

ANNUAL REPORT 2023



Balkan Sunflowers

Volunteers for Social Reconstruction

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Appreciation Message

Dear Supporters,

As we close the chapter on 2023, I want to take this moment to express our profound appreciation for the incredible support we have received throughout the year. Your belief in our mission and your unwavering generosity have fueled our efforts to uplift the Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities across Kosovo. It is because of you that we have been able to push the boundaries of what is possible in education, healthcare, and social inclusion.

This year has not been without its difficulties, but the challenges only strengthened our resolve to do more. Your contributions empowered us to ensure that every child who walked into our Learning Centers had the opportunity to thrive in an environment that fosters growth, respect, and understanding. Beyond education, your support has allowed us to expand our health initiatives, reaching more families than ever before with life-changing services.

None of these accomplishments would have been possible without the tireless dedication of our volunteers, staff, and community partners. Their passion and commitment continue to be the backbone of Balkan Sunflowers Kosova, and I am continually inspired by their ability to go above and beyond to meet the needs of the communities we serve.

Your continued faith in our work not only encourages us but propels us forward as we look ahead to the challenges and opportunities of 2024. Together, we are creating a future where marginalized communities can stand on equal ground, where every child has access to quality education, and where every individual is treated with the dignity and respect they deserve.

On behalf of the entire team at BSFK, thank you for standing with us. Your support makes a world of difference, and we are truly grateful.

Sincerely,

Ferdane Asllani, Executive Director

About Balkan Sunflowers Kosova

Balkan Sunflowers Kosova focuses primarily on community, human dignity, children, and youth. Our work encompasses the protection of fundamental human rights and fostering the social, emotional, and intellectual growth of people across Kosovo. We are dedicated to empowering communities through the development and implementation of programs in education, research, advocacy, arts, culture, and other humanitarian initiatives.

Balkan Sunflowers (BSF) originally was an international grassroots organization, founded in 1999 to aid Kosovar refugees. Volunteers from around the world saw TV images of the war and refugee emergency. They wanted to help in ways that money could not. They believed that person-to-person contact with aid workers who came to work as friends and neighbors might help restore community life in ways that emergency aid and political support alone could not.

Balkan Sunflowers Kosova (BSFK) was registered in 2007 and gradually started a transformation from being an international organization to a local non-governmental organization, which is committed to improving the holistic well-being of people through practical, value-based, and community-supported activities in the cultural, educational, and research sector. BSFK is a multiplier, building activist lives and communities for social change and reconstruction. BSFK supports and develops volunteerism, activism, regional and international exchange, and local community action in support of human dignity and rights and also European integration.

During 2023 BSFK has more than 50 employees and 60 volunteers involved in a daily basis in different projects.

Balkan Sunflowers Kosova believes that volunteers, both international and local who participate in community life, are crucial in order to promote the ideals of a caring and open society.

BSFK is a nongovernmental and non-profit association with the following objectives that are specified within BSFK ISO 9001:2015 Quality Management System:

- **Improve the educational, social, psychological, health, emotional, and intellectual development of children and young people, their families, and communities.**
- **Advocate and mediate for the human rights of marginalized groups.**
- **Propel positive social change and support community empowerment through research, advocacy, training, mentoring, volunteerism, and innovative program development.**

At Balkan Sunflowers Kosova, our core mission is to advance community development, uphold human dignity, and create opportunities for children and youth to thrive. We are deeply committed to promoting human rights, fostering social and intellectual growth, and empowering marginalized communities across Kosovo.

Our approach centers on designing and delivering impactful programs in education, advocacy, arts, culture, and humanitarian support, all aimed at creating lasting change. Our organization is driven

by a dedicated team that is committed to excellence and a collaborative spirit, ensuring that the needs of our stakeholders and partners are always met.

By adhering to the highest standards of service delivery and quality management, including ISO 9001:2015, we continuously strive for improvement and innovation. This commitment guides our efforts to deliver top-tier services that reflect our values of responsibility, integrity, and care for those we serve.

