

NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE

THE FACE OF DEMOCRACY IN KOSOVO 2012

Future Women Leaders



Working for Democracy and Making Democracy work

Women's Leadership Academy

Program Description

The Women's Leadership Academy (WLA) is a new program initiated by the National Democratic Institute that was based on feedback received during NDI's "Week of Women", a program that was held in March 2012 and brought together 100 women from across Kosovo to discuss, learn and identify skills and techniques that would help them to become more effective in their chosen field.

Following "Week of Women", NDI designed and implemented a five-module Women's Leadership Academy (WLA) aimed at providing "Week of Women" participants with additional skills-development. The Institute issued a call for applications to attend the modules, and chose 30 new and mid-career participants, ensuring a balanced representation from all regions, political parties and sectors. NDI specifically selected women who have achieved some degree of success in their chosen field of work and would be able to immediately apply the skills learned through this program. The topics covered during the modules were:

- Module 1: Managing the media and becoming more media savvy
- Module 2: Public Speaking
- Module 3: Time Management
- Module 4: Networking and Negotiation skills
- Module 5: Training of Trainers – (ToT)

The trainings were delivered by international experts and local trainers who shared their knowledge and expertise with the emerging women leaders from Kosovo.

The first two modules took place in May, 2012. NDI consultant Bonnie Brownlee delivered a presentation on media interactions, demonstrating to participants the importance of taking advantage of media opportunities that could benefit their careers. Brownlee discussed tactics for attracting the media, managing the media and messaging. NDI expert Pamela Hart led the second module on public speaking. Hart worked with participants on building confidence while speaking in public and provided guidance on creating public speaking opportunities. Former U.S. Governor and NDI board member Howard Dean was able to observe and participate in this module as part of a visit to Kosovo.

In June, NDI Kosovo staff worked with NDI Albania staff to organize in Durrës, the third module on Time Management. In addition to the Kosovar participants, this module was held jointly with 20 women representatives from the Women's Network in Albania, the Albanian Democratic Party's women's forum and the Albanian Socialist Party's women's forum. NDI consultant Shannon O'Connell led the module, which addressed such topics as the development of time maps and logs, and other time-management techniques. In addition to providing practical skills to the participants, the module enabled women in the Kosovo and Albania programs to network and compare professional experiences with each other. The fourth module on Negotiations and Networking

was held in July and was led by NDI consultant Denitsa Sacheva, The goal of this module goal was to introduce the participants to the art of negotiation and to illustrate how networking is an important technique to that can be used to become more effective and successful in their respective chosen fields.

Lastly, in mid-July NDI worked with local trainers to deliver a module on Training of Trainers. The module was designed give participants the skills and techniques to deliver trainings so that going forward participants would be able to share the knowledge, skills and experiences gained from WLA with other women in their organizations and political parties. Although this module was an optional one for the program, 90% of the women participated in this module and have made a commitment to train and share with other women.

One unanticipated result of the WLA was that not only did the participants successfully complete all five modules, many of the women decided among themselves to continue to work together post-graduation on specific advocacy projects that they believe are important to the economic and political successes of women in Kosovo. For example, there are participants who have decided to work together, across party lines, on a campaign to help divorced single mothers become more educated about their rights with respect to child support for their families.

Laura Nichols – Senior Resident Director of NDI Kosovo

NDI has been privileged to support women’s programming in Kosovo over the past decade, by supporting the work of the Women MPs caucus, by providing skills building for women candidates at both the local and national level, and by working with women’s forums within political parties.

The Women’s Leadership Academy (WLA) signals a new and innovative approach to supporting women’s programming. By following the week-long women’s academy, “Week of Women” (WOW), with a smaller, more focused women’s leadership academy, NDI was able to provide 25 women with five , high-energy, two-day leadership workshops taught by NDI International experts in media, public speaking, time management and negotiation and networking. The final module was a session on Training of Trainers, (TOT) to enable the participants to work with subsequent women leadership academies and to share their newly-acquired skills with their women colleagues and counterparts.

Given that this was the first year of the WLA, our programming expectations were modest. We hoped that by bringing together a diverse group of women from political parties, civil society, business and the media that we could accomplish two objectives:

- o Help women in Kosovo establish new relationships by breaking down the silos that can exist between politics, business and civil society;
- o Provide a unique learning opportunity for current and future women leaders to ensure that women have the skills and opportunity to be equal players in Kosovo’s future

This first generation of women leaders proved to be exceptional; their commitment to the program was evident from the first day and their capacity to learn and share their experiences was further proof of their capacity to undertake and succeed in leadership roles in their professional careers.

One unanticipated result of the WLA was that the participants elected to continue to work together following the WLA program on three key projects. In the future, they will be working together - independent of NDI - on specific projects that they believe are critical to the economic and political success of women in Kosovo.

