



European  
Union  
Kosovo

# Empowering youth and women towards employment in Ferizaj and Mitrovica regions



***CAPITALIZATION of 2.5 YEARS  
of experience***





This report was prepared by

**Elizabeth Gowing**



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### The project

In Kosovo's challenging environment for employment opportunities, some groups face more challenges than others. It is with these groups that Caritas' Empowering Youth and Women Towards Employment in Ferizaj and Mitrovica project worked to secure access to employment.

### These materials

These materials identify the particular challenges of the context in which the project was working and then set out the key features of the activities which led to success and could be implemented elsewhere to tackle similar challenges. They share details of what was done as well as the features of how it was done, with some recommendations and a short section on the research and interview process by which the key features presented here were identified. The materials are aimed at other donor or implementing organisations, in Kosovo and beyond, committed to empowering youth and women into employment. They summarise what Caritas has learned about the most effective ways to

bring about lasting change in this area and aim to enable others to serve similarly disadvantaged groups.

Throughout the materials, experiences and learning are exemplified by the testimonies of the project partners so that the voices, stories and reflections of job-seekers can be heard.

### Context

The context for the project is characterised by high unemployment and unfair employment practices. The situation is worse for women than for men, and prejudice makes it harder for the minority ethnic groups of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians than for those from majority ethnic communities; young people face particular challenges in accessing the labour market. In addition, one of the project locations – Mitrovica – has specific political and social challenges. In addition, of course during 2020 and 2021 the project faced the difficulties of planning and making positive change happen within the context of a pandemic. All these factors overlap and create intersectional challenges for those who are multiply disadvantaged.

As well as these challenges, project partners identified further barriers to engagement in the labour market from some practices from other donors, and the social welfare policy which incentivises job-seekers not to engage in activities such as internships for which they receive symbolic payments or funds to cover expenses. A final trend impacting attitudes to employment in Kosovo is emigration seen as an alternative response to unemployment.

### **What the project did**

The project was energetic and creative in reaching individuals from the most vulnerable groups, sharing its opportunities with people who had not been engaged in similar projects before, using a range of strategies that other organisations can learn from.

Once potential applicants had been alerted to the project using these strategies that had rarely been used before, another innovation was removing a barrier to applications for material grants by inviting those who were interested in starting up their own business to attend training on writing a business plan

rather than inviting submissions of business plans. The process of selecting these plans was made transparent in ways that were also novel for most participants.

Training was then offered with both soft skills and technical content and grants for material support were given out to meet the needs set out in the successful business plans. The project continued with individual support for former and current jobseekers even after the training and provision of equipment. Those who had successfully completed training were matched with internship opportunities, and jobs and mentoring were secured for marginalised jobseekers.

As well as developing the skills and horizons of these former and current jobseekers, the project planned a study visit to France to share experience of good practice with staff from the municipalities and from employment centres. For those whom the project had supported to set up in business, trips with lasting and measurable impact were organised to Serbia and Albania to visit trade fairs and businesses in similar fields.

One outcome from one of the study visits drew on a model seen in Serbia and brought together many successful elements of the project – the creation of a network of women in business in Ferizaj, with their own sales point in the town as well as the opportunity for mutual support and development.

### How the project achieved success

Nine features of the project's approach are identified as having contributed to its success. The first of these is **partnership** – one of the 'guiding principles' in the creation of the project and applied to a range of stakeholders – bringing together civil society, local institutions, and business in the service of jobseekers. The partnership was not just on paper, and project partners talked about the realities of making such relationships work. One contributing factor was effective **communication** by the project team to match the realities of project partners' lives. This in turn built another feature of the project's success, which was the **quality of relationships** and the care invested in them: both between **members of**

**the Caritas team** and project partners but also, for example, between trainers and course participants which led to better learning and motivation.

Another factor for the project's success was the **willingness to adapt**. This was, of course, necessary in the context of the pandemic, but was also seen in the attitude to details such as course content.

In other ways, too, the project was not restricted to the achievements set out in the project document – **impact went way beyond the targeted numbers** for engagement, as evidenced by the life-changing effect of the opportunities shared. The transformation which some project partners talked passionately about also motivated them to 'pay it forward' with a **multiplier effect** where they shared with others the opportunities they had had in the project.

This led to increased **sustainability** and was part of the strong **work ethic** that is in evidence in conversation with so many of those whose opportunities have been improved by the project.



Fig. 1: Map of Kosovo with project locations highlighted

Kosovo's shockingly high levels of unemployment across the population mask an even worse situation for particular groups. Specific challenges include:

#### a) The position of women

In Ferizaj, for example, the register of the unemployed includes more than twice as many women as men. The challenges creating this severe inequality are as diverse and deep

as can be observed in many patriarchal societies: from families' and wider social expectations and restrictions on women, to their own beliefs about themselves mixed with powerful fears of threats to their personal safety and harassment, and oppressive traditions

*"When you go out as a village woman, they say 'where are you going?'" (woman who started business, South Mitrovica)*



*"As women in Kosovo we have zero confidence" (employer, Ferizaj)*

*"What doubts did I have before I started? It was the first time I saw that CnC machine and I only saw men working on it" (young woman trained within the project, North Mitrovica)*

*"I was the first to go to the beekeepers association. There were 200 – 300 men and I was the only woman but I told myself 'they're just people; I'm a person'" (woman who started business, South Mitrovica)*

*"As women, our problem is inheriting land. I'd like to apply for a grant for a tractor but the documents are in the men's names" (woman who started business, South Mitrovica)*

*"Lots of organisations work on rights. But I think if women have economic development then they have rights (Woman founder of professional association, Ferizaj)*

*"What doubts did I have? I wondered what women's families will think of the project" (member of Management Committee)*

*"What challenges were there? Challenging gender norms" (member of Caritas team)*

*"One challenge was in women who had never left the house. It seemed absurd for them to be beneficiaries. They're from rural areas and it was like it dropped from the sky. They were so happy and energised." (Ferizaj Employment Centre member of staff)*

“

***I have to take one of my sons with me when I go to the flower supplier. When I go the restaurants to discuss a contract for their flowers, they think it will be cheaper to buy from a woman. You have to hold your head like this," she says, bowing.***

***"Nothing has happened to me, but as a woman going to these places you do get scared. You go to the flower depot after hours and there's just a security guard there. He'll open up for you, but as a woman on your own, would you dare to go in?"***

*Woman who started business through the project, Ferizaj*

”

## b) The situation for Roma/ Ashkali/ Egyptians

“

**60% of our jobseekers database are young people**

*Director, Mitrovica Employment Centre*

”

Among Kosovo's young people (15-24 years old) 61% are unemployed (56% of males and 71% of females), which gives Kosovo the lowest labour force participation rates for youth in the Western Balkans.

