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BiH in Black and White: Photo-Diary of My Adventure Learning How NGO's Anti-Trafficking Prevention Programs Work in Small Communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina

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SIT Study Abroad

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BiH in Black and White:

Photo-Diary of My Adventure Learning How NGO's Anti-Trafficking
Prevention Programs Work in Small Communities in Bosnia and
Herzegovina

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The School for International Training
Gender, Transformation, and Civil Society

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To my mother, my father, my stepmother, and my three brothers and my aunts and uncles, cousins, and friends: thank you for letting me spread my wings and fly. I hope you know wherever I fly, you remain constant in my heart and mind, and I will always fly home. Thank you for believing in me. I love you.

Preface:

From the very beginning of my immersion in the Balkans, the issue of Trafficking of Human Beings has found a nook in my mind of righteousness, and ever since, the interest of learning how this crime is being prevented has festered. In the one-month period of time I had for my research, I spent 5 days in Modriča, 8 days in Ključ, 5 days in Mostar, 7 days in Sarajevo, and 2 days in Dubrovnik. The goal of my travels was to see first hand the actual and physical actions that NGO's in small towns in Bosnia and Herzegovina (hereinafter BiH) are developing and implementing in order to stop the trafficking of children and women within BiH.

Definition of Trafficking:¹ *(a) 'Trafficking in persons' shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.*

Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs;

(b) The consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) have been used;

(c) The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered 'trafficking in persons' even if this does not involve any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article;

(d) Child shall mean any person under eighteen years of age.ⁱⁱ

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms:

BiH Bosnia and Herzegovina

NGO Non-Governmental Organization

RS Republika Srpska

KM convertible mark (currency of BiH)

UNICEF United Nations Children's Fund

STAR Strategies, Training, Advocacy, Resources, Women's Economic and Political Leadership.

BATCOM BH Anti-Trafficking Community Mobilization project a project of the STAR Network of World Learning supported by the ZONTA International Foundation

ASTRA Anti-Sex Trafficking Action

CEDAW United Nation's Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women

FBiH Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina

UN United Nations

November 11th 2004, 8:57 a.m. Talk about crazy. I just boarded a train heading to Dobož. What the hell am I doing? What did I get myself into? Supposedly I'm catching a bus from Dobož to Modriča and getting picked up there by a woman from Budućnost – an anti-trafficking NGO in the middle of Bosnia-nowhere- I've- ever- been. I'm taking up three seats with all of my luggage because I'll be gone for a month and I may have over packed. Stop crying. Stop crying.

This morning, Barica, my “host mom” cried when I was leaving the flat in Zagreb. She said, “*Moja kćer, sretan put,*” my daughter, good luck. Before she started crying I was fine. I had recovered from yesterday's nervous breakdown. I had finally pulled myself together and convinced myself that this trip is no big deal and I'm gonna survive it, no problem. As my “host dad,” Mirko, was walking me to the train station I wasn't so sure. He carried two of my three bags. How am I going to carry all this stuff around Bosnia if I can't even get to the train station myself?! Mirko helped me onto the train. It's a hell of a climb up. Then he sat with me for about ten minutes until the train started getting crowded, then he waited outside on the platform to see me off. I feel like I'm leaving home. It's weird how much I've adjusted to Zagreb over the past two months. I feel safe and comfortable there. As I watch Mirko fade off into the distance, I have *deja vu* of September 1st: the day my parents brought me to Logan Airport in Boston to see me off to Croatia. I had the same “what have I gotten myself into” and “can I really do this by myself” overwhelming feelings. My parents had the same proud/worried expressions on their faces as Mirko has now. And Barica is home crying. My own mother later confessed that after they dropped me off she cried the whole car ride home. I was upset when I left the United States because I didn't know what I was getting myself into. But it worked out fine so far, so I should just trust that this adventure will work out fine too and be over and four weeks.

Right?! I wish some one were here to reassure me. Talk about being pushed outside my comfort zone.

11:05 We must be getting close to the boarder. Men in uniforms are checking the underside of the train. An officer just came into my car. I think he asked me if I had anything to claim. Can I claim temporary insanity? I'm so confused! Ok. What am I doing for my ISP? A creative writing photo-diary about programs that combat sex trafficking of women on a local level in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). Looking closely at two NGO's – one in the Federation of BiH and one in the Republica Srpska: Ključki Biseri and Budućnost, respectively. A first hand look at what it is like to shadow active group members over the course of a couple weeks. I will record my observations and experiences with the groups and interview members for the purpose of obtaining useful information. I just entered BiH.

13:00 For the last couple of hours I had a whole car to myself. We've just left Banja Luka and a girl about my age, maybe a few years older asked (not in English) if she could sit with me. Of course I said yes. I asked her if she speaks English and she said no. 14:00. I'm worried that I won't be able to read the Cyrillic sign for Doboj and know when to get off the train, although I did write down the Cyrillic translation. I keep thinking of what Katrina said to me last night, "you just have to put yourself out there." So I decide to tell this girl in Croatian that I need to get off at Doboj and can she tell me when we are close. Fortunately she does understand English; she just doesn't speak it very well. After a couple tries, I understand that she is getting off at Doboj also and that it will be at 15:00.

15:05 We get off the train in Doboj. When I ask if she can explain to me where the bus station is, she motions for me to follow her. I'm so relieved that I listened to Katrina's advice, or else I wouldn't know what to do and I would be

panicking right now. I finally get to the bus station and buy my ticket to Modriča. I'm almost there!

17:35 The Modriča bus stop is the last one on the line; I am the only passenger left. Gordana, from Budućnost is waiting for me. Jill warned me that she doesn't speak any English. We exchange "Dobro večers" and shake hands. Then Gordana introduces me to her husband, and he puts my bags into their car. After a few awkward moments and butchered dialogue, we agree to go to their house for coffee. I get offered slippers and introduced to Gordana's mother as soon as I walk in the door; later I get introduced to her two younger sons. She and her husband repeatedly tell me that their older son is twenty-three. When Jill calls to check in she relays the message to me that Gordana wants me to be her daughter-in-law.

After coffee and candy and apples and being shown pictures of their eldest son, Gordana and her husband take me to the one motel in Modriča. I was told before I came that it's mostly used for "day visits" and I'm more than a little sketched out. But my frugal side convinced me that saving ten marks a night will be worth it, and on top of that, I won't have to take a taxi into town every day. So now I'm sitting in my motel room by myself, listening to a CD that I bought last week at the Sarajevo Jazz Festival that I thought was jazz music, but turns out to be hip-hoppish-reggae/punk. Go figure. Lessons learned from today: expect the unexpected and pack lighter next time!

November 12th Gordana and her husband picked me up from the motel at 8 a.m. Gordana and I got dropped off at her office – the Budućnost office – and there I was introduced to four other women who work in the organization, including Tijana, a well dressed twenty-something year old, who speaks beautiful English. As soon as I was welcomed in and told to have a seat at the conference/dinning room table I was

offered coffee. We all sat around and drank coffee and talked for a while, Tijana explained that this is how they start their days (a concept that many Americans who get their coffees at drive-thrus on their way to work, may not understand or appreciate as they are always on the go). I felt a little awkward at first, just sitting there after coffee because everyone else was getting ready for the roundtable event to be held later. Tijana must have sensed my unease because she walked around the office pulling out and handing me a stack of pamphlets about the different projects Budućnost had worked on in the recent past. The projects ranged from ecological, to domestic violence awareness, to lobbying for gender equality in the political sphere. Unfortunately, all but one of them is written in Cyrillic. She patiently sat down and explained them all to me. The most interesting project is the one they are working on publishing the materials for now.

This new project recognizes the severity of the issue of trafficking in children in BiH and thus aims to raise awareness by working with the entire community, including, children. At the very start of this program, Budućnost along with co-partner, Child Rights Center of Konjic (a small town nearby) set up a five day workshop for twenty children from both locations in Zaostrog, Croatia. Through a creative workshop approach, for example drawing and writing, the children were given the opportunity to learn about child human rights and the issue of child trafficking. From the works produced at this workshop Ferida Duraković, a Bosnia writer, wrote the play “Lean on Me.” From the booklet about this project I learned that this play will premier this December and the twenty children from Modriča and Konjic will be the actors. In turn, their performance will teach the children who attend the play, families and community members about the prevalence and dangers of child trafficking in BiH. How amazing is that! This is just one example of the great

progressive work that is being done on a local level to prevent trafficking, but at the same time, its impact will most likely reach national levels thanks to the media's newfound interest.

10:00 a.m. We all sit back down, or rather, the other women sit back down around me, and we eat greasy cheese pitas and yogurt for breakfast – a very typical, traditional, and delicious Bosnian meal.

10:30 a.m. The Budućnost women and I head over to the Modriča Cultural Center to prepare for the roundtable that they are hosting today to bring together institutional representatives, including teachers, police, social workers, healthcare providers, judges, members of other local NGO's, and media. This roundtable was designed to raise the “sensitivity” of those who have the most influence in the community on this issue of child trafficking. This roundtable which is part of the project described above, is working in affiliation with Save the Children – Norway and UNICEF.