As Senior Resident Director for NDI in Kosovo, it was an honor and privilege to meet and work with the women of the first generation of Women’s Leadership Academy. There are many to thank for their support for this pilot program - USAID who provided the funding for “Week of Women”, and the Women’s Leadership Academy and who have helped NDI to explore innovative programming for women in Kosovo; the Women MP’s caucus (Grupi Grave Deputete), for their leadership and support throughout the program as well as their commitment to women’s outreach throughout Kosovo; the Embassies in Kosovo, the Norwegian, German, United Kingdom and French

embassies who were quick to host our participants during the Week of Women and share their commitment to advancement of women and their participation in Kosovo society; President of Kosovo, Atifete Jahjaga, who supported “Week of Women” programming by addressing participants and hosting a dinner as part of the week’s activities; NDI Albania and the Albania Women’s Network who hosted our WLA participants and shared in the Time Management training module.

Special thanks to our international consultants, Bonnie Brownlee, Cathy Allen, Pamela Hart, Shannon O’Connell and Denitsa Sacheva, who shared their time, knowledge and experiences with the first generation of “Week of Women” and Women’s Leadership Academy. Their skill, intellect and commitment to women’s programming helped to instruct and inspire and we are in their debt for taking the time to come to Kosovo to be part of this project.

And finally a special acknowledgement to the NDI Kosovo staff who worked behind the scenes to recruit and organize every workshop and every module. Their hard work, professionalism and commitment to the project ensured that each learning experience was the best one possible for the participants.

NDI is committed to the equitable participation of women in politics and government as this is essential to building and sustaining democracy. We believe that we can best do this by supporting programs like “Week of Women” and the Women’s Leadership Academy that will assist Kosovo women to advocate on matters of policy, run for political office, be elected, govern effectively, and ultimately - participate meaningfully in every facet of civic and political life.



Governor Howard Dean – NDI Board member

State-building is not easy. As the people of Kosovo know first-hand, to build a state -- its institutions and laws, its education system, infrastructure, civil society and healthcare system -- requires the participation and active commitment of all. During my recent visits to Kosovo, I have had the opportunity to meet with many Kosovars who have made the serious commitment to state-building. I have met with party leadership and activists, with men and women from across generations and from all sectors and communities throughout the country. I applaud their unwavering efforts to build and strengthen Kosovo's institutions, and confront such democracy-threatening challenges as corruption and unemployment head-on.



In particular, I want to highlight the work of the women of Kosovo who have contributed so profoundly to these efforts. They are lawmakers, caretakers, educators, skilled and emerging politicians and leaders; and they have made great strides in improving the quality of life for all citizens. I participated in the National Democratic Institute's Women's Leadership Academy earlier this year, where I met a group of women working hard to develop skills that will enable them to participate meaningfully in Kosovo's democratic and state-building processes. I was impressed by their qualifications and the stories they told of their accomplishments thus far. I look forward to hearing about their future successes and would encourage Kosovo's institutions to create space and support women's equal participation in all facets of society.

On behalf of NDI, I want to affirm continued support to the citizens of Kosovo as they continue to strengthen and promote inclusive decision-making practices and as they strive to create a modern, independent, and European Kosovo.

Aferdita Sylaj



is the current executive director of Community Building Mitrovica (CBM). A lifetime resident of Mitrovica, Ms. Sylaj embraced civic work in 1999, and became one of the first civic activists in this challenging environment. As a dedicated supporter of women's empowerment, she is one of the founders of the Multiethnic Women Association of Mitrovica for Human Rights. The Universal of Peace Foundation nominated her as an "Ambassador of Peace" in 2012.

"Being part of the Week of Women and the Women's Leadership Academy is a special privilege that I had a chance to experience," She said. She added, "Being in the same room with women from different backgrounds, and hearing their experiences and shared stories has enriched me with additional confidence, encouragement and new ideas. My work will evolve even more to empower women through economic development." Ms. Sylaj also commented that the Women's Leadership Academy gave her confidence in her public appearances and strengthened her ability to speak in public.

"The Academy was effective because it was very interactive, allowing us to hear directly the lessons and experiences of the experts. The most unforgettable and unique experience for me was the meeting with Governor Dean. I had the opportunity to speak with him about the CBM programs and to provide him with background on the current situation in Mitrovica" said Ms. Sylaj.

"Women should not hesitate to support one another, because by supporting one another they actually support themselves, and as a result of this they strengthen their position" says Aferdita Sylaj in her message dedicated for all women in Kosovo.



Aida Dërguti



is currently a history professor, but has experienced much more than that. Following her service as a soldier in the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), she became a dedicated member and a volunteer of the Women's Network. Later, she joined in the Movement "Vetevendosje", as an activist, and through her commitment and hard work soon became the movement's second deputy leader.

For Ms. Dërguti, the opportunity to participate in the Week of Women and the Women's Leadership Academy; to learn and observe women working together across political spectrums and sectors, was a valuable experience. "It is a unique opportunity for the women in decision-making positions to help others, and push jointly for change. During these two events (Week of Women and Women's Leadership Academy) we had a unique opportunity to hear from international experts who could offer common-sense explanations to concepts that can help women succeed regardless of what stage they are at in their careers. Sometimes it was such a simple explanation, but had an amazing influence on me" she said.

Ms. Dërguti also noted that learning about public speaking and public appearance was a good opportunity, as women in Kosovo are generally offered few opportunities to speak in public. She believes that in subsequent opportunities that she has had to present and speak in public following her training in Academy, were more productive and effective, as her experience gave her additional confidence to present herself and apply the lessons that she had learned during public speaking sessions.

