready to work on reconciliation and see the possibility of developing cultural, tourist, and economic ties. Local officials and women activists believe that women should have a greater role in negotiations since they are more cooperative.

Partner organizations sent 35 copies of the reports to 6 local self-governments in the Rasina district and 80 copies to 7 local self-governments in the Mitrovica region. They also distributed the reports to CSOs, and women activists and put them on the internet page of Sandglass and Facebook of MWAHR. The opinions of the interviewed people were promoted through quotations posted on Sandglass Facebook[22] and Instagram. Furthermore, three public presentations were held for the activists of human rights, media professionals and officials in the Rasina district and the Mitrovica region (around 80 people). The reports were also presented as part of the presentations of the project results at the Čaglavica Media Center in Pristina[23] and the Belgrade Media Center[24].

The research and reports were important in establishing contacts with local officials and encouraging them to think about these topics. Therefore, for example, an agreement on cooperation was signed between MWAHR and GE Body in South Mitrovica. In 2020, Sandglass appointed a representative in the Council for Gender Equality at the invitation of the Town of Kruševac, and two organizations that are part of this project, Una from Ćićevac and Sandglass, were involved in the preparation of the Ćićevac AP for Gender Equality. Sandglass was also invited to be part of the working group for the development of the Action Plan for Gender Equality in Kruševac. Furthermore, Sandglass signed a memorandum with the magazine Town about publishing 5 articles in 5 magazine issues related to the research. It is also significant that partner organizations sent these "local voices" to EU officials. They sent inputs for the *EC Progress report for Serbia 2022.* One of the *Sandglass* recommendations to the EU Commission was to increase the inclusion of women in Belgrade – Pristine dialogue and reconciliation between the two. They also had the opportunity to talk with EU officials during a week of the meetings with EU officials that *Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation* organizes on an annual basis, usually in November. For example, in 2020, they talked with Charlotte Isaksson, Senior Gender Expert (EEAS) and Linda Andeer (CPCC) about WPS and the new Gender Action Plan III**,** Cloe Berger, country desk officers for Serbia at DG NEAR (European Commission), Korneel De Schamp, Rule of Law desk officer and Anais Andra in Kosovo, MEP Viola VON CRAMON-TAUBADEL (EP Rapporteur for Kosovo) and MEP Vladimir Bilcik (Chair Montenegro, EP Rapporteur for Serbia). In 2021, they gave input for making the Country Local Implementation Plan related to EU Gender Action Plan III. The topic of women's participation in reconciliation processes is defined as one of the goals of the Country Local Implementation Plan for Gender Action Plan III – 2021-2025 for Kosovo[25].

We believe that the officials had the opportunity to get information that they lacked before, to hear something that they did not know, the opportunity to exchange opinions with members of women's groups and to generally talk about a topic that is not talked about much, at least not publicly. How much they used the information and how much it meant to them, we don't know, we assume not much, or maybe nothing, we didn't do the evaluation except verbally, while talking with them. During

[22] (1) Facebook
[23] (1) Facebook
[24] "Žene za mir i sigurnost – ka unapređenju dobrosusedskih odnosa Srbije i Kosova" (mc.rs)
[25] country_level_implementation_plan_gap_iii_kosovo_eng.pdf (europa.eu),

the conversation, they said they were pleased that we met, that it was important to discuss these topics, and that they would deal with it more in the future.
Partner organization representative

Partner organizations raised awareness of **local public officials** on the topics important for Women, Peace and Security through 26 meetings in both districts, which encompassed more than 50 officials. It is also important that officials from areas in Kosovo were encompassed, with a dominant Albanian population and from areas with a dominant Serbian population. They were mainly mayors of municipalities, local assembly representatives, representatives of gender equality bodies, etc. At the end of the project realization (16-19 March 2023), a joint peacemaking retreat for female public officials and women activists from Mitrovica and Rasina regions was organized on Ohrid Lake (North Macedonia). There were 26 participants. Conflict resolution and peace negotiations were discussed, but it was also about improving their well-being, such as guided meditation, grounding and breathing exercises. One of the products of the retreat was an appeal letter[26] signed by the participants and addressed to official negotiators on normalizing relations between Serbia and Kosovo (they were in Ohrid at the same time). They appeal for women to be included in the negotiations, and to be guided by the concept of human security and the interests of peace and stability and the well-being of all citizens during the negotiations.

