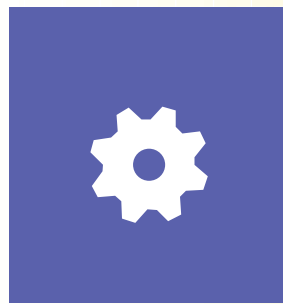
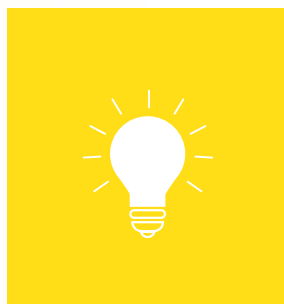
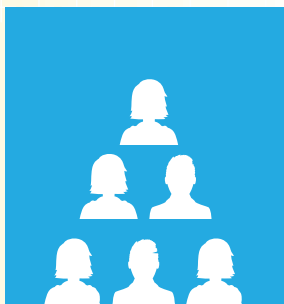


# SUCCESS STORIES

FROM TOMORROW'S LEADERS



Pristina  
February, 2018



# **SUCCESS STORIES**

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## PREFACE

Since 1999, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) in Kosovo has supported citizens and political leaders at all levels to build a strong civic culture by establishing comprehensive and durable democratic institutions. *Democracy depends on such institutions—the voice of an informed citizenry—to connect citizens to their government and to one another by providing avenues for participation in public policy.*

Citizens enjoy many benefits and rights guaranteed in a democracy but often do not fully understand their responsibilities as citizens to safeguard and exercise those rights. Among these responsibilities are the acts of self-organization, engagement, participation, and advocacy in political processes to ensure greater representation, inclusion, and social justice. These principles are necessary for citizens to understand as obligations to achieve the lasting benefits of a democratic system. On the other hand, political parties need to be organized and willing to act as a vehicle to channel policy to government institutions, and be proactive in encouraging greater participation of citizens in the political process, ensuring policies that are reflective of their concerns and interests.

In this booklet, NDI is proud to present the accomplishments of a remarkable group of women and youth activists, who have embraced their civic responsibilities, helping raise citizens' concerns within their political parties and to other decision-makers in order to bring about change in their communities. Since 2013, NDI has provided skills-building training in effective political engagement and advocacy to these individuals from Serbian-speaking communities, through its Women's Political Academy (WPA) and Youth Leadership Program (YLP), with funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Beyond training, the programs provided these emerging community leaders with opportunities to network and connect with each other, across party, geographic, and ethnic lines, learning about common concerns and developing shared strategies to approach them.

By targeting women and youth from the predominantly Serb communities in the North, NDI seeks to promote Serb engagement in the political process and support greater inclusion of the communities into Kosovo institutions. Through the WPA, women from all walks of life and political parties across the political spectrum, committed their time to learn policy development, public speaking, advocacy, time management, and communication skills. Through the YLP, young activists from political parties and civil society learned how to develop political and advocacy campaigns, focusing on message development, research, and effective outreach. In addition to structured training, both groups received regular mentoring and coaching from NDI staff and international experts to enable all participants to put into practice everything they have learned.

The initiatives that follow in this publication are the results of these emerging leaders' strong commitment, hard work and willingness to stand up for their communities and take part in determining Kosovo's future. The issues addressed by these initiatives were motivated by community needs and interests, and the results presented here represent their first victories in what we hope is just the beginning of these leaders' activities. They were made possible by the support of USAID and the tireless efforts of NDI staff to see these initiative and new leaders succeed.

These women and youth are an inspiration to all. They show us a new Kosovo, where no matter who you are or what you do, we can work together for the good of all. They prove that people - of any age, gender or ethnicity - can make a difference, and that change, even if small, is possible when there is a strong community desire and will from decision makers to make it happen. We hope you enjoy reading about the initiatives as much as NDI did supporting these amazing individuals, and hope their examples serve as inspiration to others to take the first step to making a difference in Kosovo.

**Alexander Chavarria**  
Senior Resident Director  
National Democratic Institute-Kosovo



## INTRODUCTION

In nearly a decade since its declaration of independence, Kosovo has achieved significant progress in consolidating democratic institutions and political processes based on democratic values and principles. Political parties have begun developing policies that are more responsive to citizens' priorities; election processes are becoming more transparent and less vulnerable to irregularities; the Assembly is strengthening its capacities to adopt quality legislation and exercise greater oversight of the executive; and civil society organizations are becoming more effective in articulating the needs of citizens and building sound advocacy initiatives.

The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, a nonprofit, nonpartisan, nongovernmental organization engaged in strengthening and advancing democracy worldwide, has been present in Kosovo since 1999. With the support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), NDI has worked with Kosovo citizens every step of the way as they have built their democracy from the ground up, focusing primarily on political party development and internal democratization; election monitoring and citizen participation; building and strengthening effective, transparent and accountable institutions; and advancing monitoring and advocacy capacities of civil society organizations. NDI also works to open avenues for cross-ethnic dialogue to facilitate efforts directed towards conflict transformation and lasting ethnic reconciliation.

Currently, NDI is implementing an accountable governance program in Kosovo, funded by USAID, with the goal of improving legislative and political responsiveness to citizen needs. One way the Institute is working to achieve this is by fostering the meaningful participation of the underrepresented groups in politics as community activists, political party members, and elected representatives.

NDI believes that Kosovo's democracy will be strengthened when civic and political activists, particularly women, youth, and minorities, are empowered to identify, conduct and ensure the implementation of issue-based advocacy; to transform advocacy initiatives into effective policies; and to increase pressure on legislatures to hold the executive accountable at the local and central level.

As part of its support to political parties, NDI has been working with their leadership to foster internal democracy, with a particular focus on opening more space for women and youth to take leadership roles and invest in increasing their capacities. NDI's Women's Political Academy and Youth Leadership Program are two examples that illustrate NDI's methodological approach of bringing together women and youth in cross-party settings, in this particular case those from the Serb community in Kosovo, to learn new skills and techniques that enhance their abilities and turn them into valuable resources for their respective political parties. By working to empower new leadership and establishing linkages with political representatives, NDI can encourage national and branch leadership to be inclusive of those individuals emerging from the grassroots and ensure they are fully engaged in political processes.

## IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GENDER EQUALITY LAW AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

Three years after the creation of municipalities in northern Kosovo, those municipalities continue to face challenges in establishing institutional mechanisms and departments. The current situation has not improved mainly due to a noticeable lack of capacity within the local government system, lack of support from the central level government, and lack of political will. Municipalities in northern Kosovo still lack Offices of Gender Affairs and respective officers for gender issues, as required by the Law on Gender Equality (the Law).

One group of WPA participants from Zvecan identified an absence of local strategies for gender equality and inadequate implementation of the Law on Gender Equality at the local level as problems during a training session on issue identification. As they explored the issue, the group sought feedback through intensive consultations with political and civil society activists with relevant knowledge on gender issues. Inspired by the idea that their initiative could contribute to better implementation of the Law itself and provide valuable input for the future work of Zvecan municipality to improve the quality of citizens' lives, the group decided to draft a set of recommendations to address these issues.

