

The Road to Recovery:
Economic and Social Development in Srebrenica, Bosnia-Herzegovina

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Abstract

Srebrenica, Bosnia-Herzegovina is recreating itself. This municipality, located in the Republic of Srpska, is the setting of the 1995 genocide, which murdered 8,000 Muslim men and boys. Destroyed by the war, this municipality is rebuilding its economy, infrastructure and civil society from scratch. Srebrenica has made a large amount of progress in the past ten years, with the help of international and local donors. These donors have contributed millions of dollars to the effort. However, Srebrenica still faces many obstacles, namely, high unemployment, lack of physical infrastructure and poor attention to social welfare. While slow, progress is made everyday in Srebrenica. There are numerous people and organizations working toward its betterment and with time, and further financial investment, Srebrenica will once again be a prosperous community.

Special thanks to Fadila Efendić, for opening her home and heart to me. Her constant reminders of what Srebrenica was, allowed me to hope for what it might be. Always truthful, she taught me the reality of Srebrenica while allowing me to see its beauty.

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Acronyms

AWO	German Workers Club for Welfare
BHMAC	Bosnia-Herzegovina Mine Action Center
BiH	Bosnia- Herzegovina
CGAP	Consultative Group to Assist the Poor
FBiH	The Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina
MZ	Mjesna Zajednica (Local Community)
OHR	Office of the High Representative
RMAP	United Nations Development Program: Rights-based Municipal Assessment and Planning Project
RS	Republic of Srpska
SBC	Srebrenica Business Center
SIDA	Swedish Agency for International Development
SRRP	United Nations Development Program: Srebrenica Regional Recovery Program
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

PART I: Introduction

Background Information

The Municipality of Srebrenica is geographically the largest municipality in all of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Located in the eastern portion of the Republic of Srpska, it covers a 500-km² area of mountains, forests, rivers, and natural springs. Rich in natural resources, the industrial sector employed one-fourth of Srebrenica's pre-war population (36,000) in mines, metal product factories and furniture production before the 1992-1995 Bosnian war. Srebrenica, then famous for its 48 natural springs, was a prosperous tourist destination for people from around the world before the war. Its gorgeous terrain and diverse population made it one of the most prosperous areas in all of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

However, in the years between 1992 and 1995, Srebrenica drastically changed. The war threw Srebrenica, a UN "safe area," into poverty, destruction, and political ruin. It also left the people in physical and emotional agony. The war began in Srebrenica in 1992 when the Bosnian-Serb forces began to surround the municipality. Srebrenica became home to not only its own war-affected population but also thousands fleeing from towns across eastern Bosnia. While hundreds were being killed, the people of Srebrenica were able to keep the enemy forces from completely overtaking them. Eventually, in 1993 General Philippe Morillon, of the UN Peacekeeping Mission told the people of Srebrenica that the UN would protect them and following this promise the United Nations Security Council declared the enclave a "safe area" to be protected by its troops¹.

These troops and their commanders did not fulfill their promise. The years of war in Srebrenica reached a tragic culmination on July 11, 1995 in Potočari. Directly in front

¹ Officially known as UNPROFOR, the UN Protection Force.

of the UN battalion headquarters, where Dutch soldiers stationed themselves to protect the population, Bosnian-Serb troops chose their next victims. On this day, and several days following, Serb forces under the command of General Ratko Mladić executed at least 8,000 Muslim men and boys from Srebrenica as the international community looked on without intervention. This mass execution was the largest on European soil since World War II and has been officially recognized, by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, as genocide.

Even after the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement², which signaled the end of the war in Bosnia, Srebrenica's suffering was not complete. Local political obstruction in Srebrenica, and the Republic of Srpska (RS), forced the international donor community to cease their donations to the municipality. This funding embargo, endorsed by the Office of the High Representative (OHR), slowed the reconstruction and growth of the municipality. However, under pressure from OHR, the RS politicians eventually allowed returnees back into Srebrenica and OHR lifted the embargo. Once the embargo period ended in 1999, desperately needed aid began flowing to the people of Srebrenica and reconstruction of the community began.

Right now, Srebrenica's highest priority is the employment of its citizens. This priority is agreed upon by all sectors of the municipality: local government, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, and everyday citizens alike. Employment is the key to the sustainability and growth of Srebrenica. However, a prerequisite to a successful economy is quality infrastructure: physical, social and institutional. Entering the town of Srebrenica, you will first see the abandoned and dilapidated EnergoInvest Building: a daunting invitation into this municipality's recent

² The Dayton Peace Accords were signed on November 21, 1995.

past. More than half of the town's buildings are still in their post-war state, damaged by bullets and mortars, covered with holes, peeling facades and rotting window frames. The effort to rebuild both buildings and houses is in dire need of funding. However, if people are to live in, let alone return to, Srebrenica, it is vital that they have running water and electricity in these homes. Equally important is the existence of a transparent and informative local government, a supportive NGO sector, and opportunities that will serve citizens' needs and promote a constructive and dynamic atmosphere for growth. Fortunately, all local institutions and a high number of international organizations are working toward this end.

Research Question

When I began researching in Srebrenica on November 18, 2005, I set out to learn how the community's many projects, both economic and social, were promoting sustainable return. I thought that I would be researching the sustainability of *Bosniak* return and only *Bosniak*³ return. I quickly realized, however, that this question would fail to reveal the true dynamics of social and economic development in Srebrenica.

Throughout the interview process, I learned that absolutely everyone in Srebrenica is a part of the war-affected community. A great number of the population has at some point been or still are displaced, internally displaced, or returnee.⁴ Had I limited myself to my initial research question, I would have focused on only one group

³ Bosniak has replaced Muslim as an ethnic term in Bosnia, in part to avoid confusion with the religious term Muslim - a follower of Islam.

⁴ A displaced person, in this context, is someone who was forced to leave his or her home due to religious or political persecution (war) but has not crossed an international border. Internally displaced, in this context, is someone who has remained within the municipality of Srebrenica, but has been displaced from their original residence. A returnee, in this context, is either of the above and/or refugee who has returned to their original residence in Srebrenica.

and actively ignored the needs and opinions of the rest of the population and in doing so, disregarded a significant number of people.

In Srebrenica, I learned quickly that consideration of the entire community, and not only its parts, is essential to researching its social and economic development. By creating a better *community*, life will be better for all of its populations. Srebrenica has been working for ten years to rebuild its community and bring its multi-ethnic population back together. Had I only researched the effects of development on one ethnicity, I would have undermined the very ideal of integration that they are working toward.

For this reason, I decided to create a more inclusive research question: exploring if and how Srebrenica can sustain its inter-ethnic community. This question led me to learn about the community's history, before the war, during the war, and after the war, in order to understand more clearly its present state and consider its potential for the future. In the following research, I will explain how Srebrenica, along with its partners, is creating sustainable economic and social infrastructure for its citizens. I will also put forth the challenges and accomplishments of the community's efforts in order to enlighten the subtleties of development within the municipality. Most importantly, I have included the impressions and comments of local people so that the reader can understand how development is currently affecting the people who live in Srebrenica. Understanding the accomplishments and prospects of development in this community can further inform the methods and capacities of similar projects in other post-conflict multi-ethnic communities.

Methodology

This work is based primarily on sixteen personal interviews. My goal in this research was to portray Srebrenica as it is today, especially from the point of view of those who live and work there. There are very few publications available recent enough to portray an accurate picture of this town and municipality at the end of 2005. I held discussions with employees of the municipal government, local NGO's, UNDP and internationally funded organizations. The majority of my interviews were in English, but I did work with a translator for three interviews. All interviewees were given the option to speak "off-the-record", unrecorded, and/or anonymously, and several decided to use this option.