Getting to know the participants of the seminar in Ohrid and taking part in this project helped me realize that nothing is lost yet and that there is hope as long as there are women who want to share their time, opinions, decisions, life problems and many similar things with women who are alike, who understand them. Very apt and, for this type of work, trained mentors really impressed me because in my environment such professionalism under European standards is marginalized. Of course, the complete organization, starting with the program, lecturers, transportation, hotel and hotel services, visiting St. Naum, respecting agreements related to seminar activities was at a very professional level. It would be a pleasure for me to be part of this or a similar team in the implementation of some new projects.

Local official from the Rasina district

Participation of women in peacemaking processes at the local level was supported through different exchange activities – discussion on relevant social and political topics and socially engaged artistic events. The following activities were organized:

- **Four workshops on utilizing the artistic process in peacemaking** (December 2021)
  Two workshops were organized in Mitrovica with 15 young women and two in Kruševac with 10 young women from Kruševac and Trstenik. Participants improved their understanding of the context in which the feminist movement in art appears, but the workshops were also preparation for creating murals dedicated to peace.
- **Creating a mural with women for peace message in Mitrovica and a billboard in Kruševac** (September 2022 in Mitrovica, April 2023 in Kruševac)
  The mural in Mitrovica was created and its official presentation was organized. In Kruševac, due to the lack of support from the local authorities, Sandglass installed a billboard with the motif of the mural that stood there for a month.

[26] Apel za uključivanje žena u dijalog Beograda i Prištine | Udruženje žena Peščanik (udruzenjepescanik.org)

- **Two Women Peace Caravans in Mitrovica and the Kruševac district** [27] (October 2022)
  The caravans gathered a large number of participants, numerous and diverse activities were organized, starting from political discussions to artistic events and a party for the participants. Although the caravans were planned as a traveling activity, it was only possible in the Rasina district, the participants visited 4 of the 6 towns of the district. In Mitrovica, the partner organization assessed that in the current circumstances, the idea of organizing activities in different cities is not feasible and is potentially unsafe, as well as their participation in the street action in Kruševac. At least 300 women participated in both caravans, about 200 in Mitrovica and more than 100 in the Rasina district. A short film about the peace caravan was also made.[28]

Activities in Mitrovica: Concert of classical and popular music in the Town Museum; Series of panel discussions on reconciliation and normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia; Visit to the photo exhibition made by young women of Serbia and Mitrovica in the Info Center (North Mitrovica); Theatre performance about violence against women; Cultural Center in Mitrovica; Visit to the South Mitrovica Municipal Assembly and talk with officials.

Activities in the Rasina district: Round table on Resolution 1325 and women's participation in reconciliation processes, premises of the Educational Center, Kruševac; Visit to the Varvarin municipality and talks with Varvarin officials; Street action: Public reading of Resolution 1325, Actors' Square in Kruševac; Visit to the Wine Museum and the Town Museum in Aleksandrovac; A walk through the town and a tour of the mural dedicated to women's solidarity; Screening of films from the Free Zone festival, dedicated to human rights, the exhibition of photographs made by young women and a party in ACC Gnezdo, Kruševac.

- **Cultural exchange program between the cities of Mitrovica and Krusevac** (2020-2022)
  In the first year of the project realization, two literary events were held. MWAHR hosted a literary event attended by women writers from Serbia (4) and Kosovo (6) in their office. The auditory was 23 female activists from the Mitrovica region and from Kruševac. Sandglass organized reading poetry and the fragments of novels by their authors – 8 women writers (all translated in Serbian and Albanian for auditory), as well as playing guitar in the breaks. The auditory was 30 female activists from 5 CSOs. In 2022, two theatre plays were organized. In the Hall of the Kruševac Theatre, 6 young activists and artists from Kosovo, dedicated their performance to women's strength, combining dance, poetry and acting[29]. In return, two activists from the organization *Girls' Center* from Niš, held an eco-feminist performance O2 or "New trees for the planet", in the schoolyard in North Mitrovica[30]. Each performance gathered around 30 spectators.
- **Photo exhibition on reconciliation from the perspective of young Albanian and Serbian women** (2022)

[27] U ORGANIZACIJI UŽ "PEŠČANIK": "Ženski mirovni karavan" – Kruševac PRESS (krusevacpress.com), UŽ Peščanik: Mirovni karavan u Kruševcu - KruševacGrad (krusevacgrad.rs)
[28] https://www.facebook.com/UdruzenjeZenaPescanik/videos/5814500608629740?locale=sr_RS

[29] https://www.rtk.rs/130495/u-krusevackom-pozoristu-odrzan-performans-udruzenja-zena-pescanik-u-saradnji-sa-asocijacijom-zena-mitrovice-za-ljudska-prava/
[30] https://www.brusonline.com/kultura/14931-novo-drvece-za-planetu-i-o2-u-okviru-projekta-zene-za-mir-i-sigurnost