*"If we want to create a society based on the principles of equality, it is very important for local government to consider gender in the development of strategies for the implementation of its activities and daily operations." – Blagica Radovanovic*

Faced with a challenging task, the group was determined to move the problem from a standstill by engaging all relevant stakeholders to build support for implementing the Gender Equality Law. Before raising this issue at the local assembly, participants met with the mayor who acknowledged the importance of the group's initiative and emphasized that the recommendations the group planned to draft should be used as a starting point for resolving this issue. The mayor promised that he would initiate work on the local strategy on gender equality, but stressed that, as a new municipality, Zvecan would need support and assistance from central authorities.

Following its meeting with the mayor, the group organized workshops with local councilors to present Kosovo and international laws, regulations, and declarations on gender equality. Participants emphasized the importance of implementing the Gender Equality Law and





necessity for establishing an Office of Gender Affairs by comparing Kosovo to other countries from the region, motivating councilors to start making changes in their own municipality. Moreover, the group organized an informative session with local councillors where a Gender Equality Law expert presented the benefits of a gender sensitive budget. For many of the local councillors, that was their first encounter with the topic, and they had very positive reactions.

*"A lack of proactive and effective local mechanisms for gender equality, including a failure to integrate a gender perspective in key local strategies and action plans, is the main factor that leads to divided, uncoordinated actions in fostering gender equality in local communities in the municipalities of northern Kosovo. That's why we decided to make this effort to try to move this issue from a standstill." - Dubravka Nickovic*

After meetings with the mayor and local councilors, participants realized that establishing a new department would be a major undertaking for such a young municipality and might not occur anytime soon. However, they were even more determined to complete their recommendation document to provide detailed and specific suggestions to the municipality. To build support for their efforts, they formed a network of other political and civil society activists on gender issues.

This resulted in a roundtable with all relevant stakeholders to help participants refine their preliminary recommendations. Based on that discussion as well as the experiences of various participants on this topic, the group drafted a document with a set of recommendations, including to develop strategic documents and an action plan to achieve gender equality and advance the position of women in Zvecan. They also recommended skills building for municipal officials so they can better move toward full implementation of the Law.



*"We strongly believe that this document can improve the implementation of the Gender Equality Law and therefore the promotion of human rights of women." - Dragana Milentijevic*

The document was presented at a session of the Zvecan local assembly and was accepted by the majority. The mayor and local councilors expressed their concerns that the process of establishing institutional mechanisms and departments may take time, but they promised to reflect on the recommendations and engage some of the group's participants in the process of developing strategic documents.

**Participants:** Bojana Bojovic, Gordana Mladjovic, Dragana Milentijevic, Dubravka Nickovic, Zlatana Radenkovic, Blagica Radovanovic



## TRAFFIC SAFETY NEAR SCHOOLS

During their engagement through the Women's Political Academy, a group of active women from North Mitrovica launched a joint initiative with the aim of bringing positive changes to their city. Even though the North Mitrovica municipality has made large investments to visibly improve the city center's infrastructure, the general impression is that few investments have been made outside of the city center. The dearth of investment is particularly visible in an area where several schools, the university campus, and other educational facilities are located.

Due to inadequate infrastructure, including insufficient pedestrian paths, unmarked road crossings, and a lack of traffic signals that alert the proximity of the school, children are exposed to the dangers of traffic on a daily basis, which causes concerns among parents about sending their children to school unaccompanied.

*"Being a single mother, I have to face that fear every day. I can't take my daughter to school every day, and I feel helpless knowing that she is in a risky situation. That's why I decided to take an active part in this initiative." - Aldijana Bektasevic*

A survey given to students' parents found several possible solutions to the current situation. The proposed solutions

included the construction of a safe walking zone, the acquisition and use of traffic signs, and a police patrol at intersections in front of the schools to regulate traffic during hours immediately around the school day's beginning and end. The group shared these proposals with local authorities, including contacting the Department of Urbanization.

As the proposed solutions fell under the jurisdiction of several institutions, the group had several meetings with the relevant stakeholders, such as the Director of Municipal Administration of North Mitrovica, Kosovo's Regional Police Commander, school principals, and representatives of the Department of Urbanization. All actors supported the group's work and its recommendations were well received. In a meeting with the mayor's assistant, the group was informed the mayor supported the initiative and would help the group with implementation.

Spurred on by the positive feedback from the mayor's office, the group presented its initiative during a municipal public hearing on September 21, 2016, and it was adopted by the local assembly the following day. The assembly included the group's request for the construction of "safe zones" near the targeted schools in the 2018 municipal budget.





*"Thanks to the cooperation with NDI and USAID, which estimated that it was the right time to start with education and political empowerment of women from northern Kosovo, we had an opportunity to act and do something meaningful for our community." - Olivera Milosevic*

*"With the support of NDI and USAID, we managed to move the problem from a standstill. As an informal group of active women, we intend to continue with our work on similar initiatives, but next time our approach will be focused on more sensitive topics." - Suada Hajdarpasic*

To conclude its work, the group organized a roundtable in the Administration Office with relevant stakeholders in order to present the results of the initiative and advocate for additional support from local authorities for future initiatives. Following the municipality's adoption of this initiative, the group launched an advocacy campaign to teach children traffic safety, holding workshops with first grade students at the Branko Radicevic elementary school. Group members delivered safety vests to the students as a measure to make the children more visible to traffic until the safe zone is constructed.

A police patrol has also been set in front of the Branko Radicevic primary school and the mayor's office informed the group that its other recommendations will be incorporated into the municipality's infrastructure plan for 2018.

**Participants:** Aldijana Bektesevic, Jasmina Dedic, Suada Hajdarpasic, Milena Jovanovic, Aleksandra Kostic, Olivera Milosevic, Sanela Muranovic, Dragica Paunovic, Vasiljka Vojinovic




To protect the children who are exposed to the dangers of traffic on a daily basis and build "safe zone" in an area where several schools, the university campus, and other educational facilities are located.



Survey results and recommendations are presented to the different stakeholders



The initiative is supported by the Police, Municipality and school directors through the roundtables and intensive meetings.



The initiative and recommendations are presented in the Local Assembly and adopted by the majority of the councilors.



Municipality adopted the recommendations and built "safe zone"



## DECLARATION ON GENDER BUDGETING

Equality of women and men constitutes a fundamental right and an essential value for countries' democracy and integration into the European Union, but equality of women and men in daily life is still not a reality in the municipality of Zubin Potok. Women and men do not enjoy the same rights, and social, political, economic and cultural inequalities persist. Although citizens as taxpayers and consumers are generally regarded as equal in drafting of the municipal budget, experience has shown that citizens do not participate equally in either financing or using the budget. Additionally, given a growing trend of women leaving the municipality for areas where they have better access to financial resources, the WPA group from Zubin Potok was motivated to raise the need for better understanding and implementation of gender-sensitive budgets.

*"This idea stemmed from the fact that we know many women have the potential to run private businesses but due to limited or no access to financial resources, they left the municipality seeking better futures for their families." - Milica Rakic*

Through meetings with municipal officials, the group obtained information on budgetary expenditures between 2014 and

2015, analyzing the value, impact, and purpose of the projects against the needs of the community. Given the complexity of the task, the group engaged a gender equality expert to help them draft a detailed analysis on the impact government projects had on both genders and provide recommendations for budget planning in the future, including offering concrete suggestions for specific projects that should be funded.