11:00 Women in wool coats and plaited plaid skirts, some older, some younger (although I am clearly the youngest and stick out like a flashing neon sign in my red polartek fleece jacket) stream into the room and hello each other with pats and cheek kisses as Tijana writes “Prevenција trgovine djecom” on the flip chart at the front of the room. The room itself is distinguishably antique; a man dumps coal into the cold iron stove to heat the room. Black plastic coating is peeling off of most of the chairs exposing their sun-faded orange cushion insides. The lace curtains are stained old; and the chipping chalkboard is green. Nobody but me seems to notice.

Gordana begins with greetings and asks everyone to go around and introduce themselves. I am the only one without an –ić or an -ac last name. Then Gordana, Tijana, and a woman from the shelter for women and children of domestic violence

each take turns talking a bit about what, why, and how trafficking is a problem that each institution has to take responsibility for. I look around the room; count thirty-three people: one TV cameramen, two journalists, and a judge are among them. The elderly judge is seated two to the left from me. He has fat fingers and appears disinterested as he fingers the pages of his small leather bound notebook. His telephone, the camera man's, and the speaker's from the shelter all ring during the opening discussions.

Next on the itinerary is to watch the movie, "Ljilja 4 – Ever," so we all move out into the main room and sit in big brown chairs in front of a big screen. This is a movie about a Russian girl whose life begins to deteriorate when her mother abandons her and she is forced to live alone. She drops out of school and gets into drugs and prostitution to make enough money to buy herself food, and falls in love with a guy who pretends to love her but is really trying to gain her trust so he can traffic her. He persuades her to go abroad with him and she falls into the trap of being a victim of trafficking. Her life becomes a living hell, when she is forced into daily plethora of sexual relationships with men who pay money to the man who is keeping her hostage. This captor treats her like a slave, beats, and molests her. Eventually she escapes and kills herself.

The whole time the movie was being shown I was keeping an eye on the audience. A couple women were crying. Some had faces of disbelief and astonishment. Other faces were blank and unyielding of any emotions. By this point, two more camera men had arrived. I knew that this movie was going to be heavy, but I didn't think it would hit me as hard as it did. For the first time I was really aware of the personal reality of trafficking, and scared now of it. I have never before felt so close to the locality and presence of this horrible crime. If the movie had that effect on

me as an American who is only here temporarily, I can only imagine the impact it must have on those people who watch it who have to live in the place where they are possible targets of the traffickers.

After the movie, we moved back into the small room for discussion about the film. People were definitely shocked and disturbed by it. A heated debate broke out between a police officer and a woman social worker. The officer seemed defensive and angry, while the social worker seemed upset and frustrated. Later Tijana explained to me that none of the institutions think that combating trafficking is their responsibility. The police think that it's the schools responsibly and the schools think that it's the parents' responsibility to keep children from being trafficked. At the end of this session, they collectively came to these five conclusions: 1. They need to implement a multidisciplinary approach so that all institutions take responsibility for resolving this problem. 2. In the community there needs to be an organizing of activities for children in order to take them off of the streets and give them something productive to get involved in, such as English or computer courses or creative workshops. 3. Send a request to the local assembly to make it illegal for children under 16 years of age to be out in the streets alone after 11 p.m. 4. To send a request to the state border service requesting implementation of stricter control regarding the passing of children over borders. 5. The Red Cross Recreational Center agreed to host a space for activities for children free of rent to any groups who want to design and conduct these activities.

4:00 p.m. As I walked with Tijana from the Cultural Center to the newly opened second town restaurant, we talked about the role of media. I wondered if they were annoyed with all of the camera men and journalists that were present today. I was thinking that three camera men in one room is a crowd. A majority of the time,

one of them was blocking the flipchart, but no one but me seemed to notice. She explained that she thinks the media attention is beneficial rather than detrimental as long as they are educated about the issues they are writing about. She was glad that there was so much media attention today, because in the past, at other roundtable events, people didn't seem to care. Now, everyone is interested, probably unfortunately because of the case of the Ukrainian woman who was trafficked into Bosnia and died in Mostar from AIDS. This issue seems to have gained media popularity. Tijana thinks that the more people are exposed to and being made aware that trafficking exists here and is a problem that needs to be addressed, the better. She goes on to explain why there were three television crews – one from the RS, one from the FBiH, and one from a local station.

At dinner I sat in between a man and a woman who work with an institution for educational reform in the area. The woman relayed that as of late, educational reform has been making significant progress, especially regarding the reintegration process of returnees into the school systems. This fragment of hope helps me feel a little better about today, until she tells me she has an eight year old daughter and wonders how my mother could let me come all this way by myself. I do everything in my power not to break down and fall apart. I don't want people to know I'm scared and homesick and miss my mother so much. I tell her that my mother is always worried about me but trusts that I make life decisions that will be beneficial to me. She knows if I have my heart set on something, like studying for three and a half months in the Balkans, then she can't stop me. The woman wipes her eyes, as she is I assume, thinking of the day she will have to let her daughter go, and I reach for a piece of bread – something to hold on to and distract me.

November 13th 10:10 a.m. Gordana's husband has come to pick me up from the motel. I'm beginning to feel like he is a taxi driver and I owe him lots of money. We go to the Budućnost office where I'm offered Internet access, which I have been anxiously craving but soon regret. Emails from my Stepmother and my Aunt and my cousin make me cry, as you can only imagine. I get a panicky feeling that I'm trapped so far away from home and I can't stop crying. Why am I such a baby?

Noon: Gordana's eldest son has gotten pizza with ketchup for us. We eat in silence, except for the interval of a phone call from Jill. Relief is delivered when she explains what is going on, and the feeling of feeling so lost subsides. When Tijana comes to the office I feel much better. She lets me interview her after lunch and I learned so much. I never knew Saturdays could be so productive.

"What does preventative education of trafficking consist of?" is the first question I ask her.

Tijana responds, "For the first twenty minutes of the workshops we introduce women and girls to the issue of trafficking. We tell them what is trafficking, who are the traffickers, and we tell them something more about the prejudices of trafficking in our country. Because some think that this only happens to girls from other countries like Ukraine and Moldova, we have to break these prejudices and then we show them this film, Ljilja 4-Ever. After the film we have a discussion where we give them opportunity to tell us how they feel and to share their emotions and we talk about what can be done. We have to talk to as many girls as possible how they have to be as open as possible so they don't get into this trafficking. At the beginning of these workshops we ask them to do some kind of brainstorming, we ask, "what do you think trafficking of human beings is?" And most of them say that is prostitution or sale of organs. That is two things that they connect to trafficking. After the discussion and the

film they realize that is also forced marriage or forced labor. At the end of these workshops we give them evaluations. Most are very frightened or disappointed in society. They never connected the disappearance of the twelve girls to trafficking.” [Twelve girls from the area of Modriča disappeared in recent years. Budućnost has conducted interviews with the families of the missing girls, because no other institutions were taking action to track down their whereabouts. Budućnost has come to the conclusion that these twelve girls have become victims of trafficking.]

I ask, “Who created this project?”

Tijana answers, “Together Gordana and I with Star Network representatives here in BiH.”

“Why do you think preventative education is important here?” I question.

“Well, we think it is important because during the last several years, twelve girls were taken to work abroad and they never came back again. And we assume that those are victims of human beings trafficking. They were taken away from poor families by some friendly acquaintances who promised their parents they would get proper jobs as waitresses, models, or to baby-sit someone’s children. It turns out that these girls never contacted their parents again. On the other hand it’s a bad economic situation in our country. Almost all of young people, if you ask them, ‘what are you planning to do with your life?’ all of them will tell you, “I want to go abroad, I want to go to Germany, to Austria, to Switzerland.”” Because these are three countries where many people from here go to work. And young people actually dream of going there of buying expensive cars and expensive clothes, going on holidays and so on. ... The young people want to be like them. Here even when you finish faculty, the salaries are very low and you can’t afford yourself things like that. Young people have a stronger motivation to go abroad because they think that’s the only way they can

provide themselves a better future. They see no perspective here that's why we think it is important for us to talk to them - to warn them about all these threats. There are also offers of jobs that are regular and legal but then on the other hand, there are those that are not legal and have a hidden trap behind the ad and that's why we want them to open their eyes and make them think and to make them talk to other people as well to have trust in their brothers and sisters and parents and to ask their opinions if someone ever offers them a job."

I ask, "How has the community reacted to the anti trafficking work that is being done?"

Tijana, "Very positively actually because they all think and know it is high time that we started to do something. Because neither police nor any other institution has prosecuted these men. We think there are maybe two or three names of these men who took these girls abroad and they were never prosecuted. They were never brought to the police stations for some kind of questioning procedure or any thing. One of them three years ago was taken into prison on the border of Croatia because they found some marijuana in his car and that's why he went to prison not because he took some five or six girls abroad. On the other hand, people are very aware of this corruption and there is huge money and bribes in this trafficking problem. Obviously no one will do anything about that and it's not our job of the NGO's to prosecute these men. But the least we can do is start talking about it in the public sphere and that's why people think it's a positive thing. (The research about the 12 missing girls led to the development of the preventative workshops, crucial moment*).

"What is the general goal of Budućnost?" I ask.

