

Promoting Inclusion in Post-Conflict Balkans (continued from page 1)

Muja. Local representatives from the Bosnian, Gorani, and Turkish minorities were also present.

“Prizren is in many ways a model of multiculturalism, with different communities and religions co-existing,” said Nayak. “We met the mayor and visited Muslim, Christian Orthodox, and Christian Catholic shrines in the centre of the old town. It was a good example for us all to see where there is an earnest attempt to work together.”

At the Serb Orthodox Monastery near Decan in western Kosovo, Father Sava Janjic spoke of the challenges of everyday life in a region that is overwhelmingly Muslim. He pledged to continue to serve the entire community, following the egalitarian traditions of the monastery.

Jan-Peter Olters, the World Bank Representative in Montenegro, said the value of the Bank’s emphasis on socioeconomic development is clear. “It was very much a message I took away from the meeting with Father Sava in the Orthodox monastery,” he said. “The hope for a more prosperous future might alter the outlook and increase willingness to reach beyond and over one’s fence.”

To include poor minorities, talk with their elected officials

The next day, Kosovo’s Prime Minister Hashim Thaci, President Fatmir Sejdiu, and several Ministers met with the Bank Group representatives.

The delegation briefed the Prime Minister on key aspects of the institution’s efforts to serve the poorest of the poor from all ethnic groups across diverse communities. The representative in Albania, Camille Nuamah, gave an account of the Bank’s Social Service Delivery Project, which is reaching women and disabled people more effectively than previous initiatives.

In Macedonia, the Government still confronts a huge challenge in breaking the cycle of poverty, reported Markus Repnik. But he singled out a promising new initiative—conditional cash transfers based on a Brazilian model—that provides financial incentives to families to send children to school. “Macedonia is the first country in the region to launch such a program,” he said.

Kosovo’s President Fatmir Sejdiu thanked the group for the Bank Group’s efforts, and said Kosovo’s developmental priorities continue to be energy, agriculture, education, and transport. He underlined the importance of nurturing better relations with Serbia, as well as with other neighboring countries, while expressing hope that Kosovo’s ethnic tensions would be overcome.

Oyegun complimented the very progressive constitution and remarked that, with 50 percent of the population under the age of 30, Kosovo had a unique opportunity to steer the culture away from its difficult past. “Reconciliation takes time,” responded President Sejdiu, “but it can be best assisted through economic progress.”

“Diversity is how we do business”

As the assembly of regional leaders moved to adjourn, consensus emerged that frequent face-to-face interaction between Bank staff and ethnic communities will help foster better inclusion in World Bank programs.

Camille Nuamah, said she will redouble efforts to make projects ethnically neutral or even ethnicity- and gender-affirmative. She plans to meet individually with staff to stress the importance of diversity and inclusion.

“Diversity is not just who we are, but how we do business,” said Simon Gray, the Bank’s Representative in Serbi. He recommended all regional

staff receive support in improving their English-language skills, which could serve to diminish linguistic barriers to reconciliation.

Referring to “an exhilarating two days,” Ranjit Nayak called the event rich, productive, and enjoyable. “The combination of meetings with Kosovar citizens, Government officials, and internal sessions got us thinking in ways that were unique—and I must say that I got more than what I had initially anticipated.”

“I was struck by how much each of my colleagues cares about our institution, and the efforts they make in different ways to make it an even better one,” said Nayak. “I remain most grateful to Julie [Oyegun] for selecting our region as her pilot, and for bringing us together in this forum in Pristina.”

“Each of these participants invested their time and commitment in this venture, and I cannot thank them enough for trusting me and embracing the unknown so wholeheartedly,” said Oyegun. “I think we saw how our institutional commitment to diversity and inclusion is of direct relevance to the client’s economic development. This is innovative, value-added D&I, at the heart of our operational effectiveness.”

Jan-Peter Olters called the experience insightful: “For diversity to be a source of wealth and inspiration, as stressed by all of us, we need a combination of understanding, respect, and tolerance—and an exchange of views and ideas. On many levels, through our programs, the World Bank Group can provide this forum for all the Balkan countries.

“This experience is certain to resound and influence the way we are doing our jobs here in the Balkans,” Olters concluded.

Our thanks to Lundrim Aliu who contributed to this story.

Q & A with Ranjit Nayak

World Bank's Representative in Kosovo

Q: You have been the Bank's Rep in Kosovo for almost three years now. What is your role?

A: I manage the Bank portfolio of operations, the country office here in Pristina, and coordinate the Kosovo team, both here and virtually in Washington and other offices. I am also responsible for our coordination with development partners, the Government, NGOs, and civil society. Working in a post-conflict state, we have additional stakeholders, including NATO, the UN mission, International Civilian Office, the European Union mission, and others.

Q: How has the Bank's operations portfolio evolved?

A: Soon after the conflict, the Bank was focused more on infrastructure. Today, our main focuses are building institutional capacity and working in areas of social and human development and energy. In the future we may consider agriculture and rural development.

Q: What are the prevailing challenges?

A: We have many different ethnic groups. The majority is the Albanian ethnic group—about 90 percent—and the minorities include Serbs, Bosniak, Gorani, Roma, Turk, Ashkali, and Egyptian. Kosovo is ethnically polarized, primarily between Albanian and Serb ethnicities. It is a challenge to reach out to minorities, since most Government institutions tend to be exclusionary, not by design but in practice. When the World Bank designs, implements, and monitors its programs, it needs to ensure participation and inclusion, to ensure that project benefits go to everyone irrespective of ethnicity, gender, age or disability.