Young female activists participated in the photography workshops, but also in the workshops that addressed stereotypes and peace activism, during three-day visits. Seven young activists from Mitrovica participated in the workshops together with their 8 Serbian peers in Kruševac. Three young activists from Kruševac returned the visit to their peers in Mitrovica, accompanied by three project team members. As a result of the worsening of the situation in Kosovo due to the conflict over license plates, the other girls gave up. Similar workshops were organized in Mitrovica with 20 girls. During both visits, the girls took photos, and in the end, an exhibition was created that was shown during the Women Peace caravan at the EU Info Center in North Mitrovica and at the Alternative Cultural Center Gnezdo in Kruševac. The photos were also used in an online publication[31] where the activities and results of the project were presented.

I was part of a working group of young women, I visited Serbia for the first time, I wanted to see how people lived there. It was very nice. I realized that we are similar, everyday problems are the same, we established good communication. I am happy to have new contacts, I will use them in the future.

Participant in youth activities from the Mitrovica region

At the end of the project, the partner organizations asked the donors for an additional activity with a request for a reallocation of funds - a **final three-day event** (4-6 May 2023) for project teams and activists. 12 female activists from Serbia and from Kosovo (24 in total) gathered in Miloševo in Kosovo. Along with the evaluation of the project and the presentation of the project results in the Čaglavica Media Center in Pristina, the participants visited the dark sights - the Gračanica monastery, the archaeological site of Ulpijana and Prizern. On 9 May, the project results were presented at the Media Center in Belgrade. The presentation of the project results in Čaglavica was followed by journalists from RTK Kosovo, and in the Media Center by journalists from Fonet, RTK Kosovo, and N1.

Information about the project, individual activities, and products, as well as project topics, **reached a large number of citizens**. The total number of media reports about the work of partner organizations was 80 and 55 media reports related to women, peace, and security issues. There were 20 news on the Sandglass website and 144 posts on social networks (80 Sandglass Facebook, 7 Sandglass Instagram, and 57 MWAHR Facebook). The number of reached people through social networks was 69,338. The number of likes was 2,679.

4.2. Efficiency

The project was implemented flexibly in relation to the challenges in the environment and identified needs during the project implementation since it was the only way it could be implemented. First of all, the very topic of the project should be taken into account - the improvement of relations between Serbia and Kosovo. Little has been done on the issue and it causes resistance and suspicion both among local self-government representatives who were the target group of the project and among citizens. Thus, for example, in the Rasina district, instead of the

[31] PREDSTAVLJENA MONOGRAFIJA U OKVIRU PROJEKTA ŽENE ZA MIR I BEZBEDNOST KA DOBROSUSEDSKIM ODNOSIMA SRBIJE I KOSOVA | Udruženje žena Peščanik (udruzenjepescanik.org)

planned 35 interviews with representatives of local self-governments, 22 interviews were conducted through personal contacts of project team members.

The reason the plan has not been fulfilled in the Rasina district is the lack of interest and the weak response of those responsible for participating in the research. We believe that there is a huge self-censorship at the local level, both on the topic of relations between Kosovo and Serbia and on cooperation with the civil sector that is not established and controlled by the government.

Partner organization representative

Sandglass also did not receive permission to paint a mural dedicated to women's contribution to peace in a public area in the town, although they provided funds, had a sketch of the mural, and submitted a proposal for possible walls to be painted. So instead of a mural, they put up a billboard with the motif of the mural that stood there for a month. In general, it was difficult to establish cooperation with local authorities on the subject of relations between Serbia and Kosovo in the Rasina district, and representatives of Sandglass mainly entered the conversation through the topic of the realization of women's rights in the Rasina district, so then they would present the project and introduce the topic of women's participation in the negotiations on the normalization of relations between Serbia and Kosovo.

In the Mitrovica region, on the other hand, local authorities were more willing to cooperate, but the implementation of activities was hindered by security problems. The cooperation between North Mitrovica and South Mitrovica was not appreciated, and some women hid the fact they participated in the project. MWAHR avoided working on the project media visibility and moving the peace caravan to different municipalities, which would also increase the visibility of the project, but would jeopardize the safety of female activists.

The tightening of relations between Belgrade and Pristina, such as, for example, the conflict over the replacement of Serbian license plates with Kosovo ones, led to the refusal of female activists to participate in activities in another region. Conflicts would usually intensify during elections, and during the project implementation in Serbia, there were two election years in Serbia - in June 2020 and April 2022, and in Kosovo, parliamentary and local elections in 2021 and early local elections in April 2023, due to the withdrawal of Serbs from Kosovo institutions and the fact that four Serbian municipalities were left without mayors. These elections made it even more difficult to implement activities with representatives of local authorities and local bodies, as a result of the time needed to establish the government at all levels after the elections. Moreover, in the period immediately before and after the elections, their focus was on the elections, and it was difficult to achieve cooperation.