A third of Kosovo's young people are neither employed nor attending education or training (NEET).

Around 20,000 young people enter the Kosovo job market every year. According to the 2010 World Bank assessment of youth labour market outcomes, school-to-work transition is rare among young women while it takes young men around 10 years. The majority of the unemployed have been looking for work for more than a year.

### c) The situation for young people

Njofësi is an Albanian word which translates loosely as 'who you know'. The existence in Kosovo of this powerful determiner for whether an individual will become employed or not is as corrosive as the belief in its existence. If they have no contacts in a particular company or field, jobseekers may be put off

applying for a job because of their belief that the decision will be determined by njofësi. If they do apply but then don't get the job, a belief in njofësi – whether justified or not – will shape their willingness to draw lessons from the experience. And of course, when recruitment runs (or is believed to run) on njofësi then those who are already marginalised are made even more so.

“

***I loved school but I didn't go to university because my friends that did are working as waiters – you only get a job through njofësi***

*Woman trained through the project in Ferizaj*

”

“

***The old way is to offer jobs to people you know, whether they know how to do the job or not. Now let's give opportunities to those who do know how to do the job. She has a chance to show what she can do. Then it's up to her.***

*Woman trained through the project in Ferizaj*

”

“

***In another project I did an internship for 4 months unpaid and got no certificate***

*Woman from South Mitrovica trained within this project*

”

Poor legal protection and a weak rule of law for the implementation of the legal provisions that exist mean that exploitation of workers is widespread. Misunderstandings or

broken promises rarely have legal redress, and ordinary people are unlikely to feel the security of legal backing when they sign a contract.

“

***[Other businesses] tell us we'll be paid 300 euro a month but we get 180 euro or they don't give us the lunches they promised would be included every day***

*Young man in Ferizaj who started his own business with a material grant through the project*

”

Access to labour market opportunities reflects wider discrimination and prejudice, making it harder for

ethnic minorities or women to get jobs.

“

***It's a problem employing family – Albanians don't want Ashkali in their home, and vice versa***

*Young Ashkali man in Ferizaj who started his own business with a material grant through the project*

”



d) The political/ social context in Mitrovica



The viability of Mitrovica as a city is often used as a proxy for the viability of Kosovo. This city in the north of Kosovo, through which runs the river Ibër/ Ibar, has a Serbian-majority population north of the river and an Albanian-majority population south of the river. Institutions in the north include those run from Belgrade and those from Pristina/ Prishtina. Frequent cases of stale-

mate over exactly who exercises jurisdiction over important elements of daily life (including schools and social welfare) and associated difficulties in doing business has led to stagnation of the town's economy. The professional associations interviewed say that the town has the highest number of cases of people on social welfare in the whole of Kosovo

“

***If you are working under the Kosovan government but are being instructed by the Belgrade government, how can you be acting in the interests of individuals?***

*Serbian interviewee who wants to be unidentified*

”

”

***A doubt I had before the project started was about how many people in North Mitrovica would be willing to register at the employment office [run from Prishtina]***

*Serbian member of Caritas team*

“



### e) Intersectionality

Intersectionality refers to the interconnected nature of social categorisations which create overlapping and interdependent systems of disadvantage. Further challenges are created for jobseekers when there is a combination of factors such as those identified above, or others such as disability (85% of

disabled Kosovars are unemployed). Thus, the challenges for young people are tougher for those who are not only young but from a minority ethnic community such as the Roma, Ashkali or Egyptians who are faced with widespread and institutionalised racism. Likewise, the challenges for women are more complex for women from these communities.

”

***Roma women trained in kitchen work face twin prejudices which prevent them from finding work or even internships – businesses won't hire them because if Albanians hear there's 'a Roma, Ashkali or Egyptian (they use a pejorative term) in the kitchen' they won't eat there. But their fathers wouldn't let them anyway, saying 'what will people think you're doing if they hear you're working in a hotel.'***

*Serbian member of Caritas team*

“

## f) The pandemic

***This year we went 5-6 years backwards. People are afraid to spend money from their reserves. The diaspora is not coming. Circulation of money stopped.***

“

*Mitrovica professional associations*

The pandemic has brought challenges in ways of working, earning and learning around the world. As with other intersectional factors, its

negative impact has nevertheless been felt most by those who were already disadvantaged in the labour market and beyond.

## g) The social welfare policy context

One element of the policy context which makes it challenging for job-seekers to move from unemployment is the regulation stopping social welfare payments as soon as someone receives money into their bank account. This meant that even symbolic sums such as covering

expenses for transport to an internship carried a heavy penalty for someone who had relied on social welfare payments. This was mentioned as an issue by jobseekers in both Ferizaj and Mitrovica who had completed training within the project but couldn't afford to do an internship, as well as by professional associations and project staff.

“

***You have someone who's had a terrible life and is full of commitment, but who has to leave her internship because of losing a 100 euro social welfare payment per month***

*Caritas member of staff on project team*

”



## h) Emigration

A haemorrhaging of Kosovars to other countries has taken place over the last 7 years. It's estimated that 70 000 people (almost 4% of the population) left in an exodus between 2014 and 2015 . This was most marked in the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian population where it's estimated that a quarter of the

population left the country at this time. Many enter other countries illegally, running the risk of eventually being sent back to Kosovo where they are left without assets. Nevertheless, the attractiveness of this option means that unemployment in Kosovo often leads swiftly to emigration and the destabilising effects of irregular migration.

