

# *DRC KOSOVO*

*Returns and Communities Projects*

*2013*



**DRC** DANISH  
REFUGEE  
COUNCIL

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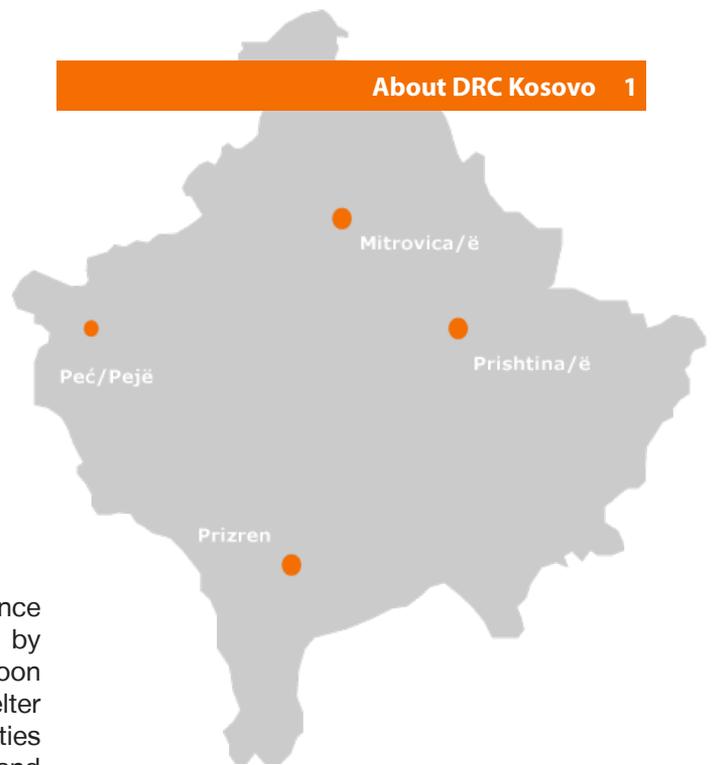
***For the past 15 years, Danish Refugee Council has assisted refugees and IDPs to return, reintegrate and rebuild their livelihoods in Kosovo***

DRC has operated continuously in Kosovo since 1998. Initially the assistance implemented by DRC focused on emergency aid, but was soon extended to logistics support, transport, shelter and reconstruction, income generating activities and social rehabilitation of IDPs, returnees and affected populations.

From 2003, DRC has focused increasingly on minority returns to Kosovo, a programme priority which has been developed in close cooperation with DRC Serbia & Montenegro.

Today, DRC continues to work towards the creation of a sustainable and durable returns process to Kosovo through targeting not only the physical requirements of returning refugees and IDPs, but also social and economic reintegration and development, improving living conditions, facilities and opportunities for both receiving and returning communities, safety and inter-ethnic dialogue.

DRC also strives to strengthen our local partners' capabilities, as well as empower and build capacity amongst local authorities to ensure the ongoing support for beneficiaries in Kosovo.



***Our impact***

Since 2003, DRC has returned 778 families to Kosovo with a total of 2945 individuals.

DRC implemented Kosovo-wide return projects in partnership with UNHCR, BPRM, EU, The British Embassy Kosovo, MCR, SMB and local partners and authorities.

DRC continues to support the reintegration of minority refugees, IDPs and Kosovo IDPs.

Current projects support the return of IDPs from Serbia, support return to Prizren town, provide economic support to returnees and minorities in Pejë/Pec, Istog/Istok, Prizren, Štrpce/Shtërpçë, Dragash/Dragas and provide socio-economic support to returned Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in Mitrovica/ë.

## 2 Reintegration and Community Stabilization



# U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

## Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration



This project will support the Kosovo Government's efforts in finding durable solutions for at least 26 displaced families in Serbia, and promoting socio-economic stabilization and increased prosperity of vulnerable returnee and minority communities.



