LEARNING TO WORK WITH BOTH HANDS

A CLOSE EXAMINATION OF WOMEN'S POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION IN POST-CONFLICT KOSOVO

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Learning to Work with Both Hands:
A Close Examination of Women’s Political and Economic Participation in Post-Conflict Kosovo

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“No society can be strong if 50 percent of the population is left out. It’s like having two hands and you are only working with one.”

Teuta Sahatqija, Member, Kosovo Assembly
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Abbreviations

AAK – Alliance for the Future of Kosova
CBM – Community Building Mitrovica
CEDAW – Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CSO – Civil Society Organization
D4D – Democracy for Development
EU – European Union
FRY – Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
IGOs – Intergovernmental Organizations
KDN – Kosovo Democratic Network
KLA – Kosovo Liberation Army
KPEP – Kosovo Private Enterprise Program
NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGOs – Non-governmental Organizations
OSCE – Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
SRSG – Special Representative of the Secretary-General
UN – United Nations
UNMIK – United Nations Mission in Kosovo
UNSCR – United Nations Security Council Resolution
USAID – United States Agency for International Development
WPS – Women, Peace and Security
Introduction

In June 1999, the conflict between ethnic Serbs and Albanians in the Yugoslav province of Kosovo ended with the retreat of Slobodan Milosevic’s forces and the passage of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1244, which established the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). Under UNSCR 1244’s mandate, elements from the United Nations (UN), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and the European Union (EU) assumed responsibility for the rule of law, governance, democratization, institution-building, and economic development of Kosovo.¹

Four years earlier, representatives from 189 countries had gathered in Beijing for the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing Conference), a defining moment in the struggle for women’s rights and gender equality. Recognizing that “the achievement of equality between women and men [is] a matter of human rights and a condition for social justice,”² they acknowledged that empowering women as equal citizens was the “way to build a sustainable, just and developed society.”³ This gathering produced the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which serves as a key blueprint to guide and inspire nations toward the goal of gender equality. Following the Beijing Conference, countries, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and private corporations began to formulate policies, design programs, and allocate funding with a greater appreciation for the role – and inclusion – of women.

Post-conflict Kosovo offers a complex and interesting context to examine the role women play in post-conflict development. Four years after the Beijing Conference, the intervention by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and subsequent UN administration of Kosovo provided the international community with an opportunity to implement the measures it had endorsed in 1995. NGOs and intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) quickly proliferated throughout the territory, many of them seeking to promote, amongst other things, an agenda of gender equality.

Though women were not heavily involved in the formal peace negotiations that ended the hostilities in Kosovo, they played key roles in civil society before the war and actively sought ways to participate in the reconstruction efforts.⁴ At the grassroots level, and in unofficial channels, women worked towards peace and stability in their communities. Post-conflict Kosovo presents a useful case to examine the theory that women’s empowerment – in economic, political, and social spheres – leads to a more sustainable and prosperous peace. The international community affirmed this belief by providing security, financing, and expertise to build institutions that

¹ Mertus, 471.
³ Ibid.
advanced women’s rights after the war, while Kosovar women demonstrated the ability and willingness to contribute meaningfully to their country’s reconstruction.\textsuperscript{5} 

The case of Kosovo illustrates the essential role women play in establishing a stable post-conflict environment. Research has shown that “post-conflict is a critical period in which to address human security,\textsuperscript{6} not only because of the significant need, but because of the unique opportunity that presents itself through International Non-Governmental Organization (INGO) involvement and Local Non-Governmental Organization (LNGO) creation, thereby establishing organizations within civil society that are capable of building gendered human security through their interventions and especially within their organizations.”\textsuperscript{7} If women are given meaningful access to the political and economic processes at the outset of a nation’s reconstruction, they can influence the institutions being established, imbuing the entire system with a greater sense of fairness, equality, and sustainability.

Nevertheless, as peace-building and nation-building become increasingly common elements of international intervention, the international community’s pledges for gender equality are being applied inconsistently in post-conflict contexts. This report makes a compelling case for why women’s empowerment and gender equality should be a fundamental element of post-conflict development. Though it is a young democracy facing considerable challenges, Kosovo has functioned as an independent country since 2008 and, due in large part to the involvement and influence of women, possesses the institutional foundation necessary for a long-term stability and positive growth.

\textbf{Research Questions}

This paper addresses two main research questions. The first examines how and to what end women in Kosovo have engaged in the political process through both formal and informal means.\textsuperscript{8} The second assesses the role women have played in Kosovo’s economic reconstruction. By understanding their participation in the development sector and the labor market, this paper highlights how women have both created and benefitted from economic opportunities, how their participation has contributed to Kosovo’s economic growth, and what challenges remain.

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\textsuperscript{5} “Meaningful” participation indicates advancement beyond meeting formal quotas toward a role in which women tangibly influence policy and economic activity that contributes to Kosovo’s post-conflict development.

\textsuperscript{6} Human security refers to the protection of the population from the effects of war and violence.


\textsuperscript{8} Formal means of access refers to positions of authority in government, such as elected or politically appointed offices. Informal means of access refers to roles in civil society that serve to influence policy, but are not necessarily a part of the formal governmental structure.
**Historical Context**

The Republic of Kosovo has a long history of invasion and conquest. It has been ruled by Serbs and Turks; inhabited by Ilyrians, Thracians, Serbs, Albanians, and Vlachs; and at different times formed a part of the Ottoman Empire and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY). Though Kosovo’s history stretches back centuries, this paper limits its scope to the chain of events that begin with the death of Yugoslav leader Josep Tito, as this period is most contextually relevant to understanding the establishment of modern Kosovo.

In the 1970s, Yugoslavia’s constitution granted Kosovo autonomy. After Tito’s death in 1980, however, tensions between Albanian and Serb nationalists grew. Under the leadership of Slobodan Milosevic, the Serbian government gradually implemented a “Serbization” program, in which thousands of professional Kosovar Albanians were removed from their positions, while incentives were created to promote the relocation of ethnic Serbs into Kosovo. In 1989, under pressure from Milosevic, the Kosovo Assembly was forced to revoke its autonomous status and a series of constitutional reforms were passed that further consolidating Serb control of the territory.

In response, Kosovar Albanians established their own parallel structures and government. They declared an independent “Republic of Kosovo” in July 1990, and elected Ibrahim Rugova, a professor and writer, as their president. This resistance movement established a parallel infrastructure for ethnic Albanians that included banks, taxation mechanisms, and a public welfare system. Kosovar Albanians were determined to maintain their identity and autonomy in spite of Serb repression.

The Kosovar Albanian nationalist movement initially began as a non-violent political effort, but the increasing brutality of the Serb crackdown fueled recruitment to the militant Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA). After a series of particularly bloody raids in February 1998 in which several children and elderly civilians were killed, the international community intervened, with U.S. Special Envoy Richard Holbrooke serving as the key negotiator to reach a ceasefire. The Holbrooke-Milosevic agreement was reached in October 1998, temporarily ending the violence. However, FRY troops soon resumed operations with the clear intent of expelling Albanians from Kosovo. Scenes of hundreds of thousands of refugees fleeing their homes turned the tide of Western public opinion towards intervention and spurred the six-nation Contact Group.

