



Hear my voice

Addressing stigma surrounding the survivors of sexual violence during the war in Kosovo

*Workshop Report
14 – 15 September, 2017*

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Summary

On the 14-15th of September 2017, KRCT organised a workshop with the overall objective to address stigma surrounding the survivors of sexual violence during the war in Kosovo. The specific objective of this workshop was to identify barriers and agree on measures and recommendations needed to be undertaken in order to fight stigma from individual, community and institutional perspective.

This workshop will contribute to raise awareness on conflict related sexual violence and the situation of survivors as well as the stigma that surrounds it. The workshop brought together institutional representatives, civil society actors, representatives of religious communities, media representatives, and survivors themselves to jointly discuss different aspects of this matter at the moment when we are approaching the final phase of preparations for launching the application period for status recognition. Best practices from the region were brought to the workshop to directly learn from Bosnian experience in fighting stigma related to sexual violence.

A total of 53 participants contributed to this workshop on discussing the barriers, elements with an impact on stigma but also elements that contribute to creation of the public opinion about the survivors of sexual violence during the war, their empowerment and integration into society. Participants included members of the Commission for Verification and Recognition of the survivors, representatives of the Prosecution, Police, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Ministry of Health, EULEX, Media, CSOs supporting survivors and survivors of sexual violence during the war.

Key speakers included the former President Ms. Atifete Jahjaga, Ambassador at British Embassy in Pristina, Mr. Ruairí O'Connell, Ms. Feride Rushiti, Kosovo Rehabilitation Centre for Torture Victims (KRCT), Ms. Igballe Rogova, Kosovo Women's Network (KWN) and Ms. Kadire Tahiraj, Drenas Centre QPDK. The workshop enabled the presence and contribution of Ms. Sabiha Husic, Medica Zenica to share the experiences and practice of addressing stigma surrounding survivors in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Presentations of the key speakers provided an overview of the current status related to institutional approach on addressing the status of survivors, challenges, needs and stigma surrounding the survivors.

Methodology

The workshop was held over two days in Prishtina, Kosovo and it was organised in plenary sessions and separate workshops.

A separate focus group meeting was organised a week earlier with family members of the survivors of the sexual violence during the war in Kosovo. This pre-activity of the workshop was organized to hear challenges of family members of survivors but also to hear their thoughts about ways how to overcome stigma. Conclusions and recommendations of this pre-activity are integrated to the conclusions and recommendations of individual perspective group.

The participants in the working groups were divided in four (4) groups and worked separately in four workshops debating on the above issue from individual, community and institutional perspective.

Facilitators provided introduction remarks that stimulated inputs from participants on identifying barriers that impact the stigma surrounding the survivors of sexual violence during the war in Kosovo.

Prior to this workshop, KRCT monitored a set of media to analyze their approach about the presence of the issues related to the developments and status of the survivors of sexual violence during the war in Kosovo. Below are the Media that were monitored. Findings were used as a basis for discussion within the group. Media was monitored during a three month period starting from June until August 2017.

- Main TV Channels: Radio Television of Kosovo (RTK - National TV Station) , Koha Television (KTV), RTV 21, TV KLAN (Privately Owned TV's),
- Print media: Koha Ditore, Zeri and Tribuna,
- Web portals: Express, Telegrafi, IndexOnline, Kosova Press, Insajder,

All the media monitored at least once during the monitoring period reported about the victims of sexual violence. Media reporting was done in this form: distribution of press releases, reports for the status verification process, interviews as well as exclusive confessions from the survivors. Some of the reports, especially the exclusive confessions, have been re-broadcasted from other media.

Discussions in the working groups

The work during this two day workshop was organised in separate workshops and sessions to enable **active participation** and focus the discussions on identification of the barriers that impact the stigma surrounding the survivors from individual, community (youth and media) and institutional perspectives.

1. Role of Media on Fighting Stigma surrounding the survivors of sexual violence

For the first time KRCT achieved to have a separate workshop with chief editors of the top mainstream national media outlets in Kosovo (RTK, KOHA Group, Express, TV KLAN and BIRN).