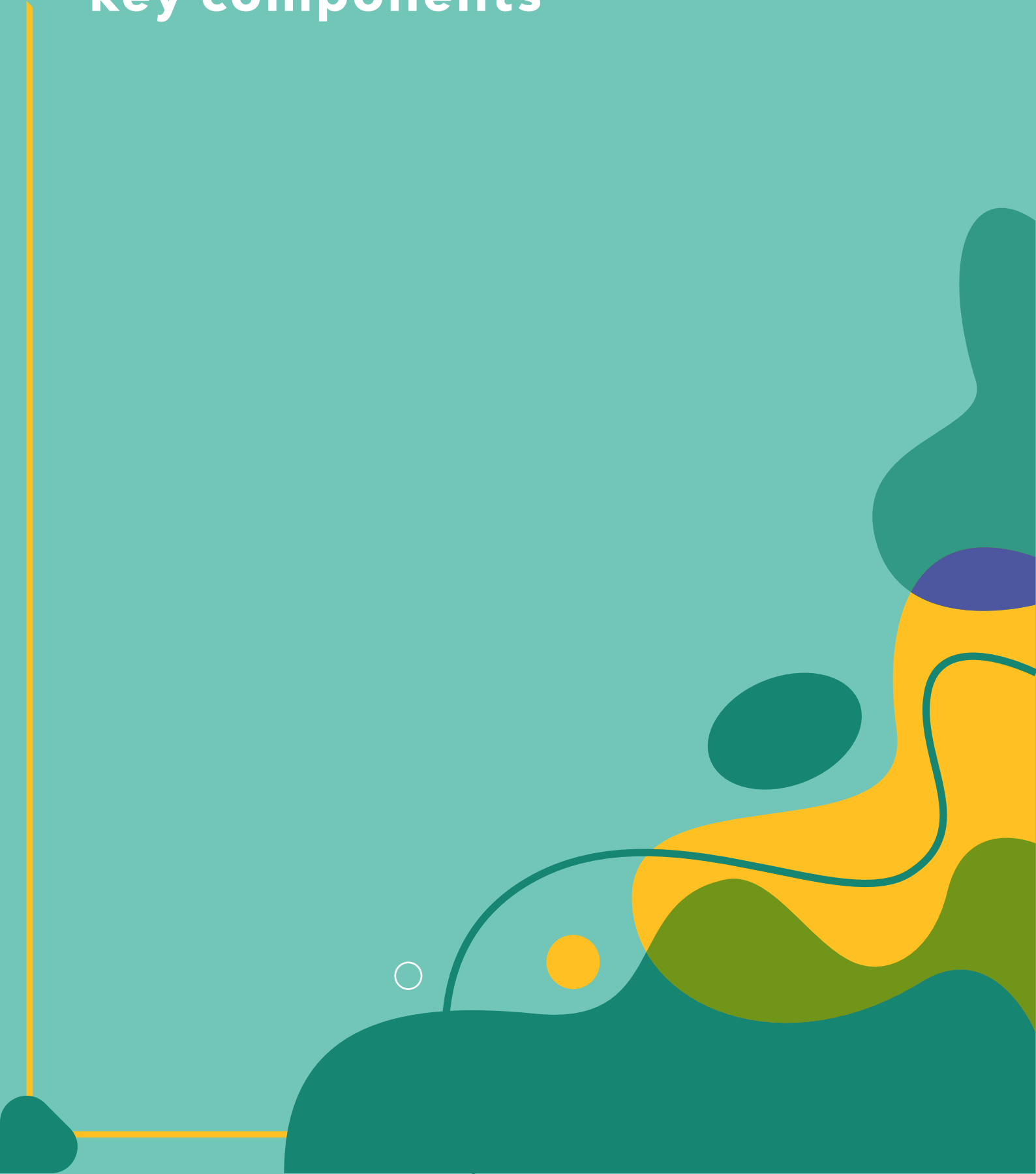
“

***If they don't have a job they'll leave  
the country***

*Woman who set up business through the project,  
North Mitrovica*

”

# What the project did: key components



### I. Reaching individuals from the most vulnerable groups

- “ -

***The information went from woman to woman,  
from friend to friend***

*Woman trained through the project in Ferizaj*

- “ -

Since the aim of the project was to reach marginalised groups, a comprehensive approach was taken to sharing information about the project's opportunity and that it was particularly aimed at those who had not had opportunities through other means - whether because of

gender, rural location or ethnic group. This meant not relying on single vectors for the information (as one interviewee said, 'Who can guarantee how well the Centre for Employment explains the project goals? Are they only informing their relatives?')

Strategies included:

Project staff arranging visits - via the heads of villages and schools - to 44 villages around Ferizaj to present the project

Fliers and posters

Information through website and social media

Door to door visits

Radio

Sharing information with other NGOs, university, Employment Centre

“

***I knew I had an advantage as an Ashkali***

*Young man who set up his own business through the project, Ferizaj*

”

“

***I'm 48. I'd been a housewife. Time is passing - this is our last chance***

*Woman who attended training, Ferizaj*

”



“

**No-one had given this chance to women before. I only had 4 years at school**

*Woman who was trained through the project in Ferizaj*

”

“

**Most projects are for under-30s. But if you work with cows you aren't under 30. I didn't want something to do with computers. I couldn't get into other projects because of my age**

*Woman who started her business through the project,  
South Mitrovica*

”

“

**I am now telling other projects about Caritas' approach using radio, social media, website, village heads, schools**

*Project point of contact at EU office*

”

“

**I had never gone to the villages: we just stayed in the office or visited businesses. Other officers told me they used to do that but I'd never seen it**

*Member of staff at Employment Centre, Ferizaj*

”

As a result, the 45 project beneficiaries interviewed had first heard about the project from a total of 16 different sources (see Annex 1)

256

*applications were received*

## II. Free support for writing business plans

An innovation of the project was that applicants were not invited to submit a business plan on the basis

of which a decision could be made as to whether they would win a grant for their business. Instead, they were invited to attend training to support them to write a business plan.

“

***My experience was that to get a grant you had to pay something like 20% - or 400 euro - for a 2000 euro machine. Caritas was better than all the others***

*Woman who was awarded a material grant in the project*

”

“

***I was worried you'd have to pay: some training you had to pay 200 – 300 euro for a business plan to apply. This one you didn't have to pay and it's better to write a plan yourself so you know what's in it***

*Woman who set up her own business. South Mitrovica*

”

“

***I used to give out money without keeping track. Now I've learned about a business plan and I take care of every 50 cent piece***

*Woman who set up business through project in Ferizaj*

”

**50** applications were shortlisted to receive business plan training, resulting in **44** business plans submitted for material grants. **31** of these were from women and **13** from youth (of the youth, **7** were male and **6** female)

### III. Selecting beneficiaries for grants

“

**The assessment of applications was done without outside interference – this didn't happen outside of the Caritas project**

*Member of the management committee*

”

Once the women and youth had been trained in writing business plans, a rigorous approach was taken to ensuring a fair assessment for which plan would be selected for funding with a material grant. The detailed process made a significant impression on Employment Centre staff and the Management Committee.