"Well we have this kind of a vision or mission but our general goal is to have emancipated women in our society who is fully aware of her rights and her space in

this world. Within our organization we have a free legal center. Women can come and get advice and support. And we have a shelter for women and children victims of domestic violence where we provide safe accommodations and psychological support. We have therapy and two green houses. ...Third is the educational segment where we do trafficking, domestic violence, and gender equality workshops.

“How do the students respond to the workshops?” I want to know.

“Even when they come home from the workshops they will think about it for a time but then they are back in this cruel reality where really nothing is offered.

Modriča is a town of some 30,000 inhabitants and we don't have cinema, we don't have a theater, not a concert hall. The only sport we have is football. ...There is nothing to motivate the children to study or to build themselves as intellectuals or their skills,” she says honestly.

“What can be done to provide the youth with a better future and to prevent more from wanting to go abroad, or becoming victims of trafficking?”

“Rebuild the economy,” she says quickly. “There is only one working factory in town and it isn't privatized. If you are a member of the leading political party, then most doors are open for you. If they finish school and can't find a job then it's no wonder why they want to go abroad. Its very popular here, we call it marriage for papers.”

“What are the difficulties and obstacles when trying to prevent trafficking?” is my next question.

“The main difficulty is the lack of cooperation we have with local community institutions. For so many years they saw us as the enemy. We were founded in 1996. And at that time we were supported by one Swedish organization, we still are. People knew that the Swedish supported us and at that time NGO's were something like an

alien. There weren't any NGO's before the war. People and local authorities thought that we wanted to put the two entities (FBiH and RS) together. It was only one year after the war and people didn't want to mix, so it was very hard to work in that time. During this last year or less, things have started to change. For example the turnout for this roundtable shows that they are starting to open up. Yesterday there were a lot of people (40). We can't do it alone without them. Together with schools, and centers for social work, which have so much contact with the poor, who are mostly vulnerable to the traffickers, we can only do it together. We can't rely on international organizations forever, that's why we need the support of the local government. They need to start recognizing us as partners."

My last question is, "what do you think the connection is between alcohol/drugs and trafficking?"

"I think that alcohol is the first step because most of these girls from our region who became the victims of trafficking, their parents were alcoholics," Tijana is quick to respond. "Alcohol is one of the reasons why families become disordered and why children lack support in their families and why they are looking for someone else's support. And why they lost trust in their families. And then I think that that drugs show up in the moment when the girl becomes a victim of trafficking. They are given drugs to get through the days, because they have I don't know how many sexual relationships with men. So they probably have to be on different kinds of drugs in order to put up with the violence. And I also think that traffickers have their hands in the drug business as well."

When I turn off my tape recorder, Tijana apologizes for talking too much, but I am more than grateful for all of the information she has provided me with.

At two o'clock I go to Gordana's for a fabulous lunch: bread, potatoes, pickled peppers stuffed with cabbage, roasted red pepper salad, and lots of meat that I don't touch. And after that we watch TV for a while. A movie about Picasso. Gordana thinks he's a loser. Regarding the way he treats his wives, I certainly agree. They return me to my motel around 7 p.m. and I call it quits around 8 p.m. and go to sleep.

November 15th I could have sworn I was getting picked up at 9 am. 9:15 rolls around, 9:30, 9:45...I guess I got "devel" and "deset" mixed up again. Oh well, this stupid mistake gives me time to have tea and toast and write in my journal for a good hour and a half. I'm beginning to wonder if I'm getting too attached to my journal... They didn't have any bread, so the cook had to run to the bakery across the street and buy some. How can a restaurant not have bread? It's snowing again this morning. "Snake," is what the word for snow sounds like here, although it's spelt nothing like that.

10:15 a.m. Another day at the office; I feel like I'm a regular now. A frequenter of a place, like a drunk to his bar. Everyone acknowledges me when I walk in. I take my regular seat. Sok please, "ne hvala" to the coffee. My body can't handle the Turkish coffee. I secretly crave Dunkin Donut's Caramel Swirl Iced Lattes – like a sin.

I check my email: A hello from Dad; baby brother Nathan is moving – almost crawling. Time to baby-proof the house. Work is good. Carolyn says, "Hi!"

Tijana copies the "BiH Child Trafficking Report" onto discs for me to have. It's ninety pages and bilingual. Super. She walks me to the bank to exchange some money. I feel like I stole the two one hundred-dollar bills I hand the man behind the glass. He looks at me suspiciously before he converts. The exchange rate is 1.456.

Tijana asks me if that's good and automatically I say yes, but really I have no idea. The man behind the glass could be robbing me.

10:40 a.m. Gordana, Tijana, and I pile into Gordana's car and we're on our way to the location of the first of two workshops today on the prevention of trafficking. About 15 minutes outside of Modriča we reach our destination: the only school in the small rural village called Tolisa. A man in blue coveralls motions for us to come inside and we follow him up the wet stairs. I'm surprised it's so wet outside and not icy, seeing how it's so cold. Inside is not much warmer. We are told to wait in the teacher's lounge – a small room with two desks pushed together the long way, little people chairs, a wood burning stove to heat the room of course, an antique coat rack, and bare white walls. Momentarily, three women in their thirties are shown into the room by the man in the blue coveralls. With a metal skewer, he lifts the circular disc lid off the top of the stove and drops in two more mildewy logs. He says to Tijana, which she then translates to me, that if more women arrive we can use the classroom, we just have to wait for the children to finish class. Only 22 children go to this school. More women do come, so we move into the classroom with the same furniture, only more of it. The grown up women now totaling nine sit down in the miniature wooden chairs and wait patiently. One woman looks so shy – like she wants to crawl inside herself and sleep. I try to smile at her, but she doesn't look up.

Gordana and Tijana introduce themselves and the workshop begins. First Tijana talks about the prejudices and realities of what trafficking means. Gordana explains what types of people are at most risk for being trafficked. They explain that women and girls who come from homes of domestic violence are at a greater danger for being trafficked. At the sound of "domestic violence" some women's passive facial expressions morph into expressions of recognition. The shy woman continues to

look at the floor. And then Tijana turns on the movie “Ljilja 4 – Ever.” I immediately get the impression that some women weren’t aware that they were going to be watching a movie, and they fidget in their seats with discontent. Other women just sit back and watch. Twice, the electricity went out for a minute. After the second time, one restless woman got up and left. After the third time the electricity did not come back on. “That happens here every time it snows,” I’m told. So we (I’m referring to Gordana and Tijana and I as “we” now, although I am doing nothing except taking photographs and am not part of the Budućnost organization anyway but am starting to feel like I am) wrap up the workshop by continuing to explain the story of the film and the importance and impact it can have on its viewers. Then evaluation forms are passed around and filled out by the participants. It’s really too bad they didn’t get to finish watching the film. Another workshop will be scheduled to pick up where this one left off and I wonder how many, if any, of these women will come back.

Because we have an hour or so to spare before we three trek further up the hill to the next rural village, we agree to take coffee with the two (and only) teachers in the teacher’s room. We’re back where we started. The elder teacher, who is actually retired but got re-summoned to teach because there was no replacement, unplugged a plastic coffee pot from the wall and placed it on the tiny desk table among the sugar cubes and tiny coffee mugs. For a moment I feel like a giant.

When the “English teacher” came into the room and I was introduced as an American student he said, “Nice to see you,” then quickly changed his seat – from the one across from me, to one far away. (We had a good laugh about this later over wine at Gordana’s and came to the conclusion that he might not know English at all, only teaches the kids words like “sandwich.” Or else, “his mind has lost its way.”)

The elder teacher, donned in a brown sweater and green and black puffy plaid shirt, and rose-tinted 80's style glasses, tells us all about how the children in this village have no playground. And two very nice American soldiers rented a room from her once; they still send Christmas cards every year. We later concluded, also over wine, that because Gordana and Tijana were from a fancy organization and I am from America, we must be rich and more than willing to award her and her children a donation. Unfortunately, that's not why we came.

2:20 p.m. We head further up the snowy dirt road to our second location: an even smaller, more rural village called Krčevljani, and its tiny two-room schoolhouse. It feels twenty degrees colder here. We are early so we stand inside in the hallway watching our breaths until our breaths birth words and we begin sharing stories of "travelling with groups" to pass the time. Tijana translates my stories to Gordana and her stories to me, although I understand most of what she says. It's funny, maybe ironic, maybe just the way it always goes when travelling with groups, but we both have had similar experiences. Gordana and I have something in common now, and I am grateful for this bond, no matter how small and insignificant it is. I like the feeling of having a connection with people who are worlds apart from me.

At 3:00 p.m. when the two classes are dismissed for the day, we talk with the teachers – one of who Tijana knew from the university they both attended. The male teacher informs us that they haven't had electricity for two days. This means we can't do our presentation of showing the movie; the workshop is unfunctional without it. But the teacher says he doesn't think anyone will show up anyway. The women who may have planned on coming are probably "paralyzed by the snow;" no-show due to inclement weather. It's really too bad I couldn't fully experience/observe *Budućnost* in its prime, but some things like snow can't be planned for.

Gordana offers the two teachers a ride into town, and they happily accept so they don't have to wait for the four o'clock bus. The thirty-something male teacher tucks his unicorn notebook inside and zips up his trapperkeeper, while the same aged female teacher puts on her long fake fur coat, and I snap a picture of the classroom with a 50-year-old tattered Yugoslavia map on its wall and rub my hands together one last time over the stove by the door.

