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## **ABOUT JUSTICE AND THE PEOPLE**

The Justice and the People Campaign is a movement that brings together citizens and civil society groups in Kosovo to work for reform in the justice system and promote change through public advocacy. The Campaign's goal is to promote a more fair and accountable justice system and increase its responsiveness to the needs of citizens. The Campaign incorporates three main pillars, which jointly support its mission:

1. National Public Education and Advocacy Campaign
2. Free Legal Aid Clinics
3. Strategic Litigation Initiative

### *National Public Education and Advocacy Campaign*

The Justice and the People Campaign promotes education on the justice system and advocates directly for reforms at the national level through implementing partner Advocacy Training & Resource Center (ATRC). Activities include public education workshops in dozens of municipalities across Kosovo, advocacy trainings to teach citizens how to advocate for reform in Kosovo, expert roundtables to help identify needed justice-system reforms, and direct advocacy for public policy reforms on a wide range of issues such as:

- Improving the disciplinary complaint mechanisms used by justice system institutions
- Disclosing publicly the names of judges and prosecutors who have been found guilty of misconduct
- Adopting an official Kosovo Police brochure that informs domestic violence victims of their legal rights and the public resources available to them
- Appointing judges and prosecutors to act as domestic violence specialists

### *Free Legal Aid Clinics*

Justice and the People provides free legal advice and assistance to citizens in need, focusing primarily on the areas of criminal law and procedure and the use of grievance and oversight mechanisms in the justice system. Implementing partner, Center for Legal Aid and Regional Development (CLARD) operates a full-time legal aid clinic in Prishtina and weekly clinics in eight other Kosovo municipalities, including Gjilan, Malishevo, Gracanica, Vushtrri, Ferizaj, Drenas, Fushe Kosovo, and Mitrovica.

### *Strategic Litigation Initiative*

The Justice and the People Campaign seeks to enforce the rights of citizens and create legal precedent through its strategic litigation initiative. Working through implementing law-firm partner, Sejdiu & Qerkini, LLC, the Campaign provides free legal representation to clients in cases that raise important issues relating to the justice system.

### *Justice and the People in Northern Kosovo*

The Justice and the People Campaign supports the active engagement of citizens in northern Kosovo in advocating at the local level on issues relate to citizen safety and security through its implementing partner the Advocacy Center for Democratic Culture (ACDC). Activities include training and support to local activists in implementing local advocacy campaigns, as well as public events on citizen activism and rule of law in northern Kosovo.

## **I. Introduction to Citizen Activism and Advocacy**

Citizen input in decisions that affect their lives is one of the key aspects of a democratic society. Advocacy, or the process of collectively proposing concrete solutions to problems to relevant decision makers, is the primary method for making sure citizens' voices are heard by the institutions that represent them. Not only is advocacy a critical part of the democratic process, but it is also the best way to hold governments accountable for decisions and make sure that institutions function better. Active and engaged citizens help government officials know what are the problems and priorities in their communities, and leads to better policy making.

While all types of volunteerism and citizen engagement can improve society, advocacy involves requesting something concrete from institutions. Volunteer actions such as a group of citizens gathering to clean up a park or collecting donations for needy families do not represent advocacy in that these volunteers are directly resolving an issue rather than seeking a government action. In some cases volunteer actions can have great impact, but many times an advocacy initiative that seeks an institutional reform can have longer lasting impact by changing government behavior.

The best way for citizens to get results with advocacy is to aim for constructive engagement with institutions, including concrete recommendations for how they can improve. Citizen initiatives that only criticize officials without proposing alternative solutions do not usually lead to more representative institutions or better decisions. In Kosovo, the role of citizens in advocating for reforms is still an emerging practice, and citizen initiatives often face challenges in convincing institutions of the importance of taking their opinions into account. However, as Kosovo institutions continue to develop, citizens have an opportunity to expand this practice and create more collaborative and open institutions.