*"We knew what we wanted but since none of us had relevant knowledge or expertise on this topic, we decided to hire an expert to help us do the analysis and support us in our further activities. We wanted to have a serious approach since this issue is very important, and none of the northern municipalities presently have a gender sensitive approach to budgeting." - Natasa Trifunovic*

The analysis showed that support programs for women entrepreneurs, students, and social services beneficiaries continue to be mostly provided by non-governmental organizations rather than the municipality itself. The group and expert determined two critical ways to advance gender sensitive budgeting in the municipality. The first was to build the capacity of Department of Finance municipal officials since



they have the greatest responsibility in planning the municipal budget. Additionally, as the analysis showed that women subsidy beneficiaries were receiving less municipal funding than men, it demonstrated the necessity of conducting a more detailed analysis of municipal budgets going forward from a gender perspective. The group therefore recommend the introduction of gender budgeting in the new fiscal year.

Based on this, the group organized roundtables with citizens, local civil society activists, and representatives of local authorities where they presented their findings and invited local authorities to act. The roundtable attendees agreed that this initiative should take place and that local authorities have nothing to lose, and much to gain in terms of advancing equality and promoting women’s rights, should they adopt the proposal and consider gender in the budget for the following fiscal year.

*“Gender budgeting should, at some point, allow for the equitable treatment of women and men, to allow for positive actions and special measures to remove long-term imbalances. We are aware that this is just a tip of the iceberg but we need to have a starting point and encourage other northern municipalities to act in similar way.” - Daliborka Rakic*

The group members then worked on a draft declaration that would oblige local authorities to respect requirements for gender equity in the allocation of subsidies. The group presented it to Zubin Potok’s mayor, who agreed that while the municipality would benefit from a gender sensitive budget, the process of creating one is very complex. Because the



municipality is newly established and facing many challenges, the mayor only suggested he would try to involve a gender sensitive component in the budget for the following year and incorporate some of the specific recommendations about allocation of subsidies provided by the group. The group members were not discouraged by this, but instead pleased that they were able to provide a baseline and initial steps for the issue of gender-sensitive budgeting, which they can continue to use in the future to encourage the local assembly to act.

**Participants:** Milica Andric, Radmila Kapetanovic, Ivana Nesovic, Daliborka Rakic, Milica Rakic , Natasa Trifunovic



## TOURISTIC SIGNS AND GUIDEPOSTS

The WPA group from Leposavic knew that there are numerous public institutions whose locations are unknown to its citizens as well as a large number of non-resident university students who are unfamiliar with the area. Therefore, the group decided to address the issue of inadequately labeled institutions, as well as a lack of guideposts and touristic signs.

*"This problem seemed important and easily manageable at the local level. It is something that is relevant for each of us that we never paid attention to. Besides the fact that it will make coordination through the city easier, it will also contribute to a better impression of our municipality by providing more information about tourist attractions to visitors." – Marina Jakovljevic*

The group launched the initiative with a survey among students and citizens of Leposavic that examined the extent to which citizens are familiar with the locations of certain institutions and if the placement of touristic signs and guideposts would improve their orientation. The results confirmed that local survey respondents were not well informed and that the labeling of institution and signposts would help. In addition, the results showed that local

respondents believe that tourist signage at the entrance and exit of the city would provide helpful information to visitors about tourist sites in the municipality and could help increase the numbers of visitors.

When the group started its activities the main road in Leposavic was under construction which provided an excellent opportunity for the group to include its request within ongoing infrastructure projects. Therefore, the group hired an expert to draft an analysis of the current situation and offer recommendations for locations requiring signage and appropriate types of signage. The resulting report also included a proposed redesign of existing signage and the creation of an information and tourist board in the city center.

*"When the expert drafted the document, we submitted it together with the request to the Department for Urbanization. We had a good feeling that we were on the right track and that local authorities were interested in our proposal!" – said Jelena Milosevic*

Despite initial hesitations that the local mayor might not support the initiative, the group met with him to present its



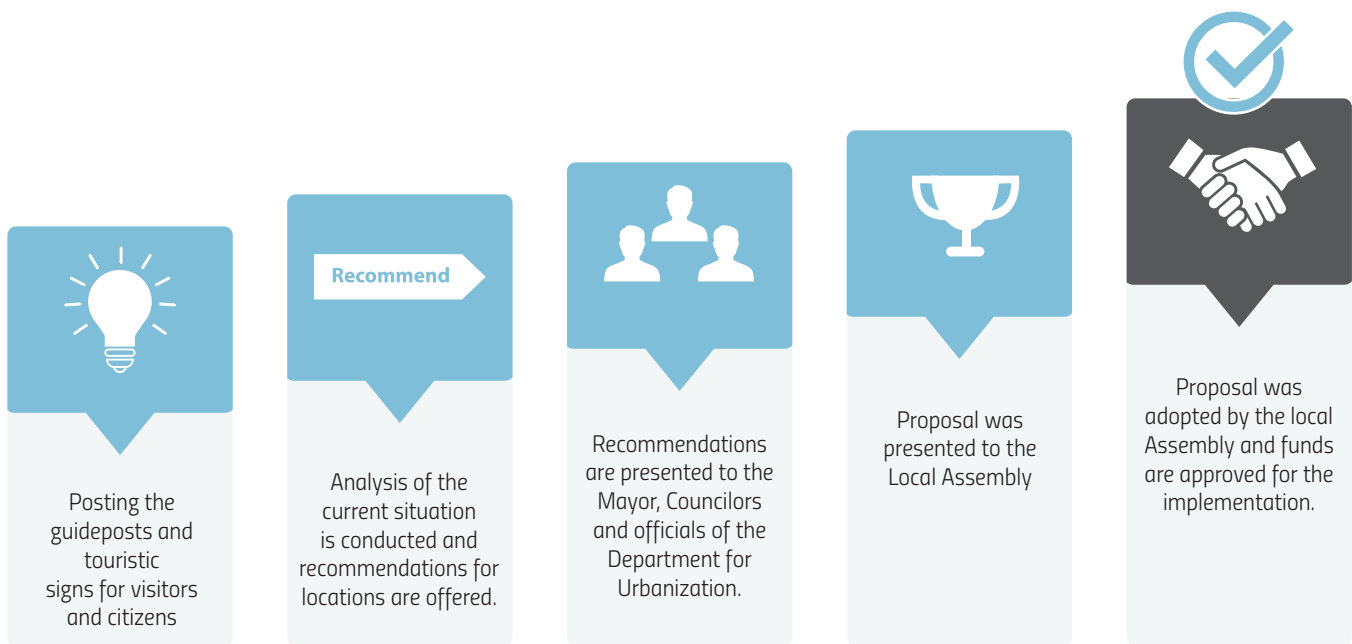


work. He supported the initiative and suggested that they present the idea to the local assembly. At his suggestion, a group member and local councilor, Jasmina Vukasinovic, presented the initiative and recommendations at a municipal public hearing on September 27, 2016. The following day, the assembly voted to approve the proposal and include 10,000 euros for the project within the municipal budget for the next year.

*"It was a strange feeling when we heard about the assembly's decision. I was a little bit surprised at the beginning how fast the assembly decided to accept our proposal and even more when I found out that they will provide funds for it. After the initial shock, all of us were happy to realize that we succeeded in changing something in our community." – Andrijana Milunovic*

This result showed the group members how things can be improved with strong will and hard work. Additionally, the results gave them motivation to continue working for the better future of their community.