Together, the members of the committee (with participation of local professional associations, and

Employment Centres in Ferizaj and Mitrovica) individually assessed each application in turn, looking at applications by number, without names, to secure against the influence of *njofësi*. Assessment was done using agreed criteria and the final number of points, amalgamated from the individual evaluations, was then used to identify the winners. The codes of the successful applications was then shared on the website for transparency for applicants.

**25 applicants**

**were selected to receive material grants**



### IV. Training – technical and soft skills

“

**You can't just put flowers in water and wait until they sell**

*Woman who started her own business through the project in Ferizaj*

”

The need for practical training on both technical and soft skills is acute. The practical part of secondary education in Kosovo is very weak and even technical education is very theoretical so there is a high demand for training. The project met this demand with training including sales, marketing, mission, vision, how to write a letter of motivation, accounting as well as technical training on *hairstyling, beauty,*

*baking, tailoring, webdesign.*

Trainers were licensed to issue internationally-recognised certificates at the end of the course.

A repeated theme was how the training was made accessible and relevant to participants who had often had very little formal education or had been out of the education system for a long time.

**134** people obtained certificates.

**101** of these were young people (**51** male, **50** female) and a further **33** were older women.

A repeated theme was how the training was made accessible and relevant to participants who had often had very little formal education or had been out of the education system for a long time.

*“The women didn’t understand business plans – they didn’t know what a ‘vision’ or ‘mission’ was. Some hadn’t completed school so I had to make it simple. ‘Let’s say you were going to sell pite pies. How much does a kilogram of flour cost, how much does a tepsi baking tray cost? How much electricity do you need?’ (Trainer, Ferizaj)*

*“They explained things in a way for normal people to understand -*

*simply, to fit with our age” (Woman who set up business through project in South Mitrovica)*

*“They made the training appropriate for us. The trainers were higher up than us but I told them to speak kaptundar (‘like people from the villages’) (Woman who set up her own business through the project in South Mitrovica)*

*“My advice to someone else who might be interested in doing the training: Write down everything they say in the training – the slides say it one way but they explained it in a way that I understood” (woman who set up business through the project in South Mitrovica)*

“

***I told the trainers to speak like people from the villages***

*Woman who started her own business through the project in South Mitrovica*

”

“

***The training gave us the courage to start work and not to stay at home.***

*Woman trained in the project in Ferizaj*

”

“

**If people are interested in learning they're interested in working**

*Employer, North Mitrovica*

”

## V. Material grants

“

**If you'd given me money, I would have spent it that day**

*Youth who started his own business through the project in Ferizaj*

”

The successful applicants for material grants received the equipment they had applied for including:

A professional florist's table

Scaffolding

Carwash equipment

A fridge

KitchenAid

A computer for design

A printer to produce cookie cutters

Pasteurisation equipment for canning

A machine for making filo pastry

An incubator

“

**I was worried about having expensive stock (flowers) which would spoil if I didn't sell them right away. Getting a fridge made the difference and I now have time to get orders ready**

*Florist who set up in business through the project in Ferizaj*

”

“

**We've had a trade for a long time, but if you don't have the equipment then you have nothing**

*Youth who started his own business through the project in Ferizaj*

”

“

**My customers come to me not just because of my work but because of the equipment I have.**

*Young man who set up in a car wash business through the project, Ferizaj*

”

“

**I didn't consider doing the work professionally before because the machines are so expensive**

*Woman who set up in business through the project, North Mitrovica*

”

“

***If you don't have equipment then it doesn't matter whether you have family or employees – it's all worthless***

*Woman who started her own business through the project in South Mitrovica*

”

## VI. Individual support for starting work

“

***It's not just getting the grant; it's putting what you spend it on to good use***

*Woman who set up in business in Ferizaj*

”

“

***I don't want money; I want work***

*Young Ashkali man in Ferizaj who started his own business with a material grant through the project*

”

The project continued to support the former and current jobseekers with 1:1 support. Those who had successfully completed training were matched with internship opportunities, and jobs and

mentoring were secured for marginalised jobseekers. Five professional associations were identified and given support to offer mentoring to jobseekers.

“

***I show them - by example - that they can succeed***

*Professional association, Mitrovica*

”

**114** people were trained in job hunting –  
**82** young people (**41** male, **41** female) and  
a further **32** older women

**24\*** project beneficiaries are now  
self-employed

**17** women, **7** youth (of the young people,  
**6** male, **1** female)

**\*1** young woman selected for a material grant  
was unable to start her business  
for medical reasons

**25** companies offered internships

More than **110** project beneficiaries  
registered at Employment Centres



### VII. Study visits

The project planned opportunities to expand the horizons of stakeholders at all levels. For those who set up in business, trips were organised to Serbia and Albania to visit other businesses in similar fields, and to trade fairs. Staff from the municipalities and from Employment Centres had a study visit to France.

As well as the knowledge gained, the benefits of these trips included consolidating relationships between the different stakeholders travelling together from Kosovo. Staff from the public sector also commented that the project had demanded additional work from them for which they received no other compensation. The study visit to France was therefore also welcomed as a bonus which acknowledged their work, and staff commented on the prestige it gave them in

the eyes of job-seekers and local businesses too.

The risk of study visits to more affluent countries is to reinforce the lack of resources in the home country and leave visitors with a sense of increased respect for countries outside their homeland but increased despair at being able to do anything with far fewer resources. In this case, participants commented specifically that 'Even though the budget is much bigger, we can take the model.' The social businesses visited also prompted reflections e.g. on alcohol and drug problems dealt with in France which are not widely acknowledged in Kosovo. Participants also commented on the link between local authorities and social businesses and on the careful reporting on impact.

Another owner of a business set up through the project commented on the value of the trade fair in Albania

where he saw the 'exact machines I needed'

“

***The study visits to Belgrade, Albania and Novi Sad took me away from my work and motivated me, giving me the chance to exchange experience.***

*Woman who'd set up her own business in South Mitrovica*

”

## VIII. Networking

Of the study visits conducted, the one with the most direct impact on return was to the network of women who'd set up their own businesses in Serbia. The women who were inspired by this have now set

up a similar network connecting a total of 44 women and their café and shop - showcasing products from women-owned businesses - opened just before the project ended.