This manual is based on the experiences of the Advocacy Center for Democratic Culture (ACDC) as part of the Justice and the People Campaign in organizing local advocacy initiatives in four municipalities in Kosovo – Leposavic, Mitrovica, Zubin Potok, and Zvecan. It is meant as a tool for any citizen in Kosovo to use as a basis for organizing initiatives on local issues. The recommendations and steps outlined here produced successful results in six local advocacy campaigns in these municipalities. This manual focuses exclusively on local level campaigns and does not cover strategies for advocating to central institutions, although many of the steps would be similar.



*Activists in North Mitrovica distribute flyers and posters for a student safety initiative*

## **II. Local Level Institutions in Kosovo**

In order to organize a successful local advocacy campaign, the first step is to understand the role of municipal governments in Kosovo and how they function in practice. You don't need to be an expert on the legal background of municipal governments in order to organize citizens around an initiative, but some general knowledge on the roles and responsibilities of local institutions is helpful for determining where best to target your efforts. This section provides an overview of how local governments are organized in the Kosovo context. For more details, you can refer to the Law on Local Self-Government.<sup>1</sup>

The most important decision making authorities at the municipal level are the Municipal Assembly and the Mayor. Every Municipal Assembly has a different number of members based on the size of the population, ranging from 15 to 41, directly elected to four year terms. Some of the most important responsibilities of the Municipal Assembly are: the adoption, amendment or repeal of municipal regulations; approval of the budget and investment plans; adoption of the annual work plan and annual report; determining the level of local fees and charges; and the establishment of municipal symbols and naming of roads and other public places, among other responsibilities.

The Mayor is the highest executive body of the municipality elected through direct elections for a four year term. The most important responsibilities of the Mayor are to represent the municipality, to lead the municipal government and its administration, to oversee the financial administration of the Municipality, and to fulfill other duties not explicitly assigned to the Municipal Assembly. He or she is also responsible for carrying out the decisions of the Municipal Assembly and proposing the annual budget, development plans, and municipal regulations to the Municipal Assembly for approval. Due to this position, in many parts of Kosovo the Municipal Assembly may defer to the Mayor's office for guidance on a variety of issues.

Each municipality also has a number of departments covering specific issues, such as Urban Planning, Social Welfare and Health, Education Culture Youth and Sport, etc. The staff at these departments are civil servants who are not elected and provide continuity through the terms of various elected officials. In many cases, these departments may have the authority to resolve a particular local issue without the involvement of the Municipal Assembly or the Mayor, while in other situations they may need to consult with these officials before being able to respond to a particular request. Similar additional municipal offices include the Deputy Mayor for Communities, Security Committee, Committee for Communities, and the Office for Gender Equality. These may not be fully established in all municipalities in Kosovo.

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<sup>1</sup> Available at: <http://www.assembly-kosova.org/?cid=2%2C191%2C249>



*Traffic signs in Zvecan placed by the local Office of Urban Planning in response to a citizen advocacy campaign*

### *How can citizens get involved in local decision making?*

There are a variety of mechanisms available to citizens for engaging with officials in the work of the municipal administration. These include public meetings, the right to petition, citizens' initiatives, referenda, and the Consultative Commission. Many of these procedures have not been attempted very often at the local level in Kosovo, and so in some areas local officials might not be prepared to respond to certain actions. However, it is important to have an understanding of these options as they may be helpful tools as part of an overall advocacy campaign. Not every mechanism will be right for a given initiative, and citizen advocacy groups should consider the pros and cons of each approach before pursuing any of the options below. For example, some of these mechanisms require gathering signatures from a large number of fellow citizens, which may take away resources from other potential activities.

### *Public meetings*

Each municipality is obliged to hold a public meeting at least twice a year during which any person or organization may participate. The date and place of the meetings should be published at least two weeks in advance. At the meeting, municipal representatives should inform participants about the activities of the municipality and participants may ask questions and make proposals to the elected representatives of the municipality. As local institutions in Kosovo continue to develop, these meetings might not take place on a regular schedule in all municipalities, but they provide an opportunity for citizens to have direct contact with local officials.

In addition to the above mentioned public meetings, municipalities are obliged to inform local citizens of any important plans or programs of public interest, and to provide access to official municipal documents. Any citizen may inspect any document held by the municipality, unless the municipal authorities place a restriction in accordance with the Law on Access to Official Documents.