Ms. Dërguti has plans to offer training session within her organization, to share the information received from the various modules of the Women's Leadership Academy to all the women in her organization who did not have an opportunity to participate in this Academy.

Ms. Dërguti's message is: "Be aware of the challenges that women face every day. While the focus should be on women and not as individuals, because as women we have to invest in the future for generations to come."

Denitsa Sacheva

When I received the call to come and share my views on political communication with Kosovo women leaders, I knew that is not going to be an easy task. I met women of different background and diverse dreams, demanding not only quality of information but quality of life experience too as they were eager to learn and start using that knowledge the same day onwards. The participants of the Women Leadership Academy of NDI have the potential to motivate, to transform, to defend, to build. They are women of verbs. And that makes me believe in them and their future in the political, NGO or business life of Kosovo.

Ajnishahe Azemi

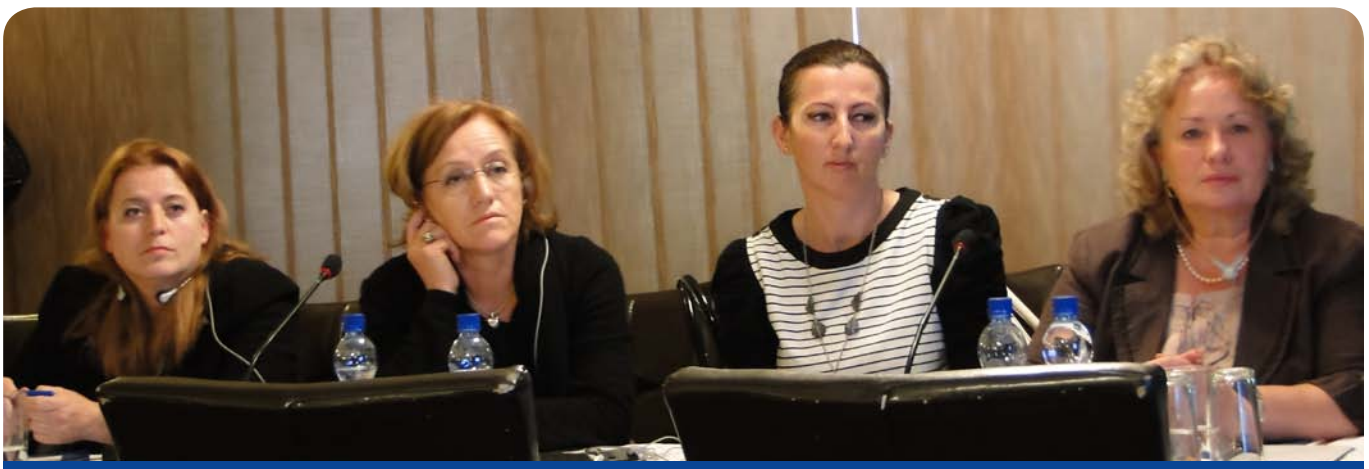


has a very rich and diverse background as she is a war veteran of the KLA, and has been a member of the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) since its establishment in 1989. She is the chair of the LDK Women's Forum Branch, as well as Deputy Chair of the Women's Forum in the central level. She has served three mandates as a member of the general council of the Pristina Assembly, and currently works as a professor of Philosophy and Sociology.

Ms. Azemi believes that advancing the position of women in the society is critical, and through public appearances and public speaking, women will be able to become more visible and participate more fully in society. Her experience with the Women's Leadership Academy helped her to achieve some of her life goals, and maximize her ability to make positive changes in politics and society, by undertaking outreach activities with Women Forum and being in the field more often. Her experience also gave her enough confidence to motivate party activists for more engagement. "If we manage to strengthen and empower 50 percent of our population, we can help to create new leaders" says Ms. Azemi.

As a personal commitment to this effort, Ms. Azemi pledged to continue working to empower women, particularly those living in rural areas, as their voices must be included in the decision-making process.

Ajnishahe's message to the women of Kosovo: "We need to have more confidence in our work. We all have to be inspired by Obama campaign - 'YES WE CAN'." Her role model is U.S. Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton.





Albana Sylja



has been involved in politics since she was in high school. In 2006, she became a member of the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK). She believes that education is the key to women's success, and has received a Master's in English, and currently studies Psychology.

For Ms. Sylja, the experience that she received during the Week of Women and Women Leadership Academy was unforgettable and necessary for her future as a woman in Kosovo. "As a result of this experience, I feel more comfortable, and I believe that I can achieve anything that I want" she said.

Ms. Sylja has a clear plan on how she wants to help women in Kosovo in the future. She aspires to open a school for Psychology and English with a teaching staff that is comprised entirely of women. "Women, as well as men in Kosovo, have always been part of the political challenges that our country has been faced with. Therefore, women today should also be an important factor in overcoming these challenges, with a clear vision for development of our country" she said.

Bardha Uka



is a young, motivated woman with many hopes and ambitions. She is a professional swimmer from Pristina and a third year student at the University of Prishtina. She is also has a very demanding position as project manager for the Youth Council, a civil society organization in Kosovo. A very dedicated activist, she works with Kosovo's youth, especially young girls, to make them aware that they should stand up for their rights.

