

# ANNUAL REPORT



## INTRODUCTION

NGO Advocacy Center for Democratic Culture (ACDC) is a non-governmental organization, founded and registered in 2011, and based in North Mitrovica. ACDC promotes social activism, mobilization of citizens in public debates, and promotion of sustainable cooperation between the central, local governments, and the community in the process of strengthening the rule of law, democracy, government transparency, interethnic collaboration, education, and work with young people.

In 2023, NGO ACDC remained steadfast in its commitment to promoting justice, human rights, and the rule of law in Kosovo. Building upon the foundation laid in previous years, NGO ACDC initiated numerous workshops, research, training, media campaigns, and conferences.

Over the year, NGO ACDC organized more than 10 conferences and public debates ranging from crucial issues such as land expropriation in North Kosovo to discussions on youth education, labor rights, discrimination, human rights, and interethnic cooperation. In addition to these conferences, ACDC published research analyses on discrimination, the justice situation in the North, labor rights and published 20 texts and on addressing human rights and social issues in Kosovo. Additionally, numerous campaigns were conducted that focused on promoting awareness of the Ombudsperson's role and mandate, advocating for the importance of Free Legal Aid in Kosovo, raising awareness about women's labor rights, and addressing the critical issues of environmental protection and flood prevention.

During 2023, there were 17 projects in total being implemented.

## Project 1:

Further Support to Access to Justice and Human Rights in the Mitrovica Region

Timeframe: 19.08.2022. - 19.06.2023.

Funded by: UNMIK

The project aimed to strengthen the judicial system in the Mitrovica region by enhancing translation and interpretation capacity, improving court work conditions, training young lawyers from non-majority communities, increasing the capacity of the Free Legal Aid Agency, and promoting the role of the Ombudsperson.

Results:

- Increased translation/interpretation capacity of the Basic Court of Mitrovicë/Mitrovica increased capacity of the Court to reduce the backlog of cases through the assistance of legal associates
- Improved work conditions at the Basic Court of Mitrovica, through furnishing and equipping
- Increased number of young lawyers from non-majority communities trained to take the Bar Examination
- Increased capacities of the Kosovo Free Legal Aid Agency Office in North Mitrovica
- Increased the visibility of the Ombudsperson's role and mandate

## Project 2:

Organizational Development Grant

Timeframe: 01.09.2022. - 31.08.2023.

This grant is supported by the Kosovar Civil Society Foundation (KCSF) program 'EJA Kosovo', co-financed by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Sweden, and Government of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.

The overall goal of the project was to increase the capacity of the organization's staff in order to create a clear direction of organizational development using specific tools and resources that will contribute to the growth of the organization, increase the level of capacity, and strengthen the internal management system.

Results:

- Increased sustainability and functionality of the organization by strengthening the capacity of the organization.
- Achieved effective human and technological resource management.

### Project 3:

Enhancing Transparency and Rule of Law in Kosovo-Serb Majority Communities in Kosovo

Timeframe: 30.09.2022. - 30.09.2023.

Financed by the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL).

The overall objective of the project was to improve the administration of justice in northern Kosovo and K/Serb majority areas in the other regions of Kosovo through support to judicial institutions and facilitation of inclusion of young lawyers from the non-majority communities into the law practice.

### Project 4:

Advocating for a better position of pregnant women and young mothers

Timeframe: 01.01.2023. - 30.06.2023.

The grant is funded by the European Union in Kosovo, in the scope of the "Protecting and Promoting Labour Rights of Vulnerable Groups in the Labour Market" project, implemented by Advocacy Training and Resource Center - ATRC in partnership with BIRN Kosovo.

The overall goal of the project was to provide support to women in Kosovo by raising awareness about the importance of non-discrimination in the field of labour law, as well as identifying the attitude of citizens, primarily women, about the rights and obligations of employees. The target groups were young women, pregnant women, and single mothers who live in northern Kosovo.

Results:

- The position of targeted women is measured and recommendations are gathered;
- Public awareness and knowledge on the mechanism for the protection women's and labour rights is raised through a public outreach campaign.

### Project 5:

Strengthening the environmental awareness in northern Kosovo

Timeframe: 01.03.2023. - 31.08.2023.

The project is implemented within the program “Integrated Water Resources Management in Kosovo” (IWRM-K), funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the Government of Kosovo, and implemented by Skat Consulting Ltd. (Switzerland) in consortium with the Environment Agency Austria (EAA).

The main objective of the project was to address water-related challenges and tackle the existing and possible future problems using the methodology and approach of assistance and awareness raising. This will be achieved and measurable by adopting and drafting municipal policies and plans for preserving existing water wells and rivers.