### *The right to petition*

Any local citizen or organization has the right to present a petition to the Municipal Assembly about any issue under the municipality's authority. The Municipal Assembly shall consider the petition in accordance with its Statute and Rules of Procedure.

*Citizens' Initiatives*

Local citizens may also propose regulations for adoption by the Municipal Assembly or by a vote of the citizens. The proponents shall submit a draft proposal for a regulation to the Chairperson of the Municipal Assembly. The draft regulation proposed shall be signed by 15% of registered voters for consideration by the Municipal Assembly. The Municipal Assembly is obliged to consider the proposed regulation and take action upon it within 60 days from the receipt.

*Referenda*

The citizens of a municipality may request that a regulation that the Municipal Assembly has adopted be submitted to a referendum. The request must be submitted to the Chairperson of the Municipal Assembly within 30 days from the date of adoption of the regulation and must be signed by 10% of registered voters. The Municipal Assembly shall consider and act upon the request within 30 days after receipt of a valid petition.

*Consultative Commissions*

Municipal Assemblies may also establish consultative committees on specific topics for the purpose of enabling citizen participation in the decision making process. Membership of the committees shall include citizens and representatives of non-governmental organizations. Consultative committees may submit proposals, conduct research and provide opinions on municipal assembly initiatives in accordance with the Municipal Statute.

### **III. How to organize citizens around an initiative**

Advocacy is a long process that requires time and patience. There are no set rules about the number of people required for a successful advocacy campaign, but in general the strongest campaigns bring together a group of citizens working towards the same goal.

When groups of people come together around an issue, the most important first step is clarifying what exactly the initiative is about. Not every problem is something that can be solved with a local advocacy campaign. Below are the most important criteria to keep in mind when deciding what problem to tackle:

#### *Resolvable at the local level*

Since we are focusing on local advocacy campaigns, the first criteria is that the problem can be resolved by the municipal authorities. Refer to the description above for an idea of what types of problems the municipal government is responsible for. Even if there is good will among local officials to help, they will not be able to respond to an initiative that is outside their area of authority. For example, some roads are maintained by the central institutions and others are the responsibility of local governments.

#### *Concrete and clear*

Local initiatives must be something specific and include a concrete recommendation for how to solve the problem. Groups that want to resolve general problems like drug use are unlikely to result in a response from local officials even if they agree that it is a problem for the community. In that example, citizens could advocate for something more concrete that addresses an aspect of the problem, such as presentations in schools on the dangers of drug use. It is best to avoid general, global problems such as unemployment.

#### *Economically and politically possible*

Even if a particular problem is concrete and could be fixed by the local government, it is also important to consider whether the municipality has the financial resources to implement the request. Many municipal governments will not have a large enough budget to build a new bridge or sport stadium, even if it would be beneficial to citizens. Similarly, every group of citizen activists should consider whether a potential initiative touches a highly sensitive political issue. More politically difficult problems can be among the most important to address through advocacy, but might require organizations or activists with established experiences and relationships to take on.

#### *Important to people in the municipality*

In every local community, there are always a number of potential problems to work on. Since every municipality has limited resources, successful campaigns focus on the problems that people generally agree need to be addressed. Different groups in the community may face different problems, such as people living in a certain neighborhood or people with disabilities, and there are likely many issues that a local advocacy campaign could help resolve for specific groups. The important thing to keep in mind for any group is how to prioritize problems and focus on the most pressing issues. For example, parents with young children might want to renovate a local playground and fix traffic problems around the school their children attend. A campaign around traffic safety might gain more support from the parents as a more urgent problem to be fixed.



*Citizens in Leposavic organized an initiative asking the local school to light the basketball court at night so it could be used in a positive way by the community*

The first step for any advocacy campaign is to get a group of citizens together to discuss local issues. Sometimes a smaller group that is more engaged is better than a larger group that includes people who are less interested – around 15 is typically the largest you would want to bring together. This can be an informal gathering of an existing group of friends, or a formal discussion hosted by a facilitator. Either way, it is important to have a clear plan for the agenda of what will be discussed before bringing people together. In the annex, you can find an example of an agenda for a meeting with citizens to discuss local problems.

