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Supporting ethnic cohesion and social well-being in Kosovo

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The vast majority of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian community in Kosovo lives in poverty or extreme poverty, faces social exclusion and can enjoy a very limited access to basic services. Despite the fact that the RAE community has been supported through various

projects by NGOs, international organizations and local institutions, their situation has registered a very limited improvement and they continue to be seen as fully dependent on external support.

Up to 35% of RAE young men and women are almost completely illiterate, and this is one of the main obstacles for them to successfully integrate into the mainstream socio-economic aspects of Kosovo society.

The “Building a better future for citizens of Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje and Obiliq/Obilić: Participation, Protection, and multi-ethnic Partnerships for improved education, health and sustainable livelihoods” initiative aims to improve the socio-economic position of the RAE by promoting equal access and participation across key drivers of social wellbeing – employment, health, education, social welfare and governance – as well as strengthening the role of civil society through strategic inclusion and mobilization of local NGOs.

The initiative helped to build the capacity of 20 RAE community advocates to become “Community Changemakers”, empowering them to address community needs. UNV provided tailored training on project proposal writing, fundraising, planning, and monitoring and evaluation. In addition, UNV provided a mechanism to allow the Changemakers to design and implement their own community projects with the support of a local NGO partner, The Ideas Partnership.

As a result, three projects were launched, reaching 120 direct beneficiaries and 3,000 indirect beneficiaries in the fields of environmental protection and health. In one, an eight-week activity saw garbage bins distributed in the main streets of the RAE community, accompanied by awareness-raising about the environment and sanitation. In another, elderly RAE citizens received volunteer support in the area of health.

Through the training and experienced gained through participation in the project, the Changemakers were able to open a kindergarten for 80 children. To do this, they raised funds from the private sector, such as the Raiffeisen Bank’s H Stepic Fund Charity.

The Changemakers group serves as a steering committee for the kindergarten, and through the monthly meetings with the kindergarten team they closely follow the activities and its outcomes.

The Changemakers also supported a local NGO partner in reaching out to youth – boys and

girls, including young mothers – from the community, and encouraging them to attend and deliver literacy and numeracy courses from which 190 RAE youth benefited.

The Changemakers group was also able to register as an official NGO, further enhancing their ability to advocate for the RAE community.

The Changemakers initiative was part of the UNV/UNDP component of the UN Joint project funded by the UN Trust Fund for Human Security, and implemented by a Kosovar NGO, The Ideas Partnership.

Sustainable Development Goal: [SDG 1: No poverty](#)