



An important result of the project is the opening of the shop in Gjakova, where self-produced goods of the beneficiaries are sold.

Improved livelihood opportunities for female and adolescent returnees and host community in Kosovo's Dukagjini region

The present project aimed at women and adolescent girls in Kosovo's Dukagjini region, including returnees from Europe or other Kosovar regions, with the overall goal to improve their livelihood opportunities and thus contribute to the prevention of further migration.

To address these issues the implementing organization *Medica Gjakova* pursued the combination of two components: on the one hand the creation and promotion of employment possibilities and entrepreneurial skills and on the other hand the provision of psychosocial counselling and gynecological support.

Findings of the final evaluation, which was conducted during summer 2020, reflect that the involved women are empowered both economically and psychologically. They are taking care of themselves, have opened a shop to sell their manufactured products, generate income and are accepted by their families. Nevertheless, further efforts are needed to ensure that initial achievements become and remain sustainable.

Project duration: 11.2017 – 08.2020

Funded by: German Corporation for International Cooperation, GIZ

Project budget: 495.527 EUR

Type of evaluation: Final evaluation

Consultant team: FAKT Consult for Management, Training and Technologies GmbH

Evaluation period: July – August 2020

Executive Summary

LOCAL CONTEXT

Kosovo's Dukagjini region is affected by high unemployment and poverty, particularly among women and adolescents. Many returnees (out of them many belong to ethnic minorities) are in addition confronted with discrimination. In many cases, there is no place to live anymore, and new homes need to be found. The likelihood of finding a job is even lower after returning than before, because returnees are also confronted with social stigma. Returnees must deal with feelings of having failed on a personal level.

In Dukagjini region (as in the rest of Kosovo), many women are traumatized through gender-based violence. Quite a number have experienced war-related violence and domestic violence after the war. These women and girls find it particularly hard to reintegrate into their communities, and they continue to face stigma and rejection.

Many returnees have experienced violence themselves during the period of being a refugee. Women and young girls are particularly vulnerable to experience gender-based violence on the route to a European country. The social, economic, cultural and psychological consequences of the trauma are still obvious, and ongoing poverty and instability within families and in the environment create an atmosphere where the pain reproduces itself in the lives of communities, families and couples – and so creates more harm and further traumatization.

The latest COVID-19 measures have destabilized many women: their families' incomes have decreased, daily routines (e.g. children going to school) have been disrupted, conflicts within the families have increased.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The overall goal of the project is to improve livelihood opportunities for women and adolescents in Kosovo's Dukagjini region, including up to 50 percent returnees, by promoting employment opportunities and entrepreneurial skills, and thus contributing to the prevention of further migration.

The objective is to start opportunities and employment possibilities in the fields of agriculture, food processing and tourism for the target group. These activities are accompanied by psychosocial counselling and gynecological care.

The project contributes to a sustainable reintegration of persons returning from a European country or the region and to the empowerment and stabilization of communities in the Dukagjini region. Further, the project is in line with the objectives of the German government to tackle the root causes of displacement, stabilizing host regions, supporting refugees by creating perspectives and employment opportunities for returnees and the host population in general.

The direct target group are 788 women and adolescents (including 84 returnees), consisting of ethnic Albanians, Serbs, and the Roman Ashkali Egyptian community. The indirect target groups include the families of the direct target group (around 3,000 persons). Originally, it was planned to reach 800 beneficiaries including up to 50 percent returnees.

The project started 1 November 2017 with a planned duration until 30 April 2020, that was extended until 31 August 2020. With a planned budget of round about 500,000 Euros the project is funded by the German Corporation for International Cooperation, GIZ. By the end of June 2020, 451,000 Euro had been spent.

OBJECTIVE, PURPOSE AND USE OF THE EVALUATION

Objective of the evaluation: At a higher level, this evaluation serves as accountability measure and as important participatory learning process for all stakeholders involved in the project to shape future project phases or new projects. The evaluation was conducted in line with the DeGEval Evaluation Standards: Utility, Feasibility, Propriety and Accuracy.

Purpose of the evaluation: The purpose of the final evaluation was to provide decision makers at *medica mondiale*, the GIZ and *Medica Gjakova* with sufficient information to make an informed

decision about the performance of the project, to document lessons learnt and to provide practical recommendations for follow-up actions and similar future projects. This project evaluation includes an assessment of the OECD/DAC and the BMZ evaluation criteria: impact, effectiveness, relevance, efficiency, and sustainability, as well as coordination, coherence, and complementarity.