I attempted to gain insight into every aspect of life in Srebrenica by interviewing a diverse array of people and attending a range of activities. During the discussions, the interviewees were asked about the greatest challenges and benefits of living in Srebrenica. They were asked to name the highest priority for Srebrenica and then explain how it could be achieved. While all interviews had slightly different questions, unique to the interviewee, I tried to balance the interview by not only asking about Srebrenica's obstacles but also its accomplishments.

All participants were given an Informed Consent Form before the interview. This form was provided in both local language and English so that confusion over terms or on-the-spot-translation would not occur. (One interviewee even corrected the grammar of my translation on the form!) All of the interviewees chose to keep the form, translated into their language, for their personal records.

The interviews were a bit more structured than I expected. The people of Srebrenica are accustomed to being interviewed and unfortunately, disinterested in the process as a result. Many journalists have been here through the years and people are used to answering questions. My previous experience trained me to ask one or two open-ended questions and then let the conversation flow from there. However, there was very little “flow” to many of the interviews I held in Srebrenica. I learned that I would only get specific, concrete answers on tape. But, once I turned off the tape recorder and became the visiting *student* again, the insinuation and personal opinions came out.

My role as a student played a very important role with respect to access to people and organizations. Journalists and international eyes have bombarded this community for years: eyes that come and go without any concern for changing the current situation, only portraying it for the writer’s benefit. I regularly found myself introducing myself as, “Erinn Lachner, a student, *not a journalist.*” Not simply, “Erinn Lachner, a student.”

Opportunities to observe, and sometimes participate, in local conferences occurred quite often. They were extremely helpful for accessing local opinions I would otherwise not have been able to collect. Learning how the organizations worked within the communities, outside of their offices, was invaluable in understanding how they achieve their goals and those of their beneficiaries.

I was an outsider to the Srebrenica community, from the first to the final days that I spent there (November 18, 2005 till December 10, 2005). However, through the friends I gained while there, I believe that I earned the trust of the community. I had only three weeks to learn about the people of Srebrenica and their current environment. Fortunately, they were extremely giving at all times and in all circumstances. Without

their willingness to invite me into their work and show me their lives, there is absolutely no way I could have learned a fraction of what I did.

Research Limitations

I encountered three major technical challenges while in Srebrenica that limited the scope of my research. These challenges were time, lack of information, and my limited language abilities. This research was completed, in its entirety, in only three weeks. This amount of time is not sufficient to gain a true picture of what life is like in Srebrenica. Being an outsider, I will never fully understand Srebrenica and the people living there. In three weeks, with sixteen interviews, and more than a hundred hours of research, I was just scratching the surface.

A lack of diverse information sources also provided a significant challenge. There are no current official statistics on any aspect of life in Srebrenica: no statistics for unemployment, none for age distribution, and no one even knows how many people officially live in Srebrenica. This lack of information made me dependent on a small number of sources for my “official” data, namely, UNDP-SRRP. I am deeply grateful for the access that SRRP provided me, without it, my research would be comprised only of estimations. Unfortunately, this lack of source diversity unintentionally puts a focus on one international organization, UNDP. While UNDP-SRRP is doing an incredible job in Srebrenica, the reader needs to remember throughout this paper that SRRP is not the *only* organization in Srebrenica. Countless others, including USAID, CARE International, AWO, and the Netherlands Working Group are donating both a large amount of funds and time to Srebrenica and we all should acknowledge their efforts.

My limited command of the local language in Srebrenica enabled me to build relationships with its citizens; however, I was incapable of understanding the many nuances present in our conversations. This language barrier led to basic conversation and simple responses from both me, and many respondents. While I feel that all of the information I gathered was extremely valuable to this research, there would be significantly more local insight if this barrier had not existed.

Another challenge I faced was the implications of self-selected interviews. While I did interview a number of people during my three weeks in Srebrenica, the group could have been more diverse. This lack of diversity will have an impact on my research about inter-ethnic relations. While relations were always cordial on the surface, I found it interesting that no one admitted to their own prejudices. Instead, they referred to the prejudices of others. In addition, no one I interviewed challenged the authenticity of the genocide that occurred there. I know that there are people in Srebrenica who believe it did not happen. I am not ignoring the presence of this denial, however, my interviewees did not raise this issue so I cannot give voice to opinions I did not hear.

A final, but not technical, challenge confronted during this research was the pure intricacy of everything that is Srebrenica. The people, the politics, and the life here are incredibly challenging to understand. As I previously mentioned, this research is just scratching the surface of what one can learn in Srebrenica. While I focus a great deal on the technicalities of its development, much of Srebrenica is based on emotion. Emotion that I do not have the words to describe authentically, or the authority to express.

My effort to live in the municipality, speak its language and understand its complexities was imperfect, but it was still sufficient to realize the information that is

often ignored in the analysis of development in Srebrenica and beyond. I was conscious of these limitations during my research, writing, and analysis, and feel that I was able to mitigate these limitations to the best of my ability through my research methods and conscientiousness. Despite these limitations, I am confident that the research that follows provides an important and unique glimpse into the development of, and everyday life in, Srebrenica. Hundreds of pages were read to inform it and more importantly sixteen local citizens lent their voices to it. This research is *not* the complete picture of Srebrenica, nor is it an attempt at creating a full picture. It is only the outline I was able to trace of the challenges and joys that comprise life in this municipality.

PART II: Economy

The 1991 national census, the last census gathered in BiH, recorded Srebrenica's population as 37,211 people. Today, there are approximately 10,000 and no official statistics.⁵ UNHCR's information, dated December 2004, counts only 1,794 Bosniak returnees to Srebrenica since the war. Before the war, Bosniaks comprised 66% of the population; now they comprise less than 10%. Also due to the war, the percentage of female-headed households in the municipality is at 42%, the largest percentage of female-headed households in all of Bosnia-Herzegovina. These drastic demographic changes greatly affect the employment prospects of the community. The table on the next page illustrates the population losses, by village, within the municipality.

⁵ No census has been conducted since the end of the 1992-1995 war. The 1991 data, country-wide, is useful only to paint a pre-war picture and current data is largely guesswork due to the profound displacement of Bosnian citizens, both inside and outside of Bosnia.

Pre-War Census Data Compared to Estimated Post-War Populations⁶

Local Community	1991 Census	Current Estimation ⁷
Brežani	1,206	175
Crvica	622	480
Gostilj	1,146	356
Kostolomci	1,066	80
Krnići	1,757	24
Luka	1,011	127
Orahovica	1,119	196
Osatica	3,613	400
Podravanje	780	161
Potočari	4,402	626
Radoševići	2,203	279
Ratkovići	784	5
Sase	1,131	224
Skelani	4,380	2,200
Skenderovići	1,516	16
Srebrenica	5,790	3,841
Sučeska	2,396	600
Toplica	995	35
Viogor	759	75
Total	36,676	9,900

The official unemployment rate of BiH is 44%, an alarmingly high number, but Srebrenica's current unemployment rate is even higher: 90%.⁸ Srebrenica was an industrial community before the war, dependent on its wealth of natural resources: zinc, lead, cadmium, limestone, brick clay and a small quantity of silver and gold.⁹ Of the community's 36,000 people: 12,500 worked in industrial jobs, mainly factories.¹⁰ The war physically destroyed the factory-buildings beyond affordable repair and

⁶ Data collected from *Srebrenica: Guide for Connecting Business*. Drina-Srebrenica. Srebrenica, BiH: The Municipality of Srebrenica, 2005.

⁷ The word "estimation" must be emphasized. There is no official source for this data or scientific means for its collection. Despite this, however, they do provide a valid picture of the demographic change in this municipality.