If the group will be working on a local advocacy initiative for the first time, plan to provide a brief introduction at the beginning. It is often best to ask the group at the start of the discussion whether they are familiar with the concept and to describe in their own words what advocacy means to them. This way discussion leaders can be sure that everyone in the group is prepared to follow along. Even if the conversation is less formal, stay flexible and do not feel that you have to stick to the agenda if it's clear that the group is familiar with a topic or if they are struggling with the discussion and need more explanation.

In some cases, a group of citizens already has a particular issue in mind. In that situation, the discussion should focus on identifying an aspect of the issue that is suitable for a local advocacy campaign using the criteria listed above. If there is a group that generally wants to be more active in local decision-making, the first step is to identify like-minded people to brainstorm local problems and determine a concrete initiative. Before opening the discussion of local problems, spend some time to lay out the criteria listed above so that the conversation is focused. After describing the four criteria above, ask the group if they have others to add to the list so they are engaged in the discussion. Once this is clearly laid out, you can begin to brainstorm local problems together and come up with a list of issues that fit within the established criteria. When everyone has provided their input, ask the group how they would like to decide which problem to take on for an advocacy initiative. There are a number of options for how to make a final determination, including open voting, assigning points to each idea based on the criteria, anonymous



voting on paper, etc. The most important thing is for the group to be included in determining how the decision is made so that they feel invested in the final outcome. It's possible the group will come up with more than one good idea, but as a starting point it is best to focus on one initiative and have a first success before taking on a second or third problem.

#### **IV. Gathering the right information**

The next step after identifying a local issue is collecting more information. Preparing the group with all the relevant data strengthens your position when you meet with officials. This way, the group will appear more serious and capable, and will be harder for the institutions to ignore. Also, the first tactic any official will likely attempt in order to deny a request is to say that it's too expensive, it's not the right time, there are other priorities, and so on. Coming prepared with data on the costs, the timing of budget decisions or other municipal meetings, or the level of interest among citizens helps convince officials of the importance of the issue and makes them less able to deny your request. It's better to take more time to conduct the proper research and come prepared rather than to move forward with outreach to officials sooner.

For any given issue, there are a number of questions to clarify before launching an initiative:

*What institution is responsible for this issue?*

It is critical to make sure the group is targeting the person or office who has the power to resolve the problem. Institutions may claim they are not able to solve the problem as a way to avoid responsibility, so an understanding of the authority of local institutions ensures that citizens can demand accountability from the right office. Keep in mind that often times multiple institutions are involved in a given issue, and occasionally in Kosovo there may be overlapping institutional authority as municipal governments continue to evolve. When conducting outreach, it's best to start at the local level before going to higher-up offices at the regional level.

#### **RAILROAD CROSSING IN ZVECAN**

*Citizens in Zvecan noticed that the gates at two railroad crossings in the municipality had not been functioning, creating dangerous driving conditions. After deciding to organize a local initiative to repair the gates, activists met with representatives from the local office of the railroad to discuss the issue and figure out why gates had not been repaired. At this meeting, officials explained that repairing the gates would be a large expense that would be far outside the means of most municipal governments. After learning this information, the citizens decided to raise awareness about the issue and urge drivers to be more careful around the railroad crossings. Activists passed out flyers in the community and created a public awareness video about safe driving.*

*How much will the proposed solution cost?*

For most initiatives, the biggest barrier is cost. Particularly in a context like Kosovo, municipal governments are often operating with limited budgets. If your group does some basic research into the general anticipated costs of the proposed initiative, you can work more collaboratively with officials to find where the resources might come from. Try as much as possible to be creative with proposed recommendations and have back-up options that are cheaper. In situations where a full resolution of the problem would be too expensive, citizens can advocate for initial steps or at least greater awareness in the community.