Discussions during this workshop were facilitated by Ms. Feride Rushiti. She updated the chief editors on the status of the survivors, stigma surrounding them and the work of Kosovo institutions in addressing the status of this marginalised group. Ms. Feride Rushiti called media representatives to join the fight against stigma surrounding the survivors and with their work play an **active role on creating a public discourse** about the survivors of sexual violence during the war in Kosovo. Further, media were invited to **pressure the government** in the process of allocation of the budget and decision on the amount of the personal pension for survivors as immediate preconditions that ensure better status of the survivors in the society.

Media representatives committed a full and unconditional support to contribute in fighting stigma surrounding survivors of sexual violence during the war. Their contribution will consist of preparing documentaries, TV stories, interviews, editorials, articles etc in a systematic way in order to treat the phenomenon and create a public discourse.

Identified barriers that impact the stigma surrounding the survivors from **media perspective** include:

- isolation of the survivors by the society including media community;
- accuracy of statistics related to the number of survivors;
- lack of consolidated public opinion related to survivors of sexual violence;
- lack of consolidated standards to be respected during communication of the media with survivors and their exposure in media materials (data protection standards).

Next steps will include:

- Preparation of a **communication strategy** between media and CSOs that work with survivors. KRCT was called to have a leading role in preparing this strategy that will also include a set of communication and data protection standards;
- Media will address and fights different aspects of stigma (legislative, institutional, impunity, empowerment and integration etc).
- CSOs will be in regular communication with media in order to address right issues at the rights time;

- Media will pay particular attention to increase public **pressure** to the newly established government in pushing forward priority issues such as making the commission operational and allocating the budget for compensation of the survivors;
- Media will pay particular attention to the creation **of collective memory** about the survivors of sexual violence during the war in Kosovo. This will be done through documentary movies, exhibition of the places and clothes of the survivors with the aim to reconstruct and remember the phenomenon of sexual violence and survivors of sexual abuse during the war;
- Public television RTK committed to continue broadcasting different awareness campaigns pro-bono with the objective to fight stigma surrounding the survivors;
- **Cooperation between media** and CSOs through specific projects is needed in order to fight stigma using both the resources of CSOs and power of media.

2. Individual perspective – barriers with an impact on stigma surrounding the survivors

Participants of this workshop concluded that **direct support to the survivors and their family members** are crucial to help them fight the battle against stigma in family, community and further in the society. They emphasised the **role of CSOs as crucial** in empowering them but also talking to their family members, partners and children and help them overcome the feeling of guilt and shame and treat trauma caused during the war.

Barriers	Measures	Necessary resources
Patriarchal mentality; Lack of support from the family; Prejudices by the family members and relatives; Bulling by community and public; Self guilty, shame, trauma and withdraw from society; Self guilty linked with gender;	Support of family members; CSOs should work with husbands and other family members;	Family, friends, community; Experiences of other survivors; Support from partners and children; Support from CSOs; Opportunities to meet with other survivors and talk freely; Support from recognised public figures;
Internal stigma are linked with: Lack of self confidence Fear of being disclosed, exposed Lack of person to speak up with and be heard; Impact of stigma on physical health;	Self motivation; Participation in group work and other joint activities; Increase of awareness about the impact of stigma on health;	Documentation of our histories via TV stories, newspaper articles, books and other awareness materials; Projects on increasing the knowledge and awareness of the survivors about their status, rights and other benefits;
Lack of access to information about the rights of women; Lack of information about the services provided by CSOs for the survivors of sexual violence during the war; Limited awareness about their rights;	Increase of awareness about the legal rights; Access to justice; Training of rule of law officials on the issues related to survivors of sexual violence during the war;	Projects focused on economic empowerment of survivors; International friends; Financial resources;
Poor economic conditions; Difficulties in getting employed; Dilemmas related to application for the status of civil victim of the war;	Increase of vocational education opportunities for survivors; Increase of employment opportunities for survivors and economic empowerment;	

3. Community (youth perspective) - barriers with an impact on stigma surrounding the survivors

Discussions in the workshop with CSOs working with youth, youth groups and independent bloggers were very productive with the focus on *increased engagement of the youth* in projects and awareness campaigns fighting stigma surrounding the survivors of sexual violence during the war. *Education aspect* was also addressed with the proposal to review school curricula and recognize survivors as part of Kosovo collective history and memory.

