

## Marking the World AIDS Day in Kosovo

*On the occasion of the global HIV/AIDS prevention day, UNICEF supported activities on HIV/AIDS prevention with young people. At the policy level, the Ministry of Health, the Global Fund Kosovo project, UN AIDS and UN Agencies launched the Kosovo Strategic Plan on HIV/AIDS 2009-2013*

Pristine/Pristina 1 December 2009 - A performance organised by the Peer Education Network (PEN) and supported by UNICEF, was presented in front of a large young audience at the Gjakove/Djakovica Theatre. The main character in the role play, a 17-year-old girl gets infected with HIV and becomes pregnant, she falls victim of unfriendly school environment and lack of knowledge on risky behavior. However, peer support helps her regain strength to move on.

Young peer volunteers have developed the theatre performance as a creative technique to attract attention and to inform young people on healthy lifestyles. They have chosen theatre as one of the channels that offers a venue for young people to be informed in visual way about negative phenomena such as Drugs, Tobacco, HIV/AIDS, IST and unplanned pregnancies. The performance also addresses stigma.

Although the HIV prevalence rate in Kosovo is low, analysis of the situation shows that without preventive measures there will be a rapid increase of HIV infection due to many risk factors present in Kosovo such as unprotected sex, injecting drug use, lack of appropriate information and services and a large young population.

Latest KAPB on HIV/AIDS among young people research published by UNICEF shows that 90% of youth did hear about HIV and AIDS but 47% only can make difference between these two terms. 38% wouldn't accept to attend school together with a HIV infected person, while only 25% would buy daily things from an infected person. Even more of concern is that only 30% did hear about sexually transmitted infections. The study shows that the HIV prevention level of comprehensive knowledge is reflected as low, with only 18 % of males and 17 % of females correctly answering all questions.

The KAPB study informed the Kosovo Strategic Plan on HIV/AIDS 2009-2013 which was launched on the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 2009.

UNICEF's Head of Office Mr. Johannes Wedenig addressing the young audience in Gjakove/Djakovica said ' When we often say that Kosovo has such a young population, we forget to mention that young people have the power to become an engine for change'

PEN was formed on August 2004 and is active in 22 municipalities in Kosovo with more than 1000 volunteers/peer educators.