⁸ It is important to note that there is a considerable grey economy in BiH, including the municipality of Srebrenica. If the figures from this grey economy were taken into account, it is possible that the unemployment rates would significantly decrease. (Source: Citizen of Sarajevo. Potočari, Bosnia-Herzegovina: November 26, 2005.)

⁹ *Municipality of Srebrenica: Rights-Based Development Strategy for 2005-2010*. Srebrenica Municipality and RMAP. Page 13.

¹⁰ Interview with Nada Javanović. Srebrenica Business Center. Srebrenica, Bosnia-Herzegovina. November 28, 2005.

technological advances have rendered many of the factories and the skills of their workers obsolete. In addition, the transition from socialism to capitalism, which came at the same time as war in Bosnia, also caused a high number of job losses. These factors, in combination, caused a dual sided dilemma: first, a sheer lack of jobs available to the population, and second, the jobs that do become available lack qualified applicants.

Wood Processing

Srebrenica's greatest asset is its natural resources and this is where the greatest number of jobs will be concentrated in the future. However, these jobs will not be concentrated in the pre-war areas of mining or minerals; rather they will focus on forestry, agriculture and tourism. Over half of the municipality is wooded, making the forestry industry a prime candidate for expansion and development at all levels of its value-added chain. The leading investor of both time and money to the development of the wood processing industry is the Dutch Government through the SRRP.

SRRP has been working with the Srebrenica Business Center to stimulate the growth of the wood-processing industry. SRRP, through extensive research, believes that the wood-processing industry shows huge potential for financial growth and job creation. Aid to this industry will also promote good-governance. Education provided to the workers of this industry will promote transparency and best practices. This transparency is essential for the sector to enter international markets, namely that of Western Europe. The sector realizes this and sees the advantage of creating better practices in order to

increase their revenues. SRRP and the Business Center are also using “backward fiscal cash refunds¹¹” to promote legal practices.¹²

The main challenges to the development of the forestry industry are access to credit, access to the market, government policies, technology, and education.¹³ It also has major risks associated with it. While there is no concrete evidence to support this theory, there is a significant possibility that this Serb dominated industry is associated with war criminal funding and, by supporting this project, SRRP might unintentionally encourage this network.¹⁴ In order to combat this, SRRP are not directly funding the industry but provide their support through education and transparent fiscal incentive processes. Another risk to SRRP and the community is that the industry will not significantly improve the situation of returnees in the short term. SRRP will encourage businesses within the sector with returnee and/or female employees by giving them priority (if all other eligibility requirements are met) in the awarding of fiscal incentives.¹⁵

While not immediately improving the lives of many returnees there are many indirect benefits that a successful wood-processing industry will provide all citizens of Srebrenica. If it is to expand, roads will be built to remote areas in order to facilitate the transportation of wood and access to exploitation sites. These roads will also connect otherwise inaccessible villages to the greater municipality. Expansion of a transparent wood-processing industry will also generate significant funds for the municipality,

¹¹ Backward fiscal cash refunds are used as an incentive for beneficiaries to pay their taxes. When applicants are accepted into this program they receive cash refunds for taxes they have paid in the previous fiscal year.

¹² Wood Processing Cluster Support Workshop. SRRP. November 23, 2005.

¹³ *Preliminary Assessment of Regional Business Clusters: Srebrenica, Milići and Bratunac*. UNDP Srebrenica Regional Recovery Program. Page 10-11.

¹⁴ Wood Processing Cluster Support Conference.

¹⁵ Ibid.

improving its overall infrastructure. Jobs will also be created, and due to affirmative action policies on the part of funding sources, returnees are likely to be hired to fill them.

Agriculture

Agriculture and livestock are the next types of industry that show potential for growth. Before the war, a significant part of the population - around 84% - was involved in agriculture as a secondary activity. In spite of the abundance of arable land available, only 2% of it was cultivated in 2002.¹⁶ The rest is now nutrient rich and in good condition for planting due to the lack of use over the last decade. Several crops are suited for the Srebrenica environment. Plum, apple and pear trees grow all over the municipality and there is simply more fruit than the community itself can consume. Hundreds of apples can be found lying on the side of the road, freshly fallen and ready for consumption. Many types of vegetables are also grown successfully in Srebrenica. Many homes have their own small greenhouses for growing onions, peppers, cucumbers and tomatoes. In addition to vegetables and fruit tree cultivation, berry farming (mainly raspberries and strawberries) also shows potential for success.

The main challenges to the growers in Srebrenica are initially their lack of funds for investment, their lack of technical training and technology, and their small plots of land that are unable to produce enough product to reach economies of scale. Once these initial challenges are overcome, they face yet one major obstacle: storage. The lack of effective storage facilities in the municipality restricts the farmers' abilities to face

¹⁶ *Municipality of Srebrenica: Rights-Based Development Strategy for 2005-2010*. Page 14.

seasonal supply fluctuations and creates an “erratic and unstructured market” that decreases the motivation for farmers to raise their production levels.¹⁷

Livestock

International donors have provided a large amount of livestock and feed to local farmers in the Srebrenica municipality. This has not only allowed many households to become more self-sustainable, it has also provided a source of income. There are several women in the villages that because of their donated cattle can now sell domestic milk, cheese, and eggs to their neighbors in order to supplement their pension. Some also sell small amounts to larger dairies. A common rate might be 5KM (\$3.75) for 2 liters of milk and a bag of domestic cheese. Recently SRRP distributed over 300 sheep to households in the Srebrenica municipality. This distribution is a part of their female-headed household 2005 sheep distribution activity funded by the Government of the Netherlands and will help these women earn an income from both wool and cheese sales, and potentially from selling the sheep’s offspring.

The biggest challenge to this industry is the lack of technology in the area such as refrigeration. Economies of scale also cannot be reached with the small plots of land and limited numbers of stock owned by individuals. The other main challenge to farmers is gaining the finances to increase numbers of stock and improve the technology they possess. Fortunately, many international organizations have found donating cattle and sheep to be a beneficial project and have helped many residents through such projects.

Tourism

¹⁷ *Preliminary Assessment of Regional Business Clusters: Srebrenica, Milići, Bratunac.* SRRP. Page 12.

Before the war, tourism was a significant source of income for the Srebrenica municipality. The beautiful landscape and medically certified mineral rich springs, the most famous being *Crni Guber*, brought thousands of people from around the world to this area every summer. In one night, there might have been almost 2,000 tourists staying in the municipality.¹⁸ The spring water is known as a cure for eye diseases, acne, sinus infections and many different forms of anemia. However, the war destroyed the industry by demolishing its hotels, mining its hills, and its reputation from beauty to bereavement.

There are two main obstructions to the growth of this industry: funding and fear. There is no money in the municipality to fund improvements in the tourism infrastructure, as it is simply not a priority. Without tourism funding, the municipality cannot rebuild or refurbish hotels or tourist attractions. Currently, the hotels provide alternative housing for returnees and displaced persons, there would be no room for tourists even if they were to come. Returnee housing must be provided before tourist accommodations can begin to be addressed. Apprehension also deters tourists from visiting Srebrenica. The stigma of “Srebrenica” still exists and for the stigma of genocide to again subside, and the resort town image to reappear will take a long time and a significant advertising campaign. The tourism industry in Srebrenica has great potential because of the municipality’s picturesque location, but without financing, time, or major public relations activities it will not create jobs for the residents of Srebrenica.