*Citizens in Zvecan place posters by the railroad crossing to raise awareness of the broken gates*

### *What other organizations/individuals are already working on fixing this?*

There might be NGOs or another group of activists currently working on the same issue, or a recent attempt to raise the problem with officials. Mapping similar ongoing efforts helps make sure that officials do not get conflicting messages from citizens on the same issue. It can also be useful for learning what challenges others have faced and for identifying potential allies who can join together for a more effective initiative.

### *When are decisions made about this issue? Is there a regular schedule?*

In order to plan a timeline for your initiative, it's helpful to be aware of the schedule of the municipal government. If the responsible institution will need to request something extra for the budget, often that can only be done at certain times. There may also be an upcoming vote in the local assembly or other decision about the issue happening soon. Every initiative should be aware of the timing of these decisions to be sure no opportunities are missed and to plan activities to have maximum impact. In many municipalities in Kosovo, there might not always be a regular schedule for local assembly meetings, so a good strategy is to build a relationship with local councilmembers or other relevant officials who can notify representatives from the initiative when a meeting is called.

### *Are there relevant statistics or personal testimonies that highlight the importance of the issue?*

Sometimes officials will need to be convinced that your issue is a priority. Data such as crime statistics, informal community surveys, or even compelling personal stories from affected individuals can have a strong impact on officials.

### *What does the law say about this issue? Is the initiative requesting proper enforcement of an existing law, or is a change to the law needed?*

An understanding of the laws that are relevant to your initiative is critical for determining what exactly the group should propose as a solution. Conducting this research might uncover that the local institutions are already obligated to provide a certain service. The group may also discover that their initiative might require an amendment to a local ordinance in order for the government to be able to carry out the request. This can often be difficult to determine in Kosovo, but it still may have an impact on the overall advocacy strategy.

Not all these questions are relevant for every issue, and there might be additional questions to clarify before finalizing a plan for your initiative. Keep an open discussion within the group about what else might be important to research. Once the group has agreed to a list of questions, the next step is to figure out the best sources of information. Keep in mind that often many questions can be answered by the same

person or in the same meeting. After identifying the appropriate sources, assign members of the group to the meetings or research that you have identified as important. There should be a clear deadline for completing this information gathering. Two weeks is often best, and more than three weeks is usually too long. If some members of the group are having trouble scheduling the planned meetings, reconvene the group to keep the momentum going by exchanging the information that others have been able to find in the meantime.

The final step in the information gathering stage is to brainstorm all interested stakeholders – who is likely to be for or against, and why? Creative thinking about who might be opposed to your initiative will help prepare the group to create talking points and strategies that take these potential concerns into account and convince local decision-makers that the proposed solution is the best option. For example, an initiative that aims to improve street lighting might face opposition from people living in a certain building who do not want a lamp installed outside their windows. This initiative will have to be prepared with a case for why the safety of all citizens walking in that area should be taken into account over the concerns of that building's residents.

As part of this brainstorming exercise, identify the people or institutions who are most likely to be interested in resolving this problem and who are most affected. For example, a successful initiative organized by ACDC in Zvecan regarding traffic safety around the elementary school identified the parents' association as the most interested local group. Once these groups are identified, conduct outreach as early as possible to invite them to be a part of the initiative. As time goes on, it is likely that the makeup of the group will change as original members become less engaged and new people join the group who are particularly affected by the issue.

## **V. Creating an action plan**

Finding answers to the questions outlined above will help your group figure out what actions to take in order to promote your initiative. The best way to organize these ideas and activities is to create an advocacy action plan. Action plans are documents that list envisioned activities, who is responsible, and when they should take place. Creating an action plan together helps make sure everyone in the group agrees about the way forward, and is useful for being sure you are using time and resources in the most effective way.

The first step in creating an action plan is to reconvene the group and review the information everyone has gathered. This should take place approximately one or two weeks after determining the research plan to be sure you keep the momentum going. Now that your group knows who is responsible for the issue, when important decisions are made, and other relevant information, you can begin to brainstorm potential activities that will move your initiative forward with officials and institutions. More details on the types of activities that can work for local campaigns can be found in the next section.