### IX. Caritas' reputation

“

***I wouldn't have accepted the project from any other NGO because I wouldn't have believed that the activities would have been done honestly***

*Director of Ferizaj Employment Centre*

”

From professional associations, the Management Committee, Employment Centre staff and the business community, interviewees commented on the power of Caritas' good reputation. Many had worked with Caritas in different capacities – e.g. attending training when they were

at high school, working together when in a previous NGO. The number of people who know of Caritas grows with each successful project, and each of these then contributes to the willingness of potential partners to work together in the future.

# How the project did it: cross-cutting approaches



I. Partnership: if you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together

“

**When I fit a kitchen, I call my plumber friend to do the taps**

*Youth who started his own carpentry business through the project in Ferizaj*

”

Partnership was one of the ‘guiding principles’ in the creation of the project and applied to a range of stakeholders – bringing together civil society, local institutions, and business in the service of jobseekers. The range of partners was diverse and when interviewees were asked who helped in the project’s achievements they identified 17 different actors. When asked ‘who helped’ interviewees identified 17 different actors.

The project was led by a management committee which met regularly to review project progress and identify and deal with issues before they became problematic. The committee had representation from all the municipalities involved in the project and from local businesses and with rotating participation from

the women and young people being trained and supported into work.

The partnership was not just on paper, and project partners talked about the realities of making such relationships work. An example given was from a partner NGO who saw that project participants did not know enough about the work of the Employment Centres so offer 10 minutes to Employment Centre staff at the beginning of appropriate NGO meetings, so the Employment Centres can introduce their work to participants. One member of the management committee referenced previous experiences where ‘partnership’ had not been so positive and ‘In the past, organisations used us and our money and it all came out as their work’.

They also identified how a meaningful partnership was a foundation for greater sustainability of the work (see 3bviii, below) – ‘The Employment Centre, vocational training school, other schools, the municipal youth department and NGOs are all joined up and can work in the future’ as one of the members of the management committee said.

Each of the actors appreciated what was brought by the others – as the

Director of the employment centre in Mitrovica said, ‘the fact that other actors was involved increased the value’, and members of the management committee also appreciated the different backgrounds they brought. Similar diversity was found and appreciated in the ethnicity of project staff, beneficiaries and other partners – from Albanian, Serbian, Bosnian, Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities.

“

***What would I say to someone interested in joining this kind of training? You’ll meet new people and different communities. You’ll change your mind about other communities and you’ll help each other. When you’re friends you’ll have a better time.***

*Young men trained through the project in South Mitrovica*

”

Working in partnership doesn’t necessarily mean that decisions move fast, and one interviewee identified that the adaptations that had to be made to the project took time to be agreed by all but was worth it for the ownership that resulted. A similar approach was taken at the level of procurement of the material grants which was a process that the beneficiaries took part in even though this

was slower.

The most dramatic example of the project’s achievements in partnership was the network of 44 women-owned businesses mentioned above. The women’s vision is to connect their businesses for a complete service for customers – for example for a wedding they can offer to make the dress, decorate the table, make the cake and offer food.



“

**We want it to be that when someone comes to buy from one of us, they get passed on to the others**

*Woman who has set up her own business through the project in Ferizaj*

”

Specific networking was evident throughout the project – as the interviewer sat down to interview a business owner who was offering internship to one of the young women supported through the pro-

ject, the member of Caritas staff who had set up the interview was hastily passing on the details of another beneficiary who would be able to help with the business' need for fresh flowers.

“

**There were women who got grants to open hairdressers or tailoring shops and I did the plastering thanks to the Caritas contacts**

*Young man who opened business through the project in Ferizaj*

”

The practical conditions for partnership around space-sharing recurred as a theme which took on an almost metaphorical implication. One member of the management committee said of their partnership, “it was like all being in one office.” The head of the employment centre in

Ferizaj said of his offer to Caritas, “I offered them space here – to use this space as if it were a Caritas building” and the NGO who offered mentoring to job-seeking women said of the same employment centre, “We were able to use space as if it were our own office.”

Meanwhile, Caritas staff talked about how they had told beneficiaries about the Caritas offices that 'this is your home' so that these project partners 'came and went comfortably because of the open door policy.'

It seems likely that this partnership was possible because of strong shared values, and one that came through strongly was the commitment to 'wanting to help'

***"I know that Caritas staff have the same satisfaction – helping someone when you don't need to help them" (Director of Employment Centre, Ferizaj)***

***"I wanted to help" (employer, North Mitrovica)***

***"What would you tell someone interested in joining the training? You'll meet new people and different communities. You'll change your mind about other communities and you'll help each other" (trained youth, South Mitrovica)***

***"The best feeling is helping someone" (Director of Employment Centre, Mitrovica)***

***"Desire to help others and build the community – these are the values of both Diakonie and Caritas" (Member of staff at Diakonie)***

### II. Communication

One contributing factor to these partnerships was effective communication by the project team with key individuals – in particular, that which was matched to the realities

of project partners' lives and involved 'good listening' and was what the EU point of contact described as 'open and transparent'.

“

**Information about the project didn't stay at one level – it went upwards and downwards**

*Member of management committee*

”

“

**Caritas gave a fast response to beneficiaries and applicants – this doesn't happen in the municipality**

*Member of management committee*

”

“

**Daily communications, regular meetings – that gives you a sense that things are moving forward. They send emails and check by phone whether we received them**

*Member of management committee*

”

”

**Constant communication with the women in the project at weekends and in the evening on Viber with groups such as one just for the women being trained on beauty therapy**

*Caritas staff member*

“

“

**If you had feedback, how did you pass it to the team? I'd have a coffee with a member of staff and tell them about it**

*Member of management committee*

”

”

**We have official co-ordination meetings but we also have coffee and phone calls**

*Caritas staff member*

“

The project Facebook page has **764** followers

### III. Relationship-building: How strong is your coffee?

This communication in turn built another feature of the project's success, which was the quality of relationships and the care invested in them: not only between members

of the Caritas team and project partners but, for example, between trainers and course participants which led to better learning and motivation.

