



## Kosovo kindergarten: Offering pre-school education to Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children in Fushe Kosove

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### 1) Background and short description of the aims of the activity

This project builds on our successful work over the past three years in safeguarding the right to education by registering over 200 Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children (from Fushe Kosove/ Kosovo Polje and elsewhere in Kosovo) in primary school, and offering holistic support to them and their families to ensure that they continue to attend school and succeed there.

It also draws on our successful Changemakers project, begun in the community in Fushe Kosove/ Kosovo Polje in 2013, through which a group of men and women who were interested in being activists for their communities was formed and trained. The initiative for a pilot kindergarten is theirs, and it will be the first time that a project for the children and families of Neighbourhoods 28 and 29 will be begun at the suggestion of activists who live in these neighbourhoods.

The project's aims are to extend the safeguarding of the right to education by:

- Piloting a community kindergarten for children aged five from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian community in Fushe Kosove/ Kosovo Polje

- Training members of the community including parents, and particularly mothers, in early childhood education and the ways that children can be supported with their learning at home and in non-formal environments

## 2) The need

Children in the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities of Kosovo are the most excluded in the country. A recent study<sup>1</sup> found that a staggering 96% of the members of these communities across Kosovo had not completed compulsory education. This is both cause and effect of generations of unemployment, poor health care and exclusion from society. Poor levels of education among the adults who are the parents of today's school children has an impact on the likelihood of these children attending school, or succeeding in their homework or other areas where illiterate parents are a disadvantage.

Founded as a Kosovan charity in 2009, The Ideas Partnership started working in Fushe Kosove in 2010. The municipality has the highest proportion of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians in all of Kosovo and when we started working in the most impoverished Neighbourhoods 28 and 29 we discovered high numbers of children out of school. In 2011 we registered 62 children for school; since then the number we have registered for school has risen to over 200

Even the adults in the community face challenges in their education; there is widespread illiteracy, especially among women, and few adults have had positive experiences of education to share with their children. The same is true for the volunteers who work with us, who have huge amounts of energy and willingness to learn but need support and training to be the best tutors for the children they work with.

The deprivation faced by the children in this community begins early in their lives, and is compounded by the lack of kindergarten provision for children under six. This means that children enter pre-primary classes with no experience of formal learning, and already at a significant disadvantage compared to their peers. Given the lack of formal education, and illiteracy among their parents, the skills of adults in the community to support their children's development at home is also poor. A recent Situation Analysis of Early Childhood Education in Kosovo by Save the Children identified this lack of early childhood education for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children as one of the biggest challenges facing the sector, and studies have revealed that **in all of Kosovo there are less than 40 Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children attending state pre-school education.**

## 3) Our approach

Offering **parents the skills to support their children.** This has included a successful literacy and numeracy programme for men and women, and a pilot project supporting parents with developing early childhood learning opportunities, including a toy library. We intend now to link these successful approaches with the kindergarten, enabling mothers who are freed from childcare while their children are in kindergarten, to attend classes on both literacy and wider parenting skills

The feature of our planned kindergarten which seems most significant for the project's chance of success and which gives us the most commitment to this project is the fact that **it has come as a direct and specific**

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<sup>1</sup> *School's Out*, Balkan Sunflowers Kosova, 2012

**request from members of the community themselves.** The Changemakers group whom we convened as part of a UNV project over last year and the beginning of 2014 brought together a group of six women and four men from the community of Fushe Kosove/ Kosovo Polje who were interested in developing as activists for their community. They received training and motivational speakers as well as field visits to successful projects, and at the end of the training approached us with a request for a kindergarten. Our response as an organization was to ask what demand there might be for such a facility in Neighbourhoods 28 and 29, and within a week the Changemakers had completed a door-to-door survey of the community and had identified a list of 250 children aged 3-5 whose parents would like them to attend kindergarten. As a pilot we intend to take only the five year-olds from this list, with interviews of parents identifying both those most in need and those most committed to supporting their children and likely to benefit from the initiative, but the long list of others keen for kindergarten facilities is a huge incentive for us to make this project happen, and to involve the Changemakers as a steering committee for the project.

#### 4) Expected results

- 30 Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children are regular attenders at the kindergarten for 8 months
- the teacher identifies learning goals for children attending kindergarten and thus demonstrates the value added by their daily learning experiences
- 15 Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian parents are regular attenders at literacy and/ or parenting classes held while their children are at kindergarten. The majority of these are mothers.