On the bumpy ride back down the snowy dirt road, I drag my fingers back and forth across the wet, cold, glass window trying to absorb everything I see from the back seat of the countryside passing by. I want to remember the rows and rows of dried cornhusks. The square brick houses. Are they warm inside? How do the clothes hanging on the lines outside dry and not become clothing popsicles? The cottages way up near the top of the hills. Are there roads that lead there? How long does it take? The scorched skeleton of a Yugo, posed on the side of the street like a sacred relic of the past. I wish I could blink – like a lens shutter – and impression these pictures in my mind forever.

4:00 p.m. They said it was all right if I just left my backpack in the trunk. We were just going to run into the office to drop off the workshop materials, and then get lunch. I was thinking maybe those potato or cheese pitas...I thought wrong. Lunch was at Gordana's. Her mother had prepared a full meal, like the dinner the other night. We drank white wine with lunch and actually really talked for the first time since I've been here. I think it was easier because Tijana could translate everything I said, so I didn't have to try hard to make my sentences understandable; I was just being myself. And it was nice. We had some laughs and talked about a lot of issues. Tijana asked me why I didn't want to stay in the spare room that Gordana had offered me the first

day I arrived. “I didn’t know she offered me a room,” I said honestly. I guess that’s a good indication of how well I know the language!

November 16th One hundred and fifty marks – that’s how much I paid for my stay at the fabulous Dvorac Motel in Modriča. Tijana and her father picked me up from the motel this morning and brought me to the bus station in town. I bought a ticket for the 8:25 bus to Banja Luka but it didn’t come until 8:55. I shook hands with them both and thanked them. I wanted to give Tijana a bear hug, but I held back. I couldn’t remember the last time I had met such genuinely nice people as the ones I have met here in Modriča. If there is one thing I remember about Modriča for the rest of my life, it will be the people and how welcoming they were to me.

One mark to check my bag. I really don’t know why I packed so much. I’m on the bus now and we’ve been on this one road for a stretch. Along both sides, house skeletons litter the bleach-white landscape. To the right up ahead, a sharp triangular structure reminiscent of a used-to-be church, juts into the sky like a fragmented bone poking through the skin. I get a queasy feeling as we drive by. On the left, an occupied house. How can the people who live there bear being surrounded by emptiness where their friends and neighbors once lived? The silence must be a daily reminder of the way things used to be. It must be especially hard when the snow and cold sets in, trapping the loneliness indoors.

I arrive at the Banja Luka bus station late, but it doesn’t matter, the bus from here to Ključ is at 1. I pay .50 KM to use the toilet – by far the worst I’ve seen yet. It is barely a hole in the ground and the smell of piss steams off the floor which makes me feel like I have the right to use as much toilet paper as I want, so I do. While waiting on a cold wooded bench and eating my lunch: a bag of chips and juice, a big smelly old man walks right up to me and sticks his hand into my bag of chips. As he

extracts his hand he takes a seat across from me and glares. I'm glad at this moment I have no clue what he is mumbling at me.

1:05 p.m. I'm on the bus now headed to Ključ. There is a spider on the ceiling overhead. What would happen if I screamed? Momentarily I'm distracted by the quantity of snow outside as the bus lurches up a steep, windy hill. Temporary paralysis. I'm not ready for this snow. I haven't gotten any boots. My fleece will barely suffice as a winter jacket. I want to go home! Hot springs. Hot springs.

3:10 p.m. Three women approach me, as I am the only passenger to be handed luggage stored underneath the bus. One is tall with a ponytail, one is short with short hair, and one is younger wearing a matching hat and scarf. My brain is frozen like the rest of my body and I can't remember the word for "hi" so I just say, "hi." The younger woman, she's around my age I assume, says, "Hello." She introduces herself and the two other women to me and explains that the one with the ponytail is in Ključki Biseri. Dumbly, I nod and say, "Hi" again. We begin walking across the parking lot toward a parked car, but then walk right by it, and pass a group of teenagers who gawk at me when I drag my wheeled duffel bag on by. All eyes are on me, or at least that's how it feels, as I follow these three women down the street and up a hill. We shortly reach my apartment/ room/ place I'll be staying and I drop off my stuff before we make our way to the Ključki Biseri office, which isn't too much further. This building is also home to the town's cultural center, Ključki Biseri is located on the second, or was it third, floor. We bust in on a very smoky and apparently very important meeting, led by Hadija – an older woman with chin length purplish-auburn colored hair and a toothy smile. As soon as I walk in she stops what she's saying mid-sentence and says something to me I don't quite understand. Handshakes with everyone in the room. Indira, from STAR, whom I met two weeks

ago in Sarajevo recognizes me and pulls out the chair next to her, for me to sit down. Hadija introduces me to the room as an American student and then the meeting ends.

There's a jostling of papers and people and something about meeting downstairs tonight at six o'clock and something about be here tomorrow around nine or ten. Right. "Are you tired?" the girl with the matching hat and scarf asks. "I can walk you home. Or if you're hungry, maybe you want to eat something...?" I need to get my mobile phone figured out, I tell her. I need to call Jill to tell her I'm here...

6:00 p.m. I'm where they told me to come, but nobody else is here. I don't even know what's going on. Some kind of dance show?

6:05 p.m. A few girls arrive. Twins, I think. And then a woman, whose name I can't remember, that I got introduced to earlier in the office arrives, and we all follow her into a room. I take a seat and the twins and the other girls that come straggling in, change from their boots to their sneakers. Apparently this is dance *class*. So that's what she meant about choreography. I thought she said she was a crime scene investigator. Maybe that's her day job. What about the short woman with short hair that was carrying a bag of costumes? What were they for? The woman I "know" puts on some music and the girls get into formation and practice their routine. For the next hour, I sit and watch them learn the choreography to a *Destiny's Child* song. What does this have to do with trafficking...?

November 17th By 8:55 a.m. I had already gone to the post office and bought a starter packet for my mobile phone, and had arrived at the office five minutes early. I was able to get my phone set up, with a little help from some nice building denizens, and read and replied to all my emails. Very, very productive. Check two things off of my to-do list.

Hađija gives me a pat on my shoulder or knee every time she walks by me, while greeting and meeting people and signing papers that come into the office in a frequent and steady stream. Every so often I'm pointed to and hear the phrase, "Ona je studentica, Amerikanka," like a waterfall – resonant and cascading. Perhaps because of the force behind the words that flood out her mouth, my mind doesn't have to scramble to translate, but rather it recognizes this strange language; I understand. This woman is phenomenal: animated, expressive, caring but solid. She speaks as she types, so you can't help but listen to what she is writing, and when the printer fails, her hands go up in the air like a red flag and immediately she jumps up to fix it – or hit it. Amazing how fast three morning hours can slip by while just watching a person's daily activity.

Potato pita from the kitchen downstairs is what I eat while Hađija and Kanita explain to me everything that Ključki Biseri is currently engaged in. Dire thirst compels me to actually take a sip of the gigantic glass of yogurt that has been staring me down for half a pita. "The prevention of trafficking program has forty volunteers," they say matter-of-factly, "and twenty-seven students involved with the group. This group has sub groups: dance groups, theater groups, and sports groups." *So that's what the choreography was all about last night! Light bulb flash above my head. Shoot! I didn't take any pictures!* The theater and dance groups are putting on a show next week. Zuhra, Kanita's sister, the one with the short hair, is making all of the costumes and directing the theater group. She writes drama.

Also, I'm told, this organization has created music radio clips and small television clips regarding trafficking. Hađija hands me a three-page report of questions and answers: a survey that was given to 2,000 students and asks questions such as, "Do you know what trafficking is?" and "Do you know what prostitution is?"

and “Why do you think people become victims of trafficking?” In this report now in front of me, I am able to see exactly how many respondents answered the questions and in what way. 866 people responded to the question, “Why do you think people become victims of trafficking?” by saying that the victims had no jobs and they wanted fast money. 557 responded by saying that they became victims due to family problems and lack of decent education. Drugs and alcohol was the response from 404 people. (See questionnaire and responses in the appendix).

It was around noon, maybe later, when we headed over to the next block where Hađija teaches small children. “Hajde! Idemo!” she motherly summoned the children from the playground, which I saw, was littered with broken beer bottles and cigarette butts. The children flocked to her standing by the doorway, and she rustled their hair or patted them on their backs and shoulders as they hurried by to go inside the school building. As we made our way up the stairs behind them I was overwhelmed with a refreshing dose of children’s artwork plastered all over the walls in the hallway. Painted paper pictures of the seasons, colorful collages, textured textile self-portraits, and corn kernel creations lured me into the classroom like Hansel and Gretel to the Gingerbread house. Such a paradise in this small gray town! I was introduced to the rambunctious class of youngsters as an American student and welcomed with a song about Bosnia. I couldn’t get the smile off my face if I tried and I realized in this moment that I have finally gotten to this place within myself, of being fully consciously and deliberately in the present, completely open, relaxed, and enjoying my experience to the fullest. I have tried to reach this place for the past two and a half months, if not my entire life. In this moment, nothing else matters.

