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THE SUSTAINABILITY OF CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES IN KOSOVO

**THE SUSTAINABILITY OF CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES IN THE REPUBLIC
OF KOSOVO**

Shpetim Bylykbashi

A Capstone Paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for a Master of Arts in
Sustainable Development at SIT Graduate Institute, DC Center in Washington, DC, USA

July 31, 2019

Academic advisor:

Amy Jersild

THE SUSTAINABILITY OF CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES IN KOSOVO

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Abbreviations and Acronym List

| | |
|--------|--|
| CSW | Center for Social Work |
| DFID | British Department for International Development |
| DSW | Department of Social Welfare |
| IMF | International Monetary Fund |
| MDHSW | Municipal Department of Health and Social Welfare |
| MLSW | Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare |
| NATO | North Atlantic Treaty Organization |
| UNICEF | United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development |
| WB | World Bank |

Abstract

Today, in Kosovo, are services provided for the children most in need sustainable? Do these services have stable and long-term funding? Did the decentralization of the Kosovo government strengthen or weaken the existing child protective environment? In an attempt to answer these questions, a review of available literature was completed, as well as direct interviews conducted with relevant stakeholders engaged in Kosovo's child protection services at both the governmental and civil society levels. The main finding of my research is that vulnerable children in Kosovo, such as children without parental care, children with special needs, and child victims of domestic violence and trafficking, remain without adequate protective services to ensure their safety and resources and supports to put them on a positive trajectory toward future stability and optimal well-being. In 1999, as war with neighboring Serbia ended, the international community came to Kosovo's aid. New ideas were introduced, and sometimes imposed, including the process of decentralization of governmental services, which increased in intensity when Kosovo declared its independence in 2008. Unfortunately, decentralization was implemented without adequate preparation of the local governments, and in what seemed to be a chaotic manner. Local governments were not prepared to receive the additional responsibilities that came with the decentralization process and did not prioritize child protection services due to a lack of qualified staff and a lack of finances. This left local and international civil society organizations to do what they could to fill the service gaps of vital child protection services. However, funding for many of these organizations is grant-based and is short to medium-term in length. At the same time, the decentralization process has actually weakened the system of child protection services that was in place. Currently there is no sustainable funding for child protection service providers at either the governmental level or

through civil society organizations. If there is to be a future for these vulnerable children, Kosovo's government and its society must urgently reconsider its priorities and commit resources for stable, continuous, comprehensive, and long-term support for these children most in need.

Introduction

According to Berwick (2011), Hubert Humphrey, United States Vice President from 1965 to 1969, stated:

The moral test of government is how it treats those who are in the dawn of life, the children; those who are in the twilight of life, the aged; and those in the shadows of life, the sick, the needy and the handicapped. (p. 4)

Kosovo has been struggling to protect the most vulnerable members of its society, particularly children, since the fall of the Iron Curtain in what is now the former Yugoslavia. Kosovo's society experienced a severe shock, transitioning within ten years from a repressive communist society to an apartheid-like regime during the 1990s under the Serbian dictator Milosevic, to war in 1998-99, and since then into a representative democracy with a market economy. Having in mind the deep complexity of the Kosovo context, this Independent Practitioner Inquiry Capstone (IPIC) research project aims to take a snapshot of the societal circumstances in the newborn Republic of Kosovo, using the analysis of the sustainability of child protection services as an indicator.

Twenty years after peace was declared in Kosovo, how have the most vulnerable of society fared with the transition, the reforms and a new style of government? Has Kosovo been able to protect children and build a sustainable system of child protection services for the populations of children in need – those who are abandoned by their parents, have special needs,

are victims of domestic violence and child trafficking, and other groups of children in most need? Are these child protection services sustainable? Do they have long-term funding and are there sufficient human resources to support the adequate provision of these services? These are the primary questions that I attempted to answer in this IPIC, with a view specifically on the impact of the government's decision to engage in a decentralization process – a process imposed by the global community after the war and especially after Kosovo's declaration of independence in 2008 - and one that has had a profound bearing on child protection services in Kosovo.

To conduct a more comprehensive assessment of the child protection situation in Kosovo, my research and data collection methodology for this capstone was mixed method, using both the quantitative and qualitative methods (Bamberger, 2011). I conducted a literature review as well as semi-structured interviews with representatives of the central and local government and representatives of civil society organizations engaged in the child protection system in Kosovo.

This study identifies and describes the causes of the current instability in the provision of vital child protection services in Kosovo, as well as the role of civil society in the process. This paper also assesses the transformation of Kosovar society after the introduction of a new democratic system, including a market economy with an imposed rapid process of privatization, and the process of governmental decentralization as a part of this new approach. In particular, I assessed the impact of these developments on services provided to marginalized and vulnerable populations, specifically children, and the sustainability of these services.

It is hoped that this study will provide an external analysis of the current child protection services in Kosovo with insights into the sustainability of the current system and whether improvements are needed. The study results could be useful for child protection policy makers

and service providers in Kosovo, including those from both the governmental and non-governmental sectors.

Literature Review

Child Protection

Definitions.

According to the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) (2015), the term 'child protection':

refers to prevention and response to violence, exploitation and abuse of children in all contexts. This includes reaching children who are especially vulnerable to these threats, such as those living without family care, on the streets or in situations of conflict or natural disasters.

The United Nations (2016) defines a child protection system as:

Certain formal and informal structures, functions and capacities that have been assembled to prevent and respond to violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of children. A child protection system is generally agreed to be comprised of the following components: human resources, finance, laws and policies, governance, monitoring and data collection as well as protection and response services and care management. It also includes different actors – children, families, communities, those working at subnational or national level and those working internationally. Most important are the relationships and interactions between and among these components and these actors within the system. It is the outcomes of these interactions that comprise the system.

Child Protection in the Region

When it comes to caring for society's most vulnerable children, the Kosovar transition from the communist system ultimately to a democratic system with a free market economy has similarities to other countries in Central and Eastern Europe, which have also faced a transitional process over the last decades. According to Burke, the transition from a communist system to that of a free market economy altered the nature of protective childcare provision in much of Central and Eastern Europe (1995). The communist system did have many gaps in their services to vulnerable children, such as being focused solely on the provision of services rather than on the quality of the services, however, the experience of the Central and Eastern European countries showed little improvement in the midterm period after the change. "The economic and political, moral and spiritual ramifications of the rapid transition have led to further social unravelling. And children have borne the brunt of its effects (Burke, 1995)."

The UNICEF Research Center published a report in 2009 analyzing the 20-year transition of Central and Eastern European, as well as the Commonwealth of Independent States, from communist regimes to market economies focused on child well-being. The report concludes that children were very vulnerable in the process. Despite evidence of progress with the overall general living standard, the report highlights persistent disparities in the distribution of benefits and in particular, the vulnerability of children to the process of change. This has been partly due to the difficulties of policy to reach population groups most at risk and to provide adequate support to reduce inequalities and exclusion. The report urged the governments to prioritize child well-being, guided by human rights principles.

Child Protection – The Kosovo Context

Kosovo's social services system has been in transition during the last three decades. According to Cocozelli (2009), in the former communist Yugoslavia, the state was responsible for providing social services, including child protection services. At the core of the social welfare system were the Centers for Social Work (CSWs) located in each of the municipalities, providing direct social services as well as serving as case management and coordination bodies for other social service institutions in the system. Kosovar Albanians benefitted from the national Yugoslav system of social protection as well and could receive limited financial assistance when facing difficult situations. Children also were cared for when needed through institutionalized care.