When we were planning the project in 2019, we thought that it was not a good moment, that very little progress was made, nothing was happening, women were not represented in the structures, in negotiating structures, or were excluded from any information channel, and in the meantime, it turned out that even worse times were about to come. The start of the project was marked by the beginning of the Coronavirus pandemic, and it ended with the national tragedy of Serbia, and meanwhile, the war in Ukraine started and the Serbs left the institutions in the north of Kosovo. I must have forgotten something, but for a long time, there were bad conditions for any initiatives, even for peace initiatives. If the reach was smaller than we planned in 2019 very ambitiously, there is no need to regret or feel sad about it, in any case, I believe it was done the best it could under the circumstances...Now the third NAP starts, so we will continue to work.

Bojan Elek, Belgrade Center for Security Policy, project consultant[32]

Naturally, the COVID-19 pandemic should also be added here, which affected the form of organization of events so that they were organized online, or some activities were postponed in order to meet the conditions for in-person meetings. For example, the peace caravan in the Rasina district was supposed to take place in 2021, but due to the pandemic, it was postponed to 2022. However, the pandemic also affected the essence of the project - the development of good-neighborly relations that required a delicate approach, mutual contacts, and socializing, so that there was a willingness and openness to exchange thoughts, attitudes, and information. On the other hand, online access had positive effects - it developed the digital skills of partner organizations and online events enabled the presence of a larger number of participants.

One of the barriers was language, although many older Albanian activists knew Serbian and younger activists used English, all products and content were in Serbian, Albanian, and English.

At the end of the project implementation, two mass murders took place, which shook the entire Serbian society to its foundations. These events took place shortly before the presentation of the project results at the Media Center in Belgrade, which resulted in little interest from journalists.

The partner organizations overcame all the challenges and obstacles and realized all the planned activities, although not in the expected time, scope, or with the expected number of participants. The project was extended by two months. Their frequent meetings and agreement on all project implementation steps contributed to successfully overcoming all obstacles. They communicated openly about all difficulties and jointly tried to find solutions. Monitoring and evaluation were an integral part of all activities. The project teams participated in all activities, and they asked for feedback from the participants - their impressions of the event and its importance to them.

It should also be borne in mind that this is the first major European project led by the Sandglass association and MWAHR, comprised of activists accustomed to an activist approach and supporting the position of their donors, and now they were faced with demanding administration and financial management of the project. The difficulties in the implementation of the activities were also reflected in the spending of the budget. There were many allowed allocations. Allocations in the first year were made due to the impossibility of holding in-person events, so the money that was intended for accommodation, travel expenses, was reallocated mainly to technical support for organizing online seminars, audio and video recording, and translation (English-Albanian-Serbian). In the second and third years of the project, some activities could not be realized at all or were organized with lower spending of budget funds, in a modified form, compared to what was foreseen mainly due to the current situation with Kosovo, which had been tense for some time, the impossibility of crossing the border and holding the activities as planned, due to the lower response of women to participate in the activities. Furthermore, in the last year of the implementation of the project, there was an increase in prices on the market, in all areas, so accommodation, transportation, refreshments, etc. became more expensive, while the situation was completely different at the time when the budget was created, at the beginning of 2020, and this led to new changes in the budget. In the end, an extension of the project by two months was requested, since for security reasons, it was not possible to implement the planned activities in the planned period for the last few months. Out of the planned budget of 242,740.20 EUR, 25,925.81 EUR (10.7%) less was

[32] "Žene za mir i sigurnost – ka unapređenju dobrosusedskih odnosa Srbije i Kosova" (mc.rs)

spent. However, the funds were adequately used for the implementation of the planned (numerous) activities.

4.3. Relevance

The project addresses two relevant interrelated topics. One is United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, with which 23 years ago a historic step was taken and for the first time the unique impact of war on women was recognized, as well as the need for full and equal participation of women in peacebuilding. It was agreed to increase the representation of women at all levels of decision-making, to provide special protection to women and girls, and to include a gender perspective in conflict resolution and peace work. In Serbia, two evaluation reports on the implementation of the National Action Plan for the implementation of Resolution 1325 for the period 2017-2020[33] pointed to the lack of connection between national and local actors, as well as horizontal cooperation between local self-governments. The absence of knowledge about the existence of the document and its content at the local level was noticed, beyond those involved directly and indirectly in its application Weak local mechanisms and policies were pointed out.