**Participants:** Marina Jakovljevic, Mila Kostic, Ana Milosevic, Jelena Milosevic, Milena Milosevic, Andrijana Milunovic, Sladjana Popovic, Jasmina Vukasinovic



## TRAFFIC SAFETY AROUND SCHOOLS

This initiative was implemented in 2014, at a time when traffic in the north of Kosovo was still not fully regulated by police. Consequently, motorists did not respect traffic rules causing many traffic accidents. In Zvečan, this was a particularly significant problem, as all primary schools are located downtown or near main roads with high levels of traffic congestion. Unregulated traffic around these schools directly jeopardized the pupils' safety. The YLP group from Zvečan recognized this as something that needed to be addressed. Based on a survey among parents, school employees, and police officers, the group identified two main factors contributing to the issue: speeding around schools and lack of organized traffic during school drop-off and pick-up hours.

*"Our main goal was to instruct preschool students about how to properly behave around traffic, and try to influence local decision-makers to take certain actions, which could improve traffic safety in the municipality." - Stevan Djokic*

Once these two factors were identified, the group established contact with different decision-makers in the municipality. This proved to be a serious challenge due to

the sensitive political situation at the time and the lack of prior cooperation between these decision-makers, such as the police department and school officials. However, with perseverance, the group established cooperation with the office of the mayor, which was identified as a key stakeholder in addressing traffic challenges, and the mayor himself agreed to support the initiative. Through his office, the group secured meetings with the chief of police and all principals of primary schools in Zvečan.

*"The personal support of the mayor and his entire team to the group and our initiative was extremely helpful and provided us with the leverage we needed to initiate discussion and implement activities." - Aleksandra Djuric*

Following careful presentation of the issues and possible solutions, the group secured necessary support and approval from the police and school principals. With their collaboration and financial assistance, the group launched a public awareness campaign for citizens and local NGOs through media, street activities, and school discussions with schoolchildren's parents. Thanks to its successful advocacy efforts, the group organized traffic safety classes in all of





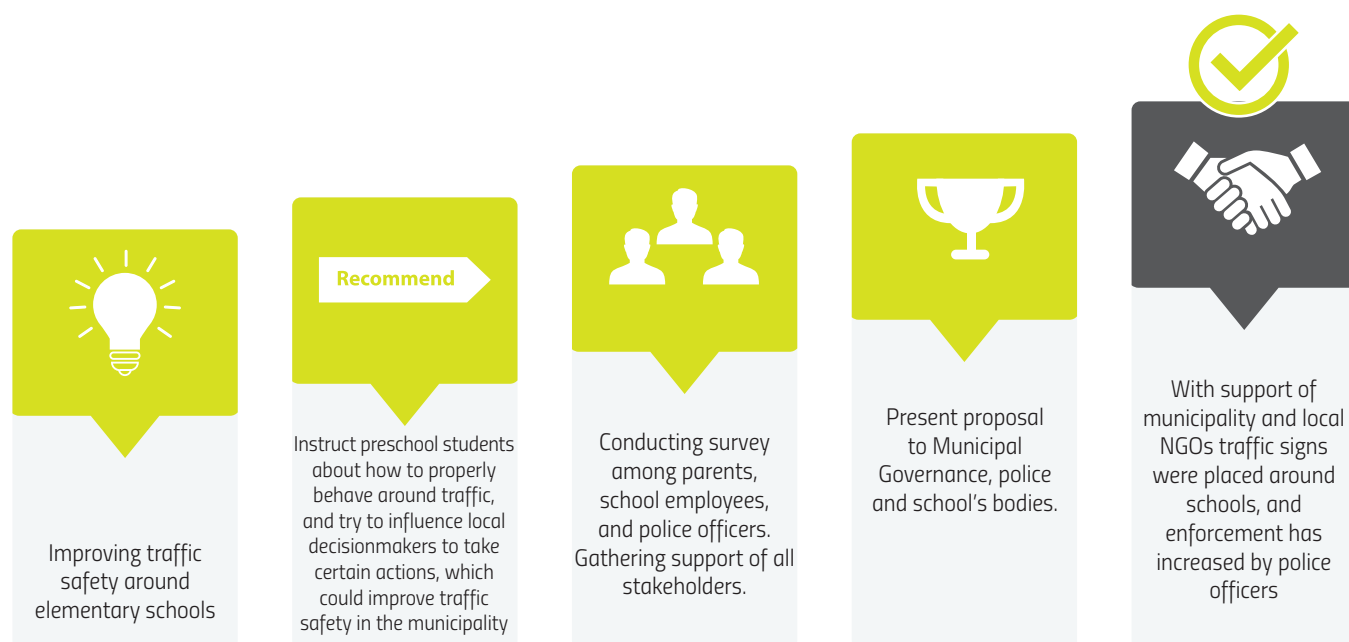


Zvečan's primary schools, conducted by a traffic safety expert from the Zvečan police station.

As an outcome of this initiative, traffic safety was recognized by the mayor and local NGOs as a significant program in the community. Soon after, with their joint financial support, new traffic signs were placed at schools, and enforcement has increased by police officers, who are present at both the beginning and end of the school day.

*"It is very rewarding to see these new traffic signs, road bumpers, and police officers providing safety around the schools. I feel great knowing I was also part of this achievement, and I think it is the same for other members of the group." - Igor Dasic*

**Participants:** Igor Dasic, Stevan Djokic, Aleksandra Djuric, Ivana Dobric, Mirjana Markovic, Dejan Nedeljkovic, Milos Timotijevic



*"It is important to protect the environment and because of a lack of organized waste disposal in the municipality, ecosystems will be disrupted. Dangerous pollution creates dangers for both animals and people. Mankind owes nature a moral obligation. It is not only important, but it is necessary in the modern world." - Sanja Sovrlic*

The YLP group from Leposavic saw the lack of organized waste disposal in the municipality and low awareness among citizens about its importance as a significant problem with potentially devastating impact. They wanted to raise awareness about inadequate waste disposal, encourage greater youth activism in environment protection, and increase public awareness about how to sort waste, as preparation for recycling once the municipality has the appropriate facilities. Additionally, they wished to initiate an open discussion between citizens and municipal officials regarding this issue.

*"By being part of the EKOsavec advocacy group from NDI's Youth Leadership Program, I was able to attend roundtable discussions with different stakeholders, but also work on concrete recommendations and make propositions for further actions. All of this has made me believe that I can participate in different processes where decisions affecting our daily lives are made."- Jovana Radosavljevic*

The group conducted many activities including one outdoor activity where it used old, discarded CDs, juice bottles, boxes, and other unnecessary items and turned them into beautiful artistic pieces. When citizens approached to see these items, the group told them about the importance of protecting the environment and organized waste disposal. Additionally, the group organized meetings and roundtables with local councilors, school representatives, and media so as to engage as many different stakeholders as possible on the issue.



As a result of this initiative, municipal authorities placed more waste disposal containers in identified hot spots and initiated discussions with local NGOs and experts about strategic approaches to this issue. The present construction of a regional recycling depot, funded by European Union Office for Kosovo, should provide a more stable solution for this issue.

**Participants:** Branko Bojovic, Brankica Janicijevic, Andrijana Milutinovic, Jovana Radosavljevic, Tijana Sekulic, Sanja Sovrlic Radmila Vukicevic





## DEPARTMENT FOR YOUTH

Kosovo has the youngest population in Europe, with 53 percent of its citizens under the age of 25. It also has one of the highest unemployment rates in the region, at 35 percent, and the unemployment rate among youth runs as high as 60 percent.