Children's faces and voices and energy engulf me completely – and I cannot help but pull my camera from my bag – it's another appendix for feeling and remembering.

When Hađija walks around the room thrusting and cascading waterfalls of words, the children's eyes follow her and some even get out of their seats to be closer to her; three boys in particular cannot control themselves from energetically responding. Tiny hands shoot and wave in the air every time she even inklings at a question. A boy with brown hair, a yellow sweater, and a booming voice stands on his desk to be heard. I cannot help to be moved by the way that her presence in the room moves the children. I've never seen anything like this. Or maybe I have just never paid attention. I'm sitting at the front of the room, in a teeny chair, absorbing it all: slippers, precious clothes, nose pickers, giant pads of paper, missing teeth, broken chalk, Harry Potter paraphenalia, and Barbie too.

Kanita, who has also come along, to translate for me, explains that Hađija has begun a lesson on trafficking with the children, but at this age, she refers to trafficking as the kidnapping of children for the use of forced labor, such as begging, or organ removal. She walks around the room asking questions like, "What should you do when strangers come up to you? If a stranger asks you to get in their car should you? Will you accept offers of sweets from people you don't know on the street? What should you do if you're home alone and somebody knocks on your door? Who should you tell or what should you do if you see a strange man trying to take you or other children?" To each question, most students were competing to get chosen to answer; others were not waiting to be called on, but simply yelling out their answers. They were revved up by Hađija's tone and voice level. And I was just trying to take it all in. After about a half hour of this sing-song like question and answer session she asked

them all to take a piece of paper and draw or write what they think about trafficking and possible solutions. And then a bribe: “chocolate for the five best!”

As children finished their artwork, they ran up to the front of the room to present Hadija with their great accomplishments – she took them one at a time, making sure to read each one and compliment with a “Super!” or a “Bravo!” When they were all finished, she gave them all chocolate, explaining to me that chocolate motivates them to participate and associate this topic with a reward. As my reward, I was handed two of the children’s papers and told to keep them. I sort of felt bad taking them, knowing that two poor kids wouldn’t get to see their pictures hanging on the wall with the rest of their class. But I couldn’t refuse.

2:00 p.m. Kanita and I walk to her sister’s sewing shop. Zuhra is busy costume making, but hungry, so the three of us walk two doors down to Zuhra’s 19 year old daughter’s and daughter’s husband’s restaurant. They make us sandwiches – to go, so we can walk to see “the nature.” One more block down the main street we turn off to the left at the old fabric factory that closed down after the war. It stands empty and ugly against a beautiful snow-capped mountainous backdrop. We follow the dirt road that hugs the river, which flows rapidly due to the recent rain, into a canyon and out the other side. As the beauty of this place and of the people awes me, my camera is once again extracted and greedily snapping. Vibrations in my pocket, it’s my father calling! “Hi Dad!”

“Hi Beck!”

“Hi Dad! How are you? What’s up?!”

“Hi Becky, I got your email, I’m really glad you have a phone now. Where are you? How is Bosnia? Are you ok? Are you safe? Did I interrupt you?”

“No you didn’t interrupt me. I’m great! Bosnia is great...” Words just couldn’t relay all the emotions I was feeling, couldn’t do justice to the things I was experiencing. And then my phone died.

5:50 p.m. We just finished coffee at Zuhra and Kanita’s and now Zuhra and I are heading to the play practice she directs. As soon as we arrive to the same building that is also home to the Ključki Biseri office, I get introduced as an American student to three sixteen year old girls. More girls and boys arrive over the course of the next hour or so, and some try to talk to me in English, but mostly I just watch and take pictures. They practice a couple short skits. In the first one, an angel is singing to a girl who has died from drugs, and her boyfriend and friends mourn her loss. The second one is about two girls who accept a trip abroad with two guys and end up getting trafficked, but then one of the guys gets arrested. And the third is about Satan trying to coax a bunch of kids with drugs and when they give in, death comes. After each performance I’m asked, “So what did you think about this?” by various actors.

When practice is over I go to “take a coffee” with three of the girls and get to chat with them for a while. They are all sixteen. One of them is a model for a Sarajevo agency, and has been in “Fashion Week” in Paris. *So that explains the anorexic body-type...* Another of them is a singer and will be on TV on Friday at nine. She says I can watch it with Zuhra. The other girl is shy and doesn’t know English, only German and some Spanish. Zuhra comes to pick me up, but the girls don’t want me to leave yet, so they tell her they will walk me to Zuhra’s house in a while, where I have been invited for dinner.

9:50 p.m. I just got back to my cozy/ cold apartment from dinner at Zuhra and Kanita’s. Kanita made for us mushroom soup, mashed potatoes, and cauliflower roasted with peppers, onions, and tomatoes. Delicious. I’m so full I could explode.

We watched part of an American western film after dinner and I watched them knit. Kanita said she would make me something to remember them by before I leave. Zuhra walked me home, and I now know why all the girls tonight called her their second mother. Wonderful. Happy. I'm in a good place, how can so much evil and corruption exist here? Or how can big-hearted people exist among so much evil and corruption? I will lay down with this paradox, exhausted.

November 18th Noon. Hađija told me to meet her in the office at noon, but she isn't here yet. I check my email, doodle in my notebook, and awkwardly wait. Finally, around 1:30, Elbisa, the woman from the first day with the ponytail says, "Idemo" so I follow her, I'm not sure where we are going. Ah – to the school. "Da, škola," I understand. Up the cement stairs to the second floor: Hađija's office. Children from yesterday see me and smile shyly; I smile back real big and say hello. Once in her office, Elbisa pulls out a handful of papers for Hađija to sign and after she does, "Idemo" again. I follow Elbisa across the flat cement playground, around the high school, and up a small hill to a factory on the main road, right near my apartment.

This building is a factory that I've heard about before. It is a pasta factory run solely by women from Ključ as a means of economic empowerment and a sort of post-war reconstruction therapy. As we approach the building, two women are stacking a pile of wood against the side of the building. We enter through the far door and into the storage room where finished products – macaroni, spaghetti, noodles, etc, wait to be shipped out; bought; and sold in every market in the canton. At first, I am taken aback by the professional looking packaging and the variety of products, but going into the next room makes me really awed. Five women, ranging in age from 35 to 60, knead and roll huge balls of dough into semi-flat discs, then work them into a steaming, thinning and dough stretching machine to make flat square pieces of dough

that get weighed out and folded in thirds to be packaged. The women don white hairnets and colorful aprons. When I'm introduced as an American student, they smile and immediately ask if I would like a cup of coffee. While waiting for the water to boil on the make-shift propane tank stove, I somehow manage to use the local language to ask the women if it's alright with them if I take some photographs – slikas. "Može, može," they say. While I'm photographing, I know that these pictures won't do justice to the ambiance and powerfulness of the place. My being able to visit and see first hand, and drink Turkish coffee with these amazing, hard-working women will be a memory I will not soon forget. The woman in pink, with the short hair winks at me and again, I feel this sense of connection that is so strong and so remarkable. I am truly honored.

At 4:30 Hađija puts on a workshop for the parents of the children she did the workshop with yesterday. Kanita tags along to translate for me, although I sort of wish she hadn't because I like being able to fully listen to Hađija and make sense of what she is saying. But it's all right; Kanita doesn't translate everything. The parents sit in a semi-circle around the room and Hađija walks back and forth between the flipchart and the chalkboard pointing with a wooden stick slapping the words, statistics (80% of the victims of trafficking are female, 3% are male, and 17% are children), and definitions she wants to emphasize. She starts by breaking the prejudice that trafficking can happen to anyone, then goes on to define all aspects of trafficking, which types of children are most at risk for being victims of trafficking, and what types of homes they come from. She makes it clear those children whose parents use drugs and alcohol, or come from broken homes are more likely to get kidnapped for trafficking than children who come from "working" homes. The reasons children get kidnapped and trafficked is also made clear: child victims of trafficking are used for

forced labor, which sometimes includes but is not limited to begging, or house cleaning. While other victims are used for sexual exploitation or organ removal, sometimes, both or all forms of exploitation are imposed on the victim. Hađija then explains that trafficking is a very big organized crime and usually the criminals can be friends of the family – people that children might be comfortable or familiar with. These trafficking criminals are sometimes strangers, but most often not. I watch one mother out of the corner of my eye, rubbing her hands together and squinting slightly to read the board. Other faces depict great interest, while others just stare blankly. The man sitting next to me laughs softly every so often at Hađija’s eccentricity. I wonder if he’s taking her seriously.

When this little lecture section is over, Hađija goes around the room and asks everyone to share what color emotion they are feeling right now about what they just learned. Most answer black or gray. She does not ask me, but I am ready to say red. And then a bizarre ending exercise that I’m still not quite sure I understand. We are told to pair up then one partner asks the other a question – talking without opening her/his mouth, the partner in turn has to answer in the same way, with the mouth closed. It’s very difficult and embarrassing and funny and silly and I guess the point is to make people laugh, so they don’t leave the workshop totally depressed and distraught. Kanita translated it as meaning to “leave them with hope.”

Hađija invites Kanita and me to go to the café for coffee, and we see some of the parents there and chat with them, or rather Hađija talks at them for a while.