> *A big omission happened at the very beginning, as NAP had been written and adopted, when, being enthusiastic about the coming to existence of a document of such quality, we didn't t notice that maybe its main characteristic, the localization of implementation, was not accompanied by anyone's obligation to introduce local actors to the document. It was up to them to, based on good luck, good will, information from the nongovernmental sector, notice that there would be a lot of work related to the implementation and a lot of benefits from the implementation... Nongovernmental organizations that received funded projects for the implementation of some NAP activities locally do so, but they are rare, and the places where this happened are also rare.*
> Prof. Zorica Mršević PhD, 2018, p.91[34]

In Kosovo, the aims of Resolution 1325 are incorporated in the Kosovo Program for Gender Equality 2020-2024[35], relating to decision-making, justice, peace, security, and equal participation in the security sector. One of the defined activities is "Organizing public debates on women's representation in negotiation, peace, and reconciliation". Gender Action Plan III – 2021-2025 Country Level Implementation Plan for Kosovo[36] also incorporates the Women, Peace and Security agenda. Therefore, the project contributes to the implementation of the EU's new Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in External Action 2021–2025 (GAP III)[37].

All these documents indicate the need for such a project, which on the one hand informs female activists and women's organizations about the Resolution and relevant documents and their implementation, and on the other hand local officials about their obligation in the implementation of the Resolution and connects them together to jointly improve the implementation of the Resolution

[33] *Zakljucak sednice Vlade RS i Izveštaj o sprovodjenju NAP.pdf (mod.gov.rs), prepared by the Political Committee for the implementation of the National Action Plan, *Monitoring-Report-sr-priprema.pdf (ravnopravnost.gov.rs), Commissioner for Equality.
[34] Ibid.
[35] AGE Kosovo Program for Gender Equality 2020-2024.pdf (rks-gov.net) , The first Kosovo Program for Gender Equality was developed covering the period 2008-2013. Kosovo had the Action Plan for the implementation of Resolution 1325, "Women, Peace and Security" 2013-2015, (ABGJ PLANI I VEPRIMIT 1325 - tre gjuh\353.pdf) (womensnetwork.org)
[36] *country_level_implementation_plan_gap_iii_kosovo_eng.pdf (europa.eu)
[37] join-2020-17-final_en.pdf (europa.eu)

locally. Additionally, the research and recommendations represent input for the development of new strategies, but also for the reports of European officials.

Furthermore, in the National Action Plan for the implementation of Resolution 1325 in the Republic of Serbia,[38] there is an activity "2.4. The incorporation of the gender perspective and the inclusion of more women in the information process and in the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina Incorporating a gender perspective and involving a greater number of women in informing and in the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina". That is another important topic that the project addresses - the negotiations between Belgrade and Pristina and the normalization of relations, in which women do not participate.

The idea came about during our Brussels meetings with EU parliamentarians. So, we came up with the idea that what our officials do not do, we do. This means that we need to establish a bridge between the women from the Mitrovica region and the Rasina district, where we exchange activities, have our target group, and try through the activities that we have planned for these three years to bring women together and to reduce the prejudices on both sides, if nothing else. And also, to raise our voices for women's participation in decision-making processes and peace processes. In recent years, we haven't had a single woman in the dialogue.
Vetone Veliu, MWAHR activist[39]

Turbulent relations between Serbia and Kosovo in the years of the project implementation and a few initiatives to improve relations also indicate the relevance of the project. Public opinion surveys show that a large percentage of citizens do not know what Serbia's goal is in the dialogue with Kosovo, and that the most common way to get information is through television. Citizens are also afraid of the outbreak of conflicts in the region due to the status of Kosovo. That is why it is important to increase the transparency and level of information about the negotiations, which the female activists worked with women throughout the project.

How difficult and scarce is access to information (about the Belgrade-Pristina negotiations), and essentially with that I contributed the most to your initiative, since all the information about them is in the heads of a few people, mostly men, and the information is exchanged not through the media, not through gatherings like this one, but mostly in some closed circles and at round tables that are not open to the public.