Action plans will help to organize all these ideas. They should always include clear timelines and be updated on a regular basis to take into account changes in the situation on the ground and reactions from officials to previous activities. Action plans are broken down into what, why, who, how, and when:

### *WHAT?*

Describes the activity or event

### *WHY?*

Explains who is the target of the activity and how it helps achieve your goal

### *WHO?*

Clearly lists which group member is responsible for organizing the activity

### *HOW?*

Lays out what resources are required to carry this out (flyers, tshirts, etc), including the costs

### *WHEN?*

Determines what is the best time to carry out this event for maximum impact

For each activity or event, include a plan for inviting the media – which events are open to the public, and which are closed meetings with officials. There are times when media pressure can be helpful for moving an initiative forward, but at some stages involving the media can be problematic for the relationship building with officials.



*A citizen initiative in North Mitrovica holds a press conference for journalists*

After each activity, revisit the action plan and determine if any changes are necessary based on the reactions from the public and officials. It can also be useful to schedule a regular time to edit the action plan (once a month, or every other month) if the initiative is focused on ongoing outreach rather than larger events. In order to keep the group coordinated, set up a communication plan to stay in touch. Be sure that there is a clear plan for who is responsible to update the group on specific issues, and not just a vague promise for everyone to stay in touch. Facebook or Viber groups can be the most effective, but it's important to ask the group what works best for them.

## **VI. Strategies for influencing officials**

There are a number of ways to make sure that local initiatives are successfully heard by local institutions. Keep in mind that different activities might work better for certain initiatives or in certain areas. Some of the instruments for gaining their interest for solving your local problem are:

### *Media outreach*

For all activities, it's important to have a plan for how to spread the word about your initiative. Social media is often the most effective at the local level, particularly Facebook as the most popular social network in Kosovo. Creating an official Facebook page with the name of the initiative would be the best way to promote your activities and also to invite other interested citizens to take a part and become members of your group.<sup>2</sup> Alongside social media, think about what local news websites or TV stations might be interested in your issue. Every time your group prepares for a certain activity, consider sending an official email to all media you think would be interested to cover it. At certain points in implementing your initiative, a press conference with journalists regarding the issue and the actions taken so far can be a good way to promote the work of your group.

Media can be your ally when implementing the activities within your initiative, particularly if there are media outlets which are already addressing the same issue. In addition to sending invitations to your events, use every opportunity for guest appearances on radio/TV shows in order to promote your initiative and explain to a wider range of citizens why your initiative is important and how they can provide support. This type of media outreach also demonstrates to local decision makers that your group is serious about your initiative. Other types of public awareness raising like billboards, posters, and flyers can also be a good way to promote certain activities or get more people involved in your initiative generally.



*Logo of the citizen initiative "Traffic Safety for Kids" in Zvečan*

### *Public events*

Getting groups of supporters together in public can be a powerful demonstration of the importance of the issue and need for change. Flash mobs, marches, or even parties can put additional pressure on the institutions to respond. For example, initiatives advocating for better street lighting in a certain area could organize volunteers with flashlights to walk through the area you want to improve. Public volunteer activities such as planting flowers or cleaning a park can also be part of an overall strategy of demonstrating the importance of an issue to local officials. For these types of events, invite media representatives and make an event at the official Facebook page of the initiative to include as many citizens as possible.

<sup>2</sup> For example, see the official page of "Traffic Safety for Kids – Zvečan" (Bezbednost dece u saobraćaju – Zvečan) at: <https://www.facebook.com/Bezbednost-dece-u-saobraćaju-Zvečan-863451663751435/>

*Informal petitions or letters of support*

Another strategy for demonstrating the importance of the issue is gathering signatures from local citizens in support of the issue. This does not always need to be part of a formal petition using the mechanism described in the section above. Sometimes describing this activity as a letter of support can be a good way to approach officials without giving the impression of challenging or threatening institutions.

