

# OVC BUILDS ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH KOSOVO THROUGH CHILD VICTIMIZATION TRAINING IN KOSOVO

## OVC'S INTERNATIONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH KOSOVO

After Kosovo's declaration of independence in 2008, the [U.S. Embassy](#) there began an active partnership with the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), specifically the [Office of Overseas Prosecutorial Development Assistance and Training](#) (OPDAT) and the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of North Carolina. This partnership with the Justice Department led to a visit to the United States by a Kosovar delegation that included participation in the Office for Victims of Crime's (OVC) 2010 National Crime Victims' Rights Week (NCVRW) events. Following this visit, Kosovars were inspired and took action that included hosting Kosovo's first NCVRW. OVC's Acting Director Joye Frost was honored to take part in these events in Kosovo in 2011.



National flag of the Republic of Kosovo

OVC and Kosovo continue to maintain a partnership. In August 2012, at the invitation of the U.S. Embassy in Kosovo, under the auspices of OPDAT, OVC Visiting Fellow Bethany Case and Office on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Visiting Fellow Shania Kapoor traveled to Kosovo to provide training on child victimization to nearly 40 Kosovar professionals.



Joye E. Frost participates in a National Crime Victims' Rights Week Ceremony in Pristina, Kosovo, on October 19, 2011.



DOJ Fellows are welcomed by Embassy staff. L-R: Benina Kusari, Bethany Case, Shania Kapoor, Jon Smibert, Eliza Thana, and Michelle Lakomy.

Read [Kosovo Focuses on Victims' Rights after Decades of Strife](#) (PDF 470 kb) to learn more about OVC's Partnership with Kosovo.

## CHILD VICTIMIZATION IN KOSOVO

One keystone to Kosovo's criminal justice system development has been recognition of the rights and needs of crime victims. The country instituted a Bill of Rights to provide strong protections for victims. These protections include the use of victim advocates—an innovative approach in the Balkans—to guide victims through the justice system and represent them in court. Although significant progress is being made in Kosovo's overall response to victimization, professionals indicate that very little child victimization is identified. Nationwide campaigns—particularly a recent domestic violence campaign—have been powerful tools in building the public's awareness of the issues and resources available. Unfortunately, it seems that child victimization, as in many other countries worldwide, is under recognized and underreported and the professional response is not yet aligned to support the comprehensive needs of child victims.



Map of Balkans. Kosovo is located on the Balkan Peninsula, bordered by Serbia, Macedonia, Albania, and Montenegro.

## CURRENT RESPONSE TO CHILD VICTIMS

There are four key stakeholders/systems involved in Kosovo’s response to child victimization—police, the Centre for Social Work (a quasi-child protection system), victim advocates, and shelters. While the expertise of these professionals varies, ranging from no formal training whatsoever to international training and vast experience; most have experience primarily with adult victims. Generally, a victim’s first contact is with the police, who receive notifications/reports of crime or victimization. Typically, police interview the victim, contact relevant professionals—social workers, shelter workers, victim advocates—and then take the victim to the hospital and/or shelter. Kosovars were eager to learn more about American responses to child victimization.

## TRAINING EVENT IN KOSOVO’S CAPITAL

The training event—titled Child Victimization—took place in Pristina, Kosovo, on August 29–31, 2012, and was comprised of three full days of content geared toward an audience of victim advocates, shelter workers, and staff from the Centre for Social Work. Training covered a range of topics, including forms and scope of child victimization in the United States; polyvictimization; the role of public awareness; factors influencing child victimization; child development; children’s rights in Kosovo; identification and systematic responses; integrated professional responses; sustaining professional responses; current U.S. initiatives; criminal justice programming; navigating the challenges; and action steps for Kosovo.



Materials for the training event.

## ATTITUDES OF PARTICIPANTS

The DOJ Fellows were overwhelmed by the passion and enthusiasm of the Kosovar participants. Participants were willing to listen to new ideas and approaches from the American trainers and to exchange ideas about ways to integrate these practices in their own communities. Not only did participants fully participate in lectures, discussions, group activities, and presentations, but they networked with their colleagues throughout the 3-day training—an opportunity these professionals rarely experience.



Participant presents the results of a small group exercise. The exercise examined how Kosovo identifies child victims, whether these responses are working, and began to identify professionals who should be part of a collaborative or multidisciplinary response.



Participants listen as a local service provider presents about the rights of children in Kosovo.

## OVERCOMING LANGUAGE BARRIERS

Many Kosovars speak English, but the two primary languages are Albanian and Serbian. All were spoken at the training, therefore, the training was simultaneously translated into Albanian, Serbian, and English. Despite the language barriers, the trainers and participants valued their communication with one another and found creative ways to address that challenge.



Participants and trainers wore headsets to receive continuous audio feed from translators.

## COMMONALITIES

With vast geographical differences, the commonalities between Americans and Kosovars were abundant. Both cultures recognize and are working toward improving responses to child victimization based on the following themes:

- Child victimization occurs in all communities but is often underreported.
- Children often experience multiple types of victimization, also known as polyvictimization.
- Coordinated professional responses are necessary to properly address child victimization.
- A child-centered approach to identification, assessment, and treatment should always be considered.
- Approaches vary based on the unique resources in every community. Each community must assess its own resources and develop coordinated responses that work for that particular community.

## CONCLUSION

It's an exciting time for Kosovo—this young country is now designing and building its government and systems in numerous areas. The people of Kosovo take great pride in their country and culture and, having been deeply impacted by war, value many of the things other countries take for granted. With a young vibrant population, a desire for building a strong country and openness to diverse approaches, Kosovo is certainly on the path to achieving great things. OVC looks forward to a continued partnership with Kosovo.

### ABOUT THE OFFICE FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME

The Office for Victims of Crime is one of six components within the Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice.

Led by Principal Deputy Director Joye E. Frost, OVC is committed to enhancing the Nation's capacity to assist crime victims and to providing leadership in changing attitudes, policies, and practices to promote justice and healing for all victims of crime.

Established in 1988 through an amendment to the Victims of Crime Act of 1984, OVC is charged by Congress with administering the Crime Victims Fund. Through OVC, the Fund supports a broad array of programs and services that focus on helping victims in the immediate aftermath of crime and continuing to support them as they rebuild their lives. Millions of dollars are invested annually in victim compensation and assistance in every U.S. state and territory, as well as for training, technical assistance, and other capacity-building programs designed to enhance service providers' ability to support victims of crime in communities across the Nation.

For more information, visit [www.ovc.gov](http://www.ovc.gov).

Office for Victims of Crime  
Office of Justice Programs  
U.S. Department of Justice  
810 Seventh Street NW.  
Washington, DC 20531  
Phone: 202-307-5983  
Fax: 202-514-6383