



From being excluded to influencers

The progress of **Citizen Voice in Action**
with children for **Child Protection**



Child Protection remains a concern in Kosovo. Children who live and work in street situation are among those who suffer the most. On average children work about 6,5 hours per day¹ during the summer and four hours during the school year, six days a week. And the most affected populations are Roma/ Ashkali /Egyptian (RAE). Therefore, a collaboration between World Vision US (WV US), World Vision Albania & Kosovo (WVA & K) (Kosovo office) Child Protection and Participation Learning Hub (CPP LH) and Local Level Advocacy Learning Hub (LLA LH) in Middle East, Eastern European Region (MEER), aims to improve Child Protection (CP) related policy in Kosovo while considering the voices of MVF and children as well as build an evidence on how CVA is used for CPP. During this process two research questions are addressed:

Acronyms

WV US – World Vision United States
 WVA&K – World Vision Albania and Kosovo
 CPP LH – Child Protection and Participation Learning Hub
 LLA LH – Local Level Advocacy Learning Hub
 MEER – Middle East, Eastern European Region
 MVF – Most Vulnerable Families
 WG - Working Group
 CP – Child Protection
 CVA – Citizen Voice in Action
 CPP - Child Protection and Participation

- Is CVA an effective approach for influencing CP policy and implementation?
- Does Child Participation in CVA contribute to greater inclusion of children’s needs/priorities in government policy?



Dear Prime Minister. We have law to protect animals in Kosovo, but not children. How come, if we are the most precious thing for our family?!

Mirzana, 12, Fushe Kosove

¹CHILD LABOUR IN KOSOVO, A STUDY ON WORKING CHILDREN, <http://www.unicef.org/kosovoprogramme/kosovo_media_pub_prot.008.04.pdf>, 2004.

Path to success

Firstly, WVA&K (Kosovo office) partnered with Health for All, a local NGO, to implement this project from the initial phase. Jointly with partners, WV staff went through CVA guidance and provided input to enrich it with CP components and also child participation part. A draft with the input is now available and being used. **So, it reinforced the learning that the profile of the partner is key to the success of CVA for CP.** The local partner identified the three communities and people (adults and children) interested in changing the landscape of CP and related policies. *The previous relationship of the partner with these communities is crucial to start the work in CP.*

Secondly, the communities involved were Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians, who are amongst the most vulnerable ones in Kosovo. With them it was important to recognize that using a **simple and friendly language to communicate is essential.** Some of them were illiterate, and for them to feel engaged was possible only when they were able to understand and contribute. Being contributors and being appreciated makes them hopeful and motivated to contribute

for change. They were transformed from the excluded and discriminated communities into the ones who can compare CP policies and influence incorporation of the changes at national level Law.

The process so far:

- Baseline is conducted alongside data gathering for an ethnographic study in June'16.
- **100** project participants (children and adults) have gone through the process of getting prepared to compare a CP related policy (social aid and children who work on the streets) with a given standards, and to keep government accountable to improve the existing policy.
- **The recommendations generated from the comparison (score card and monitoring standards), were shared with Working Group (WG) for CP Law of Prime Minister and then with the Prime Minister getting their commitment for incorporating the recommendations in the law.** The aim was to incorporate the changes in social aid and children who work on the streets in the new CP law recently drafted.



Thirdly, 100 participants (adults and children) went through the process of becoming aware of CP issues in their communities that are positive for children and issues which hinder their development. In addition participants learned of the rights and the responsibilities regarding CP, as well as their own rights, their entitlements. They started to understand how to compare the current CP policies with the ones they want to follow. They worked more specifically on **(a)** social aid criteria; **(b)** children who work in the streets.

Children's group opened up a new dimension, which was the dimension of supporting the child alongside the family.

The standards practiced in Kosovo were compared with European Standards on Child Protection. The recommendations generated from the comparison process were shared with Prime Minister, and therefore included in the draft law for CP. Also the law on social assistance

scheme in Kosovo was compared with the law applied in Macedonia, a neighboring country. Involving a facilitator who knew the laws and policies both on national and international levels was crucial. The facilitator was the best match since he managed to combine his knowledge with the ability to present in a simple manner to enable participants to contribute meaningfully which opened the doors of success to this initiative.



Success beyond the expected results

- **Product wise:** The input that participants provided is already incorporated into the draft Law for CP which currently is in the process to be approved.
- **Social norm wise – CP:** Initially the participants were not able to identify CP issues as it was so much embedded in their daily life. Therefore the process makes CP issues visible and people are motivated to challenge what is already social norm.
- **Relationship wise:** At the beginning the service providers were not trusting how community representatives and children would be able to change policies, but during the process they built positive relationships and collectively acted to influence change.
- **Inclusiveness:** Community representatives were those very poorly educated, facing extreme poverty, and totally ignored from the policy makers and decision makers. Among them there were people who could not write and read. Making them to influence policy change have brought an opportunity for inclusive accountability and citizenship as never before.

“Without children's voice the focus would have been only at the financial issues. Children manage to orient the group and CP law at the component of care for children who are at risk”

Muharrem, Local Partner