“

***The Caritas staff were like members of the family***

*Woman trained in the project in Ferizaj*

”

“

***In the first training session, we women were as silent as statues and the trainer had to keep trying. We were welcomed so well***

*Woman trained in the project in Ferizaj*

”

“

***“I went out for coffee with the participants in the training and we got close” (Caritas staff member)***

***“People want to see you so we go and have a coffee. We go to their homes and we ask about their children” (Caritas staff member)***

***“If we see each other in the street, we stop and have a coffee” (Member of management committee)***

”

IV. You can have as many projects as you like; it's these people who make them happen (Director, Ferizaj Employment Centre)

Appreciation for the particular skills and characteristics contributed to the project by key individuals in the Caritas team came through from beneficiaries as well as in the perspective of employers, Employment Centre staff, the management committee or the EU. These members of

staff were particularly singled out for praise for their 'energy', being 'non-stop active', their communication skills, how they 'bring people together', how 'nothing is too much trouble', how one staff member 'doesn't just want to do well for herself, but for everyone'. As the Director of the Ferizaj Employment Centre says, 'You can have as many projects as you like; it's these people who make them happen'

V. Steve Jobs didn't create the iPhone 12 to start with: adaptation and improvement

Another factor for the project's success was the willingness to adapt.

This was, of course, necessary in the context of the pandemic, but was also seen in the attitude to details such as course content.

“

***“If you adapt things then you can get anyone on board”***

***“Training providers were very good at adapting their curricula”***

***“On the basis of feedback, we created a new option for applications online and we ended up having more online than hard copy”***

*Caritas team members*

”

### VI. Beyond the numbers: socio-economic development not just economic development

“

***When we wake up in the morning, we know where we're going***

*Youth who started his own business through the project in Ferizaj*

”

There were other ways the project was not restricted to the achievements set out in the project document – impact went way beyond

the targeted numbers for engagement, as evidenced by the life-changing effect of the opportunities shared.

”

***Advice for someone else doing a similar project?  
Invest time and money in outreach. It takes energy but it's what makes the project have a bigger impact that you don't see in the numbers***

*Caritas team member*

“

“

***I found out who I was***

*Comment by three women in different focus groups in Ferizaj*

”



“

***I was a day labourer. Now I'm the boss***

*Young man supported to start his own business  
through the project in Ferizaj*

”

“

***When I have something to do, I wake up and I  
know I'm going to go to the training and I  
organise my life better***

*Woman trained in North Mitrovica*

”

“

***We've changed in how we talk now, in how we  
present ourselves***

*Woman trained in the project in Ferizaj*

”

“

***They taught us to ask for what we want***

*Woman trained in the project in Ferizaj*

”

“

**I learned how to go to the municipality – we would go before but we were shaking**

*Woman trained in the project in Ferizaj*

”

“

**We have more courage now**

*Youth trained through the project in Ferizaj*

”

“

**We were shy. Now I have a certificate in my hand I know I have something. I had it inside but I didn't know it**

*Woman trained through the project in Ferizaj*

”

“

**My ultimate goal is to be independent– then your children and your husband treat you better**

*Woman who started her own business through the project in South Mitrovica*

”

“

**The grant gave me a push to go forward. It gives you hope**

*Woman who started her own business through the project in South Mitrovica*

”

“

**Women full of hope that they could do something for themselves**

*EU point of contact*

”

“

**I used to worry what people would say. Then I learned to trust myself – become mistress of myself**

*Woman who started her own business through the project in South Mitrovica*

”

“

**When you have a goal, things get easier**

*Woman who started her own business through the project in South Mitrovica*

”

“

***I'm not waiting on my husband – I feel good***

*Woman trained in South Mitrovica*

”

“

***I learned to see myself as something bigger***

*Woman who was trained through the project in Ferizaj*

”

“

***“My work is to do with capitalism and this project has to do with people in need and maybe I didn't know people like this existed***

*Member of the Chamber of Commerce, Ferizaj*

”

“

***Women learned to have faith in their ideas***

*Member of the management committee*

”

VII. You can't stop once you start.  
I started with one hive and now  
I have 65: the multiplier effect

“

**People have helped me so I want to help others**

*Youth who has started his own business through the project in Ferizaj*

”

The transformation which some project partners talked passionately about also motivated them to 'pay it forward' with a multiplier effect

where they shared with others the opportunities they had had in the project.

“

**If someone gives you help then you have to contribute your effort**

*Woman who set up her own business through the project in Ferizaj*

”

“

**My ultimate goal is for people to start and grow businesses and then to come and ask for employees from us**

*Member of Employment Centre staff, Ferizaj*

”

“

***I was an intern and now I have an intern***

*Young man who started her own business through  
the project in Ferizaj*

”

“

***Women in my village see me going to the  
training sessions and ask me 'where can we do  
it?' – all women want to find themselves***

*Woman trained through the project in Ferizaj*

”

“

***My two brothers' wives from Kaçanik did an  
internship at the same place because of me***

*Woman trained through the project in Ferizaj*

”

“

***The EU's latest scheme is specifically for  
NGOs with businesses and the public sector –  
as a result of the experience with this grant  
scheme, so Caritas was a trailblazer***

*EU point of contact*

”

“

***I see the impact of the project in the creation of positive role models in the community***

*Caritas team member*

”

VIII. Sustainability: we didn't give them fish; we taught them how to fish – for grants

The 'multiplier effect' is part of the project's wider commitment to sustainability. Some of those who benefited from the project have already won further grants. One woman with a plan for a goat farm, whose application for a material grant was not successful, has nevertheless

opened her farm with her own funding.

In addition, the project drew attention to the Employment Centre for both job-seekers and employers, and to the effectiveness of internships – one employer said, 'I contacted the faculty of journalism about taking on journalism students for an internship after the success with this intern.'

“

***This is not about giving flour and oil but economic development***

*Caritas team member*

”

“

***Young people have started to believe they can stay in Kosovo – if they see that people invest in their ideas***

*Member of the management committee*

”



IX. 'We are the ones who get up before everyone else': developing a work ethic

“

**If only everyone could work like bees**

*Woman who has started her own apiary through the project in South Mitrovica*

”

Another feature of the project's success has been the clear connections it has created between skill/ work

and success: the opposite of believing in njofësi.

