

## MY IMPRESSIONS FROM THE MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT



Figure 1. Puhiza, 15, meeting with the President of Kosovo, Vjosa Osmani as part of Save our Education campaign

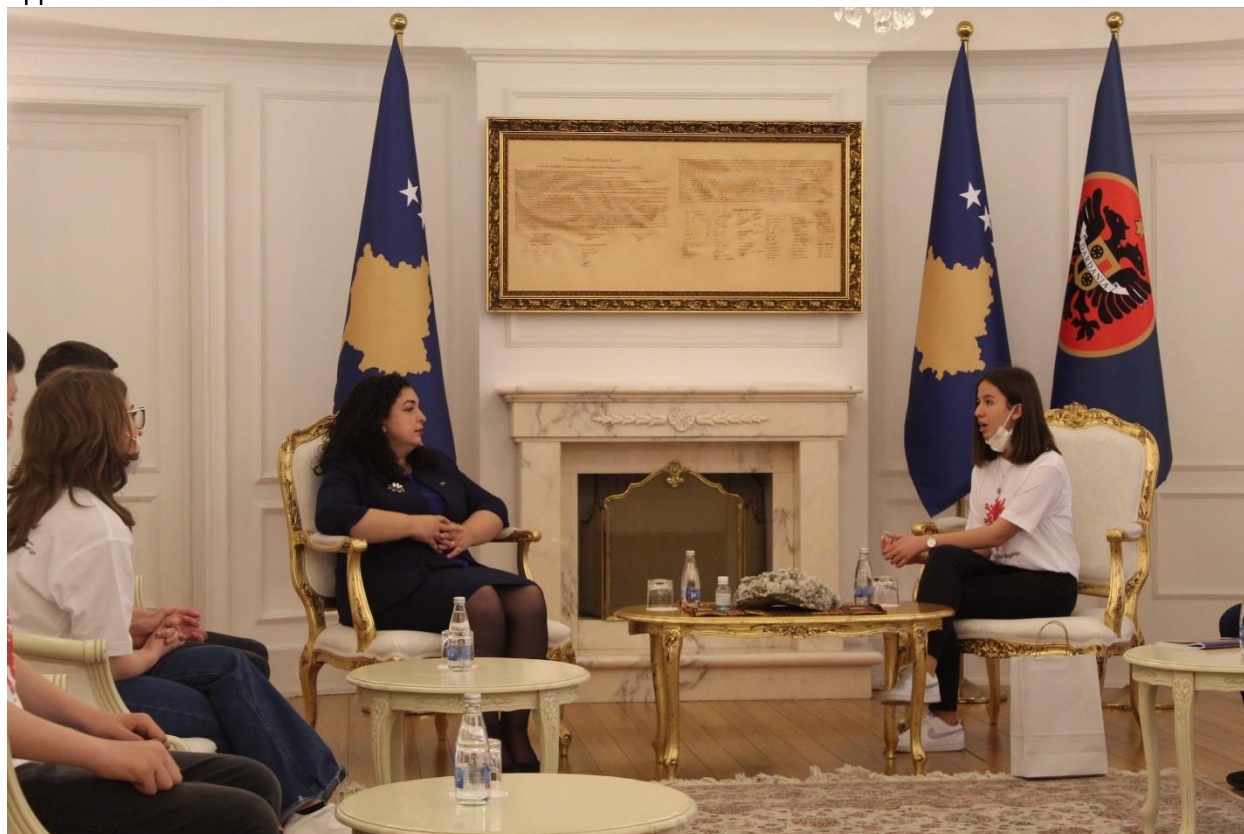
I am Puhiza Shemsedini, 15 years old from Kosovo. I am the chairwoman of the child-led group “Respect Our Rights” (ROR), established in 2014 by Save the Children in Kosovo in partnership with local NGO “Syri i Vizionit”. Composed of children 15 to 18 years old, ROR monitors and implements the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in Kosovo, and domestic laws that protect the rights of children. We represent the voice of children in Kosovo at local, national and international level and internationally.

I have been interested in children’s rights since I was very young; the challenges and discrimination have always worried me as a child. So, wanting to do something about it, I initially joined a Child-led Municipal Assembly in my hometown Prizren (children 10 to 14 years old) also supported by Save the Children, before joining ROR.. Since then, I started looking at children’s rights in a different way, and “ROR” gave me the chance to raise my voice in front of the institutions and demand our rights! We have been very active in advocating and campaigning for children’s rights, and have met a lot of influential people and decision-makers in Kosovo, demanding the realization of our rights.

One of the best experiences I have had was the meeting with the President of Kosovo Mrs. Vjosa Osmani. It was on the 1<sup>st</sup> of June, which is Children’s Day here in Kosovo. It’s a day I felt my voice was powerful! We asked her for a meeting to present our work about children’s rights, to talk about

the challenges that children in Kosovo face, such as education, environmental protection and the impact of the pandemic on children, as well as new opportunities for children in Kosovo.

I was very excited when the assistant of the President confirmed that the meeting will be held at 10 o'clock in the office of the President. Together with 10 other children from ROR we gathered in front of the Office of the President. During this time, we had the support of representatives from Save the Children and NGO "Syri i Vizionit" who accompanied us and made sure that we get the personal and moral support. Save the Children and Syri i Vizionit always make sure that we as a group get enough support in capacity building, time, budget, space and attention, and are always supporting us with new opportunities!



*Figure 2. Ten children from child led group Respect Our Rights, discussing with the President of Kosovo, Vjosa Osmani on issues around children's rights*

**“I hope in the future you will be here”, said the President Osmani and she moved to another chair that day.**

When we entered the Presidency, President Osmani was waiting for us at the door of her office. She wished us children's day and we each sat in chairs. Unbeknownst to me I was sitting in her chair and laughing surprisingly when she said “I hope in the future you will be here”, moved to another chair that day. Her words really inspired me that day!

I started the meeting, firstly telling her about our group and then mentioning three main topics we wanted to discuss: education, clean environment and children's security in Kosovo! We also raised the issue of children's participation in decision-making as a very important thing for us! President Osmani answered all of our questions, told us about her work on children's rights and said she will give more efforts in this area. She was very cooperative with us and told us to "engage every day, do not stop, I will be with you at all times, especially when it comes to children and the fulfillment of their rights". This commitment of hers motivated us even more!

For me, this meeting fills me with hope for a better future in my country! It's a hope that our voice is going to be heard and , our schools, parks, environment and hospitals will be better! I have knocked on many government doors but I have often been disappointed. Because only when we are asked about our opinion for the decisions that affect us, that decision will be appropriate! Nobody can know about us and what we are going through every day, better than us ourselves. The President made me feel that my voice counted and I was listened to, and that is a very good step to a brighter future of Kosovo!

**"I want that all world leaders to make children their priority."**

Now, we will ask the President to join our activities as often as she can! We will ask to meet other institution's representative and continue advocating for our rights!

I want all world leaders to make children their priority. When drafting laws, projects and allocating local and state budget they must focus more on children and hear our voice. I want the leaders to provide better health care, protection, quality education, work toward climate change and to provide equal opportunities for all children, regardless of ethnicity, religion, gender or economic situation.

My message to children all around the world is to never stay quiet when your rights are violated. I encourage you to always seek equality and justice! I also ask you to respect all of your friends and I want to remind you, I am here for you and that you are not alone! Together, we can make this world more colorful and bring smiles to all children around the world!



*Figure 3. Group picture of children with President Osmani*