Similar to many other municipalities in Kosovo, almost half of Zubin Potok municipality's inhabitants are under thirty years of age. While there has been a lot of interest by different stakeholders to help the young people in Zubin Potok, these efforts are largely uncoordinated. This conclusion was based on research conducted by the YLP group in Zubin Potok, among youth in the municipality. The data showed that youth in the municipality were mostly uninformed about efforts and opportunities provided by different stakeholders. This came in spite of many activities of various donors, NGOs, and citizen initiatives, which often overlapped or were repeated without any sustainable outcome. After reviewing different strategies in the region, the group determined that one of the most effective practices was to establish a municipal body that would coordinate these efforts and offer a broader strategy for providing youth with guidance and support.

*"Young people need support. Systematic, organized, and permanent support. This kind of support to young people means a quality future for our municipality, its further economic development, increasing the birth rate, and creating conditions for a better life in it."*  
- Milija Bisevac

Based on this, the group decided to encourage the local government to create a Department for Youth. This office would serve as the point of contact between youth and the municipality, providing a forum where youth could express their problems and engage in planning and decisionmaking that affects them. The office would also provide guidance to youth, offer a strategy for their support, and coordinate efforts among stakeholders to this end.

After identifying this as the main goal of its initiative, the group organized activities to raise support among young people for this municipal department. After several events where they spoke to citizens, the mayor, and local councilors, the group





created a public petition to give to municipal authorities to initiate an official discussion.

Consequently, the group, together with a local NGO, drafted and submitted a strategy for “Youth Development in the Municipality of Zubin Potok” to the municipality authorities.

This strategy was accepted at a joint meeting between representatives of the municipality and local NGOs dealing with youth issues. Following this meeting, the group advocated for the office of the mayor to appoint an individual responsible for overseeing youth issues and development. In creating this position, the mayor selected a member of the group.

Members of the initiative still continue to follow municipal decisions on this subject.

*“We are aware of the sensitivity of the political situation in the north of Kosovo. But we want to make sure that our efforts will continue through our engagement in different NGO activities, as well as through municipal decisions.” - Milos Perovic*

**Participants:** Milija Bisevac, Uros Bozovic, Nemanja Galjak, Milos Perovic, Marko Rakic



## YOUTH FOR SPORT

In 2015, the North Mitrovica municipality lacked facilities for its large youth community to gather for sports and activities. The group from this municipality recognized this as a barrier to well-rounded youth development and inclusion within the community, and they decided to do something about it.

*"The idea of this project is to have a positive impact on the psycho-physical development of young people, as well as their socialization, which is especially important today when social networks are completely occupying the attention of young people." - Zoran Mojilovic*

To strengthen its case, the group conducted public opinion research about the importance of this issue to the citizens of North Mitrovica. Through this research, the group also identified a second problem: the poor state of existing sport fields and lack of awareness among young people regarding personal responsibility to protect and care for those fields.

To address these two issues, the group first focused their advocacy initiatives towards local government by organizing meetings with municipal representatives. During these meetings, the group explained the issues identified through

its public opinion research. Municipal representatives recognized the need for youth facilities and agreed to work with the group to find solutions.

Next, the group targeted its advocacy towards the citizens of North Mitrovica, with the goal of raising awareness about the need for both preserving existing infrastructure and creating new facilities. This was also recognized and fully supported by municipal representatives. Using social media channels and direct communication through different public activities, the group worked to inform citizens about the importance of their two goals.

*"We need to enable young people to participate in sports, which would also affect the approach of youth to healthy living." - Jelena Kasalovic*

With the support of municipal officials, the group organized a street basketball tournament, under the motto **"Be part of the positive change you want to live in."** Through social media, the group promoted the tournament and gathered several local basketball teams to compete. The tournament took place on one of the recently restored basketball courts,







highlighting the importance of their message. The event also served to promote a positive example of cooperation between local government and youth in North Mitrovica.

As a result of the group's efforts, as well as the readiness of municipal authorities to support youth, opportunities for activities for North Mitrovica youth improved. Following the group's initiative, the group members were invited by municipal representatives to a meeting, where they were informed about new steps the municipality has taken, including proposals submitted to the EU Office in Kosovo to build new sport fields, as well as municipal funds allocated for building and renovating parks and playgrounds for the municipality's youngest citizens.

*"We are aware that a lot more needs to be done, and we are committed to accomplishing the mission of our initiative. We will continue to work on this through our local NGOs and small citizen initiatives!"- Jelena Kasalovic*

**Participants:** Sanja Bogosavljevic, Jasmina Dedic, Milica Djordjevic, Jelena Kasalovic, Tijana Kolutac, Zoran Mojililovic



## FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT FOR EVERYBODY

While Kosovo law regulates and protects rights of people with disabilities, it is not fully implemented on the ground as there are many public facilities that still do not provide access for people with disabilities, as required by law.

Determined to address this inequality, the group from the Leposavic municipality founded the initiative **"Freedom of movement for everybody,"** with the aim of providing potential solutions to local authorities so that they could take concrete action. The initiative targeted persons with disabilities, with the largest focus on those who used wheelchairs. Since there was already a legal obligation to provide access for those in wheelchairs, the group started out by raising awareness among municipal representatives and citizens about the lack of implementation of this law in Leposavic. Additionally, the group communicated with all organizations and associations addressing the rights of disabled people in the municipality.

*"We need greater respect of the needs and rights of persons with disabilities among citizens of Leposavic municipality, as well as stronger and more meaningful implementation of legal regulations for the technical condition of public buildings. We*

*hope that in the future buildings cannot get municipal approval to be built if the design is not in compliance with all regulations."*  
- Marina Jakovljevic

By conducting a review of public institutions in the municipality, with a larger focus on institutions that directly provide services to people with disabilities, the group identified the two most important public institutions that lacked proper access: the primary school and the post office. The group then utilized social networks and social media to mobilize as many interested individuals and organizations as possible to support this project. The group also consulted with a local expert to create a policy and technical proposal for solving access problems to these institutions.

*"The main goal of this initiative is to improve freedom of movement for persons with disabilities, through raising awareness of friends and neighbors about their problem. Additionally, we needed to rekindle discussion among different local institutions in charge of providing services to this group of citizens." Bojana Jelenic*

After drawing attention of municipal authorities to this issue, the group's final proposal was submitted to the office of the

