Public Pulse is an analytical and monitoring tool which aims to expand dialogue between government and public institutions. Project Manager Atdhe Hetemi hopes to increase awareness of its work.
Could you introduce Public Pulse (PP) and the key areas the project examined?

Firstly, I would like to sincerely thank you for giving us space to talk about our project.

PP is a continuation of the Kosovo Early Warning System Project (KEWS). We work on research and analysis of relevant issues and serve as a watchdog initiative to constructively engage both the Government of Kosovo and public institutions. The main aim of the project and myself, as PP Manager, is to increase dialogue between governmental institutions and citizens.

This project is co-financed by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and entirely implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Kosovo office, specifically by research, policy, gender and communication units.

What is the KEWS and how is PP a continuation of this?

Between 2002-2010, co-financed with USAID, UNDP implemented a research project called Early Warning System (EWS) based on quantitative research (survey) and reported on a quarterly basis on the development of political, social, economic, inter-ethnic relations and security issues in Kosovo. The objective of KEWS was to build the capacity of local leadership to foresee potential crises and design prevention policies based on the findings of the KEWS Reports. During 2002-2010, a total of 28 opinion polls were conducted and 28 reports published with the participation of more than 150 local experts from civil society, the private sector and Kosovar institutions.

As circumstances began to improve, we started monitoring the development of democratic processes in Kosovo. PP was developed as a result – we kept presenting the trends of KEWS but also developed new indices (democratisation, economic confidence and public participation). The project is now being launched on a biannual basis, and in addition to producing reports, we conduct Action Papers.

We also encourage and support the Kosovar Government and public institutions to take steps towards addressing problem areas highlighted by the reports. The reports and data from our research serve as a base for identifying institutions for targeted analysis – we prepared an Action Paper based on findings from the Ministry of Health, for example. From our latest survey, we noticed the percentage of citizens who perceive large-scale corruption among healthcare providers has increased (52 per cent in November 2012 compared to 43 per cent in April 2012). Respondents were also asked if they encountered a situation whereby a public servant conditioned them for service provision by asking for bribes (cash, gifts or other favours). Our findings showed that out of those surveyed, 7 per cent declared they gave bribes, with many (4 per cent) doing it for healthcare services.

Each Action Paper contains follow-up actions for addressing specific issues – a process that ensures complementary analytical capacity development of targeted institutions for informed decision-making processes. Through the discussion of these data with officials from Kosovan institutions, the project aims to develop confidence and communication between public organisations.

How does PP engage the citizens of Kosovo to share their opinions on the performance of the country’s institutions?

PP reports are usually based on a 1,300-person survey that captures the public opinion on key developments and the performance of various institutions in Kosovo. The results of the survey are compiled into Fast Facts, a publication that presents the raw data from the survey and contains substantive analysis or policy recommendations. Fast Facts is launched through a media event and made public via email distribution and publication on the UNDP website.

Data and indicators from opinion polls that are split by gender provide specific data for both men and women. Similarly, data are disaggregated by ethnic groups, age, locations and other demographic variables to provide detailed information on differences in perceptions and challenges faced by these underrepresented groups. This process enables citizens to draw attention to pertinent issues that are then highlighted by our biannual opinion polls and respective PP reports, allowing for dialogue with a variety of governmental line ministries and institutions in Kosovo and the creation of complementary mechanisms for an informed decision-making process.

You talked about corruption in the healthcare system. Is that something you found surprising?

Corruption is considered to be one of the largest problems in Kosovo, but yes, we were surprised, and that is one reason why we approached the Ministry of Health for coordinating the Action Paper. It is worth mentioning that the Ministry was very supportive of our research. I hope and think that, through our research and in working with the Ministry, we will be able to contribute toward decreasing corruption in this sensitive sector.

Do you find attending conferences such as the World Research and Innovation Congress (WRIC) useful for PP?

At WRIC 2013, I attended two research sessions that were very beneficial and informative. As a researcher, I am very interested in looking at how to push my research findings onto institutional agendas and ensure institutions take them into consideration and benefit from them.

WORLD RESEARCH AND INNOVATION CONGRESS

This year’s World Research and Innovation Congress – Pioneers in Healthcare is taking place 4-5 June at Eureka! Secretariat in Brussels, Belgium.

The event will educate and inspire scientific healthcare professionals by providing insights into funding opportunities, the latest issues in healthcare and developments shaping the future of healthcare research.

Themed ‘How we do research – maximising impact through collaboration’, it will address key issues such as international collaboration, funding for research and support for research excellence. Attendees will benefit from a dynamic programme comprising keynote presentations, workshops and interactive panel sessions.

Visit www.worldresearchcongress.com to sign up for this unmatchable experience.
As we are currently drafting an Action Paper in cooperation with Kosovo’s Ministry of Health, these sessions helped me to collect information on how we can improve and execute joint research strategies. They also taught me the importance of international cooperation to address local problems and how to translate data to knowledge and identify new ideas for addressing public health challenges, to name a few benefits. It is not just important, but necessary, to collaborate with others to improve the quality of research.

PROGRESS SO FAR...

Hetemi discusses Public Pulse’s achievements to date

During 2010-13, Public Pulse’s (PP’s) greatest achievements were the finalisation of 17 research products, six Fast Fact documents, six PP Reports and three PP Actions Papers addressing different issues. Currently, PP is working on two Action Papers. One is with the Ministry of Health and another with the Ministry of European Integration, which addresses the problems of Schengen visa refusal rates in Kosovo. The project carried out seven surveys – for each of them 1,290 respondents were interviewed across several focus group meetings, each with 25-30 experts, including management and administration of writing, editing, translation, design, printing, dissemination, etc.

These are some of the results that have been achieved so far, but there is still more to be done. Comprehensive research products have been conducted under my supervision that have multidimensional effects and contribute directly to evidence-based debate in Kosovo, as well as the discussion of pertinent issues such as democratisation and public participation issues, institutional and political stability, socioeconomic indicators and expectations, inter-ethnic relations, public and personal safety and security, and the need for development strategies.