**STUDENT SURVEY IN MITROVICA**

*Students in North Mitrovica identified a local problem of increasing crime against students, especially in parts of the city with poor lighting or police presence. In order to get more information on which exact areas were the most critical, activists organized a community survey targeting students that asked them their opinion on general safety in the city as well as where they felt most unsafe. Volunteers distributed surveys at the university and also online through their initiative Facebook page. In addition to the useful feedback on which streets to prioritize, the survey helped the initiative demonstrate to local officials the seriousness of the issue and the broad support among students for taking action to address the problem.*

*Meetings with officials*

Often the most critical activities are meetings with the relevant local officials. Based on the information your group has gathered about which institutions are responsible, make a plan for scheduling official meetings with local offices or elected officials. Always take time to prepare before the meeting, to be sure you know about the person who will be at the meeting, their position, areas of authority, and political background. It is usually best to start with the most directly responsible institution before reaching out to someone higher up like the Mayor.

*Community surveys and public opinion research*

In some cases, your group might want to get a better sense of what people in the community think about your issue in order to help propose a solution that has the broadest support. Community surveys and informal public opinion research can be a good strategy for gathering this information. The results can also be used to demonstrate to officials how much support exists for your initiative. Even informal statistics can be persuasive when convincing local officials of the need to resolve the issue.



*Student activists in North Mitrovica distribute an informal community survey at the university on student safety*



## **VII. Following up on promises from officials**

Even if officials have promised that they will do what your group is asking, it is always important to follow up and make sure that things actually get done. As a start, it helps to get clear information from officials regarding when they think they will be able to fulfill the request coming from your initiative based on the resources available to local institutions. That way you can create a plan to follow up at a reasonable time and will avoid damaging relationships with officials by appearing to demand an impossible timeline for implementation. The best way to follow up is to have a group member go in person to monitor implementation. For example, if your initiative aims to place a new traffic sign, go to the area where you requested the sign and verify whether it has been placed. If your initiative requests a new service or official procedure such as presentations by police officers to students, send a group member to observe whether the service is carried out. Keep in mind that the initiative may not be finished when institutions respond as there might be ways to continue to improve the situation.

If the institutions have not fulfilled their promises on the agreed upon timeline, first reach out to officials to ask for an explanation before going to the media or organizing other public events. There may be acceptable reasons why institutions have not yet been able to complete all steps, and criticizing officials publicly before providing them a chance to explain can greatly damage relationships. Similarly, if the implementation happens on the promised timeline, it's a good idea to show your appreciation for the officials with an official thank you letter or press release. That way you have created a positive working relationship and they will be more likely to collaborate in the future.

In many cases, officials will say “this can't be done now, but when we discuss our next budget we will include this proposal”. If the institutions say they will plan to include the initiative later in the next budget, get clear information about when the budget is created and/or when the vote will take place. Follow up with officials a few weeks in advance of that budget vote to remind them of their promises.



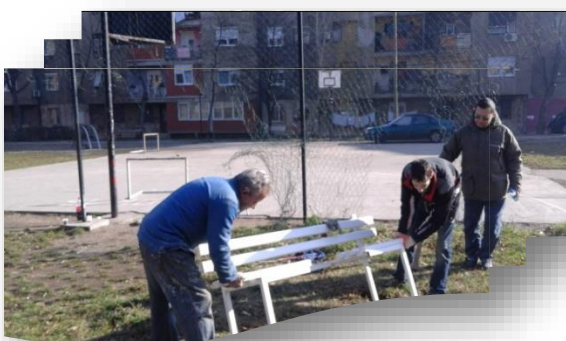
*A citizen initiative in Zubin Potok films a video on traffic safety to remind officials of their promise to place speed bumps on the main street*

## **VIII. Conclusion and tips for successful advocacy strategies**

While completing the steps outlined above, there are some general things to keep in mind that will help initiatives be successful. The most important is that the best way to approach officials is with the goal of creating a positive relationship – many institutions will react negatively to a group that criticizes them in public without trying to work together first. Demonstrate that you are serious, committed, and informed about their responsibilities towards citizens. Also, think of initiatives as part of longer term relationships with officials, and try as much as possible to create positive connections that can be helpful for future issues that citizens might want to raise.

