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SUMMARY

From February – August 2012 I was a full time volunteer with the Center for Peacebuilding (CIM), a small nongovernmental organization working in the Northwest region of Bosnia-Herzegovina (known as the Krajina region). As a volunteer, I assisted the Co-Directors with the everyday workings of the organization, joined other volunteers in special events and projects, and had the opportunity to travel throughout the country. My major tasks, both out of need from CIM and my own experience, were communications and development. I developed and wrote projects, grant applications, fundraising campaigns, and strengthened our communications and global network of supporters. As a result, my own skills were strengthened in this area while I also improved my language, learned more about the country and its past, and honed and practiced conflict resolution and peacebuilding skills. Without the support of the JJCF, this volunteering would have been impossible. Thanks to the generous grant provided, I was able to contribute to CIM's organizational development and become integrated into the local Bosnian community.

ACTIVITIES

Project Design, Development, and Proposal Writing

During my time at the Center for Peacebuilding (CIM), I spent a large amount of energy on grant writing, project development, and outreach to new, nontraditional sources of funding and support. I independently developed a project on empowering women as peacebuilders, and collaborated with staff to develop projects for International Peace Camps, Oral History, and local Truth and Healing Commissions. The major foundations and funders I applied to were the UN Women, the US Embassy in Sarajevo, and the British Embassy, which shortlisted the Peace Camp proposal I submitted. Additionally, I helped my volunteer colleagues on grant applications for Robert Bosch Stiftung, the Norwegian Embassy, and the EU instrument for Democracy.

One particular colleague and I spearheaded a new fundraising initiative through a well-known website called



GlobalGiving, which is a database of sorts to search charitable giving options throughout the world. We were accepted to participate in the “GlobalGiving Challenge” to raise \$4000 toward a project in 4 weeks. We succeeded in raising more than \$4000 for our Peace Camp and thus were granted unlimited access to the GlobalGiving fundraising network, which is a well-known and trusted fundraising website that allows individuals to give to different projects with tax deduction. In addition to our Peace Camp, we have also listed a women’s empowerment project and an oral history project. To date, we’ve raised \$4825



Partnership Development and Coalition Building

As a volunteer with Center for Peacebuilding, I wanted to build new partnerships and deepen existing ones that could help us to spread our message, reach more people, and collaborate on new projects.

In February, we became the first partner organization from Bosnia and Herzegovina in the newly-launched Global Coalition for Conflict Transformation (GCCT). Part of TransConflict, the GCCT’s mission is “to raise awareness and understanding about conflict transformation, facilitate theoretical and policy-oriented debate on conflict

transformation, advocate for greater support for conflict transformation processes and catalyse the sharing of best practice between practitioners.” Through our involvement in the GCCT, we will be able to connect with other organizations working on similar issues in the region, promote our projects and fundraising efforts, and publish articles on CIM’s approach to peacebuilding.

I became a point person for collaboration on several potential projects if funding comes through. The Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR), based in Washington DC, wanted to submit a project proposal for an interethnic youth volunteer program to USAID. One of their staff reached out to me to see if CIM might be interested in being the local, grassroots organization to work with the youth. Over the course of a month, we worked on the project proposal, budget details, and Memorandum of Understanding. We continue to await the response from the grant application.

In addition to managing the collaboration with IWPR, I also have become the liaison between CIM and the Karuna Center for Peacebuilding in Massachusetts on a potential project proposal for USAID due in early 2013. We are still in the early planning phases, so it is yet unclear if we will be able to develop a viable, competitive application, but we will continue to work together on creating a project through fall 2012.

Communications

The Center for Peacebuilding had little previous communications capacity and emails to our supporters were infrequent. Therefore, it was critical to create a foundation for regular communications to our supporters around the world that would be sustainable when I eventually left the organization. Another major goal of developing a communications platform and strategy was to increase the number of individuals and communities we reached with our message and, person by person, increase our name recognition.

The first major task I took on in developing our communications was to create an easy to use online presence that was recognizable and had the look of the “CIM brand.” I used a free website, called mailchimp, which helps organizations to develop and build online supporter lists, signup pages, e-newsletters, and regular email updates. After establishing our presence through mailchimp, I began the process of building our email supporter list and engaging them through updates on our activities as well as fundraising campaigns. The time period I volunteered at CIM was a critical time for Bosnia and Herzegovina, and in this way it made it easy to engage foreign supporters in our work and help them to see its broad impact and significance.

The winter and spring months in Bosnia and Herzegovina hold a number of dates significant to the collective memory of the country. In particular 6 April 2012, the twentieth anniversary of the start of the war in BiH, surfaced many loaded traumas and conflicts for the country’s citizens. To observe this solemn day, CIM sent out a letter to our listserv of CIM supporters about remembrance as well as looking forward to more peaceful future.



During the past six months, we sent a total of five newsletters to our supporters on our latest projects, highlights, and asking for financial support. These emails have helped us to reach a broader base of supporters and deepen their support to CIM. Since January, we have gained 116 new email supporters for our main listserv, which is a 139% increase. This group of supporters, which may seem small, is however incredibly supportive of our work.

According to our listserv network statistics, our emails are very well-received. On average 47% of our emails are opened. Furthermore, 8% of links in our emails are clicked on by readers. This is in comparison with the industry average, which is an open-rate of 20% and a click-rate of 4%. Therefore, CIM’s supporters are a modest sized but passionate group of individuals truly dedicated to conflict transformation in their own lives and communities while also advocating for CIM’s projects.