#### 5) Project follow-up

*The Ideas Partnership has a good track record of sustaining projects long after the funding that initiated them has finished. Our project funded by the Dutch Embassy in Janjevo/a in 2012 for supporting the education of Roma and Ashkali children over a summer and into school in September has spawned a homework club which we have continued with little – and at some points no – donor funding ever since. It has also led to our very successful recent tourism project promoting economic development in the town through multiethnic enterprise.*

*We have been active in Fushe Kosove for more than three years and intend to carry on for many years to come. Thanks to our extensive and committed volunteer force, of more than 60 people including over 20 volunteers from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian community, we are able to continue much of our work with people's time and skills given for free, and private donations covering modest costs..*

*We believe that education is intrinsically a sustainable activity because what has been learned cannot ever be taken away from the learner. This is true for the pre-school children who will attend the kindergarten and who will, as a result of the project, be well-prepared to succeed in pre-primary and primary classes. It is also true for their parents who will benefit from the parenting and literacy classes we will hold during kindergarten hours. The skills they acquire will enable them to support their children now and in the future and ultimately transform the life chances of their families.*

#### 6) Our monitoring procedures

*The Ideas Partnership has excellent project management systems so we will be undertaking ongoing evaluation of the project's progress towards achieving goals and milestones. These processes enable us to*

*ensure course correction where necessary, and to share the successes of our projects as we implement them. Examples of our systems include:*

- *Weekly minuted team meetings with all staff involved in Fushe Kosove agreeing actions for the week and reviewing action points from the previous meeting*
- *Weekly meetings between the Executive Director and a member of the board to review progress against projects*
- *Monthly reports from all staff to the board identifying progress against six monthly development plan*
- *Minuted meetings of the board with the Executive Director to review monthly reports and discuss any matters arising*
- *Monthly volunteer meetings sharing highlights of the month and areas where help is needed*

*We also see this project as an opportunity to develop the role of the Changemaker group and the skills and experience of its members, by using the group as a steering group for our activities. This role began with a formal meeting of them with a member of the board a few months ago, and we have planned another meeting with the full board of The Ideas Partnership to share more general feedback about the work in Fushe Kosove. In relation to the specifics of this project we anticipate the Changemakers being involved in monthly meetings to review the progress of the kindergarten against the plan.*

## **7) Our track record**

In the past we have received funding from

- NDI and Unicef's Innovation Lab on environmental projects
- the British Embassy on two projects from 2011, including one to support Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian women
- the Austrian Development Agency for two grants, from 2011, both on our work in Fushe Kosove
- the US Embassy for three grants, from 2012, each relating to educational project work in Fushe Kosove
- UNV on a number of projects, most recently (2013-4) on youth and women's literacy and numeracy in the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities of Fushe Kosove and Obilic and to develop the Changemakers group
- The Dutch Embassy for a summer teaching programme in Janjevo/a (2012) and supporting our work in Fushe Kosove last year
- Kosovo Foundation for Open Society for a 2012 income generation project in Fushe Kosove
- The Rockefeller Foundations' Forum Iniciativ per Qytetare on two projects, most recently (ongoing) to develop the social enterprises we've set up for women from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities of Fushe Kosove and Istog/k
- The Finnish Embassy (2013-4) to develop the social enterprises for women from the Roma, Ashkali and

Egyptian communities of Fushe Kosove and Istog/k

- Save the Children project to get Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children in Mitrovice/a and Peja/ Pec into school (2013-4)
- UNDP for a multicultural rural tourism project in Janjevo/a (2014)

## 8) Budget

Item requested from Dutch Embassy	per unit (euro)	unit	number of units	total (euro)	total (USD)
a) Trained kindergarten educator	300	month	8	2400	3168
b) Honorarium for community volunteers supporting the kindergarten and academic support activities on Saturdays; 2 volunteers, each receiving 50 euro netto (56 euro gross) per month	112	month	8	896	1182.72
c) Equipment for furnishing the kindergarten				999	1318.68
d) healthy snack for kindergarten children (15 children in each shift = 30 per day. 25c per child per day = 7.5 euro per day. 20 days per month)	150	month	8	1200	1584
e) Materials for parenting classes	20	month	8	160	211.2
				5655	7464.6
<b>Enablers</b>					0
a) building manager (from the community) - contribution to salary	40	month	12	480	633.6
b) volunteer transport for volunteers from Prishtina to Fushe Kosove	40	month	12	480	633.6
c) Executive Director and finance officer (contribution to salaries)	50	month	12	600	792
d) office rent - contribution	50	month	12	600	792
				2160	2851.2
<b>Total</b>				<b>€ 7,815</b>	<b>\$10,315.80</b>