Barriers	Measures	Resources
<p>Patriarchal mentality; Lack of support from the family and institutions; Lack of institutional psycho support for the survivors; Insufficient knowledge and awareness among youth about the survivors of sexual violence during the war;</p>	<p>Increased media information campaigns with sensitivity to the issues of survivors of sexual violence; Development of the programs for economic empowerment of the survivors; Review of school text books;</p>	<p>Informal education programs by CSOs; Media and CSO campaigns; MEST, Ministry of Culture, Museums, Artists, galleries, theatres; Projects that engage youth throughout Kosovo; Mobilisation of youth centers and political structures in local level;</p>
<p>Lack of information from media, CSOs and education institutions; Misunderstandings among youth related to the concept of sexual violence during the war.</p>	<p>Expansion of the activities of CSOs targeting youth in rural remote areas; Increase the inclusion of youth in awareness campaigns; Distribution of brochures and leaflets containing information about the facts and statistics related to sexual violence; Engage youth as the voice of the survivors of sexual violence during the war; Inclusion of the community of artists and in theatre plays and documentaries that have larger impact on the public opinion;</p>	<p>Fund raising and projects implemented by CSOs and media;</p>
<p>Poor documentation of the war (consequences and survivors) lack of information in school textbooks; Emphasises of the public opinion on the warriors, heroes NOT on survivors ; Degradation of war as a Cliché and the need of new generations to move forward</p>	<p>inclusion of the survivors of sexual violence in the collective memory of the war in Kosovo; Inclusion of information in schools text books about the war and issues of sexual violence during the war; Organisation of the visits of school pupils and youth to museums and places of crimes of sexual violence during the war; Establishment of partnerships between CSOs and youth centers and youth forums in municipal level to fight stigma surrounding the survivors.</p>	

4. Institutional perspective - barriers with an impact on stigma surrounding the survivors

Participants of the group that addressed institutional perspective of the barriers with an impact on stigma surrounding the survivors of sexual violence were focused on making the **Commission for Verification and Recognition** of the status of survivors during the war in Kosovo **functional** and steps needed to be undertaken in order to have **budget** and a **decision of the amount of the personal pension for survivors**. Limited access to justice and **witness protection measures** were also discussed at this workshop.

Barriers	Measures	Resources
Decision on the amount of the compensation (personal pension); Allocation of the budget for process of recognition and verification of the status of survivors; Allocation of the budget for awareness campaigns; Utilisation of secretariat of the Commission;	Advocacy meetings with Prime Minister and Minister of finances; Organisation of the information and awareness raising campaigns;	Active Commission; Allocated budget for the work of secretariat; Decision on the amount of the individual pension; Support from Government; Support from rule of Law Institutions and EULEX; Support from CSOs;
Legal gaps and lack of compatibility with the law on health services and health insurance;	Review and amendment of the relevant legislation; Advocacy actions of the Committee and licensed CSOs;	Support from Survivors.
Identification cards	Design of Ids; Implementation of sub laws	
Limited access to justice; Small number of reported cases; Small number of testimonies; Short timeline of 2 years for investigation; Insufficient cooperation between police and prosecution;	Motivation of the survivors to increase cooperation with rule of law institutions; and to testify; Training of investigators and prosecutors on approach to the survivors; Increase of the number of specialised investigators and prosecutors in investigating war crimes (sexual violence); EULEX will be requested to inform about the number of crime cases of sexual violence and testimonies submitted;	
Lack of implementation of the witness protection program such as: Increased security to testify; advancement of protection measures for witnesses; provision of psycho-social support to the survivors during the process.	Improve witness protection measures; Provision of the psycho social support; Increased cooperation among involved institutions.	