Sometimes institutions may ask for official requests or paperwork – clarify with them what format is required, whether this is an official policy or just a preference from their office. As the situation develops in Kosovo, it might be the case that officials themselves are not always sure what the correct procedure is. Take a collaborative approach, but also make sure you understand the procedure as best as possible. Reading officials laws, searching the internet, and finding out if someone else had a similar issue can all help in this area. Be ready to prepare the requested paperwork as soon as possible to demonstrate your seriousness and willingness to cooperate. After submitting the requested paper work, wait for the formal answer, but not for too long. If there is no official answer, visit the office again, write them an email or call if necessary, but do not let the institutions think that citizens have given up since you did not get an initial answer on your request.

Given the role of donors and NGO projects in Kosovo, officials may assume that you have a budget to take care of the initiative and ask you to contribute financially. Be up front with officials about the resources your group has from the start and how they can be used. Do not promise too much, but be ready to make a compromise with the decision makers. Never let them perceive you as unprepared, unprofessional or not dedicated enough. Make them realize you are aware of your rights and prepared to keep the momentum on your initiative, even if you might not have a quick success at the beginning.



*Activists in North Mitrovica rehabilitate a local park to bring attention to the area and pressure officials to fix nearby street lights*

Even though the process of advocacy can be slow and sometimes frustrating, the benefits of creating more responsive institutions and better solutions to local problems make it worth the effort. Active citizenship through advocacy is an ongoing process that is fundamental to a functioning democratic society. The approaches and recommendations outlined in this manual led to successful advocacy campaigns in four municipalities in Kosovo, demonstrating the power of citizens organized around a common cause. Included below are examples of agendas for public meetings to discuss advocacy and select a local issue, as well as a template for an advocacy action plan. These materials can be a starting point for getting citizens together to demand a change.

**IX. ANNEXES**



**Sample Agenda – First training, introduction to advocacy**

**[Date]**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Topic</b>
<b>11.00- 11.10</b>	<b>Introductions, overview of project</b>
<b>11.10- 11:35</b>	<b>What is advocacy and what are your rights as citizens</b>
<b>11:35-11:45</b>	<b>Example of a successful local advocacy campaign</b>
<b>11:45- 12:00</b>	<b>Break</b>
<b>12.00- 12:10</b>	<b>Presentation of stakeholder analysis chart</b>
<b>12:10- 12:30</b>	<b>Work in small groups on stakeholder analysis</b>
<b>12:30- 12:50</b>	<b>Presentation</b>
<b>12:50- 13:00</b>	<b>Discussion of next steps and assignment for next training</b>
<b>13:00</b>	<b>Lunch</b>



**Sample Agenda – Second training, issue identification**

**[Date]**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Topic</b>
<b>11.00- 11.05</b>	<b>Introduction, recap from previous training</b>
<b>11.05- 11.35</b>	<b>Local institutions in Kosovo</b>
<b>11:35- 11:40</b>	<b>Break</b>
<b>11.40- 11:55</b>	<b>Criteria for issue selection</b>
<b>11:55- 12:20</b>	<b>Discussion of local problems</b>
<b>12:20- 12:25</b>	<b>Voting</b>
<b>12:25- 12:45</b>	<b>Stakeholder analysis</b>
<b>12:45- 13:00</b>	<b>Research plan</b>
<b>13:00</b>	<b>Lunch</b>



## **Sample Agenda – Combined advocacy training and issue identification**

**[Date]**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Topic</b>
<b>11.00- 11.10</b>	<b>Introductions, overview of project</b>
<b>11.10- 11:20</b>	<b>Overview of advocacy</b>
<b>11:20-11:30</b>	<b>Example of a successful local advocacy campaign</b>
<b>11:30- 11:45</b>	<b>Criteria for issue selection</b>
<b>11:45- 12:00</b>	<b>Discussion of local problems</b>
<b>12:00- 12:10</b>	<b>Voting</b>
<b>12:10- 12:35</b>	<b>Stakeholder analysis</b>
<b>12:35- 13:00</b>	<b>Research plan</b>
<b>13:00</b>	<b>Lunch</b>



## Calendar of activities

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