Micro-Finance

While industry will hopefully grow to be a large employer for Srebrenica in the future, employment and small-scale financing are essential *now*. Fortunately, Srebrenica

¹⁸ Interview with Vildana Mahmutović. Drina-Srebrenica. Srebrenica, BiH: November 24, 2005.

has a well-established micro-credit community that is providing a much-needed service to the municipality's population. The majority of the people in Srebrenica live below the poverty line and micro-credit is their only possible means of financing income-producing activities. The services that the micro-finance institutions provide puts "power into the hands of poor households, allowing them to progress from...survival to planning for the future, acquiring physical and financial assets, and investing in better nutrition, improved living conditions, and children's health and education."¹⁹

Micro-finance provides a much-needed alternative to commercial bank loans in the Srebrenica community. There are several reasons why the rural poor, the classification of the majority of Srebrenica's population, cannot receive commercial bank loans and therefore need micro-finance institutions:

- 1) Commercial banks do not lend such small amounts as are relevant to needs of the rural poor.
- 2) Commercial banks have insufficient knowledge of agro-business and rural economic tendencies i.e. variable growing seasons, weather, pests, and price fluctuations.
- 3) There is a sheer lack of commercial bank presence in rural communities.
- 4) Commercial banks have high collateral requirements that cannot be met by those below the poverty line.
- 5) Interest rates for commercial bank loans in BiH are extraordinarily high.
- 6) Sparse populations and poor economies do not provide eligible guarantors, which are needed to receive most commercial bank loans.²⁰

The current micro-financing law in the RS allows micro-financing institutions to distribute short-term loans (1-3 years) of up to 30,000KM (\$20,000). The micro-financing institutions in Srebrenica have diversified their investments by type of business (agriculture, services, retail), category of borrower (women, men, returnees, displaced

¹⁹ *Building Inclusive Financial Systems: Donor Guidelines on Good Practice in Microfinance*. Consultative Group to Assist the Poor and The World Bank. December 2004. 4.

²⁰ Interview with Guy Dionne. UNDP-SRRP. Srebrenica, BiH. November-December 2005.

persons, refugees, domicile persons), and provided loan size (ranging \$800-\$20,000).

There are five micro-financing institutions currently providing services in the Srebrenica region: Benefit, Partner, EKI, MiBospo, and Prizma Mikro. One of the most successful of these five is Prizma.

Business Education and Entrepreneurship

In addition to financing, the lack of managerial and other business skills in the region is a major challenge to job creation and employment.²¹ It is essential that entrepreneurs, and future grant or loan applicants, are knowledgeable about the skills needed for running a business so that they will be successful. They need to increase their desire for personal responsibility, learn how to manage time efficiently, learn how to create a professional atmosphere and learn the skills necessary to be transparent and successful in their new business ventures.

The Srebrenica Business Center (SBC) was established to improve the business education in the community as well as eventually provide loans to its clients. SBC provides many different services to their clients from the Srebrenica region, which covers five municipalities. They help draft business plans and marketing strategies. They provide business start-up vocational training as well as courses in business English. The center also provides public services safety certification, business start-up vocational training, and auditing services. The trainings they provide cover topics from basic accounting to risk management, budgeting for business expansion to market positioning. In 2004, the most current annual report available for this research, the SBC clientele breakdown of Srebrenica was as follows:

²¹ Srebrenica Business Center: Annual Report 2004.

SBC Trainings Provided in Srebrenica²²

	Bosniak	Serb	Total
Male	147	57	204
Female	72	387	459
Total	219	444	663

This business education enables micro and small entrepreneurs to establish sound business that have the potential to grow and hire more employees. For example, SBC provided training to a local automobile mechanic who then went on to open his own mechanic business. This man attended their trainings, then applied and received a grant through their grant service. After one year, he is now in the position to where his business has grown and can employ one more worker. He has recently applied to SBC fiscal incentive program that will help him to afford this new employee and the fact that he pays his taxes to both the municipality and the state increases his chances of being accepted into the incentive program.

These trainings are essential to the growth of entrepreneurship and employment in the municipality of Srebrenica. The majority of people here were employed in the mineral mining and refining industry before the war and now that it does not exist at nearly the same capacity, all of these workers need to find work in a different field. This requires re-education and instruction in the areas that are now open to employment (i.e. handiwork²³ and agriculture). The population of Srebrenica is lingering in transition. If they are to open their own businesses and be responsible for them, it is necessary that they learn how to transform and apply their previous work experience to their current situation.

²² Ibid.

²³ Handiwork in this case applies to all craft skills: auto mechanics, woodworking, hairstyling, etc.

PART III: Infrastructure

Srebrenica's infrastructure is essential to its economic development. The 1992-1995 war in Bosnia destroyed the electrical grid, water supply, and transportation infrastructure of Srebrenica. These structural elements of a community are as essential as the homes and workplaces they lead to, and their reconstruction and maintenance must be guaranteed. There has been an enormous amount of work put into rebuild all of these infrastructures, however there is still a lot of work to be done.

*Electricity*²⁴

Several parts of the city of Srebrenica, as well as many of the villages, are still not serviced by the current electrical grid and those that are, are subject to frequent power outages. Many residents mentioned that the outages occur less often now than in past years, however, they are still inconvenienced by their frequency and unpredictability. Before the war, electricity covered the entire municipality. Ten years after the war, only 65% of the pre-war grid has been re-established and not all of them are connected to the grid: receiving their electricity from personal generators run by diesel fuel. There are three categories of electrical connection to the homes of Srebrenica.

- 1) No connection at all. There are no rehabilitated power lines in the village, or lines close the home in question, and therefore they are not connected to the grid. These homes are often provided with generators by international donors.
- 2) There is a rehabilitated network in the village, but it is comprised of only one main line and does not reach those homes that are set away from the main dirt roads where the main line is located.
- 3) The home is close to the main line and can easily be connected to it with the installation of a short low-voltage line.

USAID initiated the rehabilitation of the electrical grid and is responsible for 80% of its reconstruction up to this point. They rehabilitated the main substations and the

²⁴ Interview with Alexandre Preto. Program Manager. UNDP-SRRP. Srebrenica, BiH. December 2, 2005.

majority of power lines. Currently, however, the Srebrenica Regional Recovery Program (SRRP) and CARE International are the main donors to the electrification project

The main challenge to the continuation of the project and the aim of 100% electrical coverage in the Srebrenica municipality is funding. As more and more of the villages are connected, the costs to the donor of connecting additional beneficiaries are increasing. This is because the homes that are not currently connected are not connected because of their distance from currently rehabilitated lines. As homes increase in distance from the rehabilitated lines, the cost of connection increases. This is why these homes are being provided with generators, powered by diesel fuel. These generators can not be run constantly and all appliances, including lighting, can only be used several hours a day. These generators cost approximately \$1,600 whereas the rehabilitation of the network to reach the home in question may cost more than \$4,200. While not a perfect solution, they do solve the present necessity of the home to have electricity and will suffice for the short-term until funds can be found to connect them to the main grid.

Water

Fortunately, much of Srebrenica's water-distribution infrastructure has been repaired, with funding from the United Kingdom, however, there is still work to be done. In many villages, potable water cannot be accessed inside the home. Private wells and community water fountains are still considered a main source of water for many households. There are enough springs in the area for the villages to have their own water sources rather than overcoming the funding and technical difficulties that would be encountered trying to lay down a network for such an expansive area.

The town is currently undergoing a much needed water system upgrade: all of the steel pipes are being replaced with PVC. This project, funded by SRRP, aims to bring the current rate of water loss²⁵ (40%) down to the average loss rate of 15-20%. The huge amount of water being lost in system is extremely inefficient and costly to the municipality.²⁶

There are several challenges to this project and all water-infrastructure related projects in Srebrenica. The first is to the engineers themselves. There is no data available on the pre-war infrastructure, and so engineers currently working in the area have no information about what they might find when they begin digging to lay the new pipes. This makes project timelines, costs and contracts very difficult to agree upon and all such costs must be approximated before commencement of the projects. The other difficulty, or rather inconvenience, of these projects is that during their completion, water can be turned off in the city for 24 hours without notification. There is no official notification process enforced for notifying citizens prior to the shutting off of their water supply and they are must resort to purchasing water at local shops or not using it all for the day(s) of work.