### Project 6:

Promoting human rights and non-discrimination principles at the local level

Timeframe: 22.03.2023. - 10.06.2023.

The project was funded by Council of Europe Office in Pristina.

The overall objective of the project is to raise public awareness on (non)discrimination and to foster institutional response to discrimination through mobilizing all competent institutions and through training empowerment of municipal officers in North Mitrovica.

Results:

- Identified public perception on discrimination in North Mitrovica.
- Raised public awareness on discrimination and available mechanisms.
- Increased capacities of local self-government to prevent and respond to discrimination.
- Created synergy among all relevant stakeholders in northern Kosovo.

### Project 7:

Online platform for building open and inclusive society in Kosovo

Timeframe: 28.03.2023. - 31.08.2023.

Supported by IOM and the British Embassy in Kosovo

The overall objective of the project was to facilitate inter-ethnic cooperation among communities in Kosovo, through a tailor-made online platform for the Office of Community Affairs and support to representatives of non-majority communities.

Results:

- Included representatives of non-majority communities in gathering the needs of every particular community in Kosovo.
- Incorporated the needs and recommendations into the online platform, serving every community in Kosovo.
- Raised public awareness on the importance of cooperation across ethnic lines, the work of the Office of Community Affairs, and the platform as an available mechanism for cooperation and issue resolution.
- Facilitated cooperation of community leaders, assisting them in formulating their needs and cooperating with the Office of Community Affairs.

#### Project 8:

Promoting the rights and role of citizens through reducing the risk of natural disasters

Timeframe: 01.05.2023. - 01.11.2023.

Financed by: SMART Balkan

The overall goal of the project was to raise awareness about the risks of disasters, climate change and promote social cohesion among community members to ensure long-term results and improve the impact on the decision-making process.

Results:

- Developed a local strategy for flood prevention and adequate response in given situations.
- Strengthened social cohesion and citizens involved in decision-making processes through specifically planned activities with all important local stakeholders.
- Public informed about flood risks and awareness was raised through a media campaign.

#### Project 9:

Improving the capacity of the Agency for Free Legal Aid in northern Kosovo

Timeframe: 01.05.2023. - 31.10.2023.

Funded by: The Community Development Fund - CDF

The overall goal of this project was to enhance cooperation between non-majority communities in northern Kosovo and Agency for Free Legal Aid and improve the conditions for human rights defenders and increase the quality level of providing services by the Agency.

Results:

- The work of the Free Legal Aid mobile clinic is enhanced with one more lawyer
- The scope and work of the Free Legal Aid mobile clinic are introduced to the vast majority of the population concerning respect and exercise of human rights, critical thinking, and active citizenship, as well as universal human rights values through social media campaigns and exposed critical thinking through op-eds.

### **Project 10:**

Strengthening the human rights perspective from the non-majority point of view

Timeframe: 01.06.2023. - 30.11.2023.

The project is supported by Community Development Fund, through HumanRightivism program, funded by Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency – Sida.

The overall objective of the project was to empower young people coming from non-majority communities in northern Kosovo and support the active participation of all members of the school community to integrate human rights values and principles into all areas of educational life and emphasize the importance of human rights education.

Results

- Active citizens from all communities in northern Kosovo are encouraged and supported in the development of a global culture of human rights by educating and empowering young people, teachers and the wider school community to create human rights values more appreciated in Kosovo.
- Understanding, respect and enjoyment of human rights, critical thinking and active citizens are promoted, as well as universal human rights values through advocacy campaign #humanrightschampions and exposed critical thinking through op-eds.

### **Project 11:**

Promoting Interethnic Dialogue in Local Government 2023



Timeframe: 01.02.2023. - 31.01.2024.

The project is funded by The National Endowment for Democracy (NED)

Through surveys, focus groups, and comprehensive reporting, the project aimed to understand community perspectives and develop local action plans to empower the Communities Committee in Zvečan. The initiative further includes facilitating community meetings, hosting public conferences, and promoting awareness to foster cooperation and build stronger ties among diverse communities in the region.

### **Project 12:**

Enhancing of employability of Serbian and Bosnian communities

Timeframe: 01.08.2023. - 31.05.2024.

This project aim to introduce innovative approaches on enhancing the employability of members of the Serbian and Bosnian communities. A focus lies in a close cooperation with Kosovar institutions, namely the Kosovar employment agency in reaching out to the Serbian and Bosnian community and providing trainings.