During the period from 1989 to 1999 when Milosevic was in power and Kosovo was still part of Yugoslavia, the social services sector went through segregation and access to quality social services was very limited for the majority of the population (Cocozelli, 2009). Kosovar Albanians were cut off from national assistance and left to fend for themselves, including children in need. In this apartheid-like environment, with the help of an initiative by Kosovar citizens, as well as the diaspora living throughout Europe and the U.S., a parallel system was organized in the 1990s to distribute financial social assistance, as well as the provision of basic health care services, by the newly created non-profit organization, the "Mother Teresa Association." According to Bekaj (2008), the "Mother Teresa Association became the backbone of the Kosovar Albanian parallel healthcare and welfare system," providing for example, food and clothing to needy families, and organizing doctors to treat those who were ill.

War with Serbia broke out in 1998 and after the end of the war in 1999, the system of social protection services, including those for children, struggled to meet the needs of vulnerable

populations. Kosovo was considered one of the poorest countries in Europe and after the devastating war, many families were poverty-stricken and without any means of support or livelihood. The former Yugoslav system of social welfare was initially resurrected, re-establishing the CSWs in each of the municipalities with the responsibility to coordinate social welfare efforts as well as to provide social services, including child protection services (Cocozzelli, 2009). However, this system was immediately influenced by the many international non-governmental organizations which flooded the country after the war to offer assistance with the post-conflict reconstruction. Food, clothing, and medicine were all distributed to families, schools were opened, children abandoned by parents were provided for through hospital programs, and shelters were established for victims of domestic violence and trafficking. Soon after, international donor agencies became more involved in the reconstruction efforts and agencies such as the World Bank and the British Department for International Development (DFID) strongly supported smaller government and decentralization at all costs (Cocozzelli, 2009). These efforts were focused on the decentralization of services from the central government to the municipal governments.

Child Protection in Kosovo Today

The Kosovo government has made some headway since reconstruction started with its legal framework for child protection. The Kosovar Anti-Discrimination Law (Republic of Kosovo, 2004) and the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo (Republic of Kosovo, 2015) are the two primary documents guaranteeing child rights and a child protective environment. The Kosovo government has signed many international protocols and treaties protecting the rights of a child. Additionally, Article 19 of the Kosovar Constitution gives precedent to ratified international agreements and legally binding norms of international law over the law of the

Republic of Kosovo, and Article 22 refers to the direct applicability of international agreements and instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and its Protocols, as a way to offer child protection measures in Kosovo.

Kosovo also has come a long way over the past 20 years since the end of the war in 1999 with the provision of social services. But many challenges continue with the protection of Kosovo's children. Kosovo in general continues to struggle with building its infrastructure and economy, which impacts all of Kosovar society. According to SOS Children's Villages International (2019), which operates a children's village in Prishtina for abandoned children called SOS Kinderdorf:

Kosovars have a low standard of living, and around 46 per cent live on less than €1,42 (\$1.58) a day, with 17 per cent unable to meet basic nutritional needs. Households with elderly people, disabled members, those that are female-headed or with children are disproportionately represented among the poverty-stricken (2019).

Kosovo also is a young society. According to SOS Kinderdorf, approximately 27 percent of the population is under the age of 14 and over half is under the age of 25. SOS Kinderdorf further explains:

Poverty particularly affects children: five percent of children are malnourished. Children have been forced to work in order to contribute to the family's income. The number of young children in pre-school education is alarmingly low. The situation improves as the children get older. Furthermore, the level of education varies according to ethnicity,

gender and place of origin. In addition, only ten percent of children with special needs have access to special schools.

The Kosovo government is still in the process of being more transparent with sharing information and often official data is non-existent or minimal. In an effort to hold the government more accountable, the Coalition of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) for Child Protection (Koalicioni I OJQ-ve per Mbrojtjen e Femijeve – KOMF) was formed in 2011. This is a coalition of 27 local and international NGOs who are invested in the protection of children in Kosovo. In a publication from 2014, KOMF reported on abandoned children in Kosovo stating that there were 83 abandoned children in the system during the year 2013. Explaining the stakeholders involved in providing services for abandoned children KOMF explains:

The hospital, the Center for Social Work - CSW, residential center, community-based care, foster care families, biological family, Panel, Police, Court and the adoptive family are the “hands” or the “system” through which an abandoned child in the territory of Kosovo may go through.

Some of the challenges identified in the report are:

- The lengthy stay of abandoned children in SOS Children’s Village where they are supposed to stay for a maximum of six months.
- Lack of support and coordination with Centers for Social Work.
- Lack of MLSW inspection, i.e. there is no inspection process of the services provided for abandoned children.
- Foster care is not provided in all municipalities of Kosovo.
- Payment for children in foster care is insufficient to cover childcare expenses.

- Foster care families are not prepared adequately to care for the children.
- Foster care families do not have any social or health benefits.
- Centers for Social Work are not fulfilling their role of coordination.

In 2019, the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare (MLSW) made some information available for the year 2018 regarding services that they supported, including: 1) Foster Care - 537 children were supported financially by the MLSW while in foster care within their extended families as well as 46 children who are placed outside their extended families; 2) Shelters For Domestic Violence– 194 children were supported by non-governmental organizations by being placed at six shelters for the protection of victims of domestic violence; MLSW contributed to funding the shelters. 3) Shelter for Victims of Trafficking - 14 child victims of trafficking were sheltered and MLSW provided funding for the shelters; and 4) Children with Special Needs - financial support was provided for 2,265 children with special needs.

However, there continues to be concern that the numbers of children in need in Kosovo are under-reported and as noted above, there is a lack of official data. For example, in 2017, UNICEF reported that “domestic violence against children and women is widespread,” as compared to the numbers cited above in shelters.

Decentralization

Not only in Kosovo, but all over the developing world, societies have seen an increasing delegation of economic and political power to local governments in the past several decades. According to Bardhan and Mookherjee (2006), decentralization is considered a vital element of participatory democracy and, with privatization and deregulation, it represents a substantial reduction in the authority of national governments over economic policy. As per Schneider (2003), all forms of decentralization, regardless of the recipient, involve shifting power and

resources away from the central government. Bardhan (2002) believes that it is acceptable to argue that local service delivery and the control of government structures, “should be assigned to people who have the requisite information and incentives and at the same time will bear responsibility for the (political and economic) consequences of their decisions.” However, he also argues that it is:

important to keep in mind that structures of local accountability are not in place in many developing countries, and local governments are often at the mercy of local power elites who may frustrate the goal of achieving public delivery to the general populace of social services, infrastructural facilities and conditions conducive to local business development. (p. 202)

He further states that for decentralization to be effective, serious efforts need to happen to ensure inclusion of the disadvantaged or disenfranchised in the political process. Decentralization is “about making governance at the local level more responsive to the felt needs of the large majority of the population.” He also states that it is the role of the central government to supply technical and professional services toward building local capacity, to act as watchdog for service quality standards, evaluation and auditing; investing in larger infrastructure; and providing some coordination in the face of externalities across localities (Bardhan, 2002, p 202-203).