Findings of the workshop

- ***Legal and Institutional recognition***

Despite the fact that Kosovo has legally recognized the status of the survivors and has established the Commission for Verification and Recognition of the survivors still, there are challenges remain on allocation of the budget and amount of compensation for survivors;

- ***Role of CSOs in support to the survivors***

The role of CSO's is a precondition to ensure joint progress improvement of the status and fight stigma surrounding the survivors of sexual violence. The survivors should increase their proactive role in supporting other survivors to seek support and demand justice;

- ***Role of Media***

Media outlets shall provide full and unconditional support to contribute in fighting stigma surrounding survivors of sexual violence during the war. Their contribution will contribute on preparing documentaries, TV stories, interviews, editorials, articles etc in a systematic way in order to treat the phenomenon and create a public discourse;

- ***Role of Youth***

Youth shall be targeted and included in different activities with the aim to increase their awareness and understanding about the survivors of sexual violence during the war, their future role and contribution towards fighting stigma surrounding them;

- ***Accuracy of data*** related to the number of survivors and ***limited access to justice*** are obstacles that deepen the stigma surrounding the survivors and prevent their empowerment and integration;

Challenges in addressing the status and fighting stigma surrounding the survivors of sexual violence during the war in Kosovo from ***institutional perspective*** include the allocation of the budget and decision on the amount of the personal pension for the survivors of sexual violence (compensation); Completion of documentation of the application for recognition of the status of the persons raped during the war; Provision of pensions and other benefits to the survivors ; Empowerment of survivors ; Limited access to justice, motivation of the survivors to testify before the prosecution and courts;

From ***societal perspective*** the challenges are related to: Accuracy of statistics of potential number of survivors; Isolation of the survivors by the society including media community; Lack of consolidated public opinion related to this phenomenon; and Lack of institutional support for the survivors of sexual violence during the war (psycho-social counselling and financial support).

Recommendations

In line with the concept and workflow of the workshop, **recommendations** were also issued addressing the stigma surrounding the survivors from different perspectives.

- From institutional perspective it was **recommended to the government** to undertake the necessary measures to functionalise the commission, allocate the budget, and reach a decision on the amount of the personal pension as decent compensation for survivors;
- Survivors of sexual violence during the war need to be part of **history and collective memory** of the war in Kosovo. Ministry of Education is invited to start the process of reviewing the curricula and text books in order to include aspects of survivors of sexual violence as part of the crimes committed in Kosovo; Media, CSOs and Youth need to contribute on building this collective memory with their work.
- Relevant institutions, CSOs and media need to increase their efforts in undertaking an **intensive information and awareness campaign** to inform the public about the process of verification and recognition of the status of the survivors of sexual violence during the war; this awareness campaign needs to contribute to creation of positive atmosphere and motivate application of survivors;
- **Mobilisation of media is needed** to establish a public discourse about the survivors of sexual violence during the war and join the efforts of fighting stigma surrounding them. In particular media is invited to increase public pressure to the government in addressing different aspects of stigma (legislation, status, budget, compensation etc).
- Media needs to pay particular attention to the creation **of a collective memory** about the survivors of sexual violence during the war in Kosovo. This will be done through documentary movies, exhibition of the places and clothes of the survivors with the aim to reconstruct and remember the phenomenon of sexual violence and survivors of sexual abuse during the war;
- **Cooperation between media and CSOs** through specific projects is needed in order to fight stigma using both the resources of CSOs and power of media;
- **Youth** needs to be **more engaged** in information and awareness campaigns and educational activities about the history and collective memory on the war and status of the survivors of sexual violence;
- Survivors of sexual violence **need to further seek** and get the necessary **psycho-social support** from CSOs and relevant institutions; Support to the survivors need to include activities addressing education and awareness but also economic empowerment and employment as long term measures;
- Survivors of sexual violence **need to motivate and empower other survivors** to seek support and justice.