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11 Mertus, 466.
13 Mertus, 467.
14 Mertus, 469.
15 Malcom, xv.
16 “By 20 April 1999 it was calculated that nearly 600,000 refugees had left Kosovo in the previous four weeks: 355,000 were in Albania, 127,500 in Macedonia, 72,500 in Montenegro, and 32,000 in Bosnia & Herzegovina.” In Malcom, xxi
(consisting of the U.S., Britain, France, Russia, Italy, and Germany) to summon the Serb and Albanian leadership to a conference in Rambouillet, France.

Despite weeks of negotiations, Milosevic and the Yugoslav government ultimately rejected the terms of the Rambouillet proposals, and on March 24, 1999 NATO forces initiated Operation Allied Force. In spite of the systematic NATO bombing of strategic military targets in Serbian territory, Serbian forces increased their brutal cleansing activities against the Albanians. After 78 days of fighting, Milosevic finally capitulated on June 9, 1999. The following day, UNSCR 1244 established UNMIK as the interim administration of Kosovo.

Gradually, with the election of a new Assembly in 2001 and the Assembly’s selection of revered nationalist leader Ibrahim Rugova as their president, more control was returned to the Kosovars. Kosovo, however, officially remained a part of Serbia and an agreement on its future status was never determined or agreed upon.

On February 17, 2008, the Kosovo Assembly formally declared independence from Serbia. Kosovo’s political status remains contested: to date, 97 out of 193 UN member states do not recognize its independence. Nevertheless, the people of Kosovo carry on with the process of building institutions, establishing laws, and developing processes that characterize a sovereign democracy.

The role of women within Serbian and Albanian culture has varied over the years. Under Communism, women and men enjoyed equal legal protections in the economic sphere and participated alongside one another in the workforce. However, women remained the primary caretakers of the household and children. In the post-Communist period, women’s domestic roles remained largely unchanged, but their role in the public sphere was severely restricted, particularly with regards to political or economic participation. Family voting remains a cultural practice throughout much of Kosovo, with male heads of households voting on behalf of the entire household.

During the war, women were targeted and suffered sexual assault, rape, and mutilation. Despite these attacks, women took action to protect their children and provide them with a sense of stability and security amidst the chaos of war. They formed networks across villages and communities to establish makeshift schools for their children and find ways to distract them from the harsh reality of the conflict. Due to cultural practices and perspectives that tied women to the household, the courageous work of women during the war was downplayed by many as part of their natural role in their society. Their feats of bravery and solidarity in the face of violence and oppression went largely ignored until very recently. In the summer of 2015, President Atifete Jahjaga formally acknowledged the importance of women’s work during the war when she established the “Heroinat” monument in Kosovo’s capital of Pristina. The gold relief of a women’s

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17 Hanna Kienzler, “Kosovo’s Master and Their Influence on the Local Population throughout History,” Anthropos, 104 (2009), 500.
19 Interview with Garentina Kraja, Advisor on Foreign Policy and Security to Kosovo’s President, July 13, 2015.
face serves as a commemoration and recognition of the sacrifices Kosovar women made for their country during the war.

**Literature Review**

The inclusion of a gender perspective in the study of war and security is a relatively new development. As scholars have tried to understand the role and impact of war on women and how their involvement influences war’s conduct and resolution, the interdisciplinary field of Women, Peace and Security (WPS) has taken shape. Thornton and Whitman point out that it “draws from a variety of disciplines and discourses, including political science, international relations, and sociology, but has no single home in academia.” While this broad theoretical foundation demonstrates its relevance across disciplines, it also elicits the most criticism from those who do not view WPS as a cohesive field, but rather a peripheral consideration within the other major disciplines.

Before describing the body of literature addressing WPS, we must establish an understanding of the key terms to which we will frequently refer throughout this report. The term gender equality refers to the “equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities of women, men, girls, and boys.” Relatedly, gender mainstreaming, as defined by the UN, involves “assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies, or programmes in all areas and at all levels.” Gender mainstreaming is a strategy that contributes to gender equality. By recognizing that conflict affects each gender differently, policymakers can pursue approaches that respect these differences, thus establishing the foundation for sustainable peace.

The subject of peace also features its own vocabulary. For example, the terms peace-building and nation-building are often used interchangeably, but refer to slightly different processes. Borne out of the theory that democratic nations do not fight wars with each other, the strategies of peace-building and nation-building have become common tools in the work of international institutions since the early 1990s. Peace-building, for the terms of this paper, deals with a broad set of activities across a variety of sectors undertaken at any stage in a conflict that aim to reduce conflict and promote peace. Nation-building, on the other hand, requires the cessation of conflict and buy-in from former combatants in order to lay the foundation for civil society, a system of governance, rule of law, economic recovery, and the delivery of social services. The

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21 Ibid., 105.
22 Ibid., 13.
24 Mazurana, 15.
two can occur simultaneously and may overlap in terms of the activities. Both share the goal of a sustainable peace, with the latter involving the establishment of formal institutions and processes embodied in the functioning of a state. For the purposes of this paper, the term *reconstruction* will refer to a broad set of activities that may encompass both peace-building and nation-building.

**Political Participation**

The prevailing literature for women’s increased participation in the political processes of peace-building and nation-building draws on the discourse of feminism, the democratic principles of individual rights, and theories of conflict prevention.

The feminist dialogue\(^\text{28}\) asserts that impediments to women’s participation exist due to a patriarchal structure that is reinforced in most post-conflict reconstruction approaches. It argues that including a gender focus in reconstruction - through gender mainstreaming with the goal of gender equality – leads to a more sustainable peace. Counterarguments contend that too aggressive a gender equity approach is destabilizing, especially in the most conservative societies.\(^\text{29}\) However, “the available empirical evidence points to an opposite conclusion: that societies placed on the path of equity and rule of law are more peaceful and more prosperous, and the status of women is not merely a litmus test, but also an active agent in bringing about such an outcome.”\(^\text{30}\) The argument is tautological; without striving for gender equality, women will remain structurally oppressed.

Other theorists appeal to democratic principles, claiming that access to and agency within the political process constitute individual rights for all citizens of the state, including women.\(^\text{31}\) Thus, a "lack of participation and representation of women constitutes a democratic deficit" that threatens the stability of the state and undermines its very character as a democracy.\(^\text{32}\) An increasing number of international legal instruments, including the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Conference, reflect this notion. This rationale also appears in the broader discourse surrounding human security, which stresses the role of the state in protecting all of its citizens’ rights.

An extension of the democratic argument views the benefit of women’s involvement from a utilitarian perspective. These theorists contend that including women expands the scope and diversity of perspectives, leading to a more robust and representative deliberative process in

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\(^{28}\) This term refers to the variety of theories and perspectives that have developed within the broader feminist movement, all of which are based on the assumption that women have been historically disadvantaged by a societal structure that privileges men at the expense of women’s agency and participation. (Ann R. Cacouloss, “American Feminist Theory,” *American Studies International* 39, no. 1 (2001): 72–117. http://www.jstor.org/stable/41279790)

\(^{29}\) Zelizer and Oliphant., 2.

\(^{30}\) Ibid., 2.

\(^{31}\) Thornton and Whitman, 106.

\(^{32}\) Ibid., 107.
policymaking. They maintain that women tend to be more collaborative and less corrupt, arguing that “because of their different natures or experiences, women are likely to participate in formal processes in distinctive ways and that their increased participation in formal politics will enhance democratic procedures by embracing new approaches to political engagement.”

According to this logic, women’s increased participation improves the quality of the political process.