Use of the evaluation: The success of the project is assessed regarding its objectives. The evaluation provided practical hands-on recommendations that can be implemented by the project stakeholders within their sphere of control as follow-up projects, potential project continuation and beyond. The evaluation also provided knowledge on effects and impacts to inform future management and programming of *Medica Gjakova* and *medica mondiale*. *medica mondiale* will share the evaluation results with *Medica Gjakova* and the GIZ.

EVALUATION CHALLENGES

The evaluation team faced the following challenges:

- » limited openness of the beneficiaries due to the sensitivity of the topic. This limitation was overcome by meeting them on a safe place and ensuring their anonymity.
- » increase in COVID-19 infection rates that did not allow the regional evaluator to meet with the interview partners in person. This limitation was overcome by conducting phone calls instead.
- » limited availability of detailed monitoring data on the survivors, that constituted about 90 percent of the project beneficiaries (however, there were very detailed monitoring data on returnees that constituted about 10 percent of the project beneficiaries). This limitation was only partially overcome by asking *Medica Gjakova* about information on types of psychosocial care provided to survivors.
- » limited information on the linkage of psychosocial care and economic empowerment from the side of both *Medica Gjakova* and beneficiaries as well as in the project documents.
- » limited possibility to gain more in-depth insight into *Medica Gjakova*'s organizational capacities



Some women keep bees and produce honey, which they sell in the store, but also to other customers.

(as the key evaluator could not travel to the project place and not gain insights about *Medica Gjakova*'s project management, monitoring and reporting as well as their interaction with the project's beneficiaries). This limitation was only partially overcome by asking *Medica Gjakova* for clarifications and verifying the received information with the regional evaluator.

FINDINGS OF THE EVALUATION

Relevance

The relevance of the project can be rated **good**. The right target groups were reached with the right approach.

Local and national needs and priorities of the target groups

Kosovo's Dukagjini region is affected by high unemployment and poverty, particularly among women and adolescents. Many of them returned from Europe or other parts of the Kosovo and are now confronted with social stigma and feelings of failure while trying to find a new home and a new job in their place of origin. Additionally, traumatization

due to gender-based violence experienced during the war and after is still widespread.

With its two components of enhancing knowledge, skills and opportunities of income generation and the provision of psychosocial counselling and gynecological care, the project was relevant for the local needs of both key target groups – returnees and survivors. While the survivors prioritized the need for psychosocial counselling, the returnees prioritized the need for income generation.

Continued validity of the project's objective

The overall goal of the project was “to improve livelihood opportunities for women and adolescents in Kosovo’s Dukagjini region, including up to 50 percent returnees” and the objective of the project was “to start opportunities and employment possibilities in the fields of agriculture, food processing and tourism for the target group”. Both the overall goal and the objective are still valid. The impact of the lockdown on the economic situation also leading to psychological destabilization of many beneficiaries demonstrated the continued need for psychosocial care of the beneficiaries and for creating sustainable employment opportunities for them.

Consistency of the intervention logic

The intervention logic is as follows: In case the beneficiaries receive psychosocial counselling and gynecological care they are better equipped to enhance their knowledge and skills in food production and handicraft. In case these outputs are achieved, the beneficiaries have opportunities and employment possibilities in the fields of agriculture, food processing and tourism. This contributes to the improvement of the livelihood opportunities of the beneficiaries and thus to the prevention of further migration. In this way the outputs are consistent with the objectives and the overall goal.

Effectiveness

The effectiveness of the project can be rated **satisfactory**. Planned key activities (the establishment of the cooperative) could not be implemented due to external factors. Positive results predominate.

Effectiveness of the approach

Medica Gjakova applies a stress- and trauma-sensitive approach (STA): first their staff identifies the very specific needs of the beneficiaries, then refers them to the respective sector(s) (mostly legal, gynecological and psychosocial sectors) which then provides support in the first-hand. Once the beneficiaries have adapted, they are then transferred to the economic empowerment sector. This stress- and trauma-sensitive approach and especially this sequence of support has contributed to empowering the beneficiaries.

Effectiveness of the linkage of the two project components

Linking the economic empowerment and psychosocial care proved to be effective in the following way: receiving psychosocial care, taking part in training sessions, and consequently being involved in the self-help groups, contributes to psychosocial healing and stabilization of the beneficiaries. Thereby *Medica Gjakova* helped them to better cope with their individual situation; as a result, they became motivated in starting or getting involved in business activities.