Implementing Partner:  
Danish Refugee Council (DRC)

### Areas of Assistance:

- » Housing and referrals for harmonized assistance packages
- » Economic grants
- » Community development projects
- » Inter-ethnic dialogue and reconciliation initiatives
- » Technical assistance to central and local authorities

Project Start:  
September 2013

Direct Beneficiaries:  
170

Locations:  
Kosovo-wide

## ***Reintegration and Community Stabilization in Kosovo***

The BPRM-funded project will support at least 26 families returning to Kosovo from Serbia, and their wider communities. Danish Refugee Council, in partnership with LNGO Center for Peace and Tolerance, will employ an integrated response to returns and reintegration.

The project activities are divided into three complementary and inter-related components that will address the most important socio-economic reintegration needs and aim to reduce isolation of returnees using a rapid and flexible approach.

All activities will be coordinated with relevant institutions in Kosovo, Serbia, displaced persons and their representative bodies, BPRM and its partners, UNHCR, and other stakeholders to ensure that adequate support is available to returnees in pursuit of durable solutions and community stabilization.

### ***Activities***

#### **Assisting return**

DRC will directly provide or make referrals to other agencies for minor shelter repairs, provision of harmonized assistance packages, and income generation grants to 26 returnee families to Kosovo.

#### **Creating opportunities**

This project will also assist minority and remainee communities with economic stabilization initiatives by delivering joint grants together with field-focused technical advice to at least 4 joint economic initiatives/businesses. This will include creating livelihood linkages between minority communities and surrounding centers of trade and the wider economy.

The project will support several small-scale community projects/initiatives and 8 inter-ethnic dialogue events in cooperation with the Centre for Peace and Tolerance, that promote inter-ethnic cooperation and support reduction of the social isolation of minority returnee and remainee families.

#### **Sustainable reintegration**

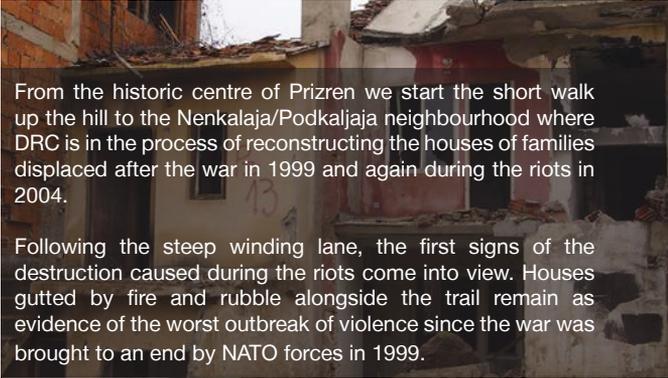
DRC will provide technical assistance to central and local authorities to enhance their capacities to address returnees' protection needs and civic rights and facilitate access to basic services, including personal and property documentation, health, education, legal and social services.

### **Sustainable Return to Nenkalaja/Podkaljaja**

Starting in 2011, Danish Refugee Council Kosovo facilitated the first organized Serbian urban return project 'Sustainable Return to Nenkalaja / Podkaljaja'. The project is co-financed by the British Embassy and the Ministry of Communities and Returns and implemented by the Danish Refugee Council and its partner Sveti Spas.

In collaboration with local partners, municipal authorities and the local community, DRC assisted the return and reintegration of 10 displaced minority families and individuals to the Nenkalaja / Podkaljaja neighbourhood in Prizren. Following the success of this first round of returns, DRC Kosovo is now in the process of rebuilding the homes of another 13 Kosovo Serb families and preparing for their social and economic reintegration into the local community.

Currently nine houses are under construction and work on the tenth is about to start. Seven heads of households returned to Prizren in March 2013 to be present during the construction of their houses.



From the historic centre of Prizren we start the short walk up the hill to the Nenkalaja/Podkaljaja neighbourhood where DRC is in the process of reconstructing the houses of families displaced after the war in 1999 and again during the riots in 2004.

Following the steep winding lane, the first signs of the destruction caused during the riots come into view. Houses gutted by fire and rubble alongside the trail remain as evidence of the worst outbreak of violence since the war was brought to an end by NATO forces in 1999.