SRRP has also distributed over 1,000 water-meters to individual households in the municipality. Prior to the installation of water meters, the water distribution company, Polet, simply averaged the costs among all houses. Because of this, there was a significant lack of environmental responsibility: since people were paying a relatively flat fee for their water, there was no incentive to be conservative with its use. Installing the meters will allow the water company to charge households for their individual water use,

²⁵ Water loss is the amount of water that leaves the system due to leakages (i.e. from the pipes.)

²⁶ Interview with Engineer. UNDP-SRRP. Srebrenica, BiH. December 2, 2005.

increase responsibility on the part of the user, and have the potential to save money for those that reduce their water usage to a responsible level.²⁷

Transportation

Transportation infrastructure is a main priority for the Srebrenica Municipality for two reasons: its ability to facilitate return and sustainable living and its importance to the economic development of the community. Some villages in Srebrenica are more than 40 kilometers from the town center and can only be reached by dirt roads. Like all roads, these deteriorate, but it seems that in Srebrenica they are deteriorating faster than they should. This deterioration is because there is no municipal transportation service to maintain them and the majority of residents don't feel that the maintenance is their responsibility. Tractors carrying heavy materials such as wood for heating often use these dirt roads. This significant weight upon the road causes a great deal of damage. Drainage is also an important problem for the dirt roads. The drainage canals along the sides of the road are often blocked and therefore not functional. If they are functional, it is likely that the drain they lead to is blocked by either leaves or trash causing significant water back-up on the roads creating movement of the dirt and potholes.²⁸ In a survey done by SRRP of 238 rural female-headed households in Srebrenica, the dire need for road reconstruction was quite clear. In response to the question: "Is there a passable asphalt road to your village?" 24.8% respondents answered "yes," 1.3% answered "yes, but it is hardly passable," and an astounding 73.9% answered that there was no asphalt road at all.²⁹

²⁷ Engineer.

²⁸ Interview with Local Governance Staff Member. UNDP-SRRP. Srebrenica, BiH. December 2, 2005.

²⁹ *Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis of the Socio-Economic Conditions of Female Headed Households in the Srebrenica Region: October 2004*. Page 30.

In winter, access to these villages is severely limited by snow and ice. There is no regular bus service between the town and its many surrounding villages and most people do not own cars, which creates involuntary isolation for many within the municipality. During the summer months, the accessibility of the villages is improved. However, residents often have to walk long distances in order to reach their desired destination, and this can be impossible for the elderly.

The main road connecting Bratunac and Srebrenica is in very good condition and is well traveled. Taxis regularly travel on this road bringing residents back and forth. Taxis are a leading form of inter- and intra-municipality transportation because of their predictability, convenience, and low fares: 1.50KM one-way from Bratunac to Srebrenica and 1.00KM to anywhere in-between. Busses are also a main form of transportation, but they travel less frequently and do not provide door-to-door (or “paved road-to-dirt road”) service. Neither taxis nor busses make frequent (if any) trips to the villages further out in the municipality.

Land Mines

“Yes, we have an official map, from the Agency for De-mining. But you should not trust the map. That is the very first thing they teach us.³⁰”

Land mines currently contaminate 2/3 of the municipality of Srebrenica. Their presence is an obstacle to all aspects of development in Srebrenica: rebuilding infrastructure, encouraging the economy and, most importantly, they create a major safety risk to the people of Srebrenica. While the majority of the residential areas of Srebrenica have been cleared of mines, people still cannot stray very far from the roads or well-trodden paths. The hills and mountains around Srebrenica have not yet been cleared

³⁰ Vildana Mahmutović

and this could possibly create problems for natural resource dependent industries such as the forestry industry. Information dissemination is also hindered by mines. Many roads to the TV transmitter located above the town of Srebrenica are mined, and therefore broadcasting is disabled. Residents are left with poor reception, sometimes only one station, and many have had to invest in satellite to have television at all. Unfortunately, citizens are also becoming desensitized to the existence of mines. An employee of Drina-Srebrenica described her experience while visiting a village in Srebrenica:

“They were all standing in front of a pile of landmines. Just standing there! People would find them and then throw them onto the pile. As I was watching, I kept taking one-step back at a time until I was close to the car. And the children, they will play with them.”³¹

Her experience describes why mine clearance, as well as mine education, is desperately needed in the Srebrenica Municipality. Drina-Srebrenica is one NGO in Srebrenica that is working to educate the population on the dangers of mines. In their bi-monthly bulletins, they show pictures of and provide warnings against touching, tampering, or playing with mines. The organization has collaborated with BHMACH, civil protection services in the municipality, local government, and authorities in Sarajevo to push for and accomplish mine clearing in Srebrenica.

³¹ Vildana Mahmutović

PART IV: Public Life and Civil Society

Beyond the technical aspects of Srebrenica's development are the people that live there. The social infrastructure that affects their everyday lives must be understood to gain a more complete impression of the municipality. The citizens are facing challenges with their local government, healthcare and education systems. The process of return, while officially complete, is still ongoing. The youth of the municipality are confronted with only two choices, remain in Srebrenica and unemployed, or leave for the cities. Inter-ethnic relations, while cordial and even friendly on the surface still face challenges underneath. All of these concerns are current for every member of the municipality and fortunately, a great number of people are working toward the betterment of them.

Local Government

Srebrenica municipality is comprised of nineteen local communities, each with an elected representative. These elected officials make up the *Skupštinski Odbor*, Assembly Board, which must approve all decisions before they are passed on to the mayor, Abdurahman Malkić, for signature. The mayor's responsibility is to manage the municipality and coordinate the many different projects within it. This structure is intended to provide for the representation of all citizens within the municipality.

While the municipal government is the highest local authority, it loses quite a bit of influence to the international donors and the RS entity government. For example, the forestry industry, an industry with large income generation potential for the community, is managed and coordinated by the RS public forestry company. The municipality has no influence over forest exploitation or planning, nor does it have the rights to utilize its wildlife (animals, mushrooms, medicinal herbs, etc.). In addition to this, the profit made

by individual forestry cooperatives does not remain in the local community.³² This reduces the amount of funds the municipality can use to improve its own infrastructure.

This lack of funds makes the local government dependent on donors: namely international donors. While the government is very appreciative of the many millions of dollars that international donors have sent to the municipality it is clear that there is still a bit of tension. Whenever donors are involved, priorities too often conflict. The municipality has its priorities and the donors have theirs. Since the donors provide the funding, their priorities usually take precedence and are sometimes at odds with the true needs of the community. This loss of authority is often frustrating to the local government, but the funds are welcome and they are willing to sacrifice some of their decision-making power in order to access them.

Another challenge that the municipality government faces is that there is a lack of trust for them in the community. There are two main political parties in Srebrenica, both nationalist: the Serbian Democratic Party or SDS (Serb party) and the Party for Democratic Action or SDA (Bosniak party). Other parties are present (for example the Social Democratic Party, SDP) however, they do not carry as much influence as the other two. These parties are both ethnically based, not necessarily in policy, but in constituency. When there is an election very few will vote for the opposing ethnicity. Currently, the majority of the population in Srebrenica is Serb but the mayor is Bosniak. This is possible because all Srebrenica residents, 24,000 of whom are currently located outside of Srebrenica, can vote in Srebrenica's elections instead of the elections in the municipality where they are currently residing. This provision was made after the war,

³² *Municipality of Srebrenica: Rights-Based Development Strategy for 2005-2010.*

and entitles residents the choice to vote according to their pre-war residence or their post-war residence.