The Week of Women and the Women's Leadership Academy have been unforgettable experiences for Ms. Uka. In particular, she credits the program with giving her courage and providing her with skills to better communicate with her male counterparts. "The two NDI programs have given me the courage and desire to challenge the barriers," she said. A special and unforgettable experience that she recalls was the opportunity during the Week of Women program to have a discussion with Cathy Allen, one of the international experts from the program. Cathy Allen was able to give her advice and encouragement on how to work collegially, but successfully, in an environment that is often dominated by men, and why it is important never to give up regardless of the daily challenges.

In the future Ms. Uka plans to continue to work with the youth of Kosovo. Her goals are to not only complete her university degree, but to work to become someone who has improved the position of women and inspired youth to believe that they can make changes in Kosovo society.

Ms. Uka's message for the women of Kosovo is: "Learn, raise your voice, start to believe that you can make change."

Pamela Hart

It was a privilege and honor to work with each and every one of you in the Women Leadership Academy. Your desire to learn, willingness to explore new concepts and use those skills made working with you an unforgettable and wonderful experience. Now it is your opportunity to take this knowledge and teach other woman what you have learned to make Kosovo a better place to live today, tomorrow and for future generations. Whether you are a businesswoman, MP or student you are strong and will get the job done. Congratulations and don't forget to practice your vocal exercises for strong and powerful voices that will be heard throughout the land of Kosovo.

Brikenë Ramabaja



was involved as an activist of the Vetevendosje Movement during her time as student in Pristina, taking part in many events. Ms. Ramabaja became a member of the Movement in 2011, and is now a delegate to the party's General Council. She is the Administrator in the municipality of Dardania (Kamenice) and has completed her studies in Psychology.

Her experience during Week of Women and Women's Leadership Academy was **unique for her in terms of learning additional skills for networking and public speaking.** "These experiences have made us think more of the situations and the issues that women in Kosovo deal with," she said.

In the near future Ms. Ramabaja is planning to share the knowledge from these events to the women in the Vetevendosje Movement. The Women's Secretariat will soon be established in the Dardania Municipality as well, so there will be an increased focus towards women.

Ms. Ramabaja's message to women in Kosovo is: "Women should be independent and try and work hard to get into the Parliament, even without the quota".



Dorina Lluka



is an economist who has also been involved in civil society for many years. She became part of the Young Men Christian Association (YMCA) in 2003 when it first started its work in Kosovo, and in 2009 she became the Executive Director of YMCA. In 2012 the YMCA was restructured to become YMCA, YWCA (Young Women Christian Association) and she now serves as director in Kosovo. In 2011, as a result of her continued work for the community, especially with respect to women and youth issues, Ms. Lluka was nominated for the Peace Prize as the delegate from YMCA Europe. She also represented Europe in the YMCA's Global Citizenship program.

According to Ms. Lluka, the Week of Women was a “wake-up call” for women to work together on women’s issues, because as she learned from experience, when you work collaboratively as part of a group, your voice is louder. She valued the opportunity to visit with and learn from women in Kosovo who have achieved great leadership roles in different sectors. As a result of this experience, she was able to establish new and stronger relationships with the women who attended the Academy, and she intends to continue to work together to create new initiatives and opportunities that will enhance and increase the empowerment of women in Kosovo.

In the future Ms. Lluka plans to share her experience and lessons learned to the women are engaged in her program. She hopes to hold trainings on the topic The Preparation of Youth for Employment. Materials will be presented on topics including media appearances, time management and creation and maintenance of good relationships with the media. Her plan for this training is to include 120 youth participants who will be divided into two groups of 60 participants.

The following is Ms. Lluka’s message to her fellow women of Kosovo: “The world of humanity is possessed of two wings: the male and the female. So long as these two wings are not equivalent in strength, the bird will not fly”. This quote comes from Abdu’l-Bahá, founder of the Baha’I Faith. Speaking to the quote, Ms. Lluka said, “Therefore, men and women are equal, and should receive the same rights and opportunities in life.”



Shannon O' Connell

The women of NDI's Women Leadership Academy are extraordinary. They have the skills, intellect, determination, and capacity for compassion that is required for real leadership. They offer great things for their countries today, and for the generations who will come after them.

Fatbardha Boletini



is a lawyer and an active member of the Kosovo Democratic Party (PDK). She has been member of PDK since 2006, and is now the Deputy Chair of the Democratic Youth in the Mitrovica Branch. As well, Ms. Boletini works in the information center at the Mayor's Office in the Mitrovica Municipality.

Ms. Boletini considers her experience during the Week of Women and the Women's Leadership Academy as unforgettable. Some of the lessons, including time management, and control of tone of voice during public speaking, were especially valuable for her. Directly following the Week of Women, Ms. Boletini provided significant support to the establishment of the women caucus councilors in the municipality of Mitrovica. As a result of her experiences and training in the Women's Leadership Academy she was able to provide assistance during the first steps of the group's establishment.

In the future, Ms. Boletini will continue to work to support women as well as share her training experiences with the women in her political party. Her message for the women in Kosovo is: "Fight the stereotypes that exist, and move beyond the jealousy that can exist among women. Only when we are helping one another can we achieve a better position in our society. Her role models are U.S. Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton and Macedonia Deputy Prime Minister, Teuta Arifi.