Positive effects of the project

According to *Medica Gjakova*, the women were empowered due to the project activities. At the beginning, the women were only receiving psychosocial care and gynecological support, not yet being involved in any economic empowerment activities. Now, at the end of the project, the shop is open; the involved women are earning money, generating income, and having money for their own. Due to the continued psychosocial counselling, they are taking care of themselves and their families, and are going out to meet their friends. The biggest change lies in the women themselves. They are empowered, i.e. they can speak out and are able to take the decision inside and for their family. Before, they were not able to raise their voice. Their economic activities, may this be handcrafting, drying of fruit, or producing milk products, are now accepted by their families. They can join the training sessions, and their families take care of their children/their household.



Producing goods and selling them in the shop enables the women to generate their own income, which strengthens their self-confidence and earns them respect in the family.

Achievement of the project's objectives and indicators

According to the results of the interviews and of both surveys as well as by the provided documents, the project's objective has been achieved.

However, at the output level, the achievement of indicators has been uneven: The production point was established, however, with some delays (indicator 1). The textile branch started working, additionally a place for handcrafting was created. However, the textile branch was not incorporated into the cooperative, as the latter one could not be registered (indicator 2). The cooperative was not established, and consequently neither the shop in Pristina. However, the shop in Gjakova as an entity of *Medica Gjakova* was opened (indicator 3). Both surveys on empowerment of women were conducted showing the degree of women empowerment through the project (indicator 4).

Efficiency

The overall efficiency can be rated **satisfactory**.

Cost efficiency

The evaluators compared planned and actual expenses. They also followed the money and visited

the places which were equipped in the frames of the project (shop in Gjakova, production point and dairy). They assume that the money was used efficiently, as they were not able to detect major inefficiencies.

Time efficiency

Two project activities were achieved in time (indicator 2: textile branch; indicator 4: surveys). One activity was not achieved during the project period (indicator 3: establishment of the cooperative). One activity was delayed (indicator 1: production point).

Impact

The impact can be rated **good**. The project changed the beneficiaries' attitudes and behaviors, increased their knowledge, and empowered them to master their lives. This also reflected on their immediate environment.

The women were empowered through the project. According to the surveys conducted at the beginning and at the end of the project, the following changes among the women were documented:

- » increase in satisfaction with themselves
- » risen confidence that the woman can take care of herself, her children, and her house



Widespread poverty and high unemployment in Kosovo, especially in rural areas, push many women to migrate. Medica Gjakova tries to counter this development by improving their livelihood opportunities.

- » less acceptance of different forms of violence against women
- » more influence in decision making at home
- » risen support in the household chorus by men
- » risen willingness of the women to take care of themselves and having gynecological check-ups
- » risen willingness to participate in trainings
- » regular attendance of trainings
- » increased openness to open a business
- » income generated
- » empowered economically

The project had a positive impact on the beneficiaries themselves, on their families and communities, and to a certain extent on the institutional level. Credible evidence of changes at policy and societal level could not be established.

Sustainability

The sustainability of the project can be rated **good** regarding the sustainable impact it had on the women's lives. It can be rated **satisfactory** as the shop, the production point, the dairy, and the

textile branch could not be registered as a social enterprise.

The following positive impacts would remain in case donor funding ceased:

- » psychological stabilization of women
- » changes in attitudes of women towards more self-esteem
- » changes of behavior in the women's families with the women opening up to their family members and their family members respecting and assisting them more
- » acquisition of knowledge/skills through the economic empowerment trainings (e.g. sewing, producing milk products and honey, drying fruit)
- » development of a sense of belonging to a community

The following factors were influencing the achievement of the sustainability:

- » the high dedication of the *Medica Gjakova* staff to implement the project to the best of the beneficiaries
- » the high number of women organized in self-help groups willing to contribute to the project



Traumatization due to gender-based violence still affects many women in Kosovo. To help them effectively, Medica Gjakova combined its economic empowerment measures with psychosocial and gynecological support.

- » the flexibility of the donor allowing major budget reallocations to buy additional equipment and to hire staff for the production point.

The following factors were influencing the non-achievement of the sustainability:

- » the missing by-laws on the social enterprise legislation that did not allow to register the cooperative
- » the country-wide, COVID-19 related lockdown that did not allow further meetings with/among the beneficiaries.

To ensure the sustainability of the intervention’s positive impact after the current donor funding ceases, a follow-up project could be preferably implemented focusing primarily on an exit strategy.