The majority of these citizens who are not in Srebrenica are Bosniak war refugees and the Mayor benefits from these votes. However, since the majority of the people who voted for him are not currently living in the municipality his work often faces a significant amount of opposition among the local resident population, which is primarily Serb.

Insufficient dissemination of information adds to this distrust. The *Mjesna Zajednica*³³ (or local community council) assembly board members are unable to transfer information to their constituents because of an irregular meeting schedule as well as poor road infrastructure, which makes it hard to attend the meetings when they are held. However, the mayor, along with other municipal staff, has attempted to rectify this situation by making visits to remote areas in order to talk to his rural constituents.

In accordance with the Law on Free Access to Information, which was adopted in 2001, the municipality is attempting to increase the amount of information available to its constituents. There is currently a bulletin board in the front entrance to the Municipality Building with announcements of meetings, employment opportunities, and upcoming events. Every day, all day, people can be found perusing this board. A second project that the municipality is working on, in collaboration with SRRP and USAID/SIDA Governance Accountability Project (GAP), is a municipal front office or “one-stop shop”

³³ Mjesna Zajednica’s (MZs) are local community councils present throughout much of Bosnia-Herzegovina and were the basic unit of local community organization and government before the war. In post-War Bosnia-Herzegovina, many communities have reformed these councils which are something of a hybrid government and non-governmental institutions that are connected to the municipal governments but not given operating budgets. Mjesna Zajednica board members are elected by local citizens. (There are 19 MZs within Srebrenica).

for its constituents. SRRP will be providing the construction costs and GAP is purchasing the equipment and providing technical support.³⁴ While the information dissemination is not yet at an acceptable level, the municipality is working to improve it and it is certain that these improvements will be welcome by the community.

Healthcare

The citizens of Srebrenica face many challenges when it comes to maintaining their health. Their access to healthcare is limited by several factors. First, the person's physical and environmental condition plays a significant role in their ability to access healthcare. Second, the existence of separate insurance in FBiH and the RS, and the predominance of uninsured people in Srebrenica, limits healthcare tremendously for patients. Further consideration should also be made on the part of the municipality and donors to research the need of a permanent mental health professional in the community.

Access to healthcare is primarily affected by terrain and transportation infrastructure. Srebrenica is an extremely mountainous area in which villages are only connected to the town by dirt roads. The poor condition of these roads makes access to healthcare extremely difficult, especially in winter when they can become impassable. There are villages which are over 50 kilometers away from the main town and, due to the lack of transportation, many people must walk rather than travel by automobile. According to one interviewee, a village needs to have more than 2,000 people before they are entitled to have an outpatient or first aid center. If you put many of these villages together, you still would not have 2,000 people: in Srebrenica as a whole there are only 10,000.³⁵ There is only one main health center, *Dom Zdravlje*, in Srebrenica. This

³⁴ Local Government Employee.

³⁵ Vildana Mahmutović

center also has two out patient clinics, but only one of them functional.

A second factor that inhibits access to healthcare and healthcare services available in Srebrenica is the insured status of its residents. Approximately 70% of its residents do not carry RS insurance. The health center receives funding from the RS Health Insurance Fund based on the number of insured living in the municipality. Given that this number is quite low, the health center receives limited funding, insufficient to ensure adequate quality of services.³⁶ In addition, a significant number of those that are insured hold their insurance in the Federation, which creates two problems: first, the health center does not receive funding for those residents, and second, the residents cannot receive their healthcare services at *Dom Zdravlje* and they are forced to go to the Federation every time they need to see a doctor. One NGO in Srebrenica, Drina-Srebrenica, is working to encourage residents to have a single registration here in Srebrenica, explaining to them that this is where they live and it is an essential part of improving the care available to them.³⁷

The mental health of the municipality's citizens should also be of great concern. The majority, if not entirety, of this community has experienced some level of trauma, emotional or physical. However, there is no psychologist working in the municipality on a permanent or even regular basis. Donors should seriously consider investment in a municipality-wide survey on the emotional status of the citizens and subsequent support free mental health services, as indicated by this survey. This lack of care is not unique to Srebrenica, Bosnia-Herzegovina, as a whole has ignored the mental health of its citizens and is ill equipped to deal with the psychological needs of its people.

³⁶ *Municipality of Srebrenica: Rights-Based Development Strategy for 2005-2010.*

³⁷ Vildana Mahmutović

When asked what the main priority for the municipality was, every respondent said employment. Not one answered emotional health. The reason for this omission could very well be cultural; the practice of visiting psychologists is still not widely approved of or considered a cultural “norm.” It also cannot be presumed that the citizens of Srebrenica have any desire for psychological intervention, or that they would take advantage of the service if it were made available without first consulting them. No interviewees mentioned a desire for a psychologist in the community. Despite this however, there is a small initiative in place for the Center for Social Work in Srebrenica to hire a psychologist in the future.

Youth

Being young in Srebrenica is challenging. For the younger members of the community (7-15), several NGO’s are working to create a positive learning environment outside of school. For example, both the NGO Srebrenica 99 and Drina-Srebrenica provide access to computers and computer games for the youth to play on after school. Many of the children that come to these NGO’s live in the villages and must wait two or three hours after school closes before their bus comes to take them home. These NGO’s provide a warm place and a fun atmosphere for them to socialize with their peers. Srebrenica 99 also plans craft activities such as painting and clothing decoration. For those children that do not come into the town for school, Srebrenica 99 attempts to go to them although these activities are irregular due to transportation and logistics. Like children everywhere, the children in Srebrenica know how to make their own fun as well. In the winter months, the children can be seen sledding down the steep roads and having snowball fights amongst the woodpiles.

Life is more challenging for the older members of the youth community in Srebrenica. For most, the lack of jobs and social activities forces them to leave or remain unemployed and unhappy. There are unfortunately not as many groups working to encourage a positive social atmosphere for the teenagers and 20-somethings of Srebrenica. “There are two days a week, Friday and Saturday. We go to the café bar and get drunk and then we go home,” is how one interviewee describes the social life of Srebrenica’s younger community. However, the Youth Center of Srebrenica is working to change this.

Srebrenica’s Youth Center is a newly renovated space: colorful, bright and full of potential. With donations from the World Bank, Netherlands Working Group, and other organizations they have created an excellent space for Srebrenica’s young community. The main room contains a stage, large open area, and non-alcoholic bar area. Another room will be used for an internet café and computer courses. The center also hopes that the municipality will donate the wage for one employee to run the center: work the bar during activities, maintain equipment and help advertise the Center’s activities. The Youth Center, which has been open since May, sponsors concerts, theater and other social activities for the community’s youth.

Education

Today in Srebrenica, there are eleven schools: one kindergarten, two primary schools, seven branch schools, and one secondary school centre. All of these schools are in some state of disrepair and most are deteriorating both inside and out. They all lack sufficient equipment for their students, especially computers. One of the schools recently acquired internet access for its students; however, the service in Srebrenica is so poor that

it cannot be used.³⁸ Like the majority of buildings in Srebrenica, the schools also lack heating and reliable water access. These circumstances do not create a good learning environment for the students of Srebrenica.

All of the schools in Srebrenica follow the RS mandated curriculum and adhere to the inter-entity Interim Agreement on the Accommodation of Specific Needs and Rights of Returnee Children. This agreement, signed in March of 2002, ensures the rights of parents and students to choose which “national group” they will be taught in school. These “national” subjects are language and literature, history, geography- in primary school “nature and society” - and religious instruction (Islam or Orthodox instruction).³⁹ Students are not required to enroll in religious courses but they are provided for those who desire them.