Together, our management and staff are united in ensuring that we meet societal needs and enhance the well-being of the communities we support, driving progress and impact in every aspect of our work.

In order to achieve our goal, the management and the employees of BSFK are obliged to:

- **Ensure that we consistently meet the needs, expectations, and requirements of those we serve.**
- **Adhere to defined roles and established procedures in all operations.**
- **Fully comply with relevant European Services Directives.**
- **Continuously enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of our work processes and staff capabilities.**
- **Take proactive measures to prevent any potential issues or discrepancies.**
- **Implement, review, and uphold our commitment to quality management policies.**

Mission Statement

Balkan Sunflowers Kosova builds activist lives for social change. We inspire and engage in community action for human rights and dignity, working in education, health, culture, citizenship, employment, and respect for diversity.

2023 project activities and achievements

Learning Centers Network

➔ **The project aims to provide educational and social-emotional support for at least 600 children and youth from disadvantaged groups of society to promote their inclusion into the educational system and improve their future employment chances.**

Highlights of 2023:

- ✓ Total registered children: 600+.
- ✓ Programs conducted in Albanian and Serbian.
- ✓ The PACE program continued to improve language and math skills with over 500 children actively monitored and evaluated.
- ✓ Monthly average attendance of over 400 children.

The Learning Centers Network (LCN) is comprised of 5 centers situated in 4 municipalities across Kosovo. Its main target is to provide school support programs for children of Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities, and as well other communities when possible. Centers are located in Fushë Kosova (FKLC), Shtime (SHLC), Gračanica (GLC), Plemetina Village (PLC), Plemetina Social Housing Building (PBLC). The programs are offered in 2 languages, Serbian and Albanian. The center space is also used for wider community activities, including those of local NGOs. The centers target children from preschool through grade 9 with different academic and social activities aiming that children go in school, stay in school, and succeed in the school.

621 children benefited in 5 learning centers during 2023.

| | | FKLC Preschool monthly average attendance | FKLC monthly average attendance | GLC monthly average attendance | PBLC monthly average attendance | PLC monthly average attendance | SHLC monthly average attendance | 5 centers monthly average attendance | |
|--|--------|---|--|---|--|---|--|---|--------|
| Average attendance April- June 2023 | | 70 | 200 | 53 | 55 | 35 | 47 | 460 | |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| Total registered children (beneficiaries) | Male | 46 | 121 | 28 | 52 | 23 | 31 | 301 | 48.47% |
| | Female | 41 | 129 | 41 | 32 | 33 | 44 | 320 | 51.53% |
| | Totals | 87 | 250 | 69 | 84 | 56 | 75 | 621 | |

PACE Program

The Planned Activities for Cohesive Education (PACE) program was implemented daily across five learning centers. Monthly plans were developed using BSFK's activity guide, and both headquarters staff and learning center teams regularly monitored and assessed the progress of the children.

The PACE curriculum is available in Albanian, Serbian, and English, and is based on an activity book created by Learning Center Network (LCN) staff and an educational expert, drawing from various resource books and online materials. A key component of the program is Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), which is integrated into the daily schedule at all five centers. Each child attending the learning center has a personal folder that tracks their progress, and this data is regularly reviewed.

At the heart of PACE are structured activities that staff use to plan, execute, assess, and report on their work with the children. Each center conducts evaluations and feedback sessions twice a month to measure progress. The PACE curriculum includes numerous specific indicators that children are expected to achieve throughout the academic year. BSFK has streamlined these indicators to effectively monitor and evaluate children's development. The progress is measured and reported four times annually, with the following summary reflecting the evaluation across all centers.