Fatime Hajdari



is a journalist who has been very active in politics for most of her life. At the age of 21 she became the coordinator for the women’s forum for the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AKR), and has been a member of AKR since 2008. Ms. Hajdari said that she was honored to be selected to be part of the first generation of the Women’s Leadership Academy, as she believes that the first generation is the generation that makes its mark and leaves behind the trace. She values her experience during the two NDI programs as extraordinary and beneficial experiences for her political career. The aspect of the programs that she valued the most was the lack of political barriers between participants. “Once we were part of the program, we didn’t argue and discuss the politics of the political parties we represented. Rather, we focused only on the issues that women face today, and how we can apply the advice we received from the experts to improve the position of women in Kosovo.

In the future, Ms. Hajdari plans to continue supporting women and working on issues that affect the women of Kosovo. She hopes to organize meetings and trainings within her party, the AKR women’s forum, in order to share all the advice and lessons that she learned during the Women’s Leadership Academy. Furthermore, she plans on increasing the number of women in her political party.

Ms. Hajdari’s message for women in Kosovo is: “Women need to be more assertive, and have the courage to express their ambitions.” She is inspired by her role model, U.S. Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton.

Florina Pnishi



is a student at the American University in Kosovo. She has worked as a volunteer for the Red Cross in Gjakova for three years, and also volunteered at the Loyola orphanage when she was in High School.

Ms. Pnishi said that the Week of Women and Women’s Leadership Academy were one of her first experiences with NDI programs, and as such the trainings were a very new experience for her. She valued the experience of meeting public figures and trainers from around the world. Through her interactions with other women in the Week of Women and the WLA, and from the sessions with the international experts, Ms. Pnishi said she is now inspired to advocate for women’s rights, and strongly believes that women can gain a bigger role in decision-making and public life.

Ms. Pnishi has already been able to implement the lessons she learned into her study environment. She believes that women should be respected, and in the future plans to share the information from NDI’s programs with her peers, especially young women.

Ms. Pnishi’s message is for young women in Kosovo: “Young girls should support one another, because only together can they accomplish more as women in the future.”

Gjylgjyzare Xharavina



is a nurse and has been an active member of the Gjakova branch of the New Kosovo Alliance (AKR) since its establishment in 2005. She recently received her Master's in the Public Health, and is Chair of the Women's Forum in Gjakova.

For Ms. Xharavina, the Week of Women and the Women's Leadership Academy was a very special experience. She said that meeting and working with women from diverse backgrounds was in itself a valuable experience, which encouraged participants to raise their voices to advance the standing women of Kosovo. In addition, there were a number of lessons learned during these programs that were entirely new for Ms. Xharavina, including time management, working with the media, career building, and planning. She believes that these new skills will benefit her career in the future.

Coming out of the Week of Women academy, Ms. Xharavina took the initiative to organize a Week of Women event in Gjakova on the topic "Challenges and Successes of Women." This round table was modeled on the Week of Women format, with the objective of sharing the experiences and lessons learned during the Week of Women with women in the municipality of Gjakova. In the future, she plans to participate in conferences in other countries in order to also compare experiences with women representatives of other countries.

Ms. Xharavina's message for women in Kosovo: "We women need to collaborate with one another if we want to improve our position. Only together can we achieve what we want." Her role model is U.S. Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton.





Ana Kadovic, NDI Albania Resident Director

In late June, I spent two days with a group of women from Albania and Kosovo gathered by NDI Kosovo and Albania offices to learn how to be able to fully and freely combine work, private and family life on an equal footing with men.

A random observer could have mistaken these women – with the experience in the fields of education, health, economy, politics, civil society, social welfare, electric engineering, psychology, sports, arts, journalism, and philosophy – for women from a corporation gathered for a retreat to celebrate their company's anniversary and do their annual planning. Moreover, they were coming from different generations, and different countries with different political, cultural and economic contexts. Still, they have shared a huge commitment, bountiful energy and decisiveness to make their communities function well, and a vision of a fairer world where gender inequalities are eradicated! They have shared readiness and enthusiasm to understand and support each other despite their different political affiliations and experience. Since then, a single thought occupies my mind: if supported in a similar way, yes, these women can deliver change to the women in Albania, Kosovo, and serve as the true source of inspiration to many women's movements sharing the same dream.

Iirjana Perteshoni



Perteshoni is a successful architect and member of the Justice Party (PD). She has been a member of PD since 2010 and is currently a member of the Party's Presidency. Ms. Perteshoni's said that her experience with Week of Women and the Women's Leadership Academy was both valuable and inspirational. She believes that because of lessons learned at the Academy she has been encouraged her to be more visible in the public sphere. She said that the training and workshops provided the right advice and methodology for working with the media and for raising issues of women. Prior to the training, she said she would often hesitate to be part of media opportunities, however she stated that "After receiving the training of the Academy, I am now more confident on how to react when a media appearance opportunity is offered to me."

In the future, Ms. Perteshoni also plans to conduct research and raise awareness of women who are affected by cancer. Her future projects will deal with this important health issue, but she also plans to continue work to help women strengthen their position in Kosovo. Ms. Perteshoni's message for women in Kosovo: "Women only need the courage to achieve." Her role model is U.S. Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton.