Svetlana Nikolic

Along the way we meet with the oldest member among the 13 Serb families that are waiting to move into their reconstructed houses.

Svetlana Nikolic tells us about her daily routine since she arrived here in March. 'I walk up this hill every day. Once in the morning and then around 7pm we gather by the old stone bridge at the foot of the hill to look at our homes.'

At the age of 70, Svetlana is still in excellent health and the steep climb up the hill does not deter her. 'Until 2004, I never needed any kind of medication. The only thing that bothers me are my feet. They are old. If I could switch them for some animal's feet, a goat's perhaps, I would be very happy,' she chuckles. For Svetlana, this is the second time she sees her house being rebuilt. 'In 1999 my family and I fled Prizren after our house was burned to the ground, and in 2003 after my husband's death I returned by myself. My house was reconstructed then, but in 2004 during the riots it was destroyed again.'

Looking past her home into the distance, she recalls the events of the night when she was forced to leave everything behind for the second time. 'I was hiding with other women in my house. We were hiding in the basement and we were afraid. Later that night we sneaked out of the house. On our way down the hill we met an Albanian man who told us to come with him. He let us into his house where we stayed the night. The next morning his daughter called a contact to have KFOR pick us up and bring us to the KFOR barracks.'

For one year she lived at the KFOR base with her son and his children. After that they were housed in Brezovica collective centre near Prizren until she returned here in March to wait for the completion of the house.

'I have no worries for myself. If I can stay in my own home even if it was only for one night, I can die happy. I worry only about my son. He has two children and he is unemployed, so he and his family will stay here with me.'

A few metres away from Svetlana's house, we meet Ljubisa Jevtic who guides us through the rooms in his 2-storey house. He travelled here ahead of his wife who will join him once their home is completed. He is the youngest in the group and concerns about the future seem to occupy him more than some of the other returnees.

'After the house is constructed we are talking about the sustainability of return,' Ljubisa tells us in near perfect English. He taps his fingers against the yet-unfinished wall of what is to become the family's living room. 'We may have this, but we can't eat walls. A few years ago the main concern was security, but now this is not a problem. The problem is how to make a living. I was telling my neighbours that we should organize with the other returnees. They talk about technical details and construction issues but not about the future.'

Ljubisa is well spoken and confident in his demeanor when he presents his views. 'My family was displaced to Mataruška Banja which is 9km from Kraljevo in Serbia. The largest number of people displaced from Prizren was in Kraljevo and the surrounding area. In Kraljevo I was the president of an NGO with 6000 members. We lobbied the Serbian government to provide assistance to IDPs who used to work in state institutions in Kosovo.

That helped a little but I didn't have steady employment, just odd jobs here and there. It was very difficult to provide for my family.'



Ljubisa Jevtic

Upon his request, DRC designed the ground floor of Ljubisa's house to serve as two potential shops.

'I would like to open a business if possible. I have some plans to open a souvenir shop or perhaps sell chillies and other produce. There are many possibilities. Before the war I worked in a factory here as a food and vegetable engineer and later in a wine factory. But my last job was managing the cinema in Prizren. It was not related to my profession at all but things like that are possible here in Kosovo,' he smiles.

'I have a broad view on all this. I don't only see the walls here. I am talking about the return and my vision for Kosovo. Many Serbs are still afraid to travel in Kosovo, but I am not afraid.

In this multi-ethnic area we can all live together. Prizren has always been known for this and that's why this is possible here in Prizren.'



Ljubisa's house with ground floor shopfront.

## 6 Sustainable Return Prizren

As we make our way a little further up the hill, we are met by Moma and Olga Pavicevic. Standing on the balcony of their house overlooking the historic centre of Prizren we see what Ljubisa was talking about. The mosques, orthodox and catholic churches stand as a testament to a vibrant melting pot of cultures. To this day Prizren has three official languages: Albanian, Serbian and Turkish.

