

YOUNG VOICES KOSOVO:

EVIDENCE-BASED ADVOCACY WITH CHILDREN



Photo: Era Thaqi, chair-person of national child-led group "Respect Our Rights" presenting the results of the Young Voices survey in the Municipal Assembly of Prishtina, Kosovo.

The 1st of June 2022 is a special day for all girls and boys in Kosovo. Each year, this day in Kosovo is widely celebrated as International Children's Day. For the child-led group 'Respect our Rights', this day is also a culmination of a lengthy engagement in the development of the Young Voices report. This child-friendly report is developed using questionnaires to find out what children think about various issues that matter to them such as education, safety, climate change and the environment, gender equality, and mental health. The questions, methodology and results were developed by Save the Children Kosova/o (SCiK), with support from Save the Children Sweden. Children representatives from the child-led groups that SCiK supports at local and national level, influenced the final shape of this research from start to finish.

Children also chose the 1st of June to present the results of what more than 1,200 children in Kosovo think about the state of child rights in Kosovo, the scale to which their voices are being listened to by decision-makers and presenting their recommendations for change in the delivery of child rights. During this day, SCiK organized events both at local and national levels reaching close to 3,000 children and more than 400 adults throughout Kosovo.

At the local level, SCiK utilized the principles of the [9 basic requirements for safe and meaningful children's participation](#) to support children from Child-led Municipal Assemblies (CLMAs) in 9 municipalities to meet with their mayors, present the results of Young Voices and demand them to take action in improving the delivery of child rights in the municipalities where they live.

Young Voices report shows that less than 3% of the surveyed children declared to have any influence at the municipality level. This was presented by children as a worrying result, on which they demanded from duty-bearers to consult them in the future. Children reinforced their openness to partner with local stakeholders to strengthen the policies and services for children on education, health and safety - as key developmental areas that directly affect their lives. The duty-bearers welcomed this approach and stated their willingness to partner with CLMAs to put forth their demands and improve the quality of decision-making for children of all backgrounds in their municipalities.

“THE CHILDREN OF EACH MUNICIPALITY SHOULD BE GIVEN THE RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PLANNING OF THE MUNICIPAL BUDGET, BECAUSE THEY CAN HELP IN AREAS THAT ADULTS OFTEN OVERLOOK.”

Gerti Dreni, 14-year-old boy representative of Child-led Municipal Assemblies

At the national level, children presented the key findings of Young Voices at the 1st meeting of the Inter-ministerial Committee on the Rights of the Child, comprised of Ministers and duty-bearers of Education, Health, Culture and Youth, and led by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Kosovo. The Committee has an official mandate since 2020 – the year when the Law on Child Protection entered into force, as a result of SCiK advocacy with local CSO partners. At this meeting, Puhiza (girl, 15) and Gerti (boy, 14) represented their CLMAs of Prishtina and Gjakova, as well as the national child-led group “Respect Our Rights”. They pointed out their demands for improved quality and inclusion on education, cleaner air for better health, safer schools for children and greater accountability to children at all levels of governance.

Photo: Gerti and Puhiza presenting the results of Young Voices at the Inter-ministerial Committee on the Rights of the Child.





To complement children’s engagement in evidence-based advocacy, SCiK organized a launching event with CSO partners, education, social welfare and health service providers, international development agencies, media organizations, and other stakeholders. The event provided an opportunity to reflect and discuss on key insights and feelings of children in Kosovo on their education, mental health, gender equality, safety, climate change and the environment. A [video](#) showcasing the key results was presented and a discussion among the stakeholders ensued, providing inputs and expressing their views on the results.

TODAY, ON CHILDREN'S DAY, I CALL ON ALL INSTITUTIONS TO MAKE CHILDREN'S WELLBEING YOUR PRIORITY, TO INCLUDE US WHEN DECISIONS ARE MADE, TO ACCEPT OUR OPINIONS AS VALID FOR ANY ISSUES THAT AFFECTS OUR LIVES.

Puhiza Shemsedini, 15-year-old girl representative of CLG “Respect Our Rights”

SCiK and child-led groups engaged in civic activism aim to utilize Young Voices report* as an advocacy tool that serves children, CSOs, duty-bearers and all relevant stakeholders to engage in meaningful discussions with children towards greater accountability. Since the launch of the report, SCiK has utilized the report to inform its own advocacy strategy, and as a basis for the development of new interventions that benefit all girls and boys in Kosovo, especially those most impacted by inequality and discrimination. Going forward, SCiK will continue its support for child-led groups and work in partnership with them to ensure that the commitments made by duty-bearers are followed-up on and children’s inputs are used to develop a robust system for child rights delivery in Kosovo.

*The Young Voices report was developed with support from Save the Children Sweden and generous funding from the Swedish International Development Agency- Sida, as part of the “Civil Society Strengthening in Kosovo” project.