Melihate Jashari



is a determined and motivated student who has been a member of the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) since 2010, and is a member of the Women's Forum Presidency of the First branch of LDK. She possesses a Master's degree in Agronomy.

Ms. Jashari said that she valued the opportunity to participate in the Week of Women and the Women's Leadership Academy. From these two programs, she has learned that women need to be stronger in expressing what they want to achieve in life. She said she not only learned how to create and deliver clear messages to the public, but also the importance of physical appearance and body language when giving a presentation or a speech. Ms. Jashari is not only intent on furthering her studies in field of Agronomy she also intends to pursue a career in politics. She says that the NDI programs have prepared her by providing her the confidence and knowledge to achieve what she wants.

Ms. Jashari also will continue to raise issues that are important to women, focusing more on the rural areas and raising awareness to this group of women about their rights as women in Kosovo. Ms. Jashari has this message for all women in Kosovo: "Women need to be aware of their rights. They need to be more present in the public life if they want their voices to be heard." Her role model is LDK Vice President, Teuta Sahatqija

Merita Mustafa



has studied Business Management and was an entrepreneur who started her own private business at the age of 19. More recently she worked in civil society, and her current position is a manager for the anti-corruption program at Kosovo Democratic Institute (KDI).

Ms. Mustafa believes that both pilot programs - Week of Women and the Women's Leadership Academy are valuable programs that are really needed by women in Kosovo.

In addition to providing a number of other benefits she believes that it was the ability of the program to bring together women to discuss, advocate, and develop solutions for specific problems that made it so successful. Ms. Mustafa also was impressed with the knowledge and caliber of the speakers and international experts who presented at the Academy. In the future Ms. Mustafa plans to keep working as a group with women from the Women Leadership Academy, with the goal of advancing the position of women and children and all the citizens of Kosovo. She is passionate about working to promote justice, equality and human rights and hopes to continue in this field in the years to come.

Ms. Mustafa's message for women of Kosovo is: "Women should educate themselves and be informed about their rights. If you learn and get informed than you can recognize your rights. Do not expect from others to serve your rights, take the initiative yourself and work for yourself." Her inspirational leader is Margaret Thatcher, the first female Prime Minister of the United Kingdom.

Bonnie Brownlee

The extraordinary women of Kosovo who participated in the Week Of Women and for those who advanced on to the Women Leadership Academy, are a powerful representation of individuals who together, wanted to enhance their opportunities for future achievements by improving their leadership skills. For me, I watched many of them emerge from the shadows and understand how to create and build their own personal campaigns and career strategies in order to navigate the road ahead. We were able to demonstrate that every woman can pursue her dreams for the betterment of herself, her family, and her country - no matter what the obstacles may be.

Mrikë Thaçi



is a lawyer who has a long history of being active in politics. She has been a member of the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo since 2001, and is the Deputy Leader of the AAK Branch of Podujeve, and Chair of the Women's Alliance in her municipality. In addition, she is also active at the central level of the party serving as the Secretary of the party's Women's Alliance and a member of the AAK Steering Council.

Ms. Thaci said that it was a privilege to be one of the 100 women participating in the Week of Women and subsequent Women's Leadership Academy. She considers the public speaking session as one of the most beneficial lessons learned during the Academy. She said that "these two programs have helped me achieve more confidence that has, as a result, reduced the stress that can occur when presenting in front of an audience."

"In the future, the women's forum that I represent will focus on the empowerment of women in the municipality of Podujeva" said Ms. Thaci. She plans to work with women who want to achieve decision-making positions, and engage more women in their own advancement in the Municipality of Podujeva. In the future Ms. Thaci plans to pursue political office at the municipal level.

Ms. Thaci's message for women in Kosovo: "Women should work. Young women should get educated. Women should not wait for others to work for them. Achieve the confidence that you can achieve success." She is inspired by her role model, Chancellor of Germany, Angela Merkel.



Myrvete Llaloshi



is an economist who worked as a budget analyst in the Ministry of Finance before pursuing a career in the Post Telecom of Kosovo. She is a founder and manager of the International Post Office, and currently works as a Post Telecom Officer of the collection of debts. She has been part of the AAK since 2012.

During the Week of Women and the Women’s Leadership Academy, Ms. Llaloshi said she enjoyed the opportunity to meet and work with representatives of different political parties. For her, the most valuable lesson was advice and skills building around networking, as she believes that this is a skill that all women should have in order to advance in their careers. In addition, she appreciated learning about how to work with the media more effectively and communicate through the media into the community.

Ms. Llaloshi said that she also gained more confidence and energy to continue to work on issues that matter to the women of Kosovo. In the future, she plans to implement the lessons she learned within her own political party. Her future activities will focus first at the local level, emphasizing to women the importance of voting, and working to eliminate family voting in rural areas.

Ms. Llaloshi’s message to the women of Kosovo: “Believe in yourself, challenge prejudice. The main goal for all women should be to enter the government. In this way, we can prove to our society that women can lead.” Ms. Llaloshi’s role model is Albanian-born, Nobel Peace Prize recipient, Mother Teresa of Calcutta.