**Economic Participation**

The arguments for women’s economic empowerment rest on two grounds: the “rights-based argument” and the “economic efficiency argument.” The first grows out of the same qualitative literature as those calling for women’s increased political participation. An International Labour Organization report relies on this logic when it identifies decent work as “a source of self-esteem, social standing, as well as human security and dignity,” and claims that societies are therefore obligated to provide their citizens with every opportunity to meet their full potential as workers.

The economic efficiency argument uses quantitative evidence to reinforce its claims, and emphasizes the tangible contributions women make to economic development and the corresponding disadvantages that result from excluding half of the population. It asserts that women’s participation contributes to development because women are more likely to reinvest in the community and help lift families out of poverty. Conversely,

“[G]ender inequalities impose costs on productivity, efficiency, and economic progress. By hindering the accumulation of human capital in the home and the labor market, and by systematically excluding women or men from access to resources, public services, or productive activities, gender discrimination diminishes an economy’s capacity to grow and to raise living standards.”

Additional studies indicate that excluding women from the workforce results in inefficient allocation of labor, inflated wage prices, and losses in output. Including women, on the other hand, leads to higher living standards, increased productivity, and greater social cohesion.

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37 Bernard, et al., 5.
39 Ibid., 85.
Women’s right to equal economic participation as part of the labor force is, according to this statistical evidence, key to a country’s sustained economic growth and productivity.  

Research also suggests that including women in top management positions influences economic success. A 2014 Credit Suisse Report on “Women in Senior Management” asserts, “companies with higher female representation at the board level or in top management exhibit higher returns on equity, higher valuations and also higher payout ratios.” This evidence suggests that it is not only important for women to participate in the labor force, but for them to have a role as leaders in the economy.

Though the case for women’s economic inclusion and empowerment seems morally clear and is bolstered by quantitative evidence, persistent cultural and normative factors impede women from fully participating economically, especially in developing countries where their inclusion would have the most immediately beneficial effect.

**Vulnerabilities and Gaps**

Despite the growing emphasis on gender equality and recent commitments from the international community toward gender mainstreaming embodied in a range of legal instruments, the field is relatively new and suffers from a few notable weaknesses. Much of the literature on this subject relies on moral argumentation, “declamatory rather than analytic, originating with advocacy groups and consisting of assertions and the importance of gender and women’s inclusion and the potential beneficial role of women.” Additionally, little quantitative data exists to support theorists’ assertions, even in the economic sector, which lends itself better to statistical measurement. For example, it is difficult to compare the poverty levels of women and men in many countries because this data is gathered for households rather than individuals. The lack of gender disaggregated data presents the most significant challenge in the study of Women, Peace and Security.

Specific to the role of women in post-conflict Kosovo, very little has been written - and even less quantitative data gathered - examining the role and impact of women in the country’s post-conflict reconstruction. One thorough qualitative study serves as a solid historical account detailing the role of women in civil society leading up to the war. Additionally, prominent economic indices from the World Bank, Freedom House and International Labor Organization provide a general sense of Kosovo’s state of progress with regard to gender equality. However, as of yet there exists no comprehensive analysis of the role of women in Kosovo’s political processes or economic development. Through our examination of the Kosovo case study, we hope to

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43 Klugman, 2.
44 Klugman, 3.
45 Thornton and Whitman, 10.
46 *History is Herstory, Too* tells the history of women in Kosovo’s civil society from 1980-2004.
contribute to the field of Women, Peace and Security broadly, and the study of Kosovo’s development specifically, by providing additional qualitative evidence of the stabilizing effect of gender equality in a post-conflict setting.

**Methodology**

This report provides a qualitative examination of the role of women in Kosovo’s political and economic post-conflict development through the collection and analysis of 19 semi-structured interviews. Interview subjects were selected based on their position, involvement, and knowledge of the political and economic sectors in Kosovo. While the majority of participants were women of Albanian descent (79 percent), the study exhibits relative even-handedness with regard to the sectors they represent. Roughly 42 percent of those interviewed hold a formal political position, 21 percent work in the private sector or development field, and 26 percent represent civil society or NGOs whose work addresses both political and economic issues.

These semi-structured interviews were conducted in a manner meant to strike a balance between consistency and flexibility. Two questionnaires – one for each research question – were tailored for each meeting based on the background, experience, and knowledge of the individual being interviewed. The questions were designed to maximize neutrality and gather as much specific information related to the research question as possible. During the interviews, the subjects were granted flexibility to elaborate beyond the formal questions, as this created a more collegial and conducive environment for the purposes of the qualitative research. All interviewees participated voluntarily and gave their consent to be recorded for accuracy and completeness.

In the analysis section of the paper, patterns observed in the data are identified, related back to the literature review, and reinforced with relevant research conducted by NGOs and think tanks. Additionally, Kosovo’s gender laws are used as primary source documents to accompany the interviews.

This type of data collection, while common and widely used, does have limitations. One limitation of this paper is the small sample size, which is not representative of the entire population in Kosovo. Further research should expand the size of the sample and include representatives of minority groups. Additionally, the inclusion of only women interviewees introduces a bias with regard to the subjects’ opinions concerning the importance and necessity of women’s role in the country’s development. By excluding men, some nuance with respect to cultural attitudes about gender roles and equality is lost. Therefore, this paper does not accomplish a gender analysis of political or economic participation within Kosovo; rather, it more narrowly examines only the role of women in the political and economic spheres of Kosovo.
Women’s Equality as a Component of Kosovo’s Reconstruction

The international community’s recognition of the role of women and pledge to improve their conditions manifested itself tangibly in the laws established in Kosovo following the war, which feature a reasonably robust set of policies promoting women’s equal access and empowerment in politics and business. The principal statute influencing the role of women in Kosovar society is the Law on Gender Equality (Law No 2004/2), which was passed by the Kosovo Assembly in 2004. It establishes “gender equality as a fundamental value for the democratic development of Kosovo society, providing equal opportunities for both female and male participation in the political, economical, social, cultural, and other fields of social life.”47 This law defines equal gender participation as achieved “in cases where the participation of the particular gender in the institutions, bodies, or at the level of authority is 40%” and includes provisions against discrimination and sexual harassment. It also protects women’s right to property, education, and employment, and directs the government to establish an Office for Gender Equality and appoint a Gender Equality Attorney. The Law on Gender Equality represents a comprehensive and progressive legislative approach to ensuring women in Kosovo experience equal treatment and opportunity in every aspect of society.

Nevertheless, the simple passage of a law does not immediately solve the problem it was drafted to address. Rather, success remains contingent on effective implementation and monitoring mechanisms. Approved by the Kosovo Assembly in 2008, the Kosovo Program for Gender Equality “represents a strategic program for the integration of Gender Equality within public policies and programs of Government of Kosovo” through analysis, the fostering of dialogue, policy recommendations, and budget development.48 In this way, Kosovo’s government is compelled to assess and reassess whether it is truly supporting gender equality.

The country’s election law plays a critical role in promoting gender equality through the mechanism of a gender quota. It states that political parties must ensure their candidate lists contain at least 30 percent from each gender for both national and municipal elections.49 This system ensures women access to the formal political process and, as we will examine in greater detail later, has played a key role not only in granting women access to the political process, but in fostering cultural change regarding the role of women in Kosovar society writ large.