Decentralization in Kosovo

Immediately after the war in 1999, under pressure from the international community, the Kosovar government started to decentralize governmental services to the municipalities (Cocozzelli, 2009). The process of decentralization was often imposed in post-conflict environments by global organizations such as the WB and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), with the justification of a country’s lack of resources and “failed state” labeling by those

institutions (Bevensee, 2015). This also happened in Kosovo. Furthermore, as part of the political process leading to the Kosovar Declaration of Independence on February 17, 2008, which has been recognized by more than 114 states including the governments of the U.S., Canada, Germany, U.K., France, Italy and Japan, the decentralization of services by the central government to the regional and municipal governments had to be accepted with the objective to integrate the Serbian minority in the Kosovar state (Beha, 2011).

This decentralization process brought with it the allocation of funds from the central government to the municipalities, including fiscal decentralization to fund social services and child protection services. However, even to date, the finance scheme defined at the central level is “with no specific budget line to fund social services at the local level (Dervishaj & Kelmendi, 2017).” This means that both municipalities and the central MLSW are unclear about how social services should be financed, and whose responsibility they are to provide” (UNICEF, 2017). The outcome of the decentralization of social services that started in 2009 is that financing of children’s services is inadequate (Dervishaj & Kelmendi, 2017; UNICEF, 2017). And due to failed social welfare system reforms, including the process of decentralization, there are serious gaps in the protective environment for children in Kosovo (UNICEF, 2017).

Civil Society

Civil society organizations in Kosovo currently play an important role in creating a child protective environment and the role has progressively increased since the end of the war in 1999. International and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) continuously are making efforts to fill in the void that has been created in social services provision, including services for children in need, due to the reduction in administration at the central and local government levels. These NGOs not only have had to provide direct services, but have had to also carry out a

range of monitoring activities on children's rights in Kosovo (UNICEF, 2017). Regarding child trafficking, the government contracts civil society organizations to provide rehabilitation and recovery services for victims (UNICEF, 2017). Civil society organizations are part of the Committee for the Prevention and Elimination of Child Labor chaired by the MLSW (UNICEF, 2017). Civil society organizations are heavily involved in the provision of foster care services in Kosovo. Much of the financing for foster care in Kosovo has been externally funded and comes through the international non-governmental sector and particularly by the Italian agency, Amici de Bambini (with support from the Government of Italy) (UNICEF, 2017). According to one of the interviewed stakeholders, just recently, responsibilities for foster care have been transferred to a local civil society organization, without stable funding. The Directorate of Health and Social Welfare at the municipal level signs agreements with civil society organizations to provide services to families in need in an attempt to prevent family breakdown by funding a limited number of family strengthening programs (UNICEF, 2017).

Since the government does not systematically finance civil society organizations and the services that they provide, particularly organizations that provide child protection services, they are heavily dependent on foreign donors. The result is that many programs, e.g. shelters for children victims of trafficking and domestic violence, supports for abandoned children, including foster care, day centers for children with special needs, etc., operate from one donor finance cycle to another, in uncertainty and without long-term funding security.

Lack of Literature on Sustainability of Child Protection Services in Kosovo

From the literature review, child protection services in Kosovo appear to be still in flux and both the central and local governments are still trying to grapple with how to protect vulnerable populations. This does not give any reassurance that the system in place is reflective

of a sustainable model. At the same time, there is still limited written documentation available specifically on child protection services and social protection services overall, particularly on the current situation. This is an area that needs to be further explored and documented in order to assist policy makers, as well as those providing direct services. It is hoped that this paper can contribute to the what should be an ongoing discussion on child protection and its sustainability.

Methods

The overall goal of this capstone project was to gain an in-depth and subjective understanding of the current child protective environment in Kosovo based on a literature review, followed by the use of semi-structured interviews, and to understand the particular context that has shaped the current system that is meant to protect the most vulnerable children. To this aim, my research took a positivist and a constructivist/interpretive epistemological approach. From the positivist viewpoint, I looked for available quantitative data in an effort to illustrate the situation of the child protection system in Kosovo. Having in mind that available quantitative data is scarce, as per my experience, I combined the positivist approach with an interpretivist epistemological approach using semi-structured interviews, as a qualitative method to collect data. I then applied mainstream and alternative development theories for analyses of the developments in Kosovo and used inductive reasoning to draw my results and discussion including recommendations.

I used a mixed methods research design for this capstone project. My methods were: 1) Literature/document review and 2) Semi-structured interviews. Triangulation is one of the benefits using a mixed-methods approach because it collects “data at different points in time and from different sources to compare information from different sources to check whether the information is consistent” (Bamberger, 2011, pg 132).

In regard to the process, I conducted an initial literature review and during the second half of May and in June, 2019 when I was in Kosovo, I conducted a further literature review as well as semi-structured interviews simultaneously. Both methods informed each other and based on the findings the methods were adjusted.

Literature Review

This study was conducted using a thorough review of available literature focused on Kosovar child protection services and the social protection environment historically and currently, as well as on theoretical aspects of the decentralization process in Kosovo and sustainable development. The literature review provided foundational information and an understanding of this topic to answer critical questions of my capstone project.

During the literature review, I identified and reviewed peer reviewed publications on the Kosovar child protection environment, including policies and services. I located public documents published by the WB, MLSW, UNICEF, and other governmental and non-governmental organizations in Kosovo.

I searched for relevant information in Google Scholar, the SIT research engine -EBSCO Information Services, as well as the open Google search engine. The key terms I used for the search for relevant documents were: “transition of social welfare system.” “nations in transit,” “Child well-being at crossroads,” “child protection systems in developing countries,” “child protection systems in third world,” “child protection systems international trends,” “child protection systems in post war,” “Child protection” Kosovo, “Civil Society” Kosovo, “Social Protection” Kosovo, Kosovo “social work,” Kosovo “social welfare,” Kosovo decentralization, Kosovo “social services,” as well as others. I chose the literature based on relevance and based on the number of times the works were cited in other publications. I also looked for more recent

publications and reports, however, I was not able to find a large number of peer-reviewed articles, or articles published in journals directly related to the topic of my research focused on Kosovo. This is an area that can benefit for future research and publications.

Semi-structured Interviews

I conducted ten semi-structured interviews with stakeholders in Kosovo to gather additional qualitative information about the state of child protection and the child protection environment in the country, the sustainability of child protection services and the role and contribution of civil society towards a child protective environment in Kosovo. The semi-structured interviews allowed for the flexibility to ask formulated questions, but also gave interviewees the opportunity to speak to other relevant aspects that may have not been previously identified. The interview questions aimed to record the opinions of the stakeholders with whom I met, regarding an overview and sustainability of child protection services in Kosovo, the process of decentralization and impact on child protection policies and services during the time frame under review, the role of civil society in the creation of the child protective environment, and the current state of the child protective environment in Kosovo.

The stakeholders were representatives of Kosovo's central and local governments and members working in civil society organizations that are involved in Kosovo's child protection system, including three representatives of Kosovo's minority communities. Interviews were conducted in-person during my visit to Kosovo in late May and June 2019. The group of interviewees is not a representative group, rather it is a sample of the stakeholders. I will share with the interviewees the outcomes of my research for feedback.

I organized and summarized the data I learned through the literature review and the semi-structured interviews by themes and categories such as child protection, decentralization, and

civil society. I have presented the outcomes of the analysis in narrative form to ensure validity, I used triangulation, referring to theory, literature and data.