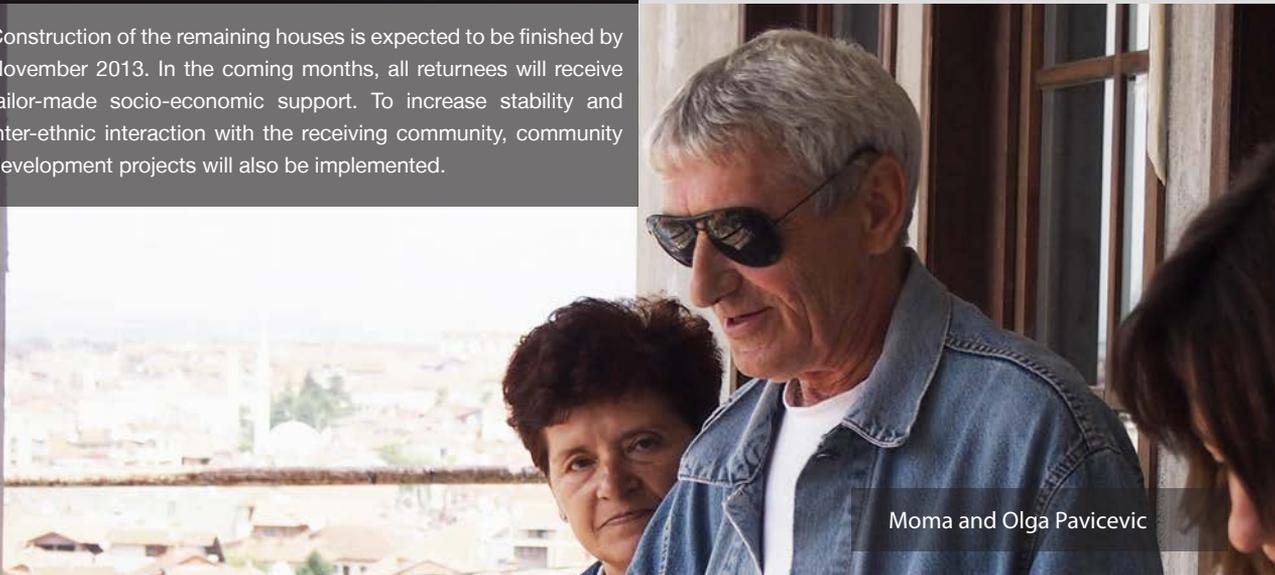
'Moma speaks Albanian, Turkish and Serbian of course. Before the war, we had a great life here. We went all around the town visiting friends. Nobody in Prizren closed their doors to us,' Olga tells us. 'We wanted to return because we can't live without Prizren,' adds Moma.

After the war the couple and their two daughters fled to Nis in Serbia where they had some distant relations and were able to rent a flat. While in displacement, both daughters got married in Nis. 'Our daughters have built a life for themselves in Nis, but for us things are different. We lived in Prizren for 50 years. It would take another 50 years in Nis to build the kind of friendships we had back here,' says Moma. Olga agrees: 'Life is much better for us here. We lost everything, but things, furniture and other material things can be replaced. Friendships cannot. We don't have any special needs. What is most important to us it to be back in our home.'



Olga looking out over Prizren from her balcony.

Construction of the remaining houses is expected to be finished by November 2013. In the coming months, all returnees will receive tailor-made socio-economic support. To increase stability and inter-ethnic interaction with the receiving community, community development projects will also be implemented.



Moma and Olga Pavicevic

## Community Stabilization Project

One of the main barriers to the stabilization of returnee and minority communities in Kosovo is a lack of economic integration. In addition, returnees and minorities face social isolation due to limited contact and connections with the majority populations, which further increases inter-ethnic tensions.

This lack of socio-economic conditions, coupled with insufficient institutional support, result in returnee and minority communities' lack of access to sustainable livelihood opportunities and destabilizing situations, which leads to low return rates and possible emigration.

This project seeks to ensure the sustainability of return and improve inter-ethnic relations by promoting the socio-economic stabilization of returnees, jointly with central and local authorities, through business and grant opportunities as well as inter-ethnic community projects that will enable them to build sustainable livelihoods and reduce inter-ethnic tensions.