Yet another example of the emphasis being given to gender equality in Kosovo is the drafting of the “Pristina Principles.” Adopted during an international summit hosted by Kosovo’s female president in October 2012, this document presents a body of strategies and best practices “to

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47 The Law on Gender Equality in Kosovo, Law No. 2004/2, Kosovo Assembly (2004), Republic of Kosovo Assembly website.
48 “Kosovo Program for Gender Equality,” Office of the Prime Minister (2008), 93.
49 Law on General Elections in the Republic of Kosovo, Law No. 03/L-073, Kosovo Assembly (2008), Republic of Kosovo Assembly website.
advance women’s security and justice, economic empowerment and political representation.”

Though these principles are not legally binding and were developed by representatives of “diverse sectors, countries, ethnicities, ages, cultures, and traditions,” the role President Atifete Jahjaga played in hosting the summit demonstrates her personal commitment to advancing gender equality and, by extension, the visibility of the issue in Kosovo.

It is important to note the role the international community played in bringing gender equality into the debate, and subsequently drafting laws to promote equal access and opportunity. From 1999 until 2008, while Kosovo was under UNMIK control, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Kosovo possessed exclusive legislative and executive power. It was UN SRSG Hans Haekkerup who therefore signed the 2001 Constitutional Framework, which established the structure for Kosovo’s self-government. This document acknowledged CEDAW, calling “upon signatory states to ensure women’s equal right to be eligible for and hold public office,” as a guiding legal document for Kosovo. Incorporating CEDAW and similar international instruments into Kosovo’s foundational documents set the groundwork for women’s meaningful participation in Kosovo’s post-conflict development.

Despite the SRSG’s legal role, UNMIK did make an effort to create as collaborative a legislative process as possible with the citizens of Kosovo. For instance, “women activists were consulted on new laws through their involvement in the Joint Interim Administrative Structure,” and a number of women’s groups claim some credit for the inclusion of CEDAW in the Constitutional Framework. Women have participated in Kosovo’s political development since the NATO victory by drafting laws, joining working groups, and advocating to the Assembly and SRSG. This involvement demonstrates their ability to meaningfully participate in the political process.

The Political Role of Women in Kosovo

“It’s a glass ceiling when you can see the sky, but you cannot touch the sky.”

- Teuta Sahatiqija, Member of Kosovo Assembly

Through both formal means, such as elected office, and informal methods, like civil society involvement, women in Kosovo play an increasingly critical and diverse role in the country’s political development. Their influence has led to several key advancements in policy, specifically with regard to women’s property rights and the reconciliation dialogue with Serbia. Nevertheless,
they still face significant obstacles on the path toward full political empowerment, most significantly cultural attitudes and the political party system.

**Touching the Sky: Accessing the Political Process**

The primary method by which women have secured entry into the formal political process in Kosovo has been through the gender quota. The most recent Country Gender Profile reported that women hold 33 percent of legislative seats at the national level and 34 percent at the municipal level. Many of our interviewees, though perhaps not wholeheartedly supportive of the quota system in the long term, recognize it as an important mechanism for ensuring women’s representation in public office. They acknowledge that without this legal requirement, women might not have had an opportunity to demonstrate their capacity to meaningfully contribute to the political process.

Mimoza Kusari-Lila, the first female mayor in Kosovo’s history, touts the quota as a success, stating:

“Election after election, you are seeing women proving themselves to be capable so that there are women who will win votes even without quota … I think it was important to put a foot in the door and open the door to women in politics.”

Presidential political advisor Garentina Kraja echoes this sentiment, claiming, “the quota brought women to the table and gave them the confidence to voice their opinions.” Most women interviewed express similar opinions, convinced that without the quota, Kosovo’s traditional patriarchal culture would have inhibited women’s involvement in politics.

Teuta Sahatqija, a female Member of Parliament (MP) and former president of the Cross-Party Women’s Caucus (Women’s Caucus), credits the quota with setting the groundwork for women’s increased representation in office, arguing “the most important thing in women’s empowerment in politics is to create a critical mass of women within these structures.” In an effort to reach this critical mass, Sahatqija and other members of the Women’s Caucus proposed legislation that mandates a gender balance among the party leadership. This law would require that all political parties fill at least one party leadership position – either that of the presidency or the vice presidency – with a woman. Sahatqija explained, “Our idea was that the president and vice-presidents wouldn’t be the same gender. We know that it’s pretty difficult to have a woman

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58 Besa Kadaja-Rabaj referred to the gender quota as a system of “positive discrimination.” She contended that, though it was a necessary measure to afford women “a jump start,” it does not necessarily ensure “the right women are representing all women.”
59 Interview with Besa Kabashi-Rabaj, July 2, 2015; Interview with Mimoza Kusari-Lila, Mayor, Gjakova, Kosovo, July 8, 2015; Interview with Arbanna Xharra, Editor-in-Chief, Zeri Daily, July 14, 2015; Interview with Atifete Jahjaga, President of Kosovo, July 13, 2015; Interview with Teuta Sahatqija, Member, Kosovo Assembly July 9, 2015.
60 Interview with Mimoza Kusari-Lila, Mayor, Gjakova, Kosovo.
61 Interview with Garentina Kraja, Advisor on Foreign Policy and Security to Kosovo’s President.
62 Interview with Teuta Sahatqija, Member, Kosovo Assembly.
president, but at least VP were one step forward in political empowerment of women.” This legislative effort is just one example of the way women in elected office are trying to expand their role in the political process and create greater balance between men and women in high public office. Not content with simply being present, they are demonstrating their desire to play a more prominent role in Kosovo’s political structure and shaping the future of the country.

Women in Kosovo have also found ways to play a role in politics without explicitly campaigning for votes. As leaders and participants in civil society, women and women’s groups have shaped debate, formulated policy, and provided services that enhance the status of women in the political sphere and support the women who run for office.

The most prominent method through which civil society has shaped the debate about gender equality and the role of women in Kosovo has been the “Week of Women,” an annual event first held in 2012 and facilitated by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) in partnership with members from the Women’s Caucus. It gathers women from across Kosovo, representing a diverse group of participants from both the public and private sectors, to provide practical capacity training and promote engagement among the participants. According to Sahatqija, the intent was to use the Women’s Caucus’ “name and influence to empower young women from all over [Kosovo].” Over the years, the event has become a launching pad for talented young women in business and politics.65

Civil society also informs and shapes public debate around issues of gender equality through culture and the arts. In a 2004 UNIFEM-funded campaign entitled “Know Your Rights,” civil society groups traveled around Kosovo staging performances that addressed issues such as domestic violence, rape, and employment as a way to inform citizens about their legal rights. These performances fostered dialogue across the country among men and women, while also educating women about the law.

In the ethnically divided city of Mitrovica, the CSO Community Building Mitrovica (CBM) regularly published a magazine that discussed various economic and social issues between the Serbian-dominated northern part of the city and the Albanian south. CBM pursued an agenda of cross-community work by organizing round-table discussions and mediation between the two communities. Valdete Idrizi, the organization’s founder, attributes much of CBM’s success to the inclusion of and partnership with women’s groups because “women are able to access more of the community.” By including women in reconciliation and mediation efforts, CSOs grant women a critical role in Kosovo’s political reconstruction.