Ethical Issues and Validity

Since part of my research was conducting interviews with human subjects, I applied for approval and got approved from the Institutional Review Board for Protection of Human Subjects in Research to conduct such interviews.

I had to navigate several limitations regarding data sources, particularly when it came to the semi-structured interviews. Despite efforts, representatives of international donor organizations based in Kosovo such as the WB, European Union, DFID, and USAID, as well as larger non-governmental organizations, such as UNICEF and Save the Children, were not available for interviews.

All the interviewed stakeholders decided to remain anonymous.

Results

Community Security

In looking at child protection services, it is clear that such services need to be developed in a stable environment with adequate resources and an interest in making sure that the most vulnerable peoples of society are cared for. Communities must feel secure and able to care for their own. In order to have a better understanding of whether there is strong groundwork for child protection in Kosovo, I conducted a community security analysis of the current Kosovo environment. Community Security is one of the seven dimensions of human security highlighted in the 1994 Human Development Report of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The organization, Saferworld, a U.K. based non-profit organization which has been working for the past thirty years on the prevention of global violent conflicts and building safer lives for

communities, defines Community Security as a people-centered approach to addressing insecurity that integrates human security, development and state building paradigms (Saferworld, 2014). It works by bringing together a wide range of state and civil society representatives from both the security demand and supply sides to discuss and identify root causes of insecurity collectively and develop coordinated responses to them. Some important aspects of Community Security emphasized by Saferworld that are relevant to the situation in Kosovo and elaborated and reviewed here are: weak/poor state–citizen relations; lack of institutional resources and capacity; tensions within and between communities, particularly involving marginalized groups; lack of decent opportunities for income generation and better livelihoods; and decentralization.

Community security in Kosovo.

Weak/ poor state-citizen relations.

There is a general deep distrust by Kosovar citizens of government and state institutions due to negative historical experiences. Over 90 percent of Kosovar citizens are of Albanian nationality. During Yugoslav times, Albanians were a minority population in the nation, most apparent by speaking a completely different language to the people of the rest of Yugoslavia. Kosovars suffered in the Yugoslavian federation by not having appropriate representation in the decision-making bodies controlled primarily by Serbian nationalists. As a result, Albanian populated parts of the country were the least developed parts of Yugoslavia. Progressively there were demonstrations for more rights and governmental representation, especially in 1968 and 1981, but always crushed with bloody repression. The underrepresentation and repression culminated when Slobodan Milosevic and Serbian nationalists came to power in 1987 in Yugoslavia, taking control of the very powerful army and stripping Albanians and other ethnic

groups of their rights through military rule. As a result, resistance and wars to oppose Milosevic's Serbian nationalist regime started in Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1991 to 1995 and in Kosovo a few years later. Kosovo was ruled violently during the nineties, in an apartheid style regime, concluding with genocide in 1998 and 1999 with approximately 15,000 people dead, as well as many other atrocities. These events triggered NATO intervention in March 1999, forcing the withdrawal of Serbian military forces from Kosovo in June 1999. Since the end of the war, there have been United Nations and European Union administrations overseeing and monitoring Kosovar government functions and operations, however, they have progressively delegated the responsibilities to the Kosovar government, particularly since the Declaration of Independence in February 2008. Currently, their presence is limited.

Even though Kosovars won their freedom and established democratically elected institutions at the central and local level, the trust of the citizens in its government has quickly and progressively evaporated. Initially, Kosovars were very enthusiastic about the democratic system and being able to elect their representatives in the governing bodies at the central and local level. However, the corruption and nepotism of the parties throughout the last twenty years, particularly by the parties formed by former guerrilla fighters after the war, has resulted in a loss of trust. As seen in Figure 2, Kosovo has struggled to fight and control corruption after initial success immediately after the war in 2000. Currently Kosovo ranks in the fortieth percentile with slight improvements compared to earlier years in regard to the indicator "Controlling the Corruption." However, the general public is frustrated with the level of corruption in the country and does not trust the local and central governments. The same trend of diminishing trust in the

government can be explained with the “Rule of Law” indicator, represented also in the chart below, showing similar tendencies as the “Control of Corruption” indicator.

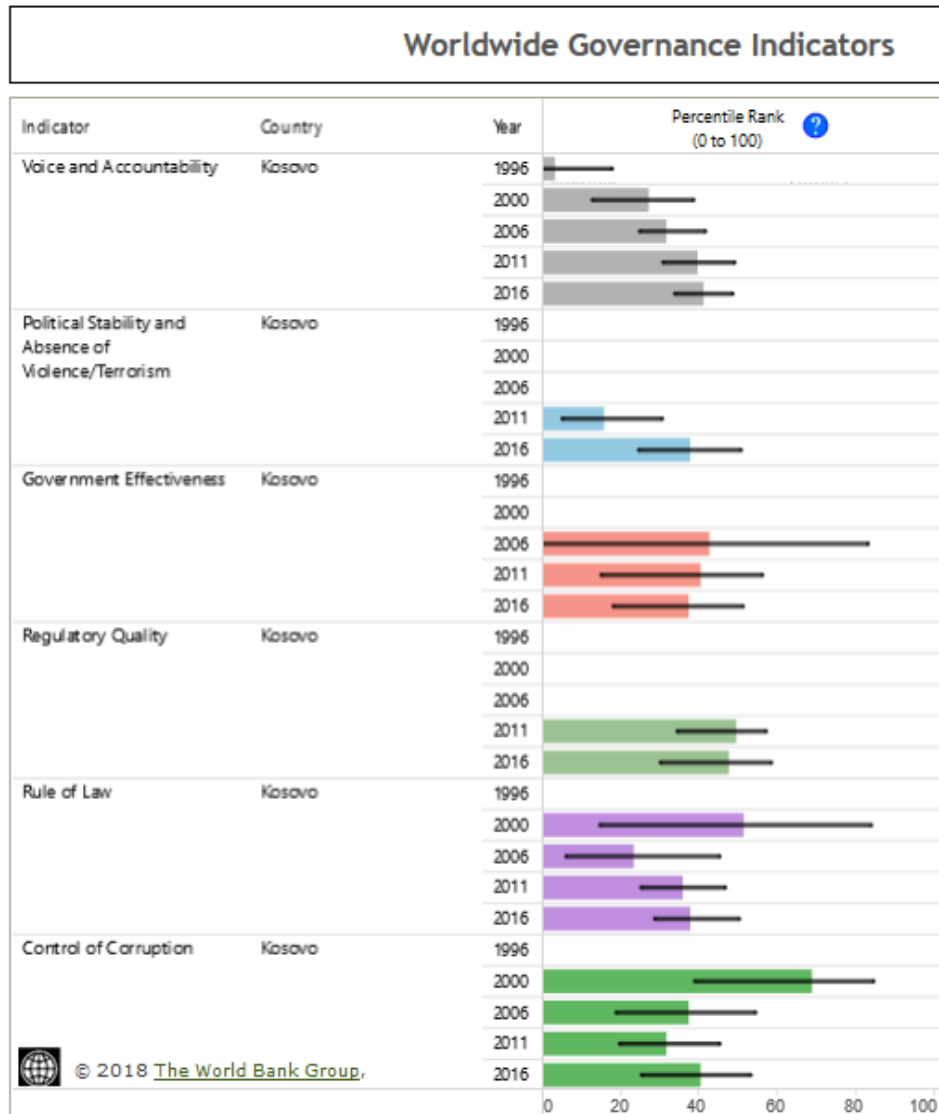


Figure 2: Kosovo Governance Indicators in 1996, 2000, 2006, 2011, and 2016. Source: The World Bank Group