Bojan Elek, Belgrade Center for Security Policy, project consultant [40]

The relevance of the project stems from the long-term cooperation of partner organizations and engagement in peace work so that they developed the project in line with the needs of citizens in their regions. Most men from the Rasina district were forcibly mobilized for the war in Kosovo in 1999 and a great number was killed. During 15 days of May of that year, during the state of emergency due to the NATO bombing, Sandglass activists participated with the citizens of Kruševac in protests against forced mobilization. Every year in May, Sandglass organizes an action of commemoration of those protests, and since 2014 they have been asking the authorities in the Town of Kruševac to declare 24 May (International Women's Day for Peace and Disarmament) as the Day

[38] 341161.pdf (osce.org), p.24.
[39] "Žene za mir i sigurnost – ka unapređenju dobrosusedskih odnosa Srbije i Kosova" (mc.rs)
[40] "Žene za mir i sigurnost – ka unapređenju dobrosusedskih odnosa Srbije i Kosova" (mc.rs)

of Remembrance of May Protests in Kruševac and the Rasina district[41]. Likewise in Kosovo, the first actors who started working together after the war in 1999 were women of different ethnicities and as a result of that work, a multiethnic organization - MWAHR - was created. Therefore, it is relevant that this initiative connects women from those regions - North Mitrovica, South Mitrovica and the Rasina district.

4.4. Impact and Sustainability

It is unrealistic to expect the impact of such a small project, realized in extremely difficult social and political circumstances and when there was a decline or absence of political will on these issues on a global level. Only 51% of the UN member states have adopted their own NAP for the implementation of Resolution 1325, and of those 98 countries, only 35 allocate a budget for the implementation of their plans.[42]

However, the significant impact of this project is that despite constant difficulties in the negotiations between officials to normalize relations between Belgrade and Pristina and constant political turmoil and conflicts, for three years partner organizations have been developing and strengthening the network of women's organizations that works diligently at the local level, working on establishing good neighborly relations and raising awareness of the need to implement Resolution 1325. Peace is not only the task of the national security sector, but of local actors - from municipalities to civil society organizations and every citizen, as they have a role in preventing and resolving conflicts. Confidence has been developed among women of different ethnicities, their awareness has been raised about the negotiations between Belgrade and Pristina and the gender issues relevant to the implementation of Resolution 1325 of the UN Security Council and the EU integration process.

> *The project contributed to the improvement of relations, in terms of getting to know each other and openly presenting opinions and factual situations from both sides (meaning Kosovo and Serbia). The very fact that there is a huge interest and commitment to include women in decision-making and in the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina is a sufficient indicator that women are ready to protect and preserve the peace and stability the entire life depends on, above all in Kosovo...*
>
> Project participant

The Women for Peace Network is a good tool for advocacy, which is used locally, nationally, and internationally. MWAHR activists managed to achieve good cooperation with local officials in both North and South Mitrovica, since they recognized that they were striving for the same goal - entry into the European Union, and they believe that such initiatives can ensure this and prevent the war from happening again. In the Rasina district, Sandglass activists managed to introduce the topic of Resolution 1325 and relations with Kosovo through the topic of the state of women's rights in the Rasina district in talks with local officials. They see this as the beginning of the process and set the example that with their persistent advocacy they contributed to the fact that 5 out of 6 municipalities in the Rasina district have women as mayors.

> *The political situation was extremely unstable. If we look at the indicators now, the number of women in those negotiation structures has not even increased, mostly men still participate in them. However,*

[41] https://krusevacpress.com/pescanik-istrajava-zahtev-za-proglasenje-24-maja-danom-secanja-na-majske-proteste-u-krusevcu-i-rasinskom-okrugu/ There is also a film "Albanians are our sisters", which is one of the rare testimonies about those days in Kruševac.

[42] "Ako u potpunosti primenimo Rezoluciju 1325, inkluzija bi bila podrazumevani standard" - Beogradski centar za bezbednosnu politiku (bezbednost.org)

I would say that the idea of this project is important, what is called people to people, contact between people, women to women, to establish some kind of communication. Only in this way, from below, some change can happen. Before we could now hope for a political solution at the highest level, which we all want to see, in order to somehow get there, it is important to establish, to break down obstacles between people at that personal level, and where else than in the Mitrovica region and the Rasina district, two regions that are next to each other.

Bojan Elek, Belgrade Center for Security Policy, project consultant [43]

The network also produced three appeals addressed to officials at all levels, including the EU representative for dialogue Miroslav Lajčak, asking for the inclusion of women in the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina. Its importance is communication with European officials and contribution to the creation of the EC Progress Report and the Country Local Implementation Plan for the Gender Action Plan III - 2021-2025. Solidarity and connection with activists in the region and beyond are also important. All this continues even after the project is over. Thus, representatives of partner organizations participated in the International Summit for Peace in Ukraine, 9-11 June 2023, at the invitation of the Austrian Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, in which there were about 300 participants. There they presented the experiences of cooperation and the project.

This is a serious peace initiative based on Resolution 1325. While the official negotiations between Belgrade and Pristina are not sufficiently transparent and exclude the participation of citizens, this initiative does the exact opposite, it includes us, explores our needs, connects us, and raises an important issue from a feminist perspective. It is valuable and immeasurable for the relations between Serbia and Kosovo.