Women have also used civil society engagement as a way to advocate for legislative reform. For example, Norma Lawyers Association – a women’s association that provides legal advice – played

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63 Ibid.
64 Ibid.
65 Ibid.
66 History is Herstory, Too, 224.
67 Interview with Valdete Idrizi, Executive Director, CivKos, July 10, 2015.
a critical role in drafting Kosovo’s National Action Plan for the Achievement of Gender Equality, Family Law, and the Law on Protection against Domestic Violence. “During working groups for drafting each law, Norma members ensured the new law included a gender perspective.”\textsuperscript{68} Other CSOs, such as the Kosovo Democratic Network (KDN), engage in similar advocacy activities to advance legislation “based on gender integration and on democratic principles that guarantee progressive implementation of equal rights for all.”\textsuperscript{69}

Norma and KDN’s advocacy strategies reflect a common method used by groups in Kosovo called the “basic action methods research approach.”\textsuperscript{70} After conducting extensive research of the issues and existing laws, groups gather facts from the field and formulate their written arguments. They then seek input from legal experts to develop proposed legal reform. Finally, they garner vital support from other advocacy groups, political parties, and government officials before proposing the legislation.\textsuperscript{71} This systematic approach reveals the sophisticated nature of Kosovo’s civil society with respect to women’s rights.

\textit{The Impact of Women Working Together}

While the methods through which women access the political process in Kosovo are notable, a critical question to explore is how women operate once they have gained entry.\textsuperscript{72} Though women in the Kosovo Assembly belong to myriad parties and espouse a diversity of political views, they formed the Women’s Caucus to promote cooperation among women in elected office. Women in civil society have organized similar partnerships to advance shared goals. In many instances, these alliances included both elected officials and members of civil society. The formation of these groups seems to indicate that, once they have gained access to the political process, women behave in a collaborative and constructive manner.

The most notable initiative undertaken by the Women’s Caucus has been its engagement with members of Serbia’s parliament. Sixteen years after the end of the war between them, the relationship between Kosovo and Serbia remains tense. To this day, Serbia does not recognize Kosovo as an independent nation and refuses to engage with Kosovo as if it were a sovereign entity.\textsuperscript{73} Discussions between Kosovo and Serbia generally occur under the auspices of third parties, specifically the EU and the OSCE.\textsuperscript{74}

\textsuperscript{68} \textit{History is Herstory}, Too, 214.
\textsuperscript{70} \textit{History is Herstory}, Too, 215.
\textsuperscript{71} \textit{History is Herstory}, Too, 215.
\textsuperscript{72} As it beyond the scope of this paper to investigate the policy positions of every individual woman or women’s group in Kosovo, we will restrict our examination to those initiatives women have pursued as a cohesive group and have had the most noteworthy impact on Kosovo’s political development.
\textsuperscript{73} As a result of the “Brussels Agreement” of 2013, Serbia agreed not to block Kosovo’s pursuit of membership in international organizations, including the EU. In return, Kosovar Serbs in the north were granted autonomy. While Kosovo characterized Serbia’s participation in this agreement as a de facto recognition of Kosovo’s independence, Serbia opposes this interpretation, referring to the agreement political act, not a legal statement. (Nikolas K. Gvosdev,
Edita Tahiri was appointed as the head of Kosovo’s delegation leading the official dialogue with Serbia in February 2011. Her appointment, while a significant accomplishment for women in Kosovo’s political history, is preceded by a history of women’s engagement across borders. According to Donika Kadaj-Bujupi, an MP in the Kosovo Assembly, “The dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina started with women, under the mentorship of the OSCE.”

In 2012, the Women’s Caucus reached out to the women of Serbia’s parliament and held a series of secret talks. According to the Sahatqija,

“Our two countries passed through the war, through the biggest atrocities that happened in the Europe, so contacting women from Serbia was very unpopular, but we had the visionary mission knowing that we cannot solve these problems without engaging.”

The dialogue between the two delegations was documented in the form of a film entitled “Follow Us.” On July 3, 2015, women deputies from Serbia’s Assembly joined their Kosovar counterparts in the Kosovo Assembly for a series of talks and a screening of the film. This event marked the first time in history that members of Serbian lawmakers visited Kosovo’s Assembly building. Through these efforts, women in Kosovo not only documented the impact their participation could have on the trajectory of Kosovo’s future, but they used the film to facilitate the first step towards fostering a reconciliation dialogue with reconciliation with Serbia.

The Women’s Caucus also worked together to lobby for the inclusion of women as political appointees. In 2011, they successfully petitioned the foreign ministry to include women in its list of ambassador candidates, which originally contained only men. Sahatqija notes the eagerness of women in the Women’s Caucus to engage in the petition process, recalling “it took us five minutes to get together, to contact the media, to send letters - even to Hillary Clinton, who wrote a letter supporting us, and her support made us very strong.”

After the concerted public relations campaign launched by the Women’s Caucus, Foreign Minister Hoxhaj issued a statement saying,

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76 Interview with Donika Kadaj-Bujupi, Member, Kosovo Assembly, July 14, 2015.

77 Interview with Teuta Sahatqija, Member, Kosovo Assembly.


80 Interview with Teuta Sahatqija, Member, Kosovo Assembly.
“We have respectfully acknowledged and reviewed the reaction you sent on behalf of women Members of the Assembly of Republic of Kosovo. Initially, please allow me to express my consent with your reaction, and state that the issue you rightfully raise was already considered with special care and seriousness at our Ministry.”

Within four days, the ministry produced a new list including three women. This success illustrates the power women MPs bring to bear when they act in collaboration toward a common goal.

Women also collaborate across sectors. One of the most far-reaching and effective ways that women in elected office and civil society have worked together has been to protect and enforce women’s property rights. Prior to the war, “the cultural norm was for women to be completely excluded from inheritance,” Kraja explained. Even after new laws were created to treat men and women equally, cultural practices endured such that today women own only 10 percent of property in the country. In an effort to increase women’s property ownership, women MPs, CSOs, NGOs, and international organizations have come together around a campaign called “For all Good.” According to Mirlinda Kusari, the founder and director of She-Era, a women’s business network,

“We are working together and we will see how we change the mentality because by law, they have the right, but the mentality is such that the law is not put into practice. If they take anything, the family will ostracize them. What we are doing through our training [and] services is the mentoring is to convince and change the mind of the male to support the female.”

As part of this effort to change the cultural mentality of men, this collaboration across sectors has advocated for the enactment of a regulation that lowers interest rates for loans to women from EU funds. This creates an incentive for men to allow women to take out loans in their name. According to Kadaj-Bujupi, “it worked because people were volunteering to divide property to take advantage of the lower interest rate.” This multi-pronged approach from policymakers and civil society to change the incentives that reinforce cultural inequities illustrates yet another way that women have used their agency in the political process to foster tangible progress.

**Impediments to Women’s Meaningful Political Participation**

Despite the many gains women have made in both representation and policy enactment, various factors impede their full and meaningful political participation. Specifically, the structure and

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81 Hoxhaj, “Response to your reaction to the proposed ambassadors’ list,” Letter to Women’s Caucus, Assembly of Republic of Kosovo, _Annual Report of Women’s Caucus of Kosovo Assembly_, 2011.
82 Interview with Teuta Sahatqija, Member, Kosovo Assembly.
83 Interview with Garentina Kraja, Advisor on Foreign Policy and Security to Kosovo’s President.
84 Interview with Teuta Sahatqija, Member, Kosovo Assembly.
85 Interview with Mirlinda Kusari, Founder and Executive Director, SHE-Era, July 8, 2015.
86 Ibid.
87 Interview with Donika Kadaj-Bujupi, Member of Kosovo Assembly.
practices of the party system and a patriarchal culture contribute to the persistent gap that exists between men and women’s participation in the political process.