“

**When you work you can achieve something. If you don't, you'll get nothing**

*Woman who started her own business through the project in Ferizaj*

”

“

**People say that you must have only had success through knowing the right people. because that's the way this society is. They don't know about the 7am wake-up calls and all the work, just so as not to depend on men**

*Woman who started her own business through the project in Ferizaj*

”

“

**My advice for someone interested in doing what I've done? 'Don't sleep; work'**

*Woman who started her own business through the project in Ferizaj*

”

“

**I started selling knitted things at the market and people gave me commissions and I made sure to have the things ready for them within a week. Step by step I expanded, and now look at me!**

*Woman who started her own business in the project in Ferizaj*

”

“

**I had an order for a cake and the power went off. My neighbour has a generator so I asked if I could pay for the fuel and use her oven. I had to go out in the rain and I didn't make any profit on that sale but I did it**

*Woman trained in the project in Ferizaj*

”

“

**You have to make your luck. God will do a bit  
and you do your bit.**

*Woman trained in the project in Ferizaj*

”

“

**People say ‘how can you get up early?’ But you  
know you’ll get something out of it.**

*Woman trained in the project in Ferizaj*

”

# Recommendations



'What advice would you give to someone interested in doing something similar?'

a) Approach solutions to unemployment drawing on the skills and experience of a range of **partners** from institutions, businesses and civil society. Commit to this partnership in its practical implications – e.g. for space-sharing – and not just on paper.

b) End the practice of inviting applications for support to businesses through **business plans**. This can be a barrier to participation for able but inexperienced entrepreneurs. Other organisations will benefit from approach taken by this project to instead inviting applications to join training on writing a business plan.

c) Be intentional, explicit and detailed in the processes and practices that ensure truly **fair and transparent selection** for any employment or training opportunities.

d) **Adapt training** to the needs and style of participants, speaking in terminology and with examples that make sense to their daily reality.

e) Use **study visits** in the region and beyond to inspire participants and share practice, looking for practical outcomes or replications of good practice that will be possible.

'I would have paid to go on that study visit, given what I learned' (Founder of local business association)

f) 'Formal environments limit you': Match project **communications** to the needs and preferences of partners, using instant messaging and phone calls – and coffee – where appropriate rather than depending on formal email trails.

g) Recognise and share awareness of the fact that plans may have to **adapt** and invite feedback in order to do so effectively.

h) Look for **multiplier effects** – how project participants can become ambassadors within and beyond their communities. Future training could even include explicit coaching for this role. These materials themselves contribute to Caritas' ability to share with other NGOs their learning on how to lead a project like this. They should also be shared with relevant ministry and municipality staff  
 'A successful person takes others with him'

i) Be creative and energetic in **reaching out to new potential participants** from excluded groups to inform them about project opportunities. Use village systems, schools, social media, local partners, local media...  
 'Go out and inform schools, rural areas, heads of villages, social networks' (staff from Employment Centre, Ferizaj)

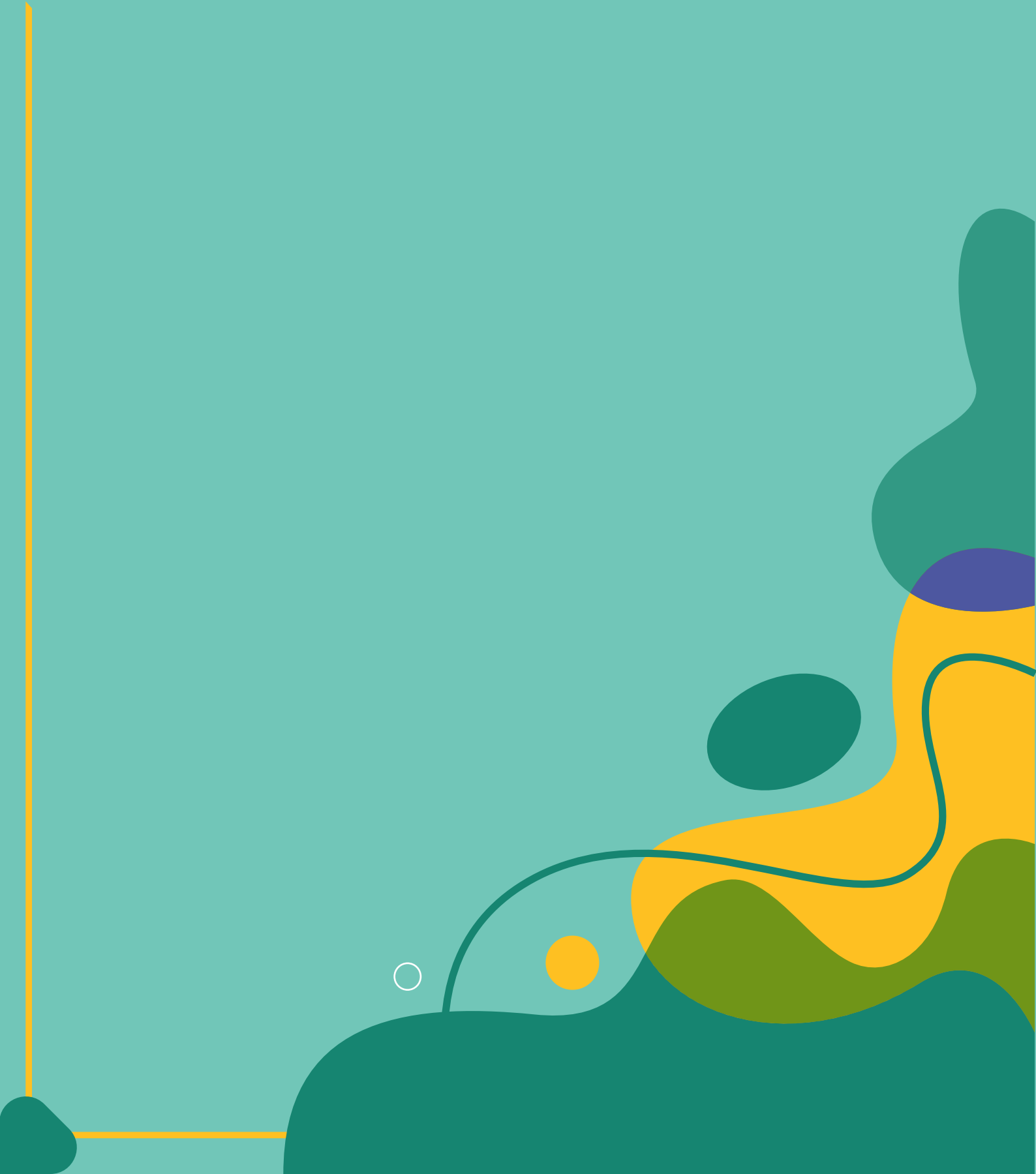
j) Accompany material grants with **training** not just on technical skills but on marketing, budgeting, sales etc.

'Make sure the training is long enough to get participants talking' (trainer from Ferizaj NGO)

k) Encourage **networking** rather than competition between beneficiaries of grants or training.