Q: What are some particular challenges, therefore, for the Bank's office in Pristina?

A: One of the challenges I had coming in to the assignment was to make the Bank office ethnically diverse. So I began hiring Serbs into the office through a very neutral recruitment process, initially with much difficulty. This is the reality of the development environment in which the Bank works.

Q: Why, in your view, is it important to aspire to being more inclusive in your office?

[W]hen poverty coincides with ethnic minorities, focusing on specific ethnic groups becomes the Bank's business, because poverty alleviation is the Bank's core mandate.

A: It is quite a challenge to fulfill our internal Bank requirements of being diverse and inclusive. It is vitally important, however, not only because it is ethical, but also because successful approaches are based on diverse ideas, which are possible with a diverse mix of educational backgrounds, socialization, gender, ethnicities, and nationalities.

Q: You recently hosted a two-day event for all of your regional counterparts, with the participating of the Bank's Chief Diversity Officer, Julie Oyegun. Please describe that.

A: It was very motivating and inspirational for Julie Oyegun from the Bank's D&I office to come and pull us all together in the region. Sometimes, the concept of

diversity in the Washington Office is emphasized differently than diversity in the field offices. Her coming here not only recognized the variety and nuances of D&I issues we face globally as an institution, but also in some ways she helped us integrate the differing discussions on diversity at the Bank's Board and Staff in Washington and in Country Offices.

Q: After this experience, what priorities emerged?

A: It became clear to my colleagues and me that we need to

adapt our approaches, methods and instruments to reach everyone. At least in the field, when poverty coincides with ethnic minorities, focusing on specific ethnic groups becomes the Bank's business, because poverty alleviation is the Bank's core mandate. And this is what we saw—very starkly.

Q: Can you draw any lessons from your initial efforts in the Kosovo country office?

A: Despite all the constraints against achieving diversity and inclusion, it is still possible. It requires tremendous persistence, patience and determination, and our team in Pristina can contribute to shaping a formidable human resource strategy for the World Bank Group if asked.

Q & A with Joy Phumaphi (continued from page 1)

development effectiveness in our human development work, in education, health, HIV/AIDS, in social protection. Having been so involved in development over the decades, the Bank has demonstrated that it was there for countries yesterday, it's here for them today, and will be a committed partner long after tomorrow, so the Bank is uniquely qualified and positioned to stay glued to its mission of reducing poverty and spurring opportunity in very difficult country and regional settings and in very complex frameworks. It has been a wonderful experience being here for the last several years and leading this exceptional group of colleagues working in the Bank's Human Development Network.

how you get sustainable results out of the health system, for example. In education systems, we have been linking local families and neighborhoods to the education system more than ever before. We have been scaling up mechanisms where communities monitor educational quality and help manage resources. In this way, communities themselves take ownership and hold the schools and Ministry of Education accountable for learning quality, relevance, and effectiveness.

Q: Please share a little about your own professional journey.

A: I decided at the very earliest age that I wanted to focus on helping people to reach their full God-given potential. This meant empowering

to become even more of a results-driven, utterly dependable global and local development Bank, from the inside out. This is a strength, which the Bank must never lose—trying to be as global and local as it can possibly be. This is what makes it all work, much more than statistics or percentages, but the mechanisms we have to hold people accountable consistently. That is the important piece.

Q: You have served in a senior capacity on the Bank's Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Group (DIAG).

A: Yes, one of the most important roles of DIAG is consistently making sure people value diversity, impressing upon people its value, and demonstrating how it actually improves the quality of our work. Even beyond the monitoring function, consistently institutionalizing diversity through communication is absolutely critical.

Q: Where does the Bank Group still need to focus its D&I efforts?

A: We get the best candidates from around the world. I am on the Young Professionals selection committee. It is very clear to me that we attract the cream of the crop. In the Bank, your ability to deliver is a product of how much you are embraced within the culture. And that is a product of mentoring. I strongly feel that there is a lot more we can do about mentoring. We just are not there yet. Everybody should have a responsibility to mentor, even the President. It should not be voluntary. It is not an onerous task. It is something that is important for the life of the institution. People tend to think about mentoring that they are doing somebody a favor. But in order for the institution to survive, everybody in the Bank needs to guarantee a quality of work. And mentoring has to be at the center of it.

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Q: What was your primary objective when you joined?

A: One thing is certain. Our partner countries need more than just money from the Bank. Our best contribution to lasting development is our innovation, our evidence-based approaches, our ability to manage and share knowledge, and then our ability to match it with flexible funds to bring about a successful result, and prove it. Partner countries need us to harness this package of services towards strengthening their key country systems and the institutions, which are vital for quality results and sustained development.

Q: In practice, what does this mean for the Bank's work?

A: Today, our Bank support to country clients is primarily focused on development effectiveness. Our results-based financing focuses on

people to use their environment to attain self-actualization and overall economic, political, and social growth. Even when I was working as an auditor, when I first introduced management and performance audits, the indicators that I was using partly focused on the quality of life of the people. So for me, coming to the Bank, the focus always has to be on people, particularly the vulnerable and poor. It is easy to get lost in the weeds with contextual issues. We need to be clear about where we want to go, and then find ways that can get us to that goal.

Q: Tell me about diversity and the World Bank.

A: I didn't come to the Bank as a development insider but as someone who had only observed it from the outside. I found it absolutely fascinating. The Bank is determined