Political parties represent the greatest impediment to women’s meaningful political participation in Kosovo. A 2014 UNDP poll found that “only eight percent of women are involved in political parties, versus 22 percent of men.”88 Furthermore, men dominate the party leadership positions and decision-making roles, making little effort to include more women in these structures.89 In the most recent party elections, a woman was explicitly blocked from running as the leader of her party, despite garnering over 30,000 votes.90 Even Kadaj-Bujupi, who has served in leadership positions in the Alliance for the Future of Kosova (AAK) party, acknowledges that Kosovars “have a women’s caucus and 30 percent quota, but there isn’t a general feeling that women have a lot of space in [the AAK] party.”91 Since the parties nominate political candidates to the assemblies, this lack of representation within the parties directly impacts the number and caliber of women who make it onto the ballot and into office.

In creating a challenging and at times hostile environment for women, political parties significantly hamper women’s potential as candidates. An NDI report found that parties do not provide the same support to women as they do to men; the parties argue that women don’t need support, since the quota guarantees they will receive seats.92 The party structure thus undermines the quota’s purpose of increasing women’s participation by limiting their preparation, blocking their access to campaign funds, and not affording them the same level of job preparation as their male counterparts. As Kusari explains,

“The men think that by having women in government and on certain commissions, they are satisfying the requirements of equal opportunity. But this is deceiving because women aren’t adequately represented at the executive level and the decision-making level.”93

This leads to less capable political candidates and officeholders, which critics of the quota and women’s participation point to as evidence to argue that women are not effective politicians.

The perception that women are not capable or are ill-equipped to serve in politics derives from the conservative patriarchal thinking that dominates Kosovar culture. In a 2014 UN study, “45

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89 NDI Report, 6. “Party decision-making structures and leadership positions at national and branch levels are inaccessible to most women. Additionally, parties lack the will and ability to make space for competent and talented women. There are few opportunities for women to hold party or government positions., which might instill greater appreciation of women’s contributions to their parties.”
90 Vjosa Osmani, a prominent MP from the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) party, was prevented from running for party leadership despite obtaining the second-most amount of votes in the initial running. (Interview with Ajete Kergeli, Project Manager at Peer Educators Network, July 8, 2015).
91 Interview with Donika Kadaja-Bujupi, Member of Kosovo Assembly.
92 NDI Report, 5.
93 Interview with Mirlinda Kusari, Founder and Executive Director, SHE-ERA.
percent of all respondents associated parliamentary professions with men compared to 3 percent association with women. There is a similar difference in responses concerning the position of mayor; 67.36 percent of all respondents associated the position of mayor with men, whereas only 2.87 percent associated it with women.” A woman’s role is still seen as more domestic than professional, which creates yet another barrier to women’s political engagement.

These impediments underscore the importance of effective policy implementation. Despite the country’s progressive gender equality policies, women in Kosovo still face significant structural and cultural barriers in the political environment. As Kadaj-Bujupi explains, “being a woman in politics is even harder, because you have to be three times better to prove you belong.” The substantial role women have played in Kosovo’s political development becomes all the more impressive in light of these challenges.

**Women’s Role in Kosovo’s Economic Development**

“By investing in a woman, you are not investing in an individual only. You invest in the individual, you invest in the family, and you invest in the child, which is the future of our country. So you invest in the future of our country.”

- Atifete Jahjaga, President of Kosovo

The establishment of political institutions and systems represents just one component of a post-conflict reconstruction strategy; economic development is an equally critical element. Drawing on liberal economic theory, as well as more recent concepts in human development, modern development theories contend that positive economic growth leads to more sustainable peace. Yet truly sustainable economic development is not possible if a significant portion of the population is excluded from that process. According to this logic, excluding women from economic processes limits economic growth.

**War, Women, and Work**

Historically, Kosovo’s patriarchal culture clearly defined gender roles with regard to family and employment. In a 2015 NDI report examining gender equality in Kosovo, it was found that men are expected to be “the main providers of their families, while women are designated to caring for the welfare of their families and household maintenance, work that is undervalued and in effect preserves their lower social status.” The war against Serbia disrupted this traditional

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95 Interview with Donika Kadaj-Bujupi, Member, Kosovo Assembly.
96 Interview with Atifete Jahjaga, President of Kosovo.
98 Democracy for Development (D4D) Institute, “The Cost of Patriarchy,” Statistics show that inactive women (those not actively seeking employment) cite caretaking and family responsibilities at rates 9-18 percent higher than men.
99 Kosovo Program for Gender Equality, 105.
arrangement because it forced many women to step into the roles normally reserved for the men of their families. As Valdete Idrizi explains,

“The war forced women to become mother and father of the family when the men would go hide in the woods or fight, so it showed women they were able to do things; so why should they stop doing it now? They were able to do everything when the men were gone and realized they were more capable than they thought.”

Out of a necessity to feed and provide for their families, women learned how to run businesses, manage family farms, and supervise workers, all while balancing their household responsibilities.

Kusari-Lila describes the experience of the women who helped rebuild after the war.

“All the sudden, a woman who was not properly educated has gone from being a housewife to a businesswoman who supports family, who thinks of increasing the business, who deals with many things she never would have dreamed about. And this is because she has gone through the hardship of war and decides to become strong and fight hard.”

Thus, due to a practical need, women in Kosovo proved their capacity to meaningfully contribute as members of the labor force.

**International Aid and Influence**

Whereas necessity forced their economic participation during the war, international aid provided critical training and opportunities for women after the conflict. Nearly every woman interviewed for this study obtained employment with international organizations after the war, using these jobs to gain experience, receive valuable training, and develop a network that allowed them to pursue other opportunities or create their own businesses.

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) represents one such international organization. Recognizing the detrimental effects of the gap in economic access and participation among men and women, USAID stipulates, “all economic growth-related activities must and will ensure prominent participation by women.” For example, 40 percent of the workers trained through the recent Kosovo Private Enterprise Program (KPEP) were women. KPEP supported women across a variety of sectors, to include agriculture, construction, tourism, business support services, and workforce development to the tune of nearly US$2 million.

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100 Interview with Valdete Idrizi, Executive Director, CivKos.
101 The shifting of gender roles during wartime is a common phenomenon, which Sheila Meintjes examines in her chapter "War and Post-War Shifts in Gender Relations in the edited volume The Aftermath: Women in Post-Conflict Transformation" (London: Zed, 2001).
102 Interview with Mimoza Kusari-Lila, Mayor, Gjakova, Kosovo.
partnership with the Women’s Chamber of Commerce, USAID aims to encourage an increase of women in top management positions by creating networking opportunities for women in business. It also sponsors projects in sectors that “employ large numbers of women and have high potential for women to assume leadership and decision-making positions.” In this way, USAID and other international organizations create opportunities and build capacity for women to participate in the formal economy.

Kusari is one of the women who capitalized on the training received from aid organizations. Immediately after the war, she worked for the International Organization for Migration, where she learned about and enrolled in the Summer School for Entrepreneurship in Pristina. Using the skills she learned and the network she built in that training, she founded She-Era, the largest women’s business organization in Kosovo. By providing business and entrepreneurial training for rural women, consulting services for international companies, and policy analysis to lawmakers, She-Era seeks to “strengthen the position of women and encourage the empowerment of women entrepreneurs.” To date, it has completed 60 projects and trained more than 5,000 women.

The organization also played a key role during the municipal budget review process for Gjakova in 2007.