Therefore, the project will build upon the good work of the UK Embassy and Ministry of Communities and Returns (MCR), who have already supported a critical number of minority families with socio-economic assistance.

This project will assist at least 20 small minority businesses, producers, processors and traders by delivering income generation grants together with field-focused technical advice and business management training.

This will include linking them to micro-finance institutions and aiming to create livelihood linkages between minority communities and surrounding centres of trade and the wider economy.

Finally, the project will support two small-scale community projects that promote inter-ethnic cooperation and support reducing the social isolation of minority returnee and remainee families.

### Locations

5 municipalities:

Pejë/Pec, Istog/Istok, Prizren, Štrpce/Shtërpcë, Dragash/Dragas



British Embassy  
Pristina



## ***Stabilization of Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptian Communities Project***

DRC Kosovo Stabilisation of Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptian (RAE) Communities Project in Roma Mahalla Mitrovicë/Mitrovica started in 2009.

The project combines economic development with activities geared towards supporting community development initiatives.

### **Economic development**

DRC Kosovo established a Social Business Incubator to increase the employability of members of the RAE community and support small entrepreneurial ventures in Roma Mahalla. The Incubator supplies subsidized work space to entrepreneurs and provides machinery and equipment for temporary use.

Apart from the physical infrastructure, mentoring and business trainings are an integral part of the Business Incubator.

To improve the prospects of employment for RAE youths, the Incubator offers vocational trainings and apprenticeships. Many of the businesses hosted at the Incubator have taken on apprentices and given them valuable vocational skills.

### **Community development**

The community development component focuses on education, cultural and environmental activities and women's empowerment.

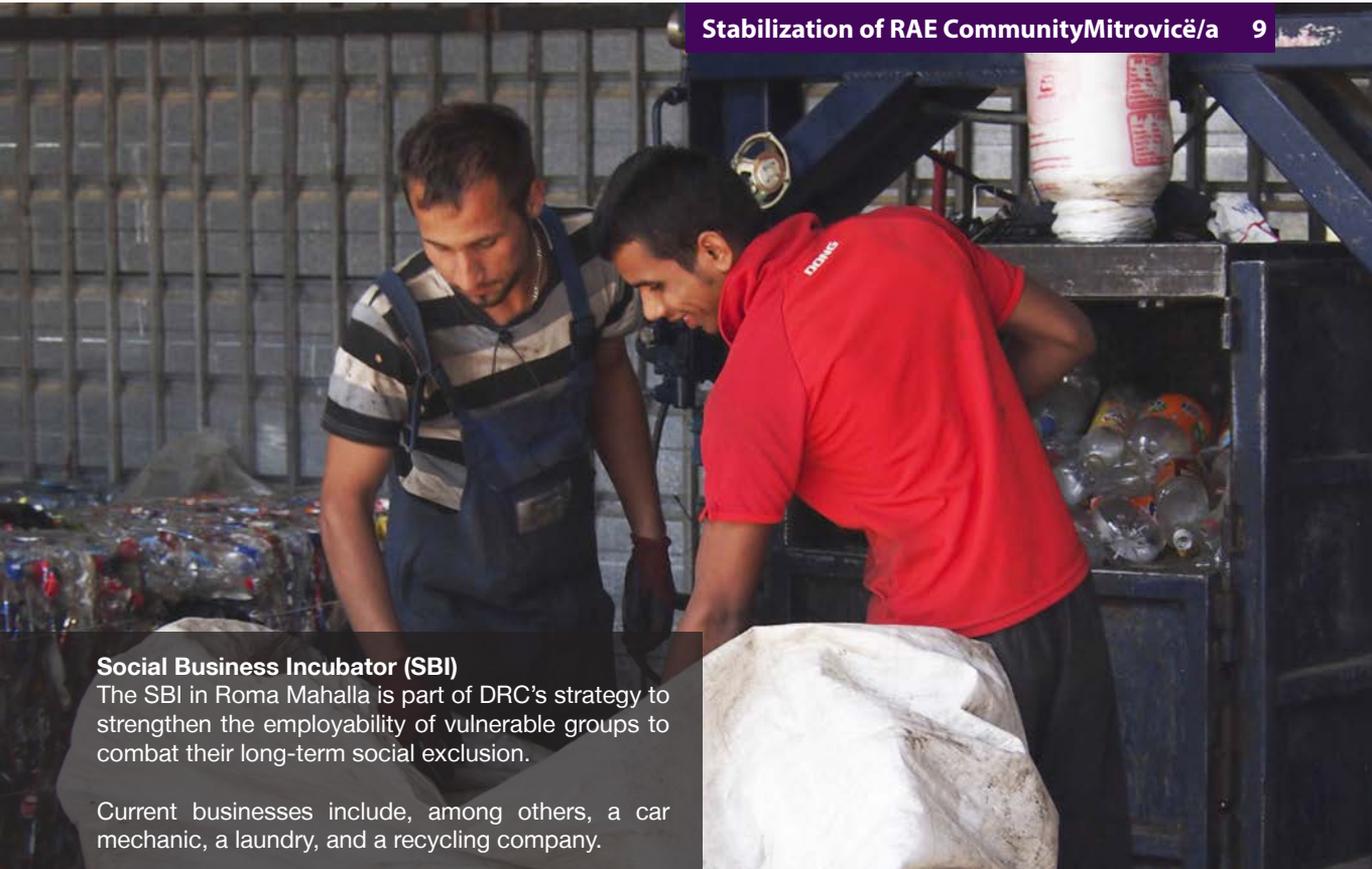
DRC Kosovo provides kindergarten and homework support services to RAE children and supports adults with basic literacy and numeracy skills.