Project participant

Sandglass is a member of the Network of Civil Society Organizations - Women, Peace and Security in the Republic of Serbia, through which it can also continue advocacy activities at all levels, such as MWAHR through membership in the Kosovo Women's Network.

The sustainability of the network can be increased through the development of a strategic plan and regular action planning in relation to the context in which it operates. There is a consensus among the evaluation participants that the network should continue its work and there are different proposals on how to continue. Some participants believe that the network should be expanded to include women from other regions. There is also a suggestion to work more with women from rural areas, to inform and connect them.

Art has also been shown to be a good link and tool for getting to know each other and building peace. Produced artistic content - literary evenings, performances, mural/billboard, as well as the designed methodology can be further used to improve relations between regions.

[43] "Žene za mir i sigurnost – ka unapređenju dobrosusedskih odnosa Srbije i Kosova" (mc.rs)

5. Conclusions

- **The project effectiveness** was analyzed on the basis of the achievement of two outcomes:
  - First outcome – **Cooperation in peace-building efforts between women groups from Mitrovica (Kosovo) and Rasina (SRB) regions strengthened, was achieved**. The Women Peace Network, an informal network of 17 women CSOs from the Rasina district and the Mitrovica region was established. A group of 155 women increased their knowledge of UN Resolution 1325, EU integration and gender equality, and the Kosovo-Serbia Dialogue so that they can achieve informed participation in dialogues for the improvement of women's safety, in peace dialogues and work on reconciliation in their communities. They were additionally strengthened by the connection and exchange of experience with peace activists from the region and beyond.
  - Second outcome - **Gender issues mainstreamed towards public officials at all levels and the general public in line with the UNSC Resolution 1325 and EU integration process**, was achieved on a smaller scale. Two reports and recommendations for the implementation of UNSC Resolution 1325 and the normalization of relations between Serbia and Kosovo from the local level were prepared on the basis of descriptive small research in both regions with a total of 79 local officials and 42 women activists. 115 copies of the reports were distributed to local self-governments in both regions, but also to CSOs, women activists and media, as well as to the public through the social networks of partner organizations. Recommendations were also sent to EU officials. Three appeals were written for the inclusion of women in the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue and addressed to decision-makers at all levels. However, these activities, as well as informational meetings, served more to raise awareness of these topics and familiarize public officials with them, than to cause concrete actions in the implementation of Resolution 1325. Better cooperation was established with local officials in Kosovo, than in the Rasina district. As for increasing participation of women in peacemaking processes at the local level, through cultural exchange events, a smaller number of women were involved (about 30, and at most 300 through peace caravans), due to the impaired security, both because of the pandemic and the conflicts in Kosovo. Information about the events still reached a wide audience through the media and social networks.

- **The project was efficiently implemented** since the partner organizations managed to respond to the challenges and needs on the ground - the pandemic, elections in both Serbia and Kosovo, conflicts and protests in Kosovo that followed the negotiations between Belgrade and Pristina. All activities were realized, although not according to plan, in scope and with the expected number of participants. Consequently, there were allocations among certain budget lines, and the donors, in line with the spending, paid 11% less than the planned budget. However, the budget was adequately spent, and countless activities were organized. Partner organizations led a European project for the first time. The successful overcoming of obstacles is the result of close cooperation between partner organizations, frequent meetings, and monitoring of activities through attendance at all events and seeking feedback from the participants of the activities.

- **The project is relevant at several levels**. It was developed based on the experience of activists who had been engaged in peace work and the fight for women's rights for years, in the regions that were most affected by the war in Kosovo and was designed according to the needs of the target groups. It contributes to the realization of the goals of Resolution 1325 and Gender Action Plan III - 2021-2025, as well as national strategies and plans for their implementation. It specifically addresses perceived shortcomings in implementation - insufficient empowerment of

the local level - officials and citizens, for their implementation and the absence of women in the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina. It contributes to the improvement of relations between Kosovo and Serbia, but also the Albanian and Serbian population in Kosovo, through the so-called process of "democratization from below".

- **The impact of the project** is in the developed trust among women of different ethnicities in the regions affected by the war and post-war tensions in Kosovo, but also in their determination not to be silent observers of the negotiations between Belgrade and Pristina, but to be informed about that process, as well as about gender issues relevant for UNSC Resolution 1325 implementation and EU integration process. Then, together with local officials, to work on the contribution to those processes locally, but to have their voice heard at the national level and with EU officials.