The same trends regarding corruption, rule of law, and democratic governance are confirmed from the Freedom House ratings. As seen in the “Nations in Transit Ratings and Averaged Scores” Kosovo has rated continuously between 5.5 and 6 (on a scale 1 to 7 where 7

represents the lowest score) during the last 10 years in regard to “Corruption,” “Judicial Framework,” and “National Democratic Governance.”

| NIT Edition | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| National Democratic Governance | 5.25 | 5.50 | 5.75 | 5.75 | 5.75 | 5.50 | 5.50 | 5.50 | 5.50 | 5.50 |
| Electoral Process | 4.50 | 4.25 | 4.50 | 5.00 | 5.00 | 4.75 | 4.75 | 4.75 | 4.75 | 4.50 |
| Civil Society | 4.00 | 3.75 | 3.75 | 3.75 | 4.00 | 3.75 | 3.75 | 3.75 | 3.75 | 3.75 |
| Independent Media | 5.50 | 5.50 | 5.75 | 5.75 | 5.75 | 5.75 | 5.50 | 5.25 | 5.00 | 5.00 |
| Local Democratic Governance | 5.25 | 5.00 | 5.00 | 4.75 | 4.75 | 4.75 | 4.75 | 4.50 | 4.50 | 4.50 |
| Judicial Framework and Independence | 5.75 | 5.75 | 5.75 | 5.50 | 5.50 | 5.50 | 5.75 | 5.75 | 5.50 | 5.50 |
| Corruption | 5.75 | 5.75 | 5.75 | 5.75 | 6.00 | 6.00 | 6.00 | 6.00 | 5.75 | 5.75 |
| Democracy Score | 5.14 | 5.07 | 5.18 | 5.18 | 5.25 | 5.14 | 5.14 | 5.07 | 4.96 | 4.93 |

Figure 3: Nations in Transit Ratings and Averaged Scores. Source: Freedom House

Lack of institutional resources and capacity.

According to the World Governance Indicators from the World Bank Group, government effectiveness in Kosovo has decreased and now is in the thirtieth percentile. One of the important reasons for this ineffectiveness is that there has been a prolonged mismanagement of public resources, corruption and nepotism. Consequently, the government lacks financial resources to implement government programs. Additionally, due to corruption and nepotism, there is a cast of

government officials at the central and local level who are fundamentally incompetent to fulfill their responsibilities of the positions they are holding. Among the stakeholders interviewed for this capstone research, multiple interviewees confirmed that due to nepotism, many civil servants in charge of child protection services, at both the central and municipal government levels, have large responsibilities that come with the position that they are holding, however, lack the basic understanding of the policies and services that they are in charge of.

And while there is lack of systematic and stable funding for essential services such as social services, including child protection services, the political parties formed by ex-guerilla fighters, have forced the implementation of large infrastructure projects such as highways, which are very susceptible to corruption, and implemented a pension system into a law to reward veterans of the war. This represents a big burden for the very limited Kosovar state budget and resources and the IMF has warned that Kosovo's war veterans' pension scheme would come to be a major burden on its budget (Bytyqi, 2018).

Moreover, the education system has suffered during the last three decades and is still struggling to recover. The education system is not able to produce a workforce able to match the qualitative needs of the society, in the political and economic scope. According to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), in a triennial international survey which aims to evaluate education systems worldwide by testing the skills and knowledge of 15-year-old students, Kosovo students were performing very poorly in Reading, Mathematics, and Science in the 2015 assessments (OECD, 2018). Likewise, the workforce is unable to meet the quantitative needs of Kosovar society. Substantial reforms and investments are needed from the government to improve the quality of the education system.

Lack of decent opportunities for income generation and better livelihoods.

In line with what Naomi Klein described in her book, “Shock Doctrine” (2008), the war and massive level of destruction created an environment in Kosovo open to assistance which brought with it the introduction of many concepts and approaches. One of these approaches that was introduced and implemented was a neo-liberal market economy. This endeavor was supported by the WB, international governmental assistance entities, such as USAID and DFID, and other international monetary organizations. Publicly owned enterprises and properties were ruthlessly privatized over a ten-year period, without any preparation or any economic logic except for the sake of giving the properties to private owners. The properties were sold very cheaply and destroyed the employment potential of these enterprises and assets, consequently crippling production and opening the doors legislatively and practically for the import of “globalization products.” Furthermore, there is a general consensus in Kosovo that this process was characterized by corruption of all parties involved, both national and international. This set a standard which has continued today, and which has impacted the positive progress of Kosovo’s economy. Consequently, the weak economy has allowed for fewer available resources for social services, including child protection services.

According to the International Labor Organization (ILO, 2019), currently 41.86% of the population is under the age of 24, but it includes a high number of individuals who are of working age. The official rate of unemployment stood at 27.5% in 2016, according to ILO. As seen on the World Governance Control of Corruption Indicator chart, due to the privatization process, the “Control of Corruption” indicator fell significantly from the year 2000 to the year 2010. The consequence of the mismanagement of Kosovo’s resources has negatively impacted opportunities for income generation and better livelihoods for most of the population in Kosovo.

This has resulted in an economic insecurity which has increased significantly human and community insecurity in Kosovo.

To conclude this analysis, it can be stated that community security is still very fragile in Kosovo as the result of the war in 1998-99 and especially with the introduction of the neo-liberal market economy.

Decentralization in Kosovo

From the literature review, as well as information shared during interviews, it appears that the decentralization in Kosovo was motivated by two main reasons. One reason was the neo-liberal agenda of global development institutions led by the WB and IMF. As previously stated, immediately after the war in 1999, under pressure by the international community, the Kosovar government started to decentralize governmental services to the municipalities (Cocozzelli, 2009). As Bardhan and Mookherjee state Decentralization is considered an important element of participatory democracy (2006).” As per Cocozzelli, decentralization was conducted without proper context assessment and a long-term view of the system (2009). Everything was decentralized for the sake of being decentralized, with minimal or no preparations.

The decentralization process of all government services that started after the war and was formalized in 2009 when Kosovo declared its independence, was based on the plan and recommendations of the United Nations Special Envoy at that time. The second primary reason for decentralization of services is that the international community promoted decentralization as a conflict mitigation and transformation tool to reconcile ethnic Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo (Gjoni, Wetterberg, Dunbar 2010).

Decentralization of Child Protection Services

As per discussion with multiple stakeholders and based on the literature, the WB and DFID funded a large, multiyear, and multimillion project that started in the early 2000s with the objective to strengthen the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) and the Institute of Social Policy (ISP) within the MLSW. These entities had the responsibility to administer and monitor the whole social welfare/services system, including the provision of child protection services. The providers at this point were the CSWs located in the municipalities, the large and small governmental institutions providing direct services and a considerable number of NGOs supported primarily with international funding, providing direct child protection services.

In 2003, an administrative order was created to regulate social services including child protection services, giving the DSW, within the MLSW, the direct responsibility to administer and manage social service provision, including civil society providers. Until 2003, civil society organizations, primarily with international funding, were operating without any supervision. The Kosovar Law on Social Services, including child protection services, was approved in 2005. One of the long-term objectives defined in the law was the decentralization of the social services, including child protection services.