November 19th 10:15 a.m. Tajana and I meet up outside and walk into the building together; she asks if I got the rundown on today’s workshops. “Nope,” I say, “I was only told to be here at 10:15 this morning.” As we climb the stairs to the third floor (it’s colder in here than outside) she explains that she is giving the two

trafficking lectures today to the two classes that are going to be coming to the office. “I have to speak for 45 minutes!” she confesses mocking nervousness, but I never witness a glitch in her confidence. Tajana looks powerful and professional in her black suit, and I feel like I’m not doing a good job at trying to come off as grown up and mature in my jeans and blazer and unwashed hair. Her black eyeliner streaks on her upper eyelids reach halfway to her temples; my face hasn’t felt make up for two months. Is this a pang of jealousy I feel? Nope, just a pain from eating too much of my brand new, expired Frosted Flakes this morning. I don’t give a damn if I have make-up or not.

In the office, Hadija and Elbisa hustle around trying to find batteries and cassettes for the video camera, finish making copies of handouts and clear the U-shaped tables of miscellaneous papers and such. Tajana gives me a briefing of how she’s going to conduct the workshops and shows me two books that she is going to read passages from.

10:30 The first class arrives: thirty 12 and 13 year olds, mostly girls. They scramble to find seats like musical chairs. It is so important for them to sit next to their friends, I conclude. When they settle down, Hadija introduces me as an American student – what else and then the issue of trafficking, and then she introduces Tajana.

Tajana begins, “What is trafficking?” she asks the group. One boy raises his hand and when she calls on him, he stands up and says, “Trafficking is prostitution.” “No, it’s not...” she explains. Trafficking is the buying, selling, and exploitation of any human being by another. Exploitation by means of forced labor or forced sexual slavery – forced prostitution is different than voluntary prostitution. She reads the documented definition from her notes, then describes why trafficking is a crime and

how it exists. She lectures, asks questions, and then reads a part from the book, *Marguerite*, about a real case of a victim of trafficking. Hadija jumps in every so often with side notes or comments, in the interim of picture taking. Elbisa passes out small glass jars of apple and strawberry juice and little yellow plastic cups. Some students stare at my camera and me. Have they never seen an American before? “Pay Attention!” I want to yell at them, but I resist.

11:50 The second class, of slightly older children comes and goes in the same way. Sit down, drink juice, listen, sign the paper that’s being passed around, laugh at the closed-mouth game Hadija makes them play, then leave. After both workshops are over, Tajana tells me, “It must be hard for them because it’s such a professional issue and I’m giving them some information that even I have difficulty understanding.” She asks me what I think. I tell her that I think kids are made aware of the locality of the issue at the very least and that the workshop is teaching them to be more conscious of their environment, which hopefully will save some of them from being potential victims of trafficking.

12:20 Hadija, Tajana, Elbisa, and I occupy the seats made empty by the children, around the table, near the space heater. Perfect opportunity for a group interview I surmise, since they want my opinion on the workshops and want to hear how theirs compares to Budućnost’s workshops. When I finish my conclusions, I begin asking them questions, which they seem grateful for and enthusiastic to answer and for me to hear. For a brief moment I feel like a real journalist.

“Besides, from the types of workshops that I’ve observed, can you tell me more about the other anti-trafficking activities that Ključki Biseri does?”

Hadija is excited to answer (Tajana translates to me, apologizing and claiming that she’s never actually spoken English before, but seeing as her English is so good,

it's hard to believe her) she says, "We have drug prevention projects, and a social credit program. For that (giving of social credits) we have volunteers who look for what people need." She elaborates by talking about the agriculture education programs – 35 in total, which were part of the two agriculture projects for which they received 300,000 KM in funding/ donations. And also with that money they were able to provide people with cows. Ključki Biseri also provides women with economic help. "Women get jobs as cooks, hairdressers...these women were victims of violence, or victims of trauma, or mothers without husbands. These jobs are a type of post-traumatic treatment. It is a sort of medical treatment for them." When choosing recipients for the social credits or hiring women for these jobs, nationality and age are not important.

Tajana gives an example for me, a type of promotional story: "One woman from an alcoholic family couldn't speak fluently. She didn't want to speak to anybody. This organization recruited her and after six months she's communicating with everyone. She looks like a normal person without trauma. That's a mark of this organization's work."

"We helped about 10,000 women here," Hadija bursts in, "when we talk about human rights. We educated about 400 women and children. One-hundred and fifty women for textile industry work and twenty-five hairdressers."

500,000 KM is what they received collectively from all donors. "We have good cooperation with all organizations and institutions in Ključ. We are a very respected organization," Tajana relays to me from Elbisa. Also, the town council gives them the use of all the rooms in this building, including their office, and the big room downstairs which they use for the dance and theater groups, free for five years.

“Can you talk to me specifically about the anti-trafficking prevention work that is happening now?” I ask, trying to get back on topic, although it is great to learn about all the different aspects of this organization.

“We have 15 anti-trafficking programs,” Tajana translates from Hadija, “We want to include Sanski Most and other surrounding towns – including ones from the Republika Srpska and the Federation of BiH. And we are making an Anti-trafficking team comprised of members from all institutions, such as police, teachers, social workers, and parents.” Currently they are in the midst of conducting thirty educational workshops for all student age groups, parents, and community members as well as members of the municipalities; four of which I have been fortunate to observe so far during my stay here. “The creative workshops are very important,” Hadija comments. The creative workshops give children a chance to learn about trafficking and express their reactions to it in the form of artwork or writing stories or poetry. “For the best work we give money or a prize.” The poster on the adjacent wall is a combination of drawings from four different children answering the question, “What is trafficking of human beings?”

“Every month we have a radio show. All the guests are children,” Tajana speaks for Hadija, explaining that the children talk about or read their work on trafficking. This is apparently a very popular activity, and a very popular radio show. “We have an SOS hotline.” People can call anonymously and ask for advice about domestic violence or trafficking or anything like that. Volunteers man the phones. “We have theater and choreography classes that all relate to anti-trafficking,” says Tajana. Because there aren’t hardly any activities for young people to participate in, joining these groups that meet a couple times a week, gives them something to do and keeps them off the streets and away from drugs and alcohol. It’s a chance for them to

have some fun and get together at night, all the while promoting anti-trafficking and anti-drug values. “The show on the 15th of December will be for all citizens and for the council.” After which Ključki Biseri will organize a chemical-free party for the young people.

“We are making all kinds of brochures.” – Hadija. And in regards to all the activities about trafficking she says, “The [anti-trafficking] team isn’t just listening to us, they’re talking to us.” I’m pretty sure she’s jumped back to talking about the good-relations this organization has with the police and such. “This organization cannot work alone,” Elbisa backs her up.

Hadija gets up to leave, and I’m told that she has to go teach now, as she is walking out the door she turns around and practically yells, “We are very dynamic people! All day we are just working!” Tajana and Elbisa say they will stay and talk to me some more. Elbisa wants to talk about another group they have of young people. This group is 15-18 year olds – high school age. The members of this group don’t have money for university study or can’t find jobs. “There is a 60% unemployment rate here in BiH.” The members come from other towns too, not just from Ključ. “They have a training here to talk to kids.”

I ask about the law in regards to prosecution of perpetrators of trafficking. “Unfortunately,” Elbisa answers, “There is no clear criminal law – law principle, and there is no adequate punishment. In the law we don’t have an exit.” As an NGO, “we are just working for prevention.”

Then I ask, “What type of care is available here for victims of trafficking?”

“We don’t have any institutional answer for that problem,” is her sad reply, as she lets out a long drag of cigarette smoke, up into the air it curls, then vanishes, like the hope I was feeling earlier. If a trafficked woman is caught or found here, she

explains then the police just put her on a plane and send her home to her country of origin. The same goes for victims in BiH from BiH; “there are no institutions to give medical or psychiatric treatment to victims. None in this canton anyway. There are different rules for each canton which makes things difficult.”

As Elbisa is finishing another Ronhill Light and we are getting ready to leave she says directly, “All citizens have to understand this problem [trafficking]. Before this project started, no one talked about it.” This last statement replenishes a small amount of hope inside me for the future of Ključ. It finally hits me full-force that NGO’s can make a huge difference; Ključki Biseri is a prime example.

November 20th 11:15 a.m. I met up with Zuhra and Kanita to go to the Bazaar – a maze of closely clumped stalls of clothes and shoes, socks and plasticware, tapes and CD’s, mountains of toilet paper and giant packs of tiny tissue packs, and other random household goods and cheap toys of which the vendors have bought in Turkey and brought back to sell for a small profit. None of us bought anything. Afterwards we went to Café U2 for cappuccinos with Zuhra’s daughter, and then had lunch at Zuhra’s. After lunch Zuhra gave me the teal knitted hat she had been working on and Kanita added a small purple knitted flower onto it. With it on, they both said that I looked like a young Princess Diana.

8:00 p.m. I declined dinner at Zuhra’s because honestly, I think two meals a day is too much. I’m sitting on my bed right now eating bread and Ajvar, wondering what type of people will be moving into the other room of this apartment tomorrow.