There are no official statistics on the number of youth in Srebrenica; however, one interviewee mentioned that there are too few students attending school in Srebrenica. This is especially true in winter, when children from the villages cannot get to Srebrenica due to limited road access.⁴⁰ While there may be a low number of students in Srebrenica, they still require qualified teachers and it is hard to entice well-educated teachers to come to Srebrenica. Salaries are extremely low here; RS education salaries are generally 50-60% less than the salaries in FBiH. Because of this, teachers, even those who are from Srebrenica, who work in the Federation are unlikely to give up their current jobs in exchange for working in Srebrenica.⁴¹

³⁸ Interview with Nedeljko Simić. Youth Center President. Srebrenica, Bosnia-Herzegovina. December 6, 2005.

³⁹ Interim Agreement on the Accommodation of Specific Needs and Rights of Returnee Children. Office of the High Representative. March 5, 2002.

⁴⁰ Nedeljko Simić.

⁴¹ *Municipality of Srebrenica: Rights-Based Development Strategy for 2005-2010.*

Return

The war destroyed 6,300 homes in Srebrenica of a previous 9,130.⁴² In the past five year, only 1,700 of them have been rebuilt. Currently, there are over 2,800 returnees registered to return who are awaiting housing and not nearly enough homes to welcome them.⁴³ This is due to a significant lack of funding and/or allocation of funding to housing reconstruction. There are homes with no running water or electricity, most of which are in the villages where returnees, Bosniak and Serb alike commonly reside

Due to political obstruction, many returnees were unable to come back to Srebrenica prior to 2000. This delay greatly influences the number of returnees that will return in the future. Because of the delay, many people did not know if they would ever be able to return, and invested in a new life somewhere else, usually in the Federation. Once they have invested what little money they had left after the war into a new house or apartment, they are unlikely to return to Srebrenica. The lack of job opportunities in Srebrenica also lowers people's desire to return. People must live where they work and without work in Srebrenica, they will not come back.⁴⁴

If they are lucky enough to find work, or decide to come back without it, they first must go to the municipality and provide them with all pertinent information. The municipality's office of Reconstruction and Return then creates a database of all these registered displaced persons and refugees. The donors work together with the municipality to coordinate the reconstruction of the returnees' homes. This process is slow but many different organizations are working to ensure its success.

⁴² Interview with Abdurahman Omić. Office of Reconstruction and Return..

⁴³ *Review of Returns to Srebrenica: June 2005*. UNHCR. Available at www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/news/opendoc.pdf?tbl=NEWS&id=42ce6bf84. Accessed on 29 November 2005.

⁴⁴ Abdurahman Omić.

An element to the return in Srebrenica that is often overlooked is the primary residence status of the returnees. Many returnees maintain their status in FBiH even after “returning” to Srebrenica. This is done for several reasons: healthcare insurance, future job prospects, other family members still living in the FBiH home, and sheer uncertainty of the future of Srebrenica. One interviewee describes Srebrenica as a company, whose workers leave every Friday night to go home to the Federation. This description is validated by the many companies/organizations in Srebrenica that close early on Friday evenings to facilitate the commute.

Inter-Ethnic Relations

“The most promising thing in Srebrenica is that there are still people here , after everything that happened. Not only returnees but also others. I lost three brothers and my father. But I can go through Srebrenica with pride.⁴⁵”

The drastic and traumatic demographic changes mentioned earlier in this paper, coupled with the memory of war and genocide, makes inter-ethnic relations tense at times, but it seems that the majority of people want change and are willing to work to make relations better.

At an inter-religious dialogue roundtable in November of 2005, this desire for good relations was apparent. This conference was intended to spotlight the impact of religion on history and culture: the religious leaders, one Muslim effendi and two Serbian Orthodox priests, from the community were there to open the discussion. After thirty minutes of rhetoric on religion in history, the community members quickly turned to the events of the current day. One citizen commented: “I can read history in a book, I am here to learn what I can do now.” This remark represented the feelings of the majority of

⁴⁵ Abdurahman Omić.

attendees. The same citizen also challenged the religious leaders present. He reminded them:

“Before the war, when a Muslim died, an orthodox priest would go to the funeral. When a Serb died, the effendi would go to the funeral. That was the way it was to live in Srebrenica. You need to stay together. You need to let people see you together. Go to funerals together. If people see you together then they will learn.⁴⁶”

His comment, “they will learn” illustrates the concerns of those citizens and NGO employees that are working to improve relations among the different ethnicities. Many people commented that inter-ethnic relations are cordial and often very friendly. However, there are still issues beneath the surface. One young man interviewed commented that while everyone seems to get along out on the street, “Serbs would never allow their daughters to marry a Muslim and the Muslims, never a Serb.”⁴⁷

One of the most evident examples today of ethnic intolerance is displayed in the cafés and various celebrations in the town of Srebrenica. One café’s Serb clients are known to play Serbian nationalist songs over the sound system when Muslim customers enter. The owner does not necessarily endorse these songs, and they are not only sung at his establishment, but the fact remains that many of its clients relish the songs that support Karadžić and Mladić and intentionally sing them in the presence of Muslims. Every single Bosniak interviewee mentioned these songs without prompt from the interviewer. For each of them, these songs serve as a constant reminder of the war that took their loved ones.

⁴⁶ Inter-Religious Dialogue Conference. The Association for Youth and Women: SARA Srebrenica. Srebrenica, Bosnia-Herzegovina. November 28, 2005.

⁴⁷ Interview with Srebrenica Citizen 3. Dom Kulture. Srebrenica, Bosnia-Herzegovina. November 30, 2005.

One cause of the inter-ethnic discrimination is the lack of cultural education about the practices and beliefs of the two dominant religions in this community. While schools in Srebrenica now provide religious education in both Serbian Orthodoxy and Islam, children must choose between these two. There is no initiative to teach children the basis of the other religion's beliefs. Each course should provide information on the other religion so that children are able to better understand the beliefs and practices of their peers and be more open-minded. Two important examples of the consequences of poor tolerance education for the children, one light hearted and one not:

- 1) One Muslim teacher recalls a student saying to him: "You are not a Muslim, you are something special."
- 2) A young Serb girl went with her class to the memorial in Potočari. As she was taught in her Orthodox training, she made the sign of the cross on her body as she entered. Then, a man yelled at her and shook her, "You can not do that here!"

The first example is interesting because the child could not comprehend that her teacher could be both Muslim *and* special. Her teacher, who presented this story, was visibly disappointed that his student did not see the co-existence of these two descriptors, but at the same time, he found it endearing. The problem here most likely lies in what the child has been taught at home. Parents are not passing on messages of cultural co-existence to their children.

While the second might show a lack of cultural education for the child, the more important problem is the lack of tolerance on the part of the adult who confronted her. When told this story later, a Bosniak woman in the community, whose very husband lies in that memorial today, commented that the girl is free to pray, in her way, in anyway at the Memorial to the God that "we all share." The Serb girl's humble recognition of the horrible events that created the need for this memorial and the Bosniak woman's

understanding of that young girl's prayers are a beacon of light the entire community should follow.

The issues underlying both of these examples need to be addressed by the community. Fortunately, the children in Srebrenica, like all children everywhere, are more concerned with having fun than with talking politics. While there is still a lot of work to be done, all people who commented negatively on the status of interethnic relations, quickly followed their comments with optimism: "There are a lot of people willing to do a lot of things on this issue here in Srebrenica, people on every side. Because this is our community, this is where we live and we need to make it better."⁴⁸

□ Vildana Mahmutović.

PART V: Conclusion and Recommendations

The Municipality of Srebrenica has overcome a tremendous amount of adversity to reach its current state. After the war and the genocide and out migration that took place here, the municipality, left in ruins, was forced to rebuild from the ground up. Millions of international and domestic capital has been invested here and many accomplishments have been made, however there is still much work to be done.