Social welfare reform and decentralization of social services were implemented, including child protection services, without proper context assessment and a long-term view of the system (Cocozzelli, 2009, pg. 190). As a result, child protection services, such as shelters for children and families who are victims of domestic violence, shelters for abandoned children, foster care services, etc., are in the hands of international and local civil society organizations, and are not sustainable as they are without stable long-term financing (Dervishaj & Kelmendi, 2017).

All municipal Directories of Health and Social Services were and still are not adequately staffed despite the fact that they have received the responsibilities and the power to make decisions regarding social services, including very sensitive child protection services. These responsibilities include funding allocation decisions and monitoring shelters for abandoned children, shelters for children victims of trafficking, shelters for victims of domestic violence, centers for provision of services for children with special needs, to name just a few.

As per the central government representative interviewed, since there was already some progress in the discussion about the decentralization of social services to municipalities, social welfare was chosen as one of the first areas to decentralize services. Consequently, with the declaration of independence, the responsibility to fund, administer, and manage social service and child protection service provision were delegated to the municipalities.

The DSW still has the responsibility of developing social protection policies, including child protection policies, as well as monitoring quality assurance of social service provision, including child protection services by governmental and non-governmental organizations. According to the interviewed stakeholders, with the very limited number of staff, it is impossible for DSW to perform this obligation, although it is mandated by law.

Low Priority Given to Social Services at the Local Level

Municipalities have given a very low priority to social services in general since the responsibility was delegated to them in 2009. Social services, in most cases, fall to the municipal Directorates of Health and Social Welfare. While they manage the Centers for Social Work as well as the non-profit organizations providing social services, most of these Directorates are understaffed and rely solely on the central government's Ministry of Finance for funding. Only a few municipalities allocate some minimal funds for emergencies. As an example of the low

priority given to social welfare, one of the municipalities created a Directorate for Social Welfare and European Integration – combining social welfare with a totally non-related department. With scarce resources, priority is given to infrastructure, health, and education. All of these municipal directorates are staffed typically with only one or on rare occasion two persons who are in charge of all social services in the municipality, including child protection services. Usually these public servants do not have any connection with the social work profession, are health professionals, and usually are appointed political party affiliates.

Funding of Child Protection Services

After decentralization of social services was formalized by a regulation in 2009, the central government's MLSW was no longer responsible for funding the CSWs and all other providers of social services, such as civil society organizations or non-profit organizations. The funds for local governments are allocated by the central Ministry of Finance and the elected municipal governments decide how to prioritize the funds at the local government level. Municipal directorates responsible for social welfare and social services were not and are still not prepared for the responsibility to fund and monitor CSWs, as well as social services, including child protection social services. They do not provide sufficient financial funds to fund or to monitor and supervise social services provided at the local level by CSWs and other service providers, such as civil society organizations.

At the local level, the municipal governments do not have a universal approach towards allocating resources for social services and child protection, most of them allocating nothing for social services provision, according to KOMF, because they think that this is a central government responsibility (2017). All these facts draw the conclusion that the hastened delegation of power and responsibility to the local level, even if with good intentions of bringing

services closer to the beneficiaries, weakened further the services vulnerable groups were receiving.

At the same time, due to high levels of nepotism and corruption in the Kosovar central and local governments, as well as political interference in the provision of governmental services, there is lack of interest by the global community, such as the European Commission, WB, USAID, DFID, as well as others to fund further necessary reforms. A good example is the \$3 million in funding that was provided by the European Commission in 2017, administered by Save the Children in Kosovo, that is supporting close to 30 local civil society organizations providing social service including child protection services. Funding will end in 2019 and there is no continuation of these funds for the next cycle. Additionally, an international donor organization, as per one of the interviewed stakeholders, has decided to pull its funding from the MLSW due to an incompetent high-ranking public servant who was politically appointed, and will instead shift funding for social services to the Ministry of Public Administration. As a result, currently, mid-term and long-term funding for current child protection services is very uncertain and there is no guaranteed future funding from either the relevant Kosovar agencies nor international institutions and organizations to make the necessary investments and interventions to improve the protection of most vulnerable members of Kosovar society, including children, and to create a sustainable system of child protection services.

Lack of Qualified Staff and Qualified Organizations to Provide Child Protection Services

A number of interviewees cited a lack of qualified staff and consequently the limited number of organizations available to provide adequate child protection services. MLSW has licensed only 30 local and international civil society organizations to provide social services at the local level in Kosovo, including direct services for the most vulnerable members of the

society such as abandoned children, children in foster care, children victims of domestic violence, etc. As per the interviewed stakeholders, this number of civil society organizations is minimal and does not cover the needs of the Kosovar society. Funding for these organizations is short-term and comes partially from the yearly grants of the central government, partially from a grant provided by the European Commission that terminates at the end of 2019, and partially from other international donors. There is high level of anxiety among civil society social service providers about mid-term and long-term funding. At the same time, at least verbally, the representative of the central government expressed the commitment to fund the minimum of social services provided by the civil society organizations, if the European Commission funding of civil society organizations does not continue at the end of the year.

Another issue that greatly impacts the sustainability of child protection services is the lack of professional social workers at the municipal level and in general. Even at the CSW, where the largest number of qualified social workers is concentrated, the number is being reduced due to retirement, and due to refusal of local government to replace the retirees by hiring new social protection professionals. Additionally, as per multiple stakeholder interviews, there is a significant political influence when it comes to employment of public servants in social services, including at the MLSW and CSWs. Public servants are hired because of their political party affiliations and not their professional merits.

Civil society organizations providing social services are limited in number in Kosovo, and are not sufficiently supported either technically or financially by the Kosovar government. As noted, only 30 are licensed to provide services and this number is minimal, particularly in light of the changes at the CSW level with a decrease in service provision. As reiterated during the interviews with involved stakeholders, the licensed civil society organizations that provide

social services are struggling significantly with funding their organizations and services. There were many examples mentioned of the staff of civil society organizations working for months without pay, as well as organizations suspending their services for months due to lack of funds.

It is only since 2010 that the University of Prishtina has a Department of Social Work and offers courses and a degree in social work. According to the interviewed stakeholders, the students and graduates from this department lack the opportunity for internships and gaining practical experience. Only recently, an agreement was reached with the CSWs to accept students and graduates to do their practicum in government institutions.

Monitoring and Inspection of Child Protection Service Provision

There is a very limited number of central government civil servants at the DSW responsible for monitoring social service provision in Kosovo. Consequently, not all service providers are licensed, and even if they are licensed, many of them are either minimally or not monitored and inspected at all. As per interviewees there are examples of service providers who are not licensed and operate illegally. Even those that are operating legally, due to the limited staff responsible for monitoring and inspection at all governmental levels, there is practically no professional oversight to ensure minimal quality standards.

Private Sector Involvement in the Provision of Child Protection Services

The private sector is continuously increasing its share in the provision of services for children, particularly in the education sector, e.g. with the opening of child daycare centers. The representative of the central government elaborated on involving the private sector in the provision of child protection social services as one of the alternatives in helping to improve the social service system in Kosovo. They mentioned that there could be coordination and joint interest to invest in private social service providers, such as some child protection services.