| Summary 5 centers - PACE evaluation 2023 | | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Center | Total children registered in LC | Number of students evaluated | Average grade for language | Average grade for Mathematics | Average grade all subjects |
| FKLC | 331 | 172 | 2.31 | 2.53 | 2.48 |
| GLC | 69 | 57 | 2.62 | 2.41 | 2.97 |
| PBLC | 86 | 63 | 3 | 3.29 | 3.15 |
| PLC | 58 | 47 | 3.46 | 3.73 | 4.15 |
| SHLC | 75 | 66 | 3.17 | 2.97 | 3.39 |
| Totals | 619 | 405 | 2.91 | 2.99 | 3.23 |

Table presents results for Language and math which are seen as the most important subject in the school. BSFK also have indicators for all subjects in the PACE. Out of 619 children attending Learning Centers, BSFK managed to monitor and evaluate 405 children. The average grade for language for children for all centers is 2.91. The average grade for Math is 2.99. The average grade for all other indicators (all subjects including math and language) is 3.33.

BSFK monitor children's progress in the school by gathering school grades children get in the school. School grades of the children are gathered twice per year. In below table are average results of the school grades from two semester.

| Average grades all centers - 2023 | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Location | Number of students | Average grade all subjects | Average grade for language | Average grade for Mathematics |
| FKLC | 224 | 2.80 | 3.08 | 3.47 |
| PBLC | 54 | 2.43 | 2.36 | 2.88 |
| PLC | 52 | 2.33 | 2.25 | 2.94 |
| SHLC | 66 | 2.45 | 2.30 | 3.24 |
| GLC | 54 | 2.58 | 2.64 | 3.12 |
| | 450 | 2.52 | 2.53 | 3.13 |

Table presents results for Language and math which are seen as the most important subject in the school. Table presents indicators for all subjects as well. Out of 619 children attending Learning Centers, BSFK managed to monitor and evaluate 450 children. The average grade for language for children for all centers is 2.63. The average grade for Math is 3.13. The average grade for all other indicators (all subjects including math and language) is 2.52.

Summer Program 2023

The 2023 summer program served over 500 children with activities ranging from educational games to sports. The curriculum, designed by Learning Center staff, provided a rich combination of arts, crafts, language development, and physical activities.

Key Achievements:

- Children were engaged in creative arts, sports, and group activities.
- Increased focus on mental health and well-being through integrated sessions.
- Successful inclusion of children from various localities and diaspora communities.

The summer camp is a unique program of BSFK that is held each summer following the completion of the academic year. Every week, children develop various activities in the educational facilities.

The summer program preparations began on June 27 and ended on July 7. During the preparatory phase, a meeting was held on July 1, 2023, with 15 participants (10 female and 5 male) in Fushe Kosove. The majority of which were coordinators and facilitators from the five educational centers and the BSFK central staff. The draft program plan for four weeks of activities was developed during this meeting, and the topics were divided. Following the completion of the plan, the coordinators spend a week preparing with the staff members of each learning center.

The topics were prepared separately for each week:

- ✓ The first week, Time
- ✓ Second week, my Talent
- ✓ The third week, My homeland
- ✓ The fourth week, My body

Sports were also incorporated as everyday activities throughout the summer camp.

520 children benefited from different educational activities in centers provided during four weeks of the summer program. The average daily attendance was 365.

We are tremendously happy and proud of what the employees and volunteers at the learning centers have accomplished in creating the summer camp program over a period of four weeks. Our campers engaged in a variety of activities, learned new things, had fun, made new friends, and took part in a number of engaging games and challenges. The summer camp welcomed a lot of children from different municipalities as well as many children from abroad countries.

On the closing day of the summer camp, a show for the parents was also prepared in each center, in which the children showed some activities that they learned during the summer program to the parents, and the summer program was ended.

Awareness raising and immunization of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children

BSFK implemented project Awareness raising and immunization of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children. Project was supported by UNICEF Kosovo Office. Project was implemented in 12 municipalities of Kosovo. The main goal of the project was Increase access to immunization programmes for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children and as well increase awareness and as well the number of the beneficiaries of the Home Visiting Program.

