

Law and Human Rights Education

Name of organisations:
**Kosovo Education Center and American Bar Association,
Rule of Law Initiative-Kosovo**

ABA Rule of Law Initiative Civics Books Have Major Impact in Kosovo Classrooms

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An April 2007 survey of primary and middle school teachers and Ministry of Education officials in Kosovo reveals that the three ABA Rule of Law Initiative-funded books introduced into schools last December have become valuable tools for civics teachers throughout Kosovo.

In December 2006, the Rule of Law Initiative worked closely with the Kosovo Education Center (KEC) in the development, publishing, promotion, and distribution of three books for primary and middle school students in Kosovo: "A Guide for Children's Rights Committees in Schools," a poetry and prose book titled "We are Flowers, We are Birds," and a book focused on rights titled "We Have No Vote, but We Do Have Our Rights." These books emphasize civics, law, and human rights. They were developed to fill a gap in the current school curriculum and to increase the level of awareness of children and teachers on child rights and the law.



Books published in 2006 by the ABA and the Kosovo Education Center: A Guide for Children's Rights Committees in Schools; a poetry and prose book - We are Flowers, We are Birds; and a book focused on children's rights – We Have No Vote, but We Do Have Our Rights.

The books were distributed to all primary and middle schools in Kosovo, representing 324,124 students from the ethnic Albanian, Bosnian, Croatian, Roma, Serb, and Turkish communities.

Based on the results of a KEC survey, teachers have incorporated the books into their civics curriculum, regularly using lessons from the books to teach the concepts of children and human rights. Educational officials called the books "very useful and

valuable for advancing the teaching of human rights and supporting teachers of civic education” and have credited the books with helping “to establish a better relationship” between students and teachers.

KEC has also credited the introduction of the Rule of Law Initiative funded books, and thus the concept of teaching children rights, with spearheading the creation of a Kosovo-wide advisors network for child rights. This network includes child rights officers, trainers, educational inspectors, and school committees for child rights protection. According to the KEC survey results, these books have helped to improve children’s lives in schools, in their homes, and in their communities. For example, school children who were surveyed in Gjakova stated that these books have moved their school to set up a children’s rights committee which holds monthly meetings with the children, their parents and their teachers. According to the Gjakova school children, this committee helps to better identify school problems and responsibilities and has taught them the importance of their role in defending children’s rights.

ABA Rule of Law Initiative Rolls Out Teenlaw Program in Kosovo

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On May 9, the Rule of Law Initiative in Kosovo rolled out its *Teenlaw* pilot program, a Street Law-style course that introduces law, human rights, and Kosovo's legal system to local high school students. With the support of the Kosovo Ministry of Education and the University of Pristina Law Faculty, the Rule of Law Initiative arranged for students from the law faculty to teach tenth graders at a Pristina high school about Kosovo's court system. The course includes planned visits to local courts, where students engage in lively discussions with practicing judges.



University of Prishtina Law student and *TeenLaw* instructor Mirlinda Dreshaj, speaks about Kosovo's courts with tenth graders in a Pristina high school.

The Rule of Law Initiative developed the program with the aim of filling a gap in the high school civics curriculum in Kosovo, which does not cover the judicial and legal systems, as well as to increase public awareness and dialogue about law and its role in society. Topics covered include:

- What is the Law & Why is Law Important?
- Who Makes Laws & How are Laws Developed?
- The Court System in Kosovo.
- Judges, Lawyers, Prosecutors, & Ethics.
- Criminal Law vs. Civil Law.
- Human Rights & Responsibilities.
- Discrimination & Equality.

The pilot program proved a success judging by the vigorous questioning and debate from the students on issues as diverse as the influence of politics on the court system, corruption, and the function of parallel courts in Kosovo. The program also received positive feedback from the civics teacher and ministry officials who observed the classes.

The Rule of Law Initiative developed the content of the course through consultations with the Law Faculty and education officials. The ABA plans to expand the pilot program in the fall to cover more topics and more students, and eventually incorporate *TeenLaw* into the high school curriculum.