Discussion

Transition Between Child Protection Systems

Kosovo society has gone through much change within a very short time period – just over 30 years. Kosovo transitioned from a repressive communist state, to a ten-year state of apartheid rule during the 1990s, to a war in 1998-99, and finally to a parliamentary democracy with a market economy. Since 1999 when the war ended, Kosovo has been subject to agendas and requirements of primary global actors who hold development funding for the implementation of reforms in the Kosovar post-communist and post-conflict environment. The Kosovo government and the involved stakeholders did not give child protection a high priority throughout these processes. In post-war Kosovo, the highest priority was given to reconstruction, introduction of representative democracy with market economy, and to the political resolution of the ethnic conflict with the Serbian minority and state.

Decentralization

I argue that decentralization was introduced as part of the introduction and implementation of a neo-liberal market economy, supported strongly by the WB, international governmental assistance entities, and other international monetary organizations. As previously stated, in a “shock therapy style,” extreme privatization was conducted over a ten-year period, without any preparation or any economic logic except for the sake of giving the properties to private owners. The properties were sold very cheaply, destroyed the employment potential, and crippled local production.

Secondly, I argue that under the umbrella and justification of the peacebuilding process, decentralization was simply imposed, without “serious attempts to change the existing structures of power within communities and to improve the opportunities for participation and voice and

engaging the hitherto disadvantaged or disenfranchised in the political process (Bardhan, 2002).” Consequently, the reforms did not achieve the ultimate goal of decentralization according to Bardhan, i.e., making governance at the local level more responsive to the felt needs of the large majority of the population (2002). On the contrary, the imposed decentralization process in Kosovo, led with minimal local knowledge and expertise, without taking into consideration the local context, and without giving sufficient time for reforms, achieved an opposite effect, i.e., it made governance at the local level much less responsive to the needs of the population, and in particular weakened to the point of near extinction, services for the most vulnerable, such as children in need.

I believe that when it comes to the market economy system, a Keynesian model would have fit much better to the Kosovar context. My strong believe is that societies did better under a Keynesianism model of market economy and social democracy. Increased government role to control and implement a very gradual process of decentralization of governmental services, privatization of public enterprises and use of natural resources and environment, would have provided more sustainable development in Kosovo. The extreme type of market economy implemented in Kosovo not only did not serve the majority of the population, but it also damaged significantly services and the protection of the most vulnerable members of the population. Furthermore, it exploited and continues to exploit the environment treating it as an externality and not as something essential and vital for the future. Examples are severely damaged rivers and mountains, exploited for construction materials.

In the field of social welfare, I would argue that the WB and DFID funded large projects immediately after the war in Kosovo, with the objective of supporting DSW to introduce the objective of decentralization. According to all child protection stakeholders who were

interviewed, the delegation of administrative and managerial responsibilities from the central to local governments was done without any proper contextualized preparation. As an example, two major reforms projects funded by WB, in support of rebuilding the Kosovar social welfare and child protection systems were implemented by two governmental institutions from Finland. Interviewed stakeholders felt that these institutions not only did not have knowledge of the Kosovo context, but also were without any sincere commitment to analyze and learn the local context. All of the interviewed stakeholders agreed that the decentralization process has been a negative endeavor and experience. Not only was the move made without adequate preparation, but consequently, it damaged the existing social services system that was created with a lot of effort and investments in the early years after the war.

Based on this experience, the interviewee from the central government, explained that officials in the Ministry were thinking to reverse some of the reforms, particularly around decentralization. They would like to reestablish central authority of the CSWs for a period of time so they can strengthen their roles and responsibilities through training and monitoring of their work. “We gave to the municipalities the responsibility to manage, administer, and fund the CSWs ten years ago and they have not shown any serious interest to exercise these responsibilities,” stated one of the interviewed stakeholders. The MLSW envisions the role of CSWs to be entry points and coordination bodies on the ground for the whole social welfare system in Kosovo.

Based on the review of relevant literature, and information learned during the semi-structured interviews conducted in Kosovo, my opinion is that the neo-liberal agenda, justified by the political peacebuilding process, including decentralization as a post-conflict peace building tool, were imposed on the Kosovar society without sufficient and proper preparation.

Funds were provided by the WB and DFID to decentralize these services, however, implementation of these measures were disastrous due to government corruption and due to implementation by international entities that did not adapt their plans adequately to the local context and needs. The international organizations implemented four- to five-year long projects without leaving much positive impact. Furthermore, I argue that more harm was done than good, because, for a few years after the war, the CSWs were progressively making improvements to the system.

Sustainable Funding

The allocated funds for social services, including child protection services, from the central and local governments are not sufficient and do not meet the minimum needs of vulnerable populations, especially children in need. As a consequence, many local and international organizations in Kosovo provide social and child protection services funded mainly by external donors. Because funding from the local government for service providers is nearly nonexistent, there is a high level of dependency by the central government and international donor community to fund child protection services, especially via civil society organizations. However, this funding is short term and not sustainable.

Even after ten years of decentralized services to the local level, municipalities spend a minimum of funds allocated by the central government to the local government on child protection services. Consequently, there is no sustainable financing for the municipal social service providers. Having this in mind, according to multiple interviewed stakeholders, there is an initiative being proposed by the MLSW, and supported by civil society organizations, that would create a law that requires the allocation of a percentage of the municipal government's

annual funds to be spent on social services. The amount of the annual percentage has not yet been defined.

Both the central level of government in Kosovo, as well as the municipal level of government, must systematically fund and support non-profit organizations providing child protection services, codifying this long-term commitment by law, with systems in place to ensure high quality social service provision. Dependency on foreign donors for financing social and child protection services should be reduced as increased funding is provided by the Kosovar government to ensure the long-term sustainability of these services.

Protection of Civil Service Professionals from Political Pressure

Kosovo society, led by civil society, has to continue the fight of separating political influence from professional child protection services. Efforts need to be made so that civil servants working in the public sector are unhindered to impartially implement their policies and laws. The current practice of employing professional civil servants based on their political affiliations must come to an end.

Interdisciplinary Collaboration in Child Protection Work

The lack of close collaboration of different government, civil society and private organizations providing services for children in the area of social services, education, correction services, etc., is a gap of the current system, according to majority of interviewed stakeholders. According to Bregu (2018) considerable efforts and resources need to be invested into developing models of multi-agency cooperation and collaboration in Kosovo. All stakeholders involved in social services in Kosovo – both those working with governmental institutions and those working with civil society organizations, – must improve the level of coordination to

provide a child protective environment and especially to establish a long-term and sustainable pattern of funding social services, particularly child protection services.

Data Driven Services

There is no universal data collection system in the Kosovar social welfare system. The current data is scattered and the validity of the produced data can be questioned. The interviewed representatives of the central and local governments identified a high need for a cloud-based data collection and processing system that would play a vital role in the administration and coordination of all social services in Kosovo, including the child protection services. It would provide vital information to inform the creation of adequate policies, administration and monitoring of services provided, as well as support the reform of the system.

Private Sector Involvement

I have serious concerns about the idea to currently involve the private sector in providing social services for people in need, including children, particularly with the identified lack of the monitoring and inspection capabilities of the current system. In other words, only after proven efficient systems of monitoring and inspection are in place, should the MLSW and Kosovo government think about involving private institutions in the provision of social services.