November 21st, 7:00 p.m. Tajana knocked on my door at 11 a.m. this morning and looked surprised when I answered in my pajamas. “Oh, you’re not ready,” she said disappointedly, then went on to explain that there was a dance class, and then lunch at Hadija’s and I should come as soon as I’m ready. Thankfully by this point,

the water turned back on and I was able to brush my teeth and wash my face, finally. I threw on a pair of jeans and made the familiar 4-minute trip to the Ključki Biseri building, interrupting the choreography as I made my way into the class. Familiar faces greeted me with smiles. After watching for a while, and light chatting with Tajana's very handsome and endearing brother, I was picked up by Elbisa and her four-year-old daughter for lunch.

Elbisa picked up mushrooms "šampinjons," pita dough (from the factory I had been to visit), cream, and a loaf of bread on the way – using her daughter's small coat pocket as a change purse. And then we slowly made our way up and up a hill – a narrow dirt street laden with wagon wheel rivets and horse dung. When we at last reached Hađija's modest yellow house, the view of the town and the surrounding mountains was fantastic.

After coffee, Elbisa and her daughter left and I stayed behind to learn how to make cheese and egg filled pitas, with Hađija. They were delicious – I took mental notes, so I can try making them by myself when I go home, maybe for a Christmas side dish.

After lunch, a man – whom I have met at the office before, but I don't recall his name – came by and the three of us walked much further up the hill/mountain to the old town, "stari grad." Talk about an amazing view! We walked among the ruins of an old fortress and each time I passed through a stone archway, I felt the cold emanating off the walls and onto my cheeks, ghostly – leaving me filled with a curious sensibility of the place. All the way around, mountains, the river Sava far below, the sun, dropping behind one of the many mountains, off in the distance – rays struggle to shine only a little while longer. Constantly, I take pictures. Constantly, as we descend, the man who walks in front of me offers me his hand at each tricky spot

in the snowy path. I take it once, as I begin to slip, and he holds on a little longer than necessary...

Again, we find ourselves at Hadžija's: coffee drinking. They call me a real Bosnian now, because I drink Turkish coffee like them. When darkness creeps up into the sky, the man walks me home and we barely mess up the peaceful quiet with our voices. At my door, he takes my hand – says he will see me tomorrow, and holds on a little too long...*Strangely that felt like a blind date.*

November 23rd, 11:00 a.m. Yesterday, Zuhra, Elbisa, and I decorated the big room on the first floor of the *Dom Kultura* with children's trafficking artwork: paintings, sketches, posters. Now, police men, the minister of internal affairs, the director of the post office, the chief of crime inspector, and the school pedagogue are among the familiar faces that make their way into the big room and fill up the seats – ready for today's roundtable discussion about trafficking organized by Ključki Biseri. Yesterday, I also helped stuff the invitations.

The theater group kicked the event off with a few of their little skits, warning about the perils of drugs, prostitution, and the dangerous trafficking trap. Through their performance they proved to most of the adults in the room that the kids that have participated Ključki Biseri's anti-trafficking project, are very knowledgeable on the issue, more so than most of their parents. They proved their interest and need to be involved in combating this crime, and admirably, they proved that their actions can and need to make a big impact on the rest of their community – starting with everybody in this room today, in order for some changes to be made. From the quantity of compliments and gratitude made to Zuhra for directing these young people, I truly believe that the older generations were ignited and inspired by them.

Elbisa took the floor as meeting facilitator, after the actors had finished. Hadija said a few opening remarks, welcoming all, and then invited the Minister of Internal Affairs to start the discussion. He started by saying, “it’s very important that everybody connects together to combat trafficking,” meaning that all institutions should combine their efforts (a motif that will thread through each speaker’s sentiments). He also wanted to make clear the official definition of trafficking, “Trafficking is violent (I think my translator meant forced) prostitution or trading with human bodies, human organs, and drugs.” Drugs, he said, are very much linked to trafficking, and therefore much attention has to be placed on the prevention of drug use and the control and punishment of the buying and selling of drugs. To emphasize his concern toward working on a better punishment for this type of crime, he gave one example of a 14 year old girl the police found in Italy a few weeks ago who had been kidnapped and used as an object/machine. “We have to find some exits, consequences for this...” he concluded.

Next up: the inspector from Sanski Most (another town in this canton). “Last year,” he said, “I didn’t know what trafficking was. Now the police – everybody knows about trafficking...” Thanks to Hadija and the good results with the cooperation offered by Ključki Biseri, he is seeing a much better future. “We live in a good territory for trafficking,” he added, “because it is a country in transition.” This man gave the example that for fast money, a person can sell a body organ for around 2,000 KM and that organ in turn can be traded for 10,000 KM – validating the urgency to stop this type of organized crime. “I’m very thankful to Hadija because of the prevention work she is doing,” he commented, also adding, “I’m very proud to say we have good children who are interested...” (I liked his spiel because I had no idea how much human organs were going for these days.)

The director of the Ključ and Bihać post offices is also a member of the council now and says that he hopes with this position he can do more now to help. He claims that he was touched by the theater work, turning behind him to the group of teens to flash them a wink. He then goes on to talk about how in this post-war period there is an imminent need for reconstruction of this country. “What is important in this country? In this community?” rhetorical question, “We have to fight for a better life. We have to find a way to protect the victims of trafficking,” he preaches, “...trafficking can happen to anybody. We have to systematically organize! We have to live now and here! Children, parents, everyone has a responsibility. The first step is everyone is important...” by the end of his tirade, his hands were flailing to be understood. He seemed to be physically pushing family togetherness and respect for the police and each other’s nationalities, things he said, “That have been lacking in this post-war time.”

The school pedagogue – Mr. Fadil Jakupović – took over for his colleague to say a few words. He thanked the performers and remarked that it is good to have an expressive way of teaching the issue of trafficking, and that it is different and probably better than just reading the information from a book. “On every level,” he cooed Hađija, “this organization is very important for our community.”

Following his speech, a police chief, very into drug prevention stood up and barked, “Discussion is very important but the solution to trafficking is prevention! Prevention is the best thing. Why do we have trafficking? Because it’s a profitable, Mafia, organized crime.” He continued, “We need a better solution for criminal acts. However, prevention is easier than helping victims. We can’t think that if it’s not seen, than it’s not a problem.” Then he sat down, red in the face, and looked at his notes, content for now.

A woman sitting three people down from me took over the floor. I believe she has something to do with education. She proudly admitted that she has been in this project from the start and that in the past year has learned a lot from this NGO. She boasts that this NGO is not just helping/ educating children, it is educating the parents as well, which is just as important. “Hađija is a good leader,” she says sternly, “She fights better than every single political party and the police. She organized workshops for everybody – nobody else did that.”

Hađija stands and asks the room if they think that prostitution exists here. A few murmurs, no definitive answers. Then she tells a story about how a woman had a house near the one nightclub, up on the hill behind it, so that she could sometimes see inside of the club from her house. One night, this woman looked and saw a small girl dancing on a table in the middle of the club for customers – including “our children.” “This nightclub in Ključ is only a small space, but trafficking and forced prostitution are taking place in that small space,” Hađija wanted everybody to know. Apparently high unemployment lures girls into prostitution, as a means of fast money. In this nightclub, 50 girls were supposedly working as prostitutes only one of them having legal BiH work documents. “If everybody knows about this problem, why not give the information to the police?” someone wanted to know. “If citizens have good information that the police can use, they are helping.”

A police representative next began again to talk about the relationship between drugs and trafficking in regards to a newspaper article about a new drug found in Croatia and in Mostar. GMA, the name of this new drug, is slipped into drinks at parties that a lot of young people attend. There have been a number of cases of incidents in Mostar where this drug was used for rape and other criminal acts. Under the influence of this drug, the user loses contact with reality and becomes limp –

making it easy for people to take advantage of them. “In the police department we have to find a solution for this [drug] problem.”

Next, the director from the organization for the National Dance Group said a few words, before Hađija closed the roundtable by pointing out the lack of media attention this event aroused. “Good things aren’t shown on TV – maybe it’s not of interest for citizens...” she declared before an unidentifiable voice said, “Trafficking is the evil of this century.”

It was very interesting to me to see the difference in media attention between Modriča and Ključ. Although Ključ seemed to have better cooperation from the police and other institutions, as was evident from the quantity of activities, much more media attention was given to Budućnost’s roundtable. I can only assume some of the determining factors for this discrepancy are due to location, quantity of journalists, and leftover sensationalism from the scandalized death of Olena Popik in Mostar.

When the roundtable discussion ended, I was given a duty: it is now my job to inform people in the United States what NGO’s in BiH are doing to prevent trafficking. But also that trafficking is a very corrupt organized crime that undoubtedly needs to be acknowledged worldwide, so that as a world of connected, decent human beings we can combat this “evil of our century” together. I feel honored with this newly endowed responsibility; finally I realize the capacity to which I can give back to the communities that have opened up for me, letting me see their worlds.

November 24th I have company for my bus trip from Ključ to Mostar: Hađija and Elbisa are also going for the same reason. We are all attending a regional conference called, “Lessons Learned,” to bring together members of NGO’s from across BiH that are working on the prevention of trafficking. More specifically, all of

the NGO's represented, are grantees from the STAR Network BATCOM project. I sit next to Hadija on the bus and she feeds me mandarins and bon-bons.