Annexes

Annex 1- Agenda of the Workshop

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**Addressing stigma surrounding the survivors of sexual violence during the war in Kosovo
14, 15 September 2017/ Hotel Sirius, Pristina**

14 of September, Day I of the workshop	
09:00 - 09:30	Registration of participants
09:30 - 10:00	<p>Workshop welcome and opening remarks Feride Rushiti, Executive Director/The Kosovo Rehabilitation Centre for Torture Victims Atifete Jahjaga/ Former President of Kosovo Ruairi O’Connell, British Ambassador to Kosovo Alexandra Papadopoulou, Head of EULEX Kosovo</p>
10:00 - 11:00	<p>Stigma surrounding the survivors of sexual violence: Understanding of and responding to conflict related sexual violence – a victim centered approach</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Igballe Rogova, Kosovo Women Network • Kadire Tahiraj, Centre for Promotion of Women Rights • Sabiha Husić, Medica Zenica, BiH <p>Questions& Answers <i>Facilitated by Sebahate Pacolli Krasniqi</i></p>
11:00-11:30	Coffee break and communication with media
11.30 -13.15	Workshops in four working groups
Group I Individual perspective	<p>Identification of the barriers with an impact on stigma surrounding the victims of sexual violence during the war in Kosovo</p> <p><i>Facilitated by Sebahate Pacolli Krasniqi</i></p>
Group II Media role	<p>The role of the media in fighting the stigma surrounding the victims of sexual violence during the war in Kosovo;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the challenges from the media perspective? • What are the challenges from the perspective of the victims; • Reporting standards and next steps <p><i>Facilitated by Garentina Kraja and Elida Ramadani</i></p>
Group III Role of youth and independent	<p>Identification of the barriers with an impact on stigma surrounding the victims of sexual violence during the war in Kosovo</p>

journalists	<i>Facilitated by Raba Gjoshi</i>
Group IV Role of institutions	Identification of the barriers with an impact on stigma surrounding the victims of sexual violence during the war in Kosovo <i>Facilitated by Fatmire Haliti & Merita Gashi</i>
13.15 -14.30	Lunch
14.30 -16.00	Continuation of workshops
Group I Individual perspective	Overcoming identified barriers, identification of measures, steps needed to be undertaken <i>Facilitated by Sebahate Pacolli Krasniqi</i>
Group II Role of youth and independent journalists	Overcoming identified barriers, identification of measures, steps needed to be undertaken The role of youth organizations and independent journalists <i>Facilitated by Raba Gjoshi</i>
Group III Role of institutions	Overcoming identified barriers, identification of measures, steps needed to be undertaken The role of youth organizations and independent journalists <i>Facilitated by Fatmire Haliti & Merita Gashi</i>
15 of September, Day 2 of the workshop	
09.30 - 10.30	Plenary session Wrap up of the first day Presentations form the workshops of the first day
Group I Individual perspective	Necessary resources and timeline to undertake proposed measures/steps to address stigma <i>Facilitated by Sebahate Pacolli Krasniqi</i>
Group II Role of youth and independent journalists	Necessary resources and timeline to undertake proposed measures/steps to address stigma <i>Facilitated by Raba Gjoshi</i>
Group III Role of institutions	Necessary resources and timeline to undertake proposed measures/steps to address stigma <i>Facilitated by Fatmire Haliti & Merita Gashi</i>
12:30-14:00	Lunch break
14:00-16:00	Plenary session Finalisation of the inputs from parallel workshops Development of conclusions and recommendations Closure of the workshop

Annex 2- List of Participants

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17	Raba Gjoshi	Young activist	
18	Elton Xhemajli	Young activist	
19	Dardan Lajci	Young activist	
20	10 Survivors of sexual violence		
Media representatives			
	Emri dhe Mbiemri Name/surname	Organization/Institution	Kontaktet Contact
1	Ramize Murtezi	Radio Television of Kosova	
2	Jeta Xharra	BIRN	
3	Berat Buzhala	Express media	
4	Gazmend Bytyqi	Klan Kosova	
5	Durim	KohaNet	
6	Shqipe	Tribuna	
7	Garentina Kraja		
8	Elida Ramadani		
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