The municipality's infrastructure is much improved. While not all citizens have running water in their homes, they all have access of some sort of potable water. Whether they obtain their water from the city, or from one of the countless local springs, there is a seemingly endless supply of water in the area. Electricity and transportation remain the greatest infrastructure obstacles for the population. Over 80% of the municipality's residents live in the villages, some of which are more than 50 kilometers away. Power lines do not yet reach them and the roads that do lead to the villages are hazardous. Many village homes are lit only by sunlight during the day and candlelight in the evening. All are heated with wood stoves. In winter, the rain and snow destroy the already corroding dirt roads and turn them into mud paths. The lack of public transportation to the villages isolates these communities as the people who live in the villages usually can not afford cars of their own.

The largest obstacle to further improving the infrastructure is funding. There have been many donations to its reconstruction, but the flexible investment of capital is still needed. The roads in Srebrenica need to be improved and access to the town must be guaranteed to its residents. Without further improving the transportation infrastructure,

80% of the population's access to information, healthcare and participation in all forms of public life is restricted.

Once this infrastructure is established, access to employment will become more of a possibility. However, the physical access absent an employment-creating economy does little to improve upon economic possibilities. The international community has also invested a great deal of money to creating employment in the municipality. Investments have been made into the purchase of livestock, and agriculture. While important, due to the nature of these industries owners need large quantities of animals and/or large plots of land to create the economies of scale necessary to make significant profits. So far, they have created households that are more self-sustainable.

Wood processing is another area of large investment. It shows great potential and the Srebrenica area is perfect place for this industry to grow. However, there is reason to question whom this industry will support. The industry is primarily, and almost exclusively, made up of men. In a municipality of 42% female-headed households, the trickle down effect of this industry's growth will be limited. Any growth in the economy and employment is positive, but research should be done to see if there is another industry that will have more impact on the whole of Srebrenica's population.

The business education and micro-finance organizations in Srebrenica are all positive influences on the community. The education provided by organizations such as the Srebrenica Business Center is helping the citizens to understand the new markets that exist in the community and how they can enter them. This education is necessary to change the people's way of thinking from an exclusively industrial mindset to one of entrepreneurship and personal fiscal responsibility. The micro-credit agencies are

providing the much needed access to funding for business start-up. Without these organizations, the citizens of Srebrenica would simply not be able to invest in new enterprises because there is no other source. Most are not eligible for bank loans and if they are, the banks have little knowledge of rural community borrowing needs, making the loans difficult or impossible to repay.

The financial and structural achievements of a community cannot sustain it alone. A positive and productive social infrastructure must be in place. This infrastructure includes transparent local government, access to education and healthcare, positive influences on the youth and a peacefully integrated multi-ethnic society. In Srebrenica, all of these pieces are improving but none are complete.

The local government is working hard to balance the international presence, the needs of its constituents and the complexity of Srebrenica's current situation. Their job is extremely difficult. They are charged with managing the geographically largest municipality in all of BiH and one of the poorest municipalities located in the poorest region of the country. Eighty percent of their population is unemployed and will most likely remain so in the near future. While they have made many accomplishments, their shortcomings seem to be the most obvious. They need to work more diligently at involving the population in the municipality's affairs. This will come mostly through the dissemination of information, which they are working on, but they also need to actively encourage the public's participation. Community members are, for the most part, uninterested in the management of their own municipality and their active participation in it could seriously improve their way of life.

The primary concern for healthcare in the municipality should be physical access. As mentioned previously, the people living in villages physically cannot get to the health care services they need. Ambulance services that do exist are limited and rural healthcare services are virtually non-existent. The municipality and its donors need to continue invest in improving the roads to make them safer and public transportation to make it more frequent and reliable. Another significant limitation to healthcare is the insurance status of many residents. Many still hold insurance in FBiH and therefore can not receive services in the RS. The insurance from the Federation is significantly better and it is hard to convince them to switch. The municipality itself can do very little to change this situation, but it still must be addressed and citizens must be aware of their health care rights and responsibilities.

Significant attention needs to also be paid to the youth of Srebrenica. Their limited access to information, travel and all other forms of gaining knowledge of the world around them will seriously hinder their education. Schools need to be equipped with both computers and reliable, and free, internet access. If nothing else, this will enable students to gain a wider perspective on life both in and outside of Srebrenica. If they are able to see the many opportunities available to them, they might be more likely to stay in Srebrenica to improve it, and if they leave, they might be more likely to return once they see the how Srebrenica might be better than other places.⁴⁹

In the mean time they need to be supplied with positive outlets for entertainment and socialization. The youth center is working hard to this end but they alone can not lift the spirits of the youth in the community. Public officials, international donors, and the

⁴⁹ This optimistic outlook is based on the assumption that jobs will be created in Srebrenica for these students to come back to.

entire community need to engage the youth on a permanent basis and make them a part of the community's improvement.

Considering the horrific experience that many of these people went through during the war, one could not be more impressed with the status of inter-ethnic relations here. Yes, there are those individuals that provoke and will always remain discriminatory at heart. However, this is not any different from any society, anywhere. What is most inspiring is the number of people who want to recreate the peaceful multi-ethnic community that existed before the war, no matter the obstacles that they must overcome in doing so.

The pride in this community about how it once was is what will make it what it is going to be. This community is fortunate that they still have good memories of the past. It is strange to think that a community is using its past to reach its future, but that is exactly what Srebrenica is doing. They have a goal. Their goal is to recreate the beautiful and prosperous place that Srebrenica was until 1992. All places have their challenges, and Srebrenica is no different. However, what sets it apart is its community. These are the people that are living and working everyday to improve it. Because of them, Srebrenica will not only be “like it was before the war,” it will be better.

PART VI: Resources

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APPENDIX:

“Redefining Srebrenica”

Srebrenica needs to be redefined. In 1995, thousands of Serb soldiers stole it's original meaning and left it with one meaning in the eyes of outsiders: genocide. I went to Srebrenica in hopes that I could understand its own meaning, the meaning given to it by the people that live there, not the ones who destroyed it. These are the new definitions:

Definition 1: Where hundreds of women and children lost their fathers and brothers, but continue living in the place they know best, hoping that things will get better. This is Srebrenica.

Definition 2: A phenomenon of the distant past being stronger than the recent past and infinitely stronger than the present. A unique occurrence that helps progress toward the future. This is Srebrenica.

Definition 3: Where taxi's have no passenger limit when the weather is bad. Two grown men will sit on each other's laps so that two elderly women, and one young, do not have to stand in the rain and wait for the next one to pass. This is Srebrenica.

Definition 4: Where last minute guests are never turned away from a meal. Where instead, the hostess will insist that she has already eaten, to ensure that there is enough food for everyone. She will then eat after everyone has left, alone, so no one feels bad for imposing. This is Srebrenica.

Definition 5: Where three women, all war widows without their sons, live in a home without electricity. The home belongs to one of the women but the others are her old neighbors, awaiting the reconstruction of their own homes. Where we sit in the dark, drinking strong Bosnian coffee, most likely our third time today. Where the man in charge of interim housing for the women stops by regularly to chat. Each time he comes, he pretends to find 100KM somewhere in the kitchen. Each time the women believe him and look

earnestly toward where he points, and each time they all laugh together, remembering he is only kidding.

This is Srebrenica.

Definition 6: Where people always have enough coffee and time for others. Even the American student who will leave, after knowing them for only three weeks. Even enough for her, who will never be able to repay their lessons or their kindness. Even enough for her. This is Srebrenica.

This place is so much more than the research. It is more than any article or picture one can see in a magazine, newspaper or on the internet. With my own eyes, I saw the future of Srebrenica. It is distant, but it is there and it is bright. I only hope that I, and everyone else, am able to see it when it comes.