My fellow SIT comrade, Katrina, is waiting for me when I get off the bus. The last thirteen days without seeing her have felt like a lifetime. Cracked open like a pomegranate, I'm messy with fresh experiences and inner growth. My juices flow, all the way across the bridge from the east to the far west side of town, once I begin leaking my journey to her and cannot stop.

November 25th Back home it is Thanksgiving. My father is cooking a turkey and lots of side dishes, getting ready for the guests. My mother is probably making my favorite – green bean casserole - to bring to her parents. Here in Mostar, I am walking to the conference; challenged to find the Ero Hotel. I've never missed Thanksgiving before. But it doesn't feel like Thanksgiving here, there are no commercialized decorations. For the next four hours, as I sit in a conference room filled with amazing women, Katrina will be home cooking a vegetarian Thanksgiving dinner for the two of us, using all 12 KM worth of vegetables we bargained for at the open-air market this morning. It will be delicious, but it won't be the same as being home with family.

Seeing Hadija, Elbisa, Gordana, Tijana, Jill, and the STAR staff from Sarajevo – Indira, Selma, and Zlata made me feel like I was at a reunion, on the first day of the conference. I never expected to see Gordana and Tijana again after I left Modriča, so this was a pleasant surprise. The workshop started with some very peculiar exercises, which I can't even begin to describe, and ended with a meeting time for dinner (a non-Thanksgiving dinner, which I said 'no thank you' to). In between starting and ending, we got into groups and began discussing projects that each NGO has been working on – projects that STAR Network of World Learning has funded. The representatives

from each group talked about workshops, SOS hotlines, web sites, promotional materials, and the training they have been doing – sharing which have worked the best.

Bosnian was spoken the whole time, so I sat next to the translator who had been hired to translate for Jennifer – the STAR representative from Washington. Although, I didn't really need a translator because I understood almost all of what was being said, the three of us were considered one person for all activities for the entire conference. I guess this was fine, because neither Jennifer nor I are members of any NGO anyway; we were mostly just there to observe and learn.

A woman from the NGO “La Strada” was in our group and it was really fascinating to listen to her talk about how her NGO did some preventative education work in some very Catholic sections of Mostar and that “people are closing their eyes about trafficking especially in Catholic religious areas.” She continued by saying that in those areas there is such an embedded denial or ignorance of the problem, but there has been proof that girls have been trafficked to and from there. After one workshop La Strada conducted in one of those religious areas they got very negative feedback. They don't think that people were receptive to the information and they also don't see a second opportunity to conduct more workshops in the schools they have already visited. They feel they would not be wanted back. Then she changed the subject and said with a sigh, “The activity that was going down in Night bars is now also in private flats especially in suburban areas, which complicates how to catch and punish criminals.”

La Strada was the only group I heard from that had experienced negative reactions to the preventative trafficking education work they were conducting, however, I did not get to hear from all of the nine NGO's present.

November 26th We talked about problems today. USAID, US Government donations, STAR funding, and the restrictions and regulations of the donors to the grantees. As a whole, we sat in a circle, and each group got to present their reactions/responses to the problems NGOs face – giant scribbled on post-it-notes pressed on the mirrored walls were referred to.

November 27th Today, Networking. They made a special only English-speaking group for us and I have to admit, I was a little bored. Saying good bye to my Modriča and Ključ buddies at the end of the conference was sadly beautiful. Hadija pressed me into her bosom and demanded Indira to take a photograph of us. Then one of us with Elbisa, and one with Gordana. As I stood in front of the camera with my arms around the backs of the women on either side of me, I felt their hands on my shoulders and waist and I couldn't help but wonder if I had as much of an impression on them as they have had on me. A smile of inspirational gratitude was my response to my own question and their good byes.

November 28th I feel like an idiot dragging my oversized duffel bag and weighed down by my backpack, laptop, and bag of gifts walking down the street toward the bus station. Praying for a cab – please rescue me. Too many layers; I'm sweating and getting nervous...if I have to walk the whole way, I won't make it in time. Ah! Relief, on the corner, a small gathering of cabs and their drivers engaged in friendly banter. My presence interrupts; questioning stares.

7 KMs later, overcharged, I'm at the bus station talking to a very attractive middle-aged backpacker from New York City. We have Boston in common, among other things. He tells me about an interesting American student he met and talked to in Ljubljana a little over a week ago. "Dustin?" Yes! Dustin! "A fellow SITER..." I begin explaining and almost three hours later after religion, family, death, capacity for

coping and growing, culture shock, traveling, bicycling, ex-wife and ex-wife's sister, flirting, 911, bars, we are getting off the bus in Sarajevo. We shake hands and I secretly hope I'll run into him again in the upcoming week. I get into another taxi and brisk off to the studenski dom, thinking about the hours of conversation I just had, and thinking that it really is a small world...

As my adventure nears the end, I look forward to going home and being once again in the aura of safety and comfort of my family and friends. But as I look back, I can't even begin to fully understand or process all that I have seen and done in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

From the very beginning of my adventure I have had a safety net of support underneath me: my wonderful host family Barica and Mirko Gladulić, the fabulous SIT staff Mirna, Goga, and Jill, my helpful advisor Agnesa, and the support of the friendships I have made along my way. These connections allowed me to feel not alone, but rather, invisibly guided by their presence, availability, and encouragement. No one was more than a phone call away.

Replaying my journey in my head, it is really amazing that I was able to first of all, find and get to each location on my own (a very real and scary thing to do), and secondly that the organizations to which I got access allowed me in without hesitation. Most of the time spent with Budućnost and Ključki Biseri I got the feeling that these two NGO's were happy I was there with them. If I was a burden or annoying they didn't show it. I was taken in, and introduced to members of their communities and members of their families as if I was an old friend or colleague. During my stay in Modriča and in Ključ I was pleasantly surprised by the number of people I met, and the kindness that I was offered. Their kindness and openness made

it quite easy for me to observe, ask questions, take photographs, and learn as much as possible. As friendships and trusts developed, I became more comfortable being myself – an American student in a small Bosnian community, and I believe that also with the development of trust and friendships, the communities felt more comfortable with me there. During my stay in Ključ I was interviewed by the local newspaper and when the article with my picture along side it was published, people I had met came up to me to tell me that they saw me in the paper, on more than one occasion.

The difficulties I was faced with during this ISP period were more internal than external. As I said before, I had to get over my own fears – traveling alone, staying by myself in motels, putting myself out there. Homesickness was also another difficulty, perhaps because when I get uncomfortable (i.e. not being able to sleep because of being spooked by the movie *Ljilja 4-Ever*) it is easier to want to be home than to deal with the present situation.

In retrospect, I think I got a good look at the NGO work that is being done on the local level to prevent trafficking of human beings in BiH. I only hope that my work clearly explains to readers all that I have seen and experienced. I want readers to be able to feel the movement that Budućnost and Ključki Biseri are stirring up in their respective communities and the power they have as NGO's to fight this crime.

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Interviews

1. Azra. Personal (informal) Interview. 20 November 2004. Ključ: Director of Kosmos, the local youth NGO.
2. Elbisa, Hadija Bajrić, Tajana Crnalić. Personal Group Interview. 19 November 2004. Ključ: Members of the Ključki Biseri organization.
3. Tijana. Personal Interview. 13 November 2004. Modriča. Member of the Budućnost organization
4. Director of the Social Services Institution. Personal (informal) Interview. 20 November 2004 Ključ.

Endnotes:

ⁱⁱ The new *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children* supplementing the *United Nations Convention Against Transitional Organized Crimes* gives this international definition signed by 80 countries, including Croatia, in December 2000. This definition is according to the Protocol (Article 3).

Photograph Notes:

Photo 1: A view of Ključ from the stari grad.

Photo 2: The three women at the front of the room are leading this anti-trafficking roundtable event for the town of Modriča. On the left is Tijana and centered is Gordana, the director of Budućnost. The woman on the right is the director of the women's shelter.

Photo 3: These women are the participants of Budućnost's anti-trafficking workshop in the rural village called Tolisa.

Photo 4: Gordana explaining the movie "Ljilja 4 – Ever" to the women in the Tolisa workshop.

Photo 5: This is the outside of the salon where Ključki Biseri gives women training and a source of work.

Photo 6: This is one of the anti-trafficking lessons in Hađija's second grade class of nine and ten year olds.

Photo 7: Hađija is looking at her student's creative solutions for the prevention of trafficking of children in Ključ.

Photo 8: This photo shows how pita dough is made in the pasta factory in Ključ.

Photo 9: Students attending the workshop lead by Tijana in Ključ.

Photo 10: Zuhra, wearing the hat, is the director of the anti-trafficking drama workshops. Here she is helping the children learn their lines during practice.

Photo 11: Two members of the choreography dance group.

Photo 12: The man in the black and white shirt is the instructor for the traditional Bosnian dance group. Most of the members of this group are around 16 years of age.

Photo 13: More examples of creative trafficking awareness artwork by local children.

Photo 14: Two actors during one of the skits that kicked off the anti-trafficking community roundtable in Ključ.

Photo 15: Hađija announces the winner of the poster contest and shows the work to the roundtable participants.

Photo 16: This is the work of a high school girl in Ključ – the winner – whose painting has been made into a promotional poster by Ključki Biseri.