She-Era’s initiatives serve as a key example of how women in Kosovo are participating in the economy and have contributed to economic growth. The NGO Women for Women also strives to increase women’s access to and participation in the economic sector. Working primarily with socially excluded, uneducated, and generally poor women, they offer a yearlong curriculum that provides life skills and vocational training. They also offer job placement services, leveraging a database of more than 800 trainees and 300 potential employers. According to the Kosovo director Iliriana Gashi, the organization has “facilitated the employment of almost 500 women.” Through its training and services, Women for Women is providing women the skills necessary to participate in the labor force, thus helping to address the unemployment gap in Kosovo.

In addition to international organizations and local grassroots efforts to economically empower women, the government of Kosovo crafts policies that encourage women’s economic participation. Many development and economic initiatives, for example, now incorporate a quota to encourage funding of women-owned businesses. These projects have also begun to incorporate more flexible application regulations. The municipality of Gjakova recently concluded a

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104 The Women’s Chamber of Commerce is a networking organization that was established in early-2013 as a result of the 2013 International Women’s Summit attended by former Secretary of State Madeline Albright and hosted by President Jahjaga. The Commerce strives to address the constraints to full female participation at all levels of the economy.


106 Interview with Mirlinda Kusari, Founder and Executive Director, SHE-Era.


108 Ibid.


110 Interview with Iliriana Gashi, Kosovo Country Director, Women for Women International, July 14, 2015.

111 Ibid.
microfinance project that featured a 30 percent quota and a long application window. As Kusari-Lila explains, “we require the business to exist for at least one month but the application announcement period and closed period is more than one month so women can start a business when the grant is announced and qualify for it.” This flexible design affords women more time to navigate the practical and cultural challenges of starting a business in Kosovo. By acknowledging the added difficulty women confront in securing capital, obtaining family support, and balancing household responsibilities, this approach increases the potential for women to become entrepreneurs.

**A Long Way to Go**

Initially, this report sought to evaluate how women’s economic empowerment contributed to Kosovo’s post-conflict development. However, the lack of gender-disaggregated data limited its ability to do so. With the available data, one cannot definitively claim that women’s participation has contributed significantly to economic development. What can be confidently asserted is that limiting women’s participation inhibits growth.  

Despite the assistance of aid organizations, programs offered by organizations such as She-Era, and the government’s policy initiatives, labor force participation by women in Kosovo remains significantly lower than that of men. “Only one in ten women in Kosovo are employed, and another one in ten would like to get a job.” The 2013 Labor Force Survey data shows a significant gender gap in labor force participation. Though the entire country suffers from high unemployment, a gender gap of over 30 percent exists, with only 13 percent of working-age women employed, compared to 44 percent of working-age men.

This disparity is even worse in rural areas, where patriarchal values, lack of education, and incomplete implementation of the law obstruct women’s ability to participate in the formal economic sector. One study showed that “women living in urban areas are twice as likely to be economically active compared to those living in rural areas (26 percent and 13 percent respectively).” In a 2015 study conducted by Democracy for Development (D4D) in Kosovo, “analysis suggested that more educated women are more likely to participate in the labor market.” Not surprisingly, women in rural areas have less access to education due to transportation challenges and cultural pressure to stay home and fulfill domestic roles, especially once they are married. They also have less exposure to the ideas and influence of international aid organizations that empower women to seek employment.

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"Interview with Mimoza Kusari-Lila, Mayor, Gjakova, Kosovo.

We reach this conclusion based on studies conducted by Democracy for Development, SHE-ERA, and the World Bank evaluating the impact of women’s economic participation on the economy.


Ibid., 24.

D4D, 30.
These cultural pressures, when combined with a lack of education, result in poor implementation of Kosovo’s equality laws. According to the President of Kosovo,

“[T]he laws of Kosovo are in accordance with international and EU standards, but we are lacking a lot in the implementation of them. For example, the property right law of Kosovo states women have equal rights as men, but less than one percent are practicing this law. More commitment has to be shown for further implementation.”\textsuperscript{117}

The enforcement of women’s inheritance rights highlights this challenge. Though women have equal rights to property according to Kosovo law,\textsuperscript{118} cultural attitudes still give preference to men.\textsuperscript{119} A USAID study concluded, “some gender-related property laws are good on their face, but tradition and customary practice have prevented women from exercising their inheritance rights.”\textsuperscript{120}

According to a study conducted by the Kosovar for Gender Studies Center, 40.61 percent of women surveyed believe that inheritance is actually regulated by tradition, not the law.\textsuperscript{121} Under pressure from their families, women will often sign their property over to a male relative. A lack of education reinforces this cultural influence because many women are not even aware they possess any property rights. As Kadaj-Bujupi stresses, “to be in charge of their lives, women need education to get jobs. By fixing inheritance rights and giving them education, women will achieve economic independence, which is key to equality.”\textsuperscript{122}

These impediments to women’s economic equality present a serious challenge to Kosovo’s economic future. According to the D4D study, “women’s exclusion from economic activity has been a key bottleneck for economic growth.”\textsuperscript{123} The World Bank maintains that “ignoring gender disparities comes at great cost – to people’s well-being and to countries’ abilities to grow sustainably, to govern effectively, and thus to reduce poverty.”\textsuperscript{124} Though the government of Kosovo has acknowledged the link between gender inequality and economic stagnation by passing legislation that grants men and women equal economic rights, cultural and structural challenges continue to perpetuate the gender gap.\textsuperscript{125}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{117} Interview with Atifete Jahjaga, President of Kosovo.
\item \textsuperscript{118} Article 3.1. "All physical persons under the same conditions are equal in inheritance”.
\item \textsuperscript{119} Women’s property inheritance rights in Kosovo: “According to Albanian customary law, the woman was discriminated against with regard to the right to inheritance. The Code of Lekë Dukagjini states that: “In the event of the inheritor being female, then a man must be sought up to the 12th removed so that this property is not left to a woman”.
\item \textsuperscript{120} “Kosovo: 2014-2018 Country Development Cooperation Strategy.”
\item \textsuperscript{121} Women’s property inheritance rights in Kosovo, 19.
\item \textsuperscript{122} Interview with Donika Kadaj-Bujupi, Member, Kosovo Assembly.
\item \textsuperscript{123} D4D, 7.
\item \textsuperscript{124} World Bank; October 2007, “Kosovo poverty assessment”. The poverty incidence is estimated to be higher by 4 percent for female headed households compared to male heads of households.
\item \textsuperscript{125} “Confronting gender inequality has a primary bearing in raising the welfare of thousands of families in Kosovo that live in poverty,” Kosovo Program for Gender Equality, 105.
\end{itemize}
With Opportunity Comes Progress

“I think for women, if you give them an opportunity, they will thrive and improve the society. We are giving an opportunity to women that never had one, nobody gave them an opportunity.”

- Iliriana Gashi, Country Director, Women for Women International

This research illustrates the ways in which women in Kosovo have demonstrated their ability to contribute meaningfully in both the political and economic reconstruction of their new nation. Due to the transformational effect of the war, legislative reforms, an active civil society, and the financial and advisory support of the international community, women have made significant advances in Kosovo. Their involvement in critical initiatives, particularly with respect to reconciliation with Serbia, have illustrated the positive effects of encouraging gender equality in politics. Yet various cultural and structural impediments prevent them from fully participating - especially economically - and this is limiting the country’s potential for future peace and economic growth. The two issues are inextricably linked: access to the political process enables women to propose and support legislation that provides more economic opportunities, while increased economic empowerment gives women a greater voice and influence in the political process. As Idrizi observed, “you cannot be politically powerful in the community if you are not economically independent.”