BSFK employed 57 outreach workers and 5 community supervisors who implemented different project activities in 12 municipalities populated with higher number of the three communities.

Immunization:

- 2,612 families reached, with 646 children immunized through door-to-door campaigns.
- 320 parents participated in immunization awareness workshops.

Home Visiting Program:

Our program reached 449 children and 108 pregnant women, significantly improving healthcare access and education for Roma communities.

Census awareness raising

Name of the project: Raise awareness of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities about importance of census

Project Objectives of the project were:

1. Raise awareness among the Ashkali community about the importance of population registration.
2. Ensure Ashkali community participation in the population registration process.

Expected Results:

1. Approximately 2,600 families were informed about the importance of population registration.
2. Active participation of the Ashkali community in the registration process.

Activities Conducted:

1. Staff Training (April 27-28, 2024):

BSFK and RADC organized training for field staff on how to approach families and explain the benefits and consequences of population registration. This training covered seven municipalities: Mitrovica, Prishtina, Ferizaj, Shtime, Lipjan, Obiliq, and Fushë Kosovo.

Door-to-Door Visits:

Following the training, field staff conducted visits to Ashkali families in seven municipalities to raise awareness:

- Lipjan: 320 families
- Shtime: 155 families
- Obiliq: 157 families
- Mitrovica: 336 families
- Ferizaj: 885 families
- Fushë Kosovë: 823 families
- Prishtina: 94 families

Total Families Visited: 2,735 families across seven municipalities.

Meetings with Community Representatives:

Field staff held meetings with local Ashkali leaders and officials from the Municipal Office for Communities and Return. Additionally, discussions with mosque imams helped spread awareness through Friday sermons.

Monitoring:

Continuous field visits by BSFK and RADC were conducted to monitor the process and assist field staff.

Project “Promoting Inclusion of Minorities through Art in Schools”

The project was funded by **UNMIK (United Nations Mission in Kosovo)** as part of its **Confidence Building Measures Projects** initiative. This program supports projects that aim to foster cooperation and inclusion among different communities in Kosovo, particularly minority groups.

Location: Mitrovica, Podujevo, Shtime, Gračanica, and Ferizaj municipalities in Kosovo

- **Objective:** The project’s overarching goal was to foster inclusion and cooperation between young people from minority communities through art. By forming theater groups in schools, students from diverse ethnic backgrounds collaborated on addressing common challenges faced by their communities. The theatrical performances were intended to raise awareness of these issues and promote inter-ethnic cooperation, with a focus on fostering better understanding and relationships between different communities.

Achievements:

1. Capacity Building:

- The project successfully engaged **96 students** from five different municipalities, representing various ethnic groups including Kosovo Albanian, Kosovo Serb, Kosovo Roma, and Kosovo Ashkali.
- Students, aged 13 to 16, received comprehensive training in theatrical skills such as acting, set design, directing, and scriptwriting.
- **Two-day workshops** were held in each municipality, equipping participants with the necessary tools to convey social issues through art.
- A key part of the capacity-building initiative was the inclusion of local mentors and professional theater trainers. The **mentorship program** not only focused on developing theater skills but also provided support and encouragement to students, especially those from marginalized communities.

2. Theater Performances:

- A significant milestone of the project was the **successful staging of five theater performances**, each prepared by student groups in their respective municipalities.
- These performances reflected real-life issues such as **bullying, human rights, and women’s rights**, which were identified and developed by the students themselves. This allowed participants to take ownership of their performances, making the messages more authentic and powerful.
- **Theatrical performances** were seen as an ideal platform for promoting important themes of diversity, inclusion, and cooperation, with the students playing an active role in shaping the narrative.
- While the performances successfully took place in four of the five municipalities, challenges arose in Gračanica where participation from the Kosovo Serb community declined. Despite this, the remaining performances involved a total of 89 students, demonstrating strong engagement from the Kosovo Albanian, Roma, and Ashkali communities.