Naile Alaj



Naile Alaj, a lawyer and successful businesswomen, currently works as a legal advisor to the Regional Office of the Ombudsperson. She has been a member of the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) since its establishment, and also serves as the chair of the Women’s Forum in Deçan. She is member of the General Council and has served three mandates as councilor in the Municipality of Deçan.

Ms. Alaj said that being part of the Week of Women and the Women’s Leadership Academy was a privilege, and it was the first time that she had participated in an NDI program. Although she already has considerable experience in political and business life, she said that being part of the NDI program will assist her in the work that she plans to do in the future on women’s issues. One of the most valuable lessons she learned during the Academy was time management. She said, that “because of the Academy I am now able to better manage my time. I can now prioritize my calendar, and as a result I find time for everything, even time to dedicate to myself.”

Further, since the Women’s Leadership Academy, Ms. Alaj has already made an effort to share some of skills and lessons she learned from the program to the women in her municipality. Future plans include organize trainings for women in her region with a special focus on the rural areas, in order to encourage rural women to stand as candidates and run for election.

Ms. Alaj’s message for women in Kosovo is: “You should trust in yourself and believe that women can make it!”



Rina Ajeti



is a successful journalist for the daily newspaper Bota Sot, and has been part of the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo AAK since 2000. She is also a member of the Presidency in the AAK, Alliance of Women. She is very passionate regarding the issues of women, especially focusing on educating women in the rural areas.

Ms. Ajeti views the Week of Women as the one of the best weeks for her as a woman. She stated that, “from that moment, I began to see the position of women in Kosovo differently. I now have the motivation to do more towards advancing the position of women in general.” She believes that the most beneficial lesson taken from the Women’s Leadership Academy, was communications and working with the media. “Public appearances, public speaking and relations with media are skills that every woman in Kosovo should acquire and learn how to put it to good use,” she said.

Her main focus in the future will be the education of women in the rural areas of Kosovo, as she believes that women’s challenges are more pronounced in these areas. She says that this is an issue that has been forgotten, and she believes that only through education will women be aware of their rights. Her goal is to conduct research, outreach visits and become more informed about specific problems affecting the women who live in these areas. In doing so, she hopes to help make them more aware of their rights.

Ms. Ajeti’s message for women in Kosovo is: “The voice of women in Kosovo is not heard as it should be, but this doesn’t mean that we need to give up. We need to fight and raise our voices for our rights. Women need the support of other women; therefore we should be assertive and work more in order to achieve what we want”.

Ms. Ajeti’s most inspirational role model is U.S. Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton.



Selvete Gashi



has been very active in addressing women’s issues since the conflict of 1999, by working with different organizations and implementing a variety of projects. She is a radio and television technician by profession, but is currently working as manager of the NGO “LULEBORA”. The work that she does with the civil society has brought her face-to-face with the issues that women deal with everyday.

Ms. Gashi considers the Week of Women and the Women Leadership Academy to be an important and extraordinary experience for her with respect to her professional development. She said that the training in networking and public speaking were beneficial to her business. “Since the end of these two programs, I have shared all the lessons learned and the experiences I gained with women that I meet with. They are all from different backgrounds, but I have already had the opportunity to see how these women have benefited from this knowledge, and have improved their positions when facing the public.”

In the future, Ms. Gashi plans to be a trainer in one of the topics that were highlighted during the Week of Women and Women’s Leadership Academy curriculum. Her contribution to helping women is to educate women on how they can create their own income through the program Income Generation for Herself and her Family.

Ms. Gashi’s message for women in Kosovo is: “Love yourself, and work for yourself so that others will love and respect you for the work that you do.” Her most inspirational role model is U.S. Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton.



Tahire Gashi



is a well-known human rights activist and journalist who is currently the Executive Director of the NGO “ZANA”. For three years she was the coordinator of the Youth Network in Kline, and has helped to establish the women caucus councilors in Kline. Throughout the years she has also worked with a number of foreign organizations to implement projects that dealt with issues of women, and her hard work on this issue still continues today.

The Week of Women was a new experience for Ms. Gashi. During the Week of Women and Women Leadership Academy she was able to network with other participants as well as with the international experts who were engaged in the program. Although she is a certified trainer, during the academy she learned new methods and additional information about topics that she had not encountered before. One of these new topics is time management, and she is implementing the lessons learned from this module into her daily practice.

In the future Ms. Gashi plans to organize a similar activity to the Week of Women in the region of Peja. Furthermore, she would like to exchange the experiences and knowledge that she learned during the Academy and Week of Women with women across the border in neighboring countries. .

Ms. Gashi’s message for women in Kosovo: “Keep your promises. Promote women rights (human rights). Decide to be the ones who make change because each one of us has the strength to do so.”



Teuta Musa



is a very active and motivated woman who has been a member of the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) since its establishment. Besides politics, Ms. Musa has also been active in civil society, working on issues that affect Kosovo's youth. Currently, Ms. Musa is the Director of the Center for Culture and Children. She also serves as the secretary of LDK's Women's Forum since 2000, and has represented Kosovo in a number of international conferences related to youth and women issues.