Our social media presence has also significantly increased over the past six months. Our facebook fan page currently has more than 410 “fans,” up from 221 (an 86% increase). Our most

viewed facebook posts from June reached between 2,500 and 3,500 people over the course of several weeks.

I hope to continue to work with CIM on their online communications, even as I have moved on from volunteering in their offices. It is critical that a list get frequent communications, and so I plan to assist through occasional newsletters and updates.

Other Projects

As a full-time volunteer, I both assisted in coordinating activities and also directly participating. One of the best-received new projects CIM started during the time period I worked there was an International, Inter-Religious Choir. As a former musician and a current peacebuilder, I was thrilled to be involved in weekly choir rehearsals and occasional concerts. The community was



incredibly open and enthusiastic about our choir which, beyond all odds, was able to sing music from all ethnicities and religions in the Balkans and still have a positive reaction from the audience. During an especially significant event in the local Muslim community, I sang a solo in an Islamic Sufi song – during this concert, CIM was recognized by some of the highest Muslim officials in the country and invited to sing future concerts with multi-religious music.

I also enjoyed working as a CIM volunteer when numerous international delegations came through Sanski Most to learn about reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina from the organization. As a former member of a number of study abroad and experiential learning programs, I believe I was especially well equipped to work with the youth that visited. In addition to representing CIM and discussing our numerous projects, I also helped the youth get to know the town, go out socially, and occasionally help them with translation or other intercultural issues. During one specific delegation, I accompanied the Co-Director to Sarajevo to help as a Program Assistant during the official meetings in the capitol. In addition to working with groups from the School for International Training, Keene State College, and Global Youth Connect, I also became a key staff member in hosting independent researchers visiting Sanski Most and CIM. Over the course of six months, we hosted researchers working on theses or other academic projects from the American University, Athens University in Greece, and Mount Holyoke College.

Finally, I thought it would be advantageous for CIM to have a stronger collection of organizational documents that could be used for project development, donor appeals, and online

communications. I wrote and published CIM staff biographies, “about us,” and a clearer breakdown of projects on the website, so that the public could get a better idea of what CIM worked on and who was behind it. I wrote, edited, and designed organizational cover letters, a number of project summaries, and a “facts and figures” sheet to be used for fundraising. I have attached a number of these documents to this project report. As I learned more about project development, monitoring, and evaluation, I realized how helpful it would be to have a stronger approach to measuring our successes with projects that are typically difficult to measure. Therefore, I worked on developing a close-ended survey (based on the Likert scale) to measure individual and relational changes in Peace Camp participants because of their attendance. I consulted with a Sarajevo-based psychologist who measures reconciliation through these types of surveys to ensure its efficacy. I hope that CIM staff will use it to establish both a baseline and quantitative data on Peace Camp so as to improve their project proposals/reports.



Finally, I was able to attend a number of events and conferences during my volunteering, which I believe was beneficial to both myself and CIM. I was invited to the Humanity in Action annual conference as a guest because of a friendship with the director. There I could learn more about their programs, make connections, and represent CIM to increase its name recognition. I also attended the annual Srebrenica

commemoration and burial, as I did last year. In addition to Srebrenica, which I've attended a total of four times, I got to visit new sites in Bosnia that hold significance because of the war. I visited three of the most notorious concentration camps in the Krajina region (the Northwest of Bosnia). Trnopolje, Omarska, and Keraterm interned thousands of citizens, including women and children, and were places of detainment, torture, and death. It was especially important for me to visit these sites because many of my colleagues and close friends were kept in these camps during the war. As part of the 20th anniversary of the closing of Omarska, I participated in releasing thousands of white balloons with the names of victims of the camp and had the opportunity to connect with incredible individuals who survived the camps and have become advocates.

LESSONS LEARNED

I learned invaluable lessons that will help me and the organizations I work for in the future thanks to the time I spent volunteering with CIM. From interpersonal skills to a deeper

knowledge of the country, the directors, other volunteers, and guests all gave me lessons to take away.

My language skills continue to improve and, though it is still a challenge, I can understand and communicate at a mid or high-intermediate level. Much of this is thanks to one the CIM Director's wives, who tutored me several times a week for two months in the spring.

In terms of conflict resolution skills, it has been a huge and challenging learning experience working with CIM. I have

learned to better resolve my own interpersonal conflicts and apologize when needed. I have learned to be more conscious of my actions and how it is critical to carry myself, my actions and deeds, as a peacebuilder would. In working with CIM's Co-Directors, I have had incredible role models to observe and



compassionate ears to listen to my challenges. When working with various groups or guests, I learned a number of things that will apply to my future hands-on conflict resolution work including managing group dynamics and building relationships while also establishing professional boundaries.

The time I had to research and practice my project development/writing skills will benefit my career greatly in the future. Since leaving CIM, I have written countless projects for different NGOs and they are all extremely strong thanks to the work I did in Sanski Most.

Finally, the relationships I built and the sites I visited in Sanski Most and with CIM have given me a critical but rare perspective of Bosnian life, culture, and history that is nearly impossible to get from just spending time in the capital of Sarajevo. My experiences there are invaluable to my own work and to future employers because I have a true "view from the field" and can provide insight on complex issues. Overall, while challenging because of the small size of the town and the need to be self-directed, my time with CIM was an amazing opportunity to give back to an NGO I dearly love and believe in while also strengthening my own personal and professional skills.