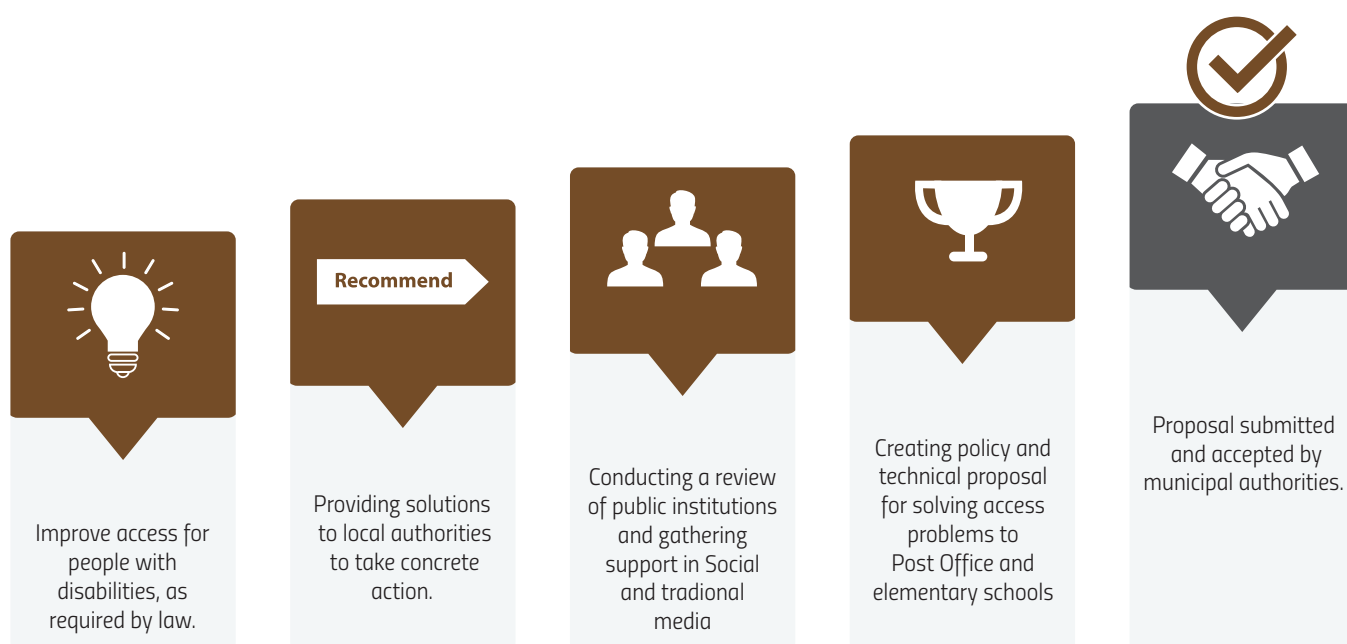






mayor. It was then reviewed by authorized personnel and officially accepted by the municipality, with appropriate budget allocations provided to make structural changes to the buildings. The mayor's office also encouraged the group to continue working on this and other important issues in the community.

**Participants:** Marina Jakovljevic, Bojana Jelenic, Mirjana Jevtic, Aleksandar Kostic, Slavko Simic



## STOPPING SCHOOL VIOLENCE

Throughout the north of Kosovo, violence among peers in school appears at much younger ages. This is confirmed by the higher number of reports submitted in schools and to the media about peer-to-peer violence. Consequently, the group from Zvecan decided to address this growing issue through its advocacy initiative, ***“School without violence.”***

*“Bullying is not an isolated social phenomenon. It is part of a complex form of social communication established in modern society. Many social factors generate it and make it one of the major problems modern communities face today. In sociology literature, different forms of school violence are interpreted as a product of the social crisis, or as a sort of symptom of the growing culture of violence.” - Ivana Vukasinovic*

To better assess the situation, the group conducted field visits to four primary schools in Zvecan and talked with school representatives. They also conducted survey research among parents of children attending these schools, which confirmed the importance of addressing this issue.

*“By talking to the school representatives, we learned about many constraints that these schools struggle with daily. Both groups,*

*parents and teachers, gave us their full support in raising this issue.” - Miodrag Radenkovic, group leader*

Through this initiative, the group organized two roundtable discussions in each of the four primary schools. One roundtable was with school representatives while the other was parents. The main topic of these roundtables was to discuss the reasons for the increasing amount of violence and to think of potential solutions.

*“Addressing the problem of school violence and making sure that children are feeling safe in schools, is one of the prerequisites to a quality education.” - Miodrag Radenkovic*

Based on recommendations from the roundtable discussions, the group conducted two activities. First, they drafted a policy proposal with help of two local experts, featuring several recommendations directed at school administrators for steps needed to successfully address this issue in the future. The steps included: creating teams for preventing school violence in each school and publicizing them; making this topic mandatory for discussion at school board and parent-teacher meetings; establishing anonymous tip boxes





or using social media to report school violence; and training peer to peer mediators. Second, the group organized several classes on peer-to-peer mediation and nonviolent communication in each of the schools so to empower pupils to take more active roles in preventing conflicts before they escalate.

After being reviewed by the authorized body, the group's policy proposal was accepted by all primary schools in Zvečan. Recommendations from it were included in the 2015 annual strategy for addressing school violence, and several have continued to be included in subsequent years.

**Participants:** Jovan Milosavljevic, Milena Jevtic, Miodrag Radenkovic, Ivana Vukasinovic





## LET IT BE CLEAN

The Zubin Potok municipality has a great opportunity for economic development through tourism due to its beautiful natural surroundings, complemented by a lake and mountains. Local authorities recognized this and in 2014 Zubin Potok gained status as an eco-municipality. However, to successfully implement the municipal eco-plan, local authorities needed citizens' support. Based on results of its public opinion research, the Zubin Potok group found that low volunteerism and self-awareness among citizens as well as a lack of a municipal strategy for eco-protection will hinder this effort.

With the purpose of supporting the municipality in its efforts to be eco-friendly, the group initiated the advocacy initiative **"Let it be clean"** to raise awareness among the citizens who lived around the heavily polluted Ibar River as well as to motivate citizens of that area to volunteer to clean up their neighborhoods.

*"Our research shows that the smaller rivers, which originate in the highest parts of our municipality, are usually the places where citizens throw garbage. All this trash flows into the Ibar River and creates really big problems to people living close to the riverbank. Together with a lack of a landfill and organized waste disposal in the north of Kosovo, this is becoming a big problem in the municipality."*  
- Milica Bozovic

The group organized several public events where they distributed promotional materials that contained data about these issues. In addition, the group made a short documentary video, with support of a local TV station, about the environmental situation in Zubin Potok. In this documentary, members of the group were joined by local environment experts to talk about the possible dangers for Zubin Potok if pollution remained the same, as well as potential solutions to the situation. The group presented this video and other information to students in primary and secondary schools in Zubin Potok with the support of principals and teachers.



Concurrently, the group reached out to the local authorities, working with the office of the mayor to organize a roundtable discussion on environmental protections in the municipality. The group expressed the need for a more strategic approach to this issue and called for more cooperation among municipal authorities, citizens living near polluted areas, the local waste removal company, and civil society organizations. to gain support for their activities and to prevent additional pollution.

After months of outreach efforts, the group succeeded in motivating citizens to participate in a volunteer clean-up of the most polluted areas. This event was coordinated by the group and supported by a municipality cleaning company, which provided all needed machinery for this activity. During this event, several trash piles around Ibar River were removed, and the municipality distributed new trash containers in these spots.

Finally, several local non-governmental organizations initiated a discussion on developing a municipal strategy for environmental protection and development with citizens and municipal authorities, to which the group was invited to participate

*"It is natural for us to work on prevention of wild trash depots and reducing the pollution of the river as much as we can. It is great seeing so many different groups, organizations, and individuals supporting this idea." - Tijana Krasic*

**Participants:** Ivan Bozovic, Milica Bozovic, Tijana Krasic, Lazar Rakic, Branka Utvic, Zoran Utvic



## SMART

The municipality of North Mitrovica, as one of the main educational and medical centers of the country, provides more public services than many other municipalities in Kosovo. As a municipality with more than 10,000 students, the majority of whom are not from the municipality, the lack of road signs to main public institutions was a concern among citizens.