3. Community Engagement and Impact:

- The project not only impacted the participants but also successfully reached out to the broader community. Performances attracted a diverse audience, including teachers, parents, students, and community stakeholders.
- **Promotion of the performances** was carried out via social media platforms, posters, and personalized invitations, ensuring that the events had visibility and attendance from local community members.
- In addition to fostering social cohesion among students, the project helped raise awareness of pressing social issues within these communities. Many attendees were witnessing student-led performances for the first time, making the events both impactful and educational.

Challenges:

1. Engagement Issues in Gračanica:

- Despite the project's overall success, engagement issues in Gračanica Municipality were a significant challenge. **Only eight children from the Kosovo Serb community** were able to participate initially, and this number declined as the project progressed.
- The decline in participation was attributed to a **lack of interest** from the children and possibly pressure from parents who had other expectations for their children's involvement in extracurricular activities.
- Multiple discussions with parents and attempts to re-engage students were made, but these efforts met with limited success. This lack of engagement ultimately resulted in the cancellation of the Gračanica performance.

2. Logistical Constraints and Scheduling Conflicts:

- Organizing rehearsals and performances during the winter break, coupled with busy school schedules, posed significant logistical hurdles.
- **Limited rehearsal space** in some schools and competing priorities for student time (especially during periods of cultural celebrations) also caused disruptions in the project's timeline.
- In some cases, schools were unable to provide adequate venues for the rehearsals, requiring the project team to find alternative spaces to ensure continuity. Despite these challenges, the team remained flexible, adapting the schedule and using improvisation to keep activities on track.

Conclusion:

The project **successfully achieved its primary objectives** of promoting inclusion, raising awareness of minority issues, and fostering inter-ethnic collaboration through the medium of theater. By actively involving students from diverse backgrounds and giving them ownership over the creative process, the project empowered young people to express themselves and advocate for change.

The performances served not only as artistic expressions but also as a platform for dialogue on important social issues, including **human rights, gender equality, and bullying**. The overall

response from both participants and the community was positive, with many stakeholders commending the project's impact on student confidence and community cohesion.

Despite some challenges, particularly in engaging the Serbian community in Gračanica, the project left a **lasting positive impact**. Plans for its continuation and expansion reflect the project's potential to create further positive change in Kosovo's diverse communities

Finances

Our organization has procurement regulations and is certified by ISO Standard 9001: 2015. The external audit of the organization is done every fiscal year. The organization is registered in the Tax Administration of Kosovo (TAK) and regularly declares VAT. Balkan Sunflowers Kosovo uses the QuickBooks financial system.

Balkan Sunflowers Kosova Profit and Loss Statement 31.12.2023

| | | Jan - Dec 22 |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Income | | |
| | 43400 · Grant Donations | 304,032.67 |
| | 44600 · URF Income | 4,500.00 |
| | 44605 · Rand Zachary Engel Donation | 1,043.13 |
| Total Income | | 309,575.80 |
| Gross Profit | | 309,575.80 |
| Expense | | |
| | BSFK Funds-URF | 168.00 |
| | Perspectives for children in th | 906.25 |
| | Jugend Eine Welt LC budget plan | 62,493.35 |
| | Kosint 2021 | 21,475.99 |
| | Council of Europe | 6,503.80 |
| | UNICEF Immuization | 92,316.93 |
| | MASHTI | 32,359.36 |
| | UNMIK 2022 | 17,461.85 |
| | Ministria e Financave | 87,001.85 |
| | UNICEF 2022 LCN | 64,509.43 |
| | Kosint 2022 | 11,720.51 |
| | Jugend Eine Welt 2022 | 15.00 |

| | | |
|---------------|--|------------|
| Total Expense | | 396,932.32 |
| Net Income | | -87,356.52 |

For more information, please visit:
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