- **A good basis for the sustainability of project results** is the established informal network Women Peace Network and its connection with networks - Network of civil society organizations - Women, Peace and Security and Kosovo Women's Network. This network was active all three years and overcame social and political obstacles, and it continued its activities even after the realization of the project. Produced artistic content - literary evenings, performances, mural/billboard, as well as the designed methodology can be further used to improve relations between regions.

6. Recommendations

- ✓ **The effectiveness** of the part of the project related to the cooperation with local officials in the Rasina district on the implementation of Resolution 1325 can be improved by connecting with the Commissioner for Equality of the Republic of Serbia, who creates a report on monitoring the NAP implementation for the implementation of Resolution 1325, and in cooperation with him to give a special review to the Rasina district. The quality of the report on the implementation of UNSC Resolution 1325 and fostering the normalization of relations between Serbia and Kosovo can be improved by including representatives of the academic community in designing the methodology and selecting the sample.
- ✓ **The efficiency** of the project can be improved through a smaller number of diverse activities and their process organization. For example, it is possible to have a joint training of organizations and activists from both regions and agree on which program they will implement with women in certain regions, and then after a certain period of work bring together representatives of women from different regions. Similarly, greater involvement of organizations from the Women Peace Network in the implementation of activities would contribute to efficiency. The organization of events on some "neutral ground", such was the peacemaking retreat in Ohrid, could also facilitate the realization of the activities.
- ✓ **The project is also relevant** for the empowerment of women and local officials for the implementation of Resolution 1325 and for contributing to the normalization of relations between Serbia and Kosovo at the local level, and it is important to continue its implementation.
- ✓ **The impact and sustainability of project results** can be improved:
    - by connecting with national actors responsible for the implementation of Resolution 1325 and organizing joint events with local officials to motivate them to engage in implementation.

- Reports on the implementation of Resolution 1325 and the normalization of relations between Serbia and Kosovo at the local level can be improved so that they represent the basis for monitoring progress and that the findings and recommendations are regularly sent to officials at all levels, including EU officials.
- The Women Peace Network needs to be further strengthened through the development of a strategic plan and regular action planning, as well as joint project writing.
- Advocacy capacities can be increased through more intensive cooperation with the Network of Civil Society Organizations - Women, Peace and Security and Kosovo Women's Network, and joint influence on national and EU officials.
- A regional Kvinna till Kvinna women advocacy platform (Gender Mainstreaming EU Integration in the Western Balkans), should be used to complement Action's advocacy efforts at the national and international level, particularly in regard to the EU officials.
- Greater connection with educational and cultural institutions.

✓ **The support of the European Commission to activist organizations** is a good practice, since in this way authentic democratization from below is supported, and lessons learned from all such projects should be drawn, to develop the best possible support for them.

7. Lessons Learned

- The best results for the engagement of women in the processes of reconciliation between the citizens of Kosovo and Serbia were achieved by a combination of information activities and cultural and artistic exchange. On the one hand, women were informed about the negotiations between Belgrade and Pristina and were introduced to the relevant UN and EU documents for the inclusion of women in decision-making processes and peace dialogues and about women's safety. In this way, they are familiar with the main actors at all levels that need to be influenced and their obligations to include women in the peace dialogue, so that they can have informed participation in social dialogues and influence decision-makers. On the other hand, the cultural and artistic exchange made it possible for women to get to know and connect better and develop mutual trust. They discovered many similarities and that they face similar problems in their communities.
- Significant for informing women about the negotiations between Belgrade and Pristina, relevant UN and EU documents, was the inclusion of two experts for European integration - Bojan Elek, from the Belgrade Center for Security Policy (Serbia) and Blerim Ahmeti (Kosovo), who were able to provide them with relevant information.
- Connecting women in the "triangle" - women from the Rasina district, Albanian women, and Serbian women from North and South Mitrovica, gave good results since the Serbian women from Kosovo had more confidence to join the project. It is important that the two regions were included, where the war in Kosovo had the greatest consequences and where there have been constant tensions and political turmoil after the war.
- Connecting women activists and women local officials is a good way to create a "common front" locally, improve the mutual exchange of information, and involve women more in decision-making processes.
- The exchange of experience with peace activists from the region and the EU proved to be significant for the women since they were familiarized with the ways of organizing and influencing decision-makers, and they received additional motivation to get involved. However, it meant the most to women from Kosovo in exchanging the experience of working with war

trauma. Working with war trauma, as well as dealing with the consequences of everyday tension in Kosovo due to the unresolved political situation, emerged as an important topic to work on.

- The role of the Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation is significant in connecting women activists with relevant EU officials so that they can convey the “voice from the local” and influence the creation of relevant reports and documents at the national level.