Since there was no official action on this issue, the YLP group in North Mitrovica created an initiative to draw municipal authorities' attention to the problem and possible solutions.

*"There is a need and demand for municipal road guides for students and visitors that will prevent unnecessary roaming through the municipality, in search of institutions such as the hospital, police, museum, library, school, different colleges, theater, bus station, court, etc." - Stefan Nedeljkovic*

The group used traditional and social media as well as street actions to increase public support and pressure municipal authorities to act. Many youth supported the initiative, as well as the university and other public institutions.

The group then visited municipality representatives to discuss the initiative and its goals. In these meetings, the municipal representatives spoke on the actions they had already taken and even suggested some possible activities for the group.

*"There was support for this initiative, and the municipality recognized the need for these road signs. That was great encouragement for us." - Ida Dzekovic*

Based on all of the information gathered through research, conversations with citizens and public institutions, and information provided by local authorities, the group drafted a policy proposal. With the support of a local urban planning expert and municipal representatives, the group first identified the public institutions of highest importance that needed



to be marked and then identified the crossroads and sites in the municipality where these signs needed to be set up. They also examined municipal plans for traffic signals, municipal budgets, relevant legislation. Then, the group drafted a policy proposal with possible solutions for the issue, which delineated institution of importance, traffic points where signs needed to be posted, traffic and municipal budget implications.

After finishing the policy proposal, the group organized one more meeting with a municipal representative to submit it and discuss future cooperation. The representative expressed his enthusiasm with the proposal and their readiness to include it in local assembly discussions following the 2017 local elections.

*“Since most of members of this YLP group are students of architecture, we will continue to support and observe future actions of the municipality in this regard.” - Tijana Jevtic*

**Participants:** Petar Djordjevic, Ida Dzekovic, Tijana Jevtic, Stefan Nedeljko, Aleksandra Zivkovic





## ALTERNATIVA

The municipality of Leposavic is located in the north of Kosovo and is home to around 18,000 people. In the 2014 parliamentary elections, three out of the ten elected Serb Members of Parliament came from Leposavic, though citizens often expressed dissatisfaction with the sporadic communication with political representatives, both at the central and local level. The YLP group from Leposavic decided to do something about it and launched an advocacy initiative called *“Alternativa.”*

As a first step in this initiative, the group conducted research to better understand the reason for this dissatisfaction, through talking directly with citizens as well as with their political representatives. They sought to examine whether dissatisfaction stemmed from a lack of effort by elected representatives or poorly informed citizens. Based on the group’s research, it determined that both reasons fed the problem, and both sides expressed an interest in improving communication an encouraging finding for the group.

*“According to our findings, our political representatives believe, despite their claim about regular communication with citizens, that this communication should be more regular. We see great opportunity in this. We plan to use our group as a catalyst for initiating better communication and discussion between citizens and their representatives.” - Bojan Milosavljevic*

The group wanted to create a platform to provide citizens the opportunity to speak directly with their political representatives in the Assembly of Kosovo. In order to achieve this, Alternativa started implementing a media campaign with flyers, posters, Facebook posts, traditional media and direct communication, to promote public debates with political representatives for citizens. The debates would be focused on issues related to citizens’ political participation, as well as the various obstacles, challenges, and opportunities for citizens in Leposavic.

At the same time, the group had several meetings with political representatives from Leposavic to present the need and advantages of these debates to the Members of Parliament. By presenting public research to the MPs showing citizen interest in more communication with their representatives, the group succeeded in motivating MPs to participate.







As a direct outcome, and based on requests by MPs, the YLP group facilitated three public debates in the Leposavic municipality. Deciding to focus on often neglected groups, the first debate focused on women's participation and the second on youth. The third invited citizens in general. Political representatives from Leposavic used suggestions from the YLP group and citizens to begin work on strategies for improving communication with citizens in the municipality.

*"This was very useful for us, as elected political representatives of Serbs in Kosovo. Activities similar to this will help us to develop a better approach to everyday problems of our citizens. Also, meetings like these provide us with ideas how to improve and increase communication with citizens." - Deputy Speaker Slavko Simic*

**Participants:** Sava Markovic, Bojan Milosavljevic, Zorica Milosavljevic, Sladjana Simic, Dalibor Stefanovic, Nevena Antonijevic



Domestic violence is a complex issue, which does not respect class, race, age, religion, culture or wealth, reaching every corner of society. While women experience domestic violence at higher rates than men, all genders can be victims of it. However, precise data on the extent of the problem is often missing. This is exactly what the YLP group from Zubin Potok found once they began discussing the subject with various stakeholders. Consequently, the group decided to gather as much data as possible to make public.

*"Domestic violence is undoubtedly a serious problem in modern society and should be treated as such. Gathering data is one of the needed steps in combating this issue, but also a very difficult one, because of the complexity and sensitivity of the subject."- Danijela Jovanovic*

After consulting with different public institutions that directly deal with cases of domestic violence, the group divided its research into two categories. First, the group targeted several local institutions, such as the municipality, the local police station, the health center, and local schools. Second, it gathered data from citizens directly. Throughout its research, the group conducted more than 300 surveys among citizens and more than 50 interviews with employees in the above-mentioned institutions. With the support of an expert on domestic violence, they processed all of the data and prepared a presentation for local stakeholders.

The group presented this data in a roundtable discussion organized with municipal representatives, as well as representatives of all institutions who had contributed data to the research. The purpose of this was to provide different municipal stakeholders with concrete data that will help them support victims of domestic violence and prevent domestic violence... After presenting its findings, the group opened the floor for discussion which brought up several recommendations for a more strategic and institutional approach to this issue. Following the roundtable, these recommendations were compiled into a document and given to all public institutions involved in the research project.