Overall objective is to contribute to economic development and to increasing employment in the labor market in northern Kosovo through empowerment of young people. This goal will be achieved through empowerment of young people to be more competitive in the labor market. Young NEET from Serbian and Bosnian communities will be approached in cooperation with the employment agencies of North Mitrovica.

This project is supported by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Federal Republic of Germany.

### **Project 13:**

Supporting Access to Justice in Northern Kosovo

Timeframe: 24.08.2023. - 24.06.2024.

This project aims to ensure further support to the integrated judiciary in northern Kosovo by the continuation of services by translators/interpreters and four legal associates at the Mitrovicë/Mitrovica Basic Court and fill the gap until additional translators and legal associates are hired by the Kosovo Judicial Council (KJC).



In addition to the support to the integrated judiciary, the project will advance the consolidation of the rule of law in northern Kosovo by increasing the local capacities for Free Legal Aid and supporting young lawyers from the non-majority communities to prepare for the Bar Exam in Kosovo.

Moreover, the project seeks to engage local communities in northern Kosovo through dialogue about the integrated judiciary's future via conferences and town hall meetings. It also aims to gather accurate insights into the integrated judiciary's functioning and public perception.

#### Project 14:

M4Y Municipalities for Youth - Empowering Youth for Change

Timeframe: 01.09.2023. - 30.06.2024.

Project Funding and Partners: The entire program is supported by the Government of Japan through the Japan Social Development Fund, and with the involvement of the Republic of Kosovo's Ministry of Local Government and Administration, along with the Community Development Fund (CDF).

- The mission of the project is to empower young individuals aged 15 to 24 in Kosovo by fostering their active participation in community development.
- Youth Initiatives: Together with 15 municipalities, we will support youth-driven projects that tackle local issues.
- Community Impact: Our goal is to successfully complete 100 community projects, all powered by the passion and dedication of Kosovo's youth.

Targeted Municipalities: For the continuation of the M4Y project, more municipalities are being added. ACDC will be in charge of the following municipalities: Ranilug, Srbica/Skenderaj, Vuçitër/Vushtrri, Gračanica/Graçanicë, and Kosovo Polje/Fushe Kosove.

#### Project 15:

Access to Justice for All: Improving Access to Free Legal Aid in Northern Kosovo

Timeframe: 15.09.2023. - 15.03.2024.

Supported by the Ministry of Communities and Returns

The project aims to enhance the capacity and promote the protection of community rights in Northern Kosovo. Through various activities and initiatives, the project seeks to improve collaboration between minority communities in Northern Kosovo and relevant institutions, with a particular focus on providing free legal aid as a mechanism for safeguarding human rights.

The project will focus on raising awareness about human rights through social media campaigns and authored articles that will explore and address issues crucial to the protection of community rights. Emphasis will be placed on involving women and youth in initiatives aimed at informing and engaging citizens in the context of safeguarding human rights.

### **Project 16:**

Advancing human rights through increasing public awareness

Timeframe: 30.09.2023. - 30.06.2024

Funded by UNMIK

The project is designed to respond to the current human rights situation amid repeated allegations of human rights violations in northern Kosovo and the persisting human rights protection gap. Through enhanced cooperation, accessibility, and awareness, the project aims to empower residents, strengthen trust in institutions, and promote effective mechanisms for addressing human rights challenges in northern Kosovo.

The project will seek to achieve the following outputs: a strengthened Forum of Cooperation between the Ombudsperson Institution of Kosovo (OiK) and Civil Society; a functioning online complaint form on the OiK's website; increased awareness of human rights and redress mechanisms; a developed reporting style template for the OiK based on human rights indicators; enhanced monitoring, reporting, and increased awareness of the human rights situation.

### **Project 17:**

Enhancing Transparency and Rule of Law in Kosovo-Serb Majority Communities in Kosovo

Timeframe: 15.11.2023. - 15.11.2024.

The overall objective of the project is to improve the administration of justice in northern Kosovo and K/Serb majority areas across Kosovo by enhancing the efficiency of integrated judicial institutions, facilitating the inclusion of young lawyers from non-majority communities into the

legal profession, and raising public awareness about the functioning of these institutions and citizens' rights.

Objectives:

- To increase the efficiency of the integrated judicial institutions in northern Kosovo and other K/Serb majority areas in Kosovo.
- Specific objective 2: To contribute to better inclusion of young lawyers from the non-majority communities in Kosovo into the law practice.
- Specific Objective 3: To raise public awareness on the functioning of the integrated judicial institutions in northern Kosovo and K/Serb majority areas and citizen's rights before these institutions.