'We need to be networked' (head of NGO in Ferizaj offering mentoring to job-seekers)

# Methodology



The information gathered here was collected through:

- *Desk research* including Caritas' materials titled *To combat trafficking in human beings: capitalization of 9 years of experience (2020)* and *Empowering Youth and Women towards Employment in Ferizaj and Mitrovica* project documents including log frame

- **11 focus groups**

- **17 one-to-one semi-structured interviews** (one on Zoom, all others in person)

- *Specific data excerpted from the project database at the consultant's request*

- *The draft report was then reviewed by key partners at a **workshop**. Suggested additions and refinements which were proposed at this workshop were then incorporated into the final version.*

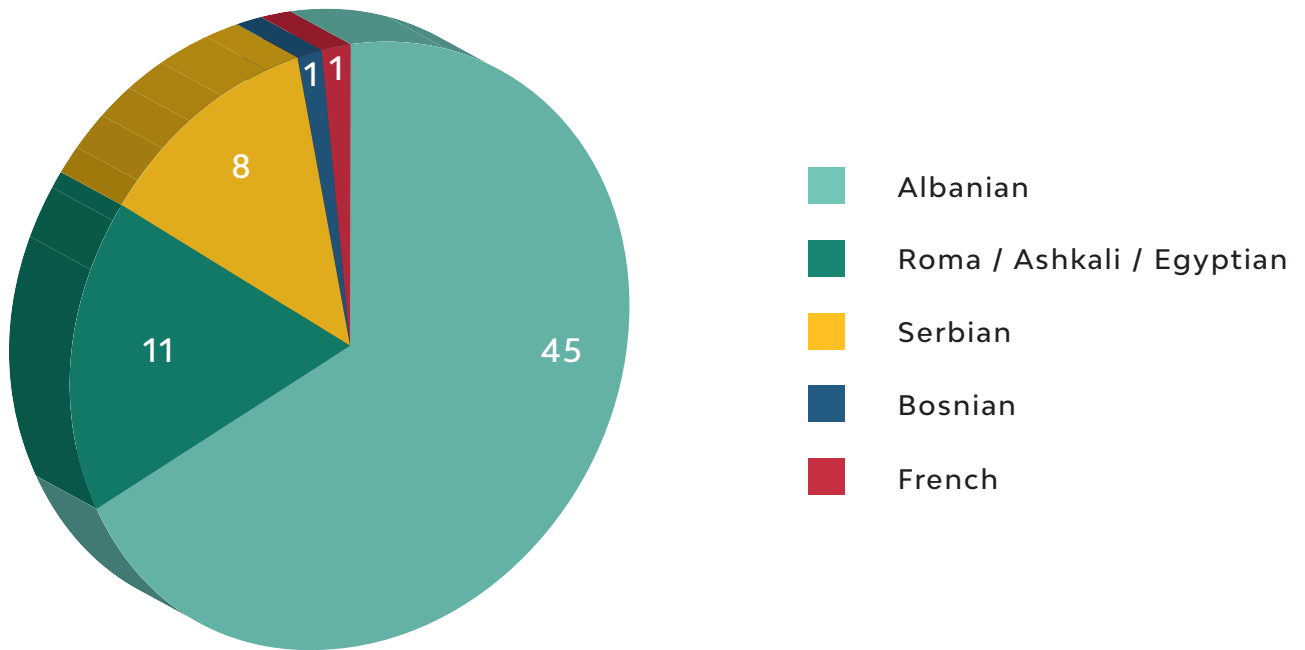
- *Processes for gathering stories were shared at a workshop as capacity building for Caritas staff for future projects.*

The interviews and focus groups were structured around the questions which can be seen in the annex. A suggested list of characteristics (e.g. location, gender, experience in project) for the participants for each interview was prepared by the consultant. Project staff then identified the feasibility of each group and invited appropriate participants.

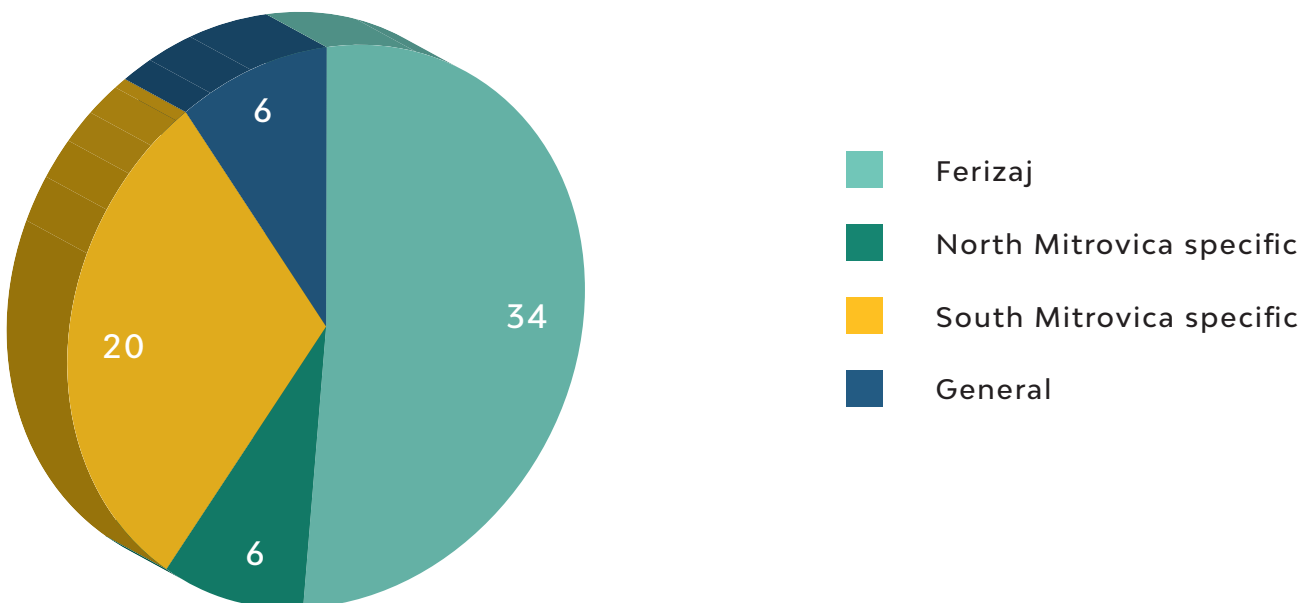


Total people interviewed = 66

### Ethnicity



### Geographic focus



### Gender