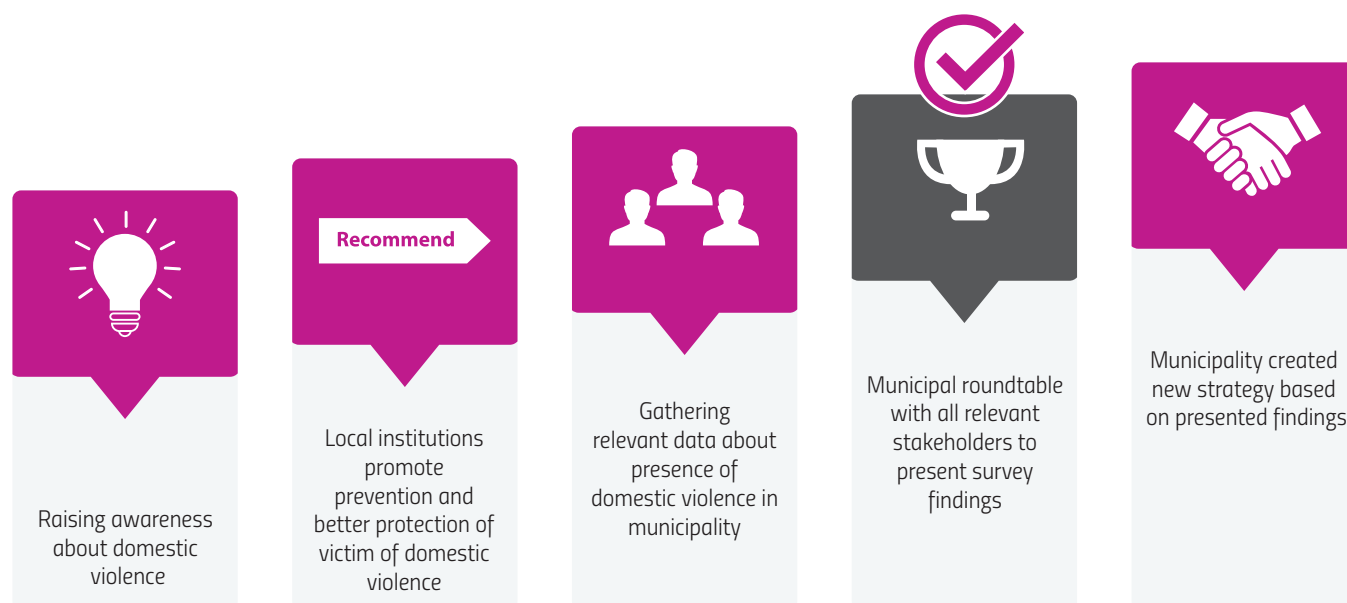




*"Any effective response to domestic violence has to take the form of a truly integrated central strategy which is cross-government and across departments, with police, health, social care and every other agency taking active roles in tackling the problem." - Ivana Nesovic*

Although the main goal of this initiative was achieved with the presentation of data, the group has continued its work, recognizing the need to continue raising awareness about domestic violence.

**Participants:** Milena Bozovic, Mila Bulatovic, Danijela Jovanovic, Ivana Nesovic, Milan Trifunovic





## BIKE BOOM

To many of the young residents of the Zvečan municipality, cycling in the city has always been virtually impossible without official paths created for this purpose. Without dedicated bike paths, cyclists are forced to bike in the road without protection from traffic. The YLP group in Zvečan decided to address this issue to benefit the community.

*"In the absence of creative cultural and recreational facilities, as well as due to insufficient funds, young people mostly spend their free time by watching TV, engaging in social networks, or staying in cafes. As a great biking and sport enthusiast I think that organized infrastructure for cycling is one of the possible solutions for this problem." - Vladimir Vuckovic*

The group decided to advocate for the creation of official bike paths among local institutions, citizens, and sports organizations. Through various public activities, traditional and social media promotions, and direct meetings with local representatives, the group sought to find both support for this issue and possible solutions. In a meeting with the local Department for Urban Planning, the group presented its initiative and requested guidance for mandatory procedures and possible support. The head of this department provided the group with all the requested information and even agreed to send the department's expert to provide the group with the support to find possible bike path locations.

With the support of the Department for Urban Planning and its local expert, the group drafted a policy proposal, containing three possible solutions for biking tracks in Zvečan municipality. After obtaining the approval of the ministry for its proposal, the group scheduled a meeting with the mayor of Zvečan. In this meeting, the group presented its findings and policy proposal. The mayor committed to finding financial resources so that at least one out of the three proposed bike paths would be created in the near future. The proposal was eventually approved by municipal authorities and adopted within the municipality's urban plan.



*"Being so openly supported by the mayor, and seeing the group's policy proposal adopted by the mayor's office and Department of Urban Planning is reassuring that sport enthusiasts will soon have new possibilities open to them. It was great to be a part of the Youth Leadership Program and this initiative. I hope there will be more kinds of opportunities like this in the future."* - Ines Aljevic

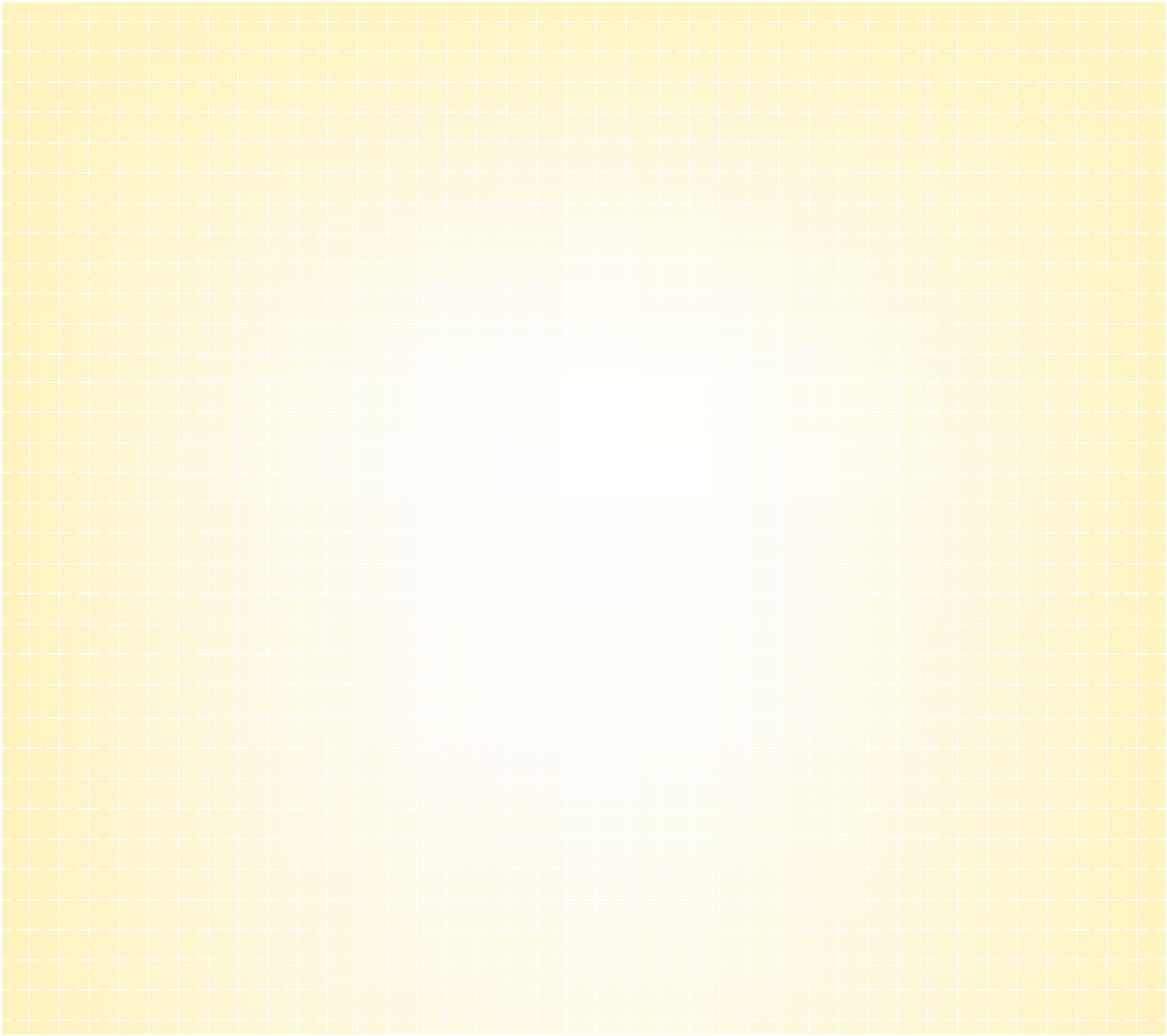
**Participants:** Ines Aljevic, Strahinja Jevtic, Vladimir Vuckovic



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