Kosovo cannot claim gender equality until it affords women the same economic opportunities as men.

The country’s obdurate patriarchal culture not only forces women to depend on men economically, but it also perpetuates the notion that women are incapable of fulfilling roles outside of the home. Fortunately, our research offers encouraging indications that the society’s exposure to women in political office, especially in executive positions, is slowly changing the culture. The first female mayor in Kosovo noticed that “the self-confidence of women is higher because I am in office; there is a ripple effect. Now you have more women coming forward for leadership positions because of my role – they look up to you.”

Through their leadership and demonstrated ability to contribute, women are forging a path for future generations. This idea of exposure as a method of normative adjustment finds its most high profile example in Kosovo’s president, Atifete Jahjaga. Though the method by which she was placed in office elicited much criticism – she obtained the position in a U.S.-brokered compromise agreement to end a stalemate between political parties – she has fulfilled the duties of the office for over four years. This exposes the society to the idea of a woman in a powerful position, slowly breaking down ideological barriers. “People get used to seeing a woman representing them, no matter how happy or satisfied they are. Whether they think she is competent or not, they get used to seeing a woman president representing Kosovo.”

Aside from providing a visible example of a woman in a

126 Interview with Iliriana Gashi, Country Director, Women for Women International.
127 Interview with Valdete Idrizi, Executive Director, CivKos.
128 Interview with Mimoza Kusari-Lila, Mayor, Gjakova, Kosovo.
129 Interview with Iliriana Gashi, Country Director, Women for Women International.
position of leadership, President Jahjaga has used her time in office to advocate for policies that promote gender equality. Through her example and political influence, she has helped to improve women’s access to the political and economic systems of Kosovo.

Nevertheless, Kosovo has a long way to go before it can claim it has achieved gender equality. Its leaders can take immediate action to provide women greater access and empowerment both politically and economically. First, though its constitution and legal systems feature gender equality laws, they are implemented inconsistently. Enforcement and accountability mechanisms should be created to ensure the laws are followed. Second, the political parties remain persistently male-dominated and do not cultivate and prepare women for political positions. Regulations should be passed creating a system of internal democracy that affords opportunities for women to serve in leadership roles. In addition, parties should offer capacity training and funding for women candidates. These changes will help to put women on a more equal footing with male candidates. Finally, more research needs to be done using gender-disaggregated data to better measure the effect women have on Kosovo’s post-conflict development.

With respect to economic participation, much needs to be done to give women equal access to the education and capital necessary to contribute to the country’s economic development. The solutions to this problem will require improvements to transportation infrastructure, more options for childcare, and the challenge of confronting entrenched cultural perceptions of gender roles. Arguably, women will not gain greater access to economic opportunities until the overall unemployment situation in the country improves. Nevertheless, efforts encouraging women’s entrepreneurship and access to private industry should continue.

Kosovo is a young country, recently having emerged from years of oppression and war, and eager to establish itself as a sovereign entity, grow economically, and participate as a future member of the EU. However, it will only be able to achieve its goals of peace and prosperity if women are fully empowered and all members of its society have an equal opportunity to contribute to the political, economic and social life of the country. Long-lasting stability and progress is not possible unless every member of the society is empowered to participate fully as a citizen.
Appendix A: Map of Kosovo

From http://www.worldatlas.com/kosovo.htm
## Appendix B: List of Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position/Title</th>
<th>Description of work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Besa Kabashi-Ramaj</td>
<td>Managing Director, Centre for Research Documentation and Publication</td>
<td>Served in advisory roles in government, to include as the Coordinator of the Inter-Ministerial Coordination Group for the Strategic Security Sector Review and Capacity Development Facility Advisor for the Minister for the Kosovo Security Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mimoza Kusari-Lila</td>
<td>Mayor, Gjakova</td>
<td>Kosovo’s first woman mayor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mirlinda Kusari</td>
<td>Founder and CEO, SHE-ERA</td>
<td>Leads a women’s business organization that offers consultations, business planning, document collection for proposals, marketing strategies, market research, and services on human resources and operating management for the businesses of women entrepreneurs in Kosovo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ajete Kerqeli</td>
<td>Program Manager, Peer Educator’s Network</td>
<td>Designs tools and conducts gender mainstreaming training to strengthen the role of women in Kosovo’s civil society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teuta Sahatqija</td>
<td>Member of Kosovo Assembly, LDK Party</td>
<td>Served as the chair of the Women’s Cross-Party Caucus and a member of the Committee for the European Integration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambassador Tracey Jacobson</td>
<td>American Ambassador to Kosovo</td>
<td>Engaged in U.S. diplomatic efforts within Kosovo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claire Wohlschak</td>
<td>KFOR Gender Advisor</td>
<td>Conducts gender mainstreaming training for NATO forces in Kosovo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arbana Xharra</td>
<td>Editor in Chief Zeri daily newspaper</td>
<td>Named an International Woman of Courage in 2015 for her reporting on corruption in Kosovo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valdete Idrizi</td>
<td>Founder, Community-Building Mitrovica</td>
<td>Participated extensively in civil society development and action after the war</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President Atifete Jahjaga</td>
<td>President of the Republic of Kosovo</td>
<td>First woman executive in Kosovo; has brought awareness to gender issues in the country through her support for legislation and civil society initiatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garentina Kraja</td>
<td>Advisor on Foreign Policy and Security to Kosovo’s President</td>
<td>Worked as a reporter during the war before becoming a member of the Yale World Fellows Program; appointed advisor to President Jahjaga in 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Luljeta Gjonbala</td>
<td>Project Management Specialist for Elections and Civil Society, USAID</td>
<td>Designs, implements, and evaluates development aid programs in Kosovo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Flora Arifi,</td>
<td>Project Management Specialist for Business Environment, USAID</td>
<td>Designs, implements, and evaluates development aid programs in Kosovo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Position</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donika Kadaj-Bujupi</td>
<td>Member of Kosovo Assembly, AAK Party</td>
<td>Served as a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee and the Women’s Cross-Party Caucus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iliriana Gashi</td>
<td>Country Director, Women for Women International</td>
<td>Leads an NGO providing capacity training and job placement resources for women in Kosovo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brikena Avdyli</td>
<td>Kosovo Project Officer for Inclusiveness, International Foundation for Electoral Systems</td>
<td>Manages civic education and training programs that seek to increase the participation, influence and representation of traditionally under-represented groups in political processes and governance structures</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C: About the Authors

**Nerea M. Cal** is a West Point graduate active duty Army officer, and will receive an M.A. in Global Affairs from the Jackson Institute for Global Affairs at Yale University in May 2016. She was commissioned as an Aviation officer and has served for ten years in various leadership and staff positions as a Blackhawk pilot, including deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan. She served as a 2015 visiting summer scholar at the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, where her research focused on the role of women in post-conflict settings. After completing her studies, she will teach International Relations at West Point.

**Rukmani D. Bhatia** is a human rights and security professional with expertise in gender, transitional justice, and fragile states. She served as the inaugural Hillary Rodham Clinton Research Fellow at the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security. She received her M.A. from the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service with a concentration in human rights, security, and international law, and a B.A. in International Relations and French with honors from Wellesley College.
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