Participatory Action Research (PAR)

I would suggest a heavily context-based approach, such as the participatory action research model, for further reforms in Kosovo as well as for other societies going through similar transitions and reforms. Participatory Action Research (PAR) is “a way of collecting information for organizing that honors, centers, and reflects the experiences of people most directly affected by issues in our communities (Bevensee, 2015; INCITE, 2005).” A PAR approach needs to be applied to identify the needs, resources, and approaches to provide sustainable child protection

services at the local level for each of 38 municipalities in Kosovo, as well as at the regional level. Each of the municipalities and the regions of Kosovo is very complex and it has its resources and strengths to build upon. There needs to be a process that will draw on these local context-related strengths to design a modified municipal and regional social welfare system, within the current legislation, that will provide an improved social welfare system and consequently an improved child protective environment for Kosovo. A Participatory Action Research approach provides a platform to make improvements of the current system possible.

Lessons Learned Potentially Applicable Elsewhere

The critical analysis of the transition of Kosovar society with a focus of the current status of child protection services in Kosovo, the role of civil society in this sector, and the formulation of what could have been done better during this period since the war could be useful for other communities and societies going through similar experiences. The main lesson from this research is that national reforms cannot be implemented successfully by global institutions, without a proper and comprehensive knowledge of the context where the reforms are being implemented. It is nearly impossible for governmental institutions from Finland, despite best intentions, to understand sufficiently and reform the Kosovar child protection system within one project cycle, to name one example. Reform measures and rebuilding projects should be led by local experts supported by external expertise and technical assistance. Sufficient time needs to be allowed for a proper analysis of the context as a strong first step.

Limitations of This Capstone

As previously stated, I conducted the research for this capstone using mixed methods methodological approach. Conducting a literature review and the semi-structured interviews at

the same time, due to time and other constraints represents a challenge (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). I can certainly identify with this statement.

Directions for Future Research

There are some remaining questions that need further attention in regard to the child protective environment in Kosovo that have been identified during this research. Further analysis should incorporate questions regarding the family structure in Kosovo. There have been many changes in family structure over the past three decades and it would be very important to consider how family and community support systems currently operate and how they can be incorporated in the overall child protection system in Kosovo today. Also, of interest is the question of whether Kosovo society should invest more in its civil society and rely on civil society organizations to provide vital child protection services or should it strengthen public central and local organizations and institutions to provide these services? Is there a place for private institutions to be allowed to provide services? Or should there be a hybrid model of governmental and non-governmental organizations providing child protection services, with or without involvement of private institutions? Finally, further research on the best approaches and models of countries in the region or beyond to prevent and exclude political influence of professional civil servants would be welcomed. Are there approaches and models which have been successful in fighting wrongful political influence, nepotism, and corruption in the child protection systems?

Brief Reflection of Sustainable Development

Context is crucial for any sustainable development. The case of the Kosovar reforms of the social welfare system, that included decentralization of social services, including the provision of child protection services, is a perfect example of what can go wrong if the international community

imposes and funds reforms that are not contextualized and do not match local needs. The social welfare reforms and decentralization in Kosovo were implemented with minimal preparation to delegate the responsibilities and without considering properly the “next steps” after the internationally funded programs ended. The consequences are that there are minimal child protection services provided in Kosovo, the quality of the services has decreased significantly over the past 10 years, and the funding is diminishing progressively to support even this current level of child protection services. This limited study gives clear indication that instead of improving the situation of the most vulnerable members of the society, including at-risk children, these interventions have not provided an adequate or sustainable system of child protection in Kosovo and the limited services available now are at risk of diminishing further.

Regarding the market economy and decentralization processes implemented in Kosovo, I believe that societies did better under a Keynesianism model of market economy and social democracy than under any other capitalistic policy regime. The neo-liberal economy does not serve the majority of the population, rather it serves the very slim minority. As per the historical review, the Keynesianism period from 1940 to 1970 represented a brief break from excessive exploitation of the available societal resources especially environment. Excessive exploitation of societal resources, especially of the environment, has been a trademark of the Kosovar type of market economy. Markets are social and institutional constructions that require rules and regulations to function effectively (Peet and Hartwick, 2015).

State or development institutions must play a role in influencing national or international economics to ensure real development, paying attention to the environment influenced by economic activity and to labor relations and conditions of the actual producers (Peet, Hartwick, 2013). There has to be a better way to come closer to what John Stuart Mills calls “ethical

economic growth” and living up to his hope that humans “are capable of living and acting in accordance with finer ideals. (1904)” Consequently, the unrestrained neo-liberal market economy that Kosovo has adopted will continue to cause hardships for the majority of the population, especially for the most vulnerable members, including children.

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Annexes

Annex 1 - Semi-Structured Interview Questions

What is the Current Child Protection Situation in Kosovo?

- ✓ Who implements currently the child protection services?
- ✓ How does the current system work?
- ✓ What is the role of government, civil society, and donors?
 - Is Child Protection a priority for the government currently?
- ✓ How Sustainable are Child Protection Services in Kosovo and does the Kosovar society provide a protective child environment currently?
- ✓ What is the current role and impact of civil society in building sustainable child protection policies and services in Kosovo?
 - How is civil society defined in Kosovo and what does it mean?
 - How has the role and impact of civil society evolved in this regard since the end of the war in 1999?
- ✓ Did post-war decentralization of governmental social services in Kosovo, strongly promoted by global development donors (as a tool to promote peace, market economy, etc.) diminish significantly the role of the government in providing child protection services?
 - Did this decentralization damage the long-term sustainability of these vital services?
- ✓ Is the increased need for local and international civil society organizations to step in, fill the gap, and contribute to sustainable child protection policies and services (at the central and local level) sustainable?

How is the Current Situation Regarded and Viewed at the Local Level?

- ✓ What is the local perspective on child protection in Kosovo?

- How is the role of government viewed?
 - What is the local perspective on local and international civil society organizations?
- ✓ What is the capacity of Civil Society to influence and promote sustainable child protection services in Kosovo?

Where is the Child Protection Headed in Kosovo?

- ✓ What are the implications of the current situation?
- ✓ What initiatives are underway to address the current problems and challenges?
- ✓ What are plans by international donors/agencies regarding sustainability?
- ✓ Is government undertaking any initiatives and preparations?
 - What is the status of these plans?
- ✓ Should traditional family structures be strengthened so they can provide and ensure a child protective environment?

Annex 2 – Kosovo Background Information

Kosovo is a small country located in South Eastern Europe, in the heart of the Balkans, landlocked and surrounded by Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, and Macedonia, as seen below in Figure 1.



Figure 1: Political map of Balkans (Ivmh.net, n.d.)

Kosovo was formally a part of Yugoslavia and after the breakup of this country throughout the 1990s, which included several brutal wars, including between Kosovo and its neighbor Serbia in 1998-99, eventually declared independence from Serbia and Montenegro in 2008. Since declaring independence, 114 countries have recognized Kosovo as an independent nation, including the United States (U.S.), United Kingdom (U.K), France, and Germany (Republic of Kosovo, 2018). According to the World Bank World Development Indicators, Kosovo has 1.83 million inhabitants and occupies 10,887 sq. km. (The World Bank, 2017), a size slightly larger than the state of Delaware. Gross National Income (GNI) per capita based on purchasing power parity (PPP) in 2017 was \$11,020 and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was 7.24 billion dollars (The World Bank, 2017). According to the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency the percentage of population under 24 is 41.86% (U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, 2019).