DRC Kosovo supports Shukarno Talenti a dance troupe started by RAE youths in Roma Mahalla. The dance troupe gives youths an opportunity to develop their skills and build their capacity as a self-organized group.

DRC also supports community-driven initiatives to raise awareness of environmental protection and recycling, as well as sports activities.

To enable RAE women to develop their craft skills and to earn a modest income from selling their goods, DRC Kosovo provides handicrafts training to the local women's group.

DRC Kosovo Stabilization of Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptian (RAE) Communities Project in Roma Mahalla Mitrovicë/Mitrovica is funded by Sida.



### Social Business Incubator (SBI)

The SBI in Roma Mahalla is part of DRC's strategy to strengthen the employability of vulnerable groups to combat their long-term social exclusion.

Current businesses include, among others, a car mechanic, a laundry, and a recycling company.

### Achievements

- The Business Incubator supports over 10 start-up businesses with advisory services, technical assistance, space and equipment
- DRC Kosovo provided formal and on-the-job trainings to 109 individuals; 20 work placement opportunities, resulting in 11 permanent jobs; and 80 apprenticeships
- DRC has also established an active multi-stakeholder community board which meets on a bi-weekly basis to ensure a transparent and participatory approach to all economic activities
- Vocational training, apprenticeships and work placements have helped unemployed youth, women and other vulnerable groups in society to acquire new skills and build their entrepreneurial potential
- Linkages, coordination and working relationships with the Regional Employment Centre and Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare have been strengthened, and together with its partners DRC Kosovo continually explores new ways to provide better services to unemployed vulnerable groups

