



Project:

Improvement of living conditions of women and their families traumatised by war in the districts Gjakova, Deqan and Prizren (Kosovo)

Summary and Recommendations

Duration of project:

three years, October 2005 - September 2008

Project budget:

670.364,00 €

Funded by:

75 % Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
25 % medica mondiale e.V.

Type of evaluation:

mid term evaluation

Evaluation period on site:

19. - 27. November 2007

Consultant:

Dr. Sybille Manneschmidt

Summary and Recommendations

“It is not good to stay inside and weep about the past. We needed to choose an activity and keep busy with something. After some time we realized we were talking less about our tragedies and concentrated more on our work with the cows and the group. Now we concentrate on the future and on our children. We feel alive and not isolated and we are thinking less about the past.”

Woman from Krelan

The evaluation presents an overview and analysis of the 2006 and 2007 activities of the *Medica Kosova* ABC (Agriculture, Bees, Cows) project, which was developed to improve living conditions for women and their families who have been traumatized by the war in Kosovo. It also presents an assessment of the project’s technical and management capacities, identification of gaps in capacity development and recommendations regarding future planning and action within the project.

The evaluation took place in November 2007, two years after the beginning of the project. Prior to the beginning of this project cycle in November 2005, *Medica Kosova* had been in existence for more than six years. This evaluation focused on visits to nine field locations in Kosovo – the town and district centre of Gjakova and eight villages in the municipal districts of Gjakova and Deqan. Data collection methods were key informant and focus group interviews, participant observation during site visits and document review prior to and during fieldwork.

Medica Kosova delivered services to groups of women and girls in these communities and at this time has reached approximately 2000 beneficiaries. These beneficiaries are women belonging to Target Group 1 (98 women involved with income generating activities – IGAs), their children and dependent family members (approximately 350 individuals), as well as the women and girls organized in groups called Target Group 2 (which involves more than 1500 people). The project will continue until November 2008 and may even reach more beneficiaries.

Thus the project goal and all objectives have been reached and in some cases even overreached. At this time, more women and girls than originally estimated in the proposal are benefiting from *Medica Kosova* services and supports. In fact, the figure for Target Group 2 participants is three times higher than originally anticipated and the number of groups in villages and the town of Gjakova has doubled to 16 established groups from the originally proposed eight groups.

The project has developed a model that provides psychosocial counselling in group settings and, after a period of emotional stabilization and teaching of group management skills, works with the group collectively to develop an agriculturally based income generating activity. These activities focused on farming, beekeeping and dairy cows.

This model has proven to be extremely beneficial for women and their family members living in the rural areas who own or have access to agricultural land. Data collected of groups’ incomes in 2006 and 2007 prove the financial success of the IGAs. Women’s statements around their decision-making processes on how they spent their earned monies show to what extend the women’s family members, and particularly their children, have benefited from the project.

Focus group and key informant interviews demonstrate that *Medica Kosova* group counsellors and other *Medica Kosova* professionals were able to provide appropriate and relevant support for the beneficiaries. The *Medica Kosova* psychosocial counsellors have achieved officially recognized professional expertise. This accomplishment needs to be given significant acknowledgement considering that the counselling profession in Kosovo did not exist previously. The *Medica Kosova* management and support staff and the legal, medical and agricultural professionals work in a collegial and supportive manner servicing and working with the beneficiaries. This has led to the organization’s strong cooperate identity which shows the strong cohesion of staff inside of *Medica Kosova* but also how the organization is presenting itself and is perceived from the outside.

The evaluation shows women belonging to Target Group 1 have enhanced their technical skill levels in the agricultural sector, have learned to overcome social and cultural barriers and restrictions and have learned organizational skills to work and function successfully as a cooperative unit. Some participants have referred other women to *Medica Kosova*’s project and they have been instrumental in the start-up of new groups. This kind of involvement indicates the high level of commitment of the beneficiaries to the project values, goals and objectives. It is a reflection of the sense of ownership that the beneficiaries have attached to this project.

Another indicator of the achievements of this project rests in its ability to build networks with businesses, agencies and institutions. This is apparent in the establishment of the milk collection points, the good rapport with members of the court system and the Ministry of Agriculture as well as the influential role *Medica Kosova* has as a member group in the Kosovo Women's Network.

Additionally, *Medica Kosova* has been very successful winning a variety of donors to support this project, thus ensuring additional services for the beneficiaries. This strength of writing and presenting successful proposals needs to be recognized in the light of organisation's successes.

Consequently, the project has proven to be highly efficient regarding all its activities for participants of both target groups and their family members. It has shown to be extremely effective as the project goals and objectives have been achieved and even, after two years, have exceeded initial expectations. The sustainability of the overall project for Target Group 1 is highly likely and participants' actions show the high level of ownership of the project. The direct and indirect impact of the project can be judged as very positive. Participants of both target groups have improved their emotional, health and economic situation. *Medica Kosova* staff has benefited through professional development training and they have made the organization a well known and respected NGO in Kosovo.

Furthermore, this project has provided a successful model on how to deliver efficient psychosocial care after armed conflict or war. Long term physical, social and psychological affects for individual survivors and their communities need to be considered by donor and aid agencies, particularly when war trauma and sexual violations need to be addressed and the social context is framed by patriarchal values and behaviour patterns. The international aid community needs to commit to appropriate and long term strategies and include psychosocial care as an integral part of a development agenda.

Although a considerable amount of work has been done to educate and support affected individuals, certain improvements can be put into place during the next year to ensure greater effectiveness and sustainability for the overall project.

The consultant has two **Key Recommendations** for the overall project:

- 1) To expand the application of the model to other groups which do not belong to Target Group 1 and to continue this work after November 2008 with another project cycle.
- 2) To adapt this model to an urban environment where women who are part of Target Group 2 can be involved with non-agricultural income generating activities.

The following **Action Point Items** can be easily implemented during this project cycle:

- Provide Training of Trainers (ToT) for psychosocial counsellors
- Give cameras for each group of Target Group 1 to take photos of their seasonal work cycle
- Research proper legal framework for groups and sign contracts²
- Reduce group meetings for Target Group 1 to once every three weeks after signing over of equipment and animals
- Move Target Group 1 toward self-help groups teaching participants how to run the groups by themselves
- Develop a mentorship initiative for Target Group 1 group leaders and other active group members
- Motivate the participants to collect information on potential future expenses to save more in their emergency fund
- Support Target Group 1 to do their own marketing of their products
- Teach some of the women how to do PowerPoint presentations about their work
- Make efforts to clarify and stick to correct terminology for all staff

2 This framework may take the form of an agricultural cooperative.