Coordination

The coordination can be rated **good**.

The project (goals, activities, procedures) is coordinated to some extent with relevant government

institutions. The cooperation with key project stakeholders like the company Agroproduct, who assisted *Medica Gjakova* with their investments in production points, and like the consultant company Sigma, who provided training for entrepreneurship and drafted the business plan and donors (primarily with *medica mondiale*) is close.

Complementary

The complementarity can be rated **very good**.

The evaluated project with its objectives and activities fits into the German development cooperation strategies. It complements the BMZ project “empower women to act” that was implemented nearly at the same time and focused on psychosocial, legal, and economic assistance for survivors.

Coherence

The coherence can be rated **good**.

The project created synergies, especially with the BMZ “empower women to act”. As this BMZ project was implemented during the same time, *Medica Gjakova* was able to focus more on the livelihood component of the evaluated project.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of the document analysis and of the interviews, the evaluation team came up with the following recommendations:

Recommendation to Medica Gjakova, medica mondiale, GIZ

Project design

For any follow-up project, a logical frame should be drafted when the project is being designed.

This logical frame should outline objectives, outcomes, and outputs together with their respective indicators.

Recommendation to *Medica Gjakova* and *medica mondiale*

Top priority activities of the current project to be continued

In case additional funding becomes available, the following elements of the project should be continued (with the top priority listed as number one):

- » **Further support the shop in Gjakova.** The shop is located at a very prominent point in the city. Its rooms can be used for handicraft production and for storage of handicraft materials and food conserves. The price for the rent is reasonable. The shop's income can cover up to 30 percent of its expenditures. The shop is to be further promoted, made known among the costumers. The shop is the "heart" of the project. In case it closes, the visibility of the women's work would decrease – as well as the number of customers.
- » **Assist the drying production point to become independent.** Women involved in the drying of fruit and herbs would require further training. The cooperation with Agroproduct could be further expanded.
- » **Build up the brand of the milk production point.** The dairy could produce bigger amounts of milk every day. The marketing should be improved to increase the demand for the milk products.
- » **Open the shop in Pristina.** A shop in Pristina could increase the visibility of women's work. The demand for their products could be further increased. The shop could serve as a positive example of survivors and returnees changing their lives through psychosocial counselling and economic empowerment.
- » In case the by-laws are being adopted, **raise the capacities of women to run their own social enterprises** to become role models for other women survivors and returnees.

Top priority activity of a follow-up project: ensuring the sustainability of the current project results

Medica Gjakova should

- » consider elaborating different scenarios (best case, middle case, worst case) for the financial sustainability of the shop – to receive a clear picture how and by when the shop (and its suppliers – including the production point and the dairy) could become self-sustained and to which degree.
- » jointly with Sigma revise the business plan in order to adjust it to the new COVID-19 realities (e.g. focusing to a lesser degree on clients in the vicinity, and to a higher degree on larger costumers and on the online shop).
- » continue providing psychosocial counselling and economic empowerment trainings to the self-help groups with a clear view to withdraw and to let the groups run independently, as soon they can do so.

Further building up of the staff's expertise

Medica Gjakova could benefit from the following staff development activities:

- » further increasing the staff's expertise in combining both approaches the psychosocial care and the economic empowerment
- » further building up the capacities of the economic empowerment sector (e.g. by providing further mentoring/training how to manage the shop, the dairy, and the production point and how to ensure their sustainability)
- » in case the by-laws are being adopted, deepening the expertise of economic empowerment sector about social enterprises (e.g. by further training or exposure to social enterprises already established in other countries)
- » investing in further developing the organization's strategy by incorporating the economic empowerment sector



With various economic empowerment trainings like learning how to plant and process food, *Medica Gjakova* wants to provide survivors with useful basics for achieving economic independence.

Recommendations to *Medica Gjakova*

Further cooperation with key stakeholders

In any follow-up project, *Medica Gjakova* should

- » consider including more relevant authorities into their project, e.g. by attending existing meeting formats, by providing information about their project activities and by further searching for synergies with respective institutions/organizations.
- » seek continuing the cooperation with the Municipal Office for Information and Tourism; so, their beneficiaries could sell their products through the Office, attend fairs, and apply for the municipal funds for businesspersons and entrepreneurs.
- » consider signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Agroproduct that would allow *Medica Gjakova* from time to time to request assistance in developing the beneficiaries' capacities in cultivating and drying fruit and plants.

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