## 10 Stabilization of RAE Community Mitrovicë/a



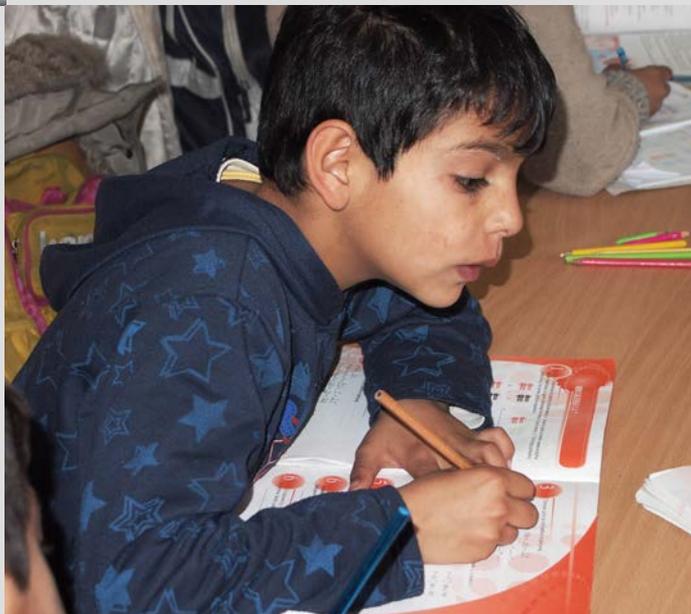
21-year-old Adelina is one of the teacher assistants at DRC's Learning center in Roma Mahalla.

Adelina was born into this community and after being displaced for years was finally able to return.

*'Ever since I was a little girl I dreamed of becoming a teacher' she explains. 'Most of the children here go to primary school in the town (Mitrovica), but there is a shortage of schools so most children are only taught half-days. It is hard for them to keep up this way. That's why we teach them here and help them with their homework.'*

At the school in Roma Mahalla, there are three teachers and two teacher assistants from the community who help the children with maths, writing and other homework assignments. Adelina was trained by the regular teachers and is now responsible for her own group of pupils.

*'I really enjoy teaching them and most of the time it is really not that hard to keep the kids focused once they arrive here. We also try to keep in contact with their teachers in town to get feedback on how the kids are doing and to find out if some of them need more support. Already we've seen some progress. Most of the children are getting better at maths and writing especially which motivates me and of course the children as well.'*



## *Past projects*

**The Reintegration of Spontaneous Returnees to Kosovo project** was funded by BPRM and supported the sustainable and dignified reintegration of 21 families from displacement in Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia to Kosovo through physical, social and economic interventions.

The families were assisted through facilitation of interethnic dialogue; assistance in housing rehabilitation or reconstruction; provision of humanitarian assistance packages consisting of food, non-food items, and furniture; distribution of income generation grants; and support in accessing basic services such as healthcare and education.

DRC coordinated activities with the Ministry of Communities and Returns, UNHCR, and relevant local municipalities.

**The EU Beautiful Kosovo Programme (EU-BK Programme)** was funded by the EU and aimed to contribute to the overall improvement of the economic and social situation for Kosovo's population as a whole and marginalized groups in particular.

The project was extended to cover the entire territory of Kosovo, including the North, and activities included enhancing skills of unemployed and marginalized groups through vocational education and trainings and improving urban infrastructure through the implementation of small and medium scale projects according to the identified municipal and regional priorities.

The project was managed by the European Commission Liaison Office (ECLO) and implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), in partnership with the Danish Refugee Council (DRC).

### *Past projects*

**The Return and Reintegration in Kosovo (RRK II)** project was funded by the European Union and managed by the European Commission Liaison Office to Kosovo, and co-funded by the Ministry for Communities and Returns.

Following intensive information and interethnic dialogue preparation, DRC facilitated the dignified return and reintegration of 214 minority refugee and IDP families in the municipalities of Klinë/Klina, Ferizaj/Uroševac, Kastriot/Obilić and Rahovec/Orahovac.

DRC also provided reintegration assistance including income generation grants, housing reconstruction assistance as well as community development projects and interethnic dialogue activities.

The project was implemented jointly by the Danish Refugee Council and Municipal Authorities.

**The Support to Sustainable Return to Kosovo of Rejected Asylum Seekers in Sweden project** was funded by the Swedish Migration board (SMB) and aimed to provide durable solutions for rejected asylum seekers returning to Kosovo.

DRC supported the returning families with individual return counseling; income generation grants; business counseling and vocational trainings for self-employment and support to obtain relevant documentation.

DRC closely coordinated the return process with the Swedish Migration Board.

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