Ms. Musa said that she valued the opportunity to participate in the Week of Women and Women's Leadership Academy as it was a wonderful experience. After participating in the two NDI programs, she believes that she is now a stronger voice in advocacy for the democratization of Kosovo society. She believes that the skills-building sessions on working with media, media presentation, leadership, and public speaking were some of the most important lessons covered. Before attending these programs, she was not aware that when delivering a speech, how you say something and present yourself can often be just as important as what you say.

In the future Ms. Musa plans to share the modules and lessons learned during the Women's Leadership Academy with women in the LDK Women's Forum. Her plans include organizing two-day trainings in the six regions of Kosovo. She also hopes to make future contributions to Kosovo in the area of the diplomacy and international relations.

Ms. Musa's message for the women of Kosovo: "Women should be more involved in political activities. Women should help and support other women" Her role model is Doris Pack, Member of the European Parliament for Germany.



Tevide Imeri



has had a successful career in the fields of health and politics. Ms. Imeri has worked as a nurse for 14 years in the Center of Family Medicine in Ferizaj. She has also been a Delegate in the Municipal Assembly of Ferizaj for nine years, and works as an Auto instructor. In addition, she is a party activist in the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK).

Being part of the Women Leadership Academy and Week of Women were Ms. Imeri's first introduction to NDI programming. She says that the most important skills learned from the Week of Women and Women's Leadership Academy was public speaking and presentation skills. Ms. Imerie also valued the shared training experience with women from the Albania Network, as she says that meeting the women from Albania was instrumental in creating a cross- border networking and sharing of experiences and challenges that women in Albania and Kosovo both face.

In the future, Ms. Emeri has plans to organize trainings for different groups of women in order to share the lessons and experiences that she received during the Week of Women and the Women's Leadership Academy.

Ms. Imeri's message for women in Kosovo is: "Be more courageous and face the problems that preoccupy you. Don't be afraid to face men. Achieve everything with hard work".

Valbona Raifi



is an economist and very successful businesswoman, who had the courage to open and run the successful traditional food bakery "City Bakery" in Pristina.

Ms. Raifi found the experience during the Week of Women and Women's Leadership Academy very beneficial and believes that the experience will help her achieve her current professional goals. She added, "because of the advice that I received from the international experts during the two programs, I have gained the confidence to better promote my business in front of the media and the public in general." Furthermore, she believes that though this experience she has created lasting friendships and a network with the other women which will be valuable for years to come.

Ms. Raifi's future goals include a special focus on women's employment. In time, when she expands her business, Ms. Raifi hopes to employ mostly women in her bakery in order to promote the participation of women in business and prove that women are able to work outside the house.

Ms. Raifi's message for women in Kosovo is: "If you have ideas for opening a business don't hesitate to go through with it. Do not stop in front of the barriers and challenges, instead look for ways to overcome them. Achieve your goal, and do not hesitate."

Zana Kada

is a respected journalist from Kosovo Public Television (RTK). In her 30 years of working as a journalist, she has consistently dedicated her work to women's programs. She previously worked for Radio Television of Pristina, and is now the writer and presenter of the women's show on RTK called "The Woman Today."

Ms. Kada had not participated in an NDI program prior to being selected as a participant in the Week of Women and the Women's Leadership Academy. She said that despite her 30 years of experience in journalism, she had never gained as much experience and knowledge from a course as she did when she participated in these two programs. "Although this experience came to me at a later age, I am still grateful that I have been part of these programs. I will try to pass on all the lessons that I have learned to the younger generation of women with whom I work," she said.

In the future, Ms. Kada plans to organize trainings and meetings with her colleagues in order to share the knowledge that she gained during the Week of Women and the Women's Leadership Academy.

Ms. Kada's message for women in Kosovo is: "Women should be more assertive in reaching their goals, because only this way can they achieve success! It has been proven that women are equal to men, therefore they can achieve anything they want."



Zize Blakaj Bujupaj



is not afraid of challenges, as in addition to holding the position of head of the Office for Procurement in the Municipality of Istog, she finds the time to hold several leadership positions in the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK). She has been a member of LDK since its establishment and is both a member of the Presidency and head of the Women's Forum in the Istog branch. She also serves as a member of the Presidency of the Women's Forum in Pristina.

Ms. Blakaj-Bujupaj said that the Week of Women was different than any learning experience she had ever participated in. She enjoyed the opportunity to sit in a room with her colleagues and discuss the issue of women's empowerment. "This privilege allowed me to learn and share a lot of best practices, and I am now more knowledgeable on how to deliver a specific message to my community. I feel more confident in talking to voters and asking for their vote in future elections", she said.

Since completing the Women's Leadership Academy, Ms. Blakaj-Bujupaj has shared all the knowledge she gained from these experiences with her colleagues, friends, community at large, as well as the media.

In her future work, Ms. Blakaj-Bujupaj plans to focus on working with women from rural areas. She wants to empower women with the skills and confidence to lead, because she strongly believes that women have the capacity to become leaders. Her aim for the future is to run for office in her hometown, Istog.

Ms. Blakaj-Bujupaj's message to the women of Kosovo: "We need to support each other, because only a strong, unified voice will deliver the message." Her role model is U.S. Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton.





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