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Building bridging
social capital at a local level:
Examples from Central Bosnia

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Building bridging social capital at a local level:
Examples from Central Bosnia[2]

How come angels are with us and we still do not see them?
I do not understand why the Qur'an allows killing anyone who is not Muslim.
For me this is something very big, I am used to being segregated all the time.[3]

Summary

This paper analyses three local micro projects or micro interventions by organizations whose project were supported by Ecumenical Women's Initiative from Omiš. This paper analyses three projects implemented in two cities situated in Central Bosnia: in Bugojno (two projects) and Livno (one project which covered most of Canton 10). A common trait of all three projects was their focus on peace building and reconciliation based on inter-faith/inter-religious and inter-ethnic dialogue. Bosniaks and Croats today live together in both of these cities, with a small percentage of Serbs as well in both. Their lives after the war (1992– 1995) have been largely marked by ethnic tensions and these cities represent deeply divided communities, mostly lacking dialogue and common activities or events. The societal tissue of Bosnia and Herzegovina (B&H) is still weak and fragile and the level of social trust is extremely low. Therefore this paper will be focusing on theories of social capital building and will try to analyze the contribution of these three micro interventions in building bridging social capital at this local (meso) level. Field research involved four research tasks, which also served as an outline for semi-structured interviews performed with project beneficiaries.

Introduction

In this paper I will analyze three local micro interventions of organizations whose projects were supported by Ecumenical Women's Initiative (hereinafter: EWI)[4]. EWI from Omiš, Croatia is a non-government, nonprofit organization that supports women as initiators and agents of change in faith communities and society by providing regional support in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia and Serbia. The overall EWI program is comprised of three closely connected areas: grant-making, regional networking and capacity building. By funding women's grassroots activism, capacity building training and regional networking EWI seeks to contribute to sustainable grassroots communities of women-led groups and more inclusive women's movement.

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[1] This paper was written within the Fellowship Program of Regional Support to Women Scholars' Research and Writing that explores the experience, knowledge and strategies of EWI local partner organizations and puts them in the context of broader theories, methodologies and/or theology related to EWI's strategic fields. The Fellowship program is a one-time pilot project funded by Dutch government's FLOW program. Hereby I would like to thank all women who have allocated a portion of their free time for me and my research. Interpretations or opinions expressed are mine and should not be considered as representative of the EWI.

[2] I would like to thank Dr. Lynette Šikić-Mićanović for her detailed and constructive mentoring of this paper as well as for her comments and suggestions which have helped me greatly to focus my paper in a clearer and more concrete manner.

[3] Questions and comments by children that participated in interreligious and interethnic projects (quotes from Final reports submitted by organizations to EWI).

[4]   More at: http://www.eiz.hr/?lang=en

The three projects analyzed in this paper were implemented in two cities in Central Bosnia[5]: Bugojno[6] (two projects) and Livno[7] (one project implemented on the whole territory of Canton 10). All three projects fall into the same project area supported by EWI: 1. peace building and reconciliation and 2. faith-based ecumenical and inter-religious cooperation.[8] A common trait for all three projects is exactly their focus on peace building and reconciliation based on inter-religious and inter-ethnic dialogue among women.

The main political idea in Bosnia and Herzegovina (which used to be a part of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) ever since World War Two until the war in 1990's was socialism/communism with its official ideology limiting and erasing visible ethnic and religious differences among the population but providing them with relatively solid social protection and security. Employment and social care were at an acceptable level and therefore multiethnic relations among the people - under the slogan *brotherhood and unity* - were not problematic in the everyday lives of ordinary citizens. The two cities of this study also have in common their ethnic composition. Mainly Bosniaks and Croats live in the two cities, with a smaller portion of Serbs present as well.[9] The lives of these people today are largely marked by ethnic tensions and these are deeply divided places which lack dialogue, common events and activities.[10] This current state is the result of war that occurred in Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1992 to 1995 and which brought change in the political setup of the country but also its territorial organization. The societal tissue of Bosnia and Herzegovina today is still weak and fragile and the level of social trust is extremely low. "In contrast to what one might assume – that levels of trust and social cohesion would be increasing, as the conflict recedes into the past – evidence suggests that over the past few years trust levels have been worsening"(Heath, 2009). As Colletta and Cullen state:

> ...violent conflict within a state weakens its social fabric. It divides the population by undermining interpersonal and communal trust, destroying the norms and values that underlie cooperation and collective action for the common good, and increasing the likelihood of communal strife. This damage to a nation's social capital - the norms, values, and social relations that bond communities together, as well as the bridges between communal groups (civil society) and the state - impedes the ability of either communal groups or the state to recover after hostilities cease. Even if other forms of capital are replenished, economic and social development will be hindered unless social capital stocks are restored. (cit. in Nixon, 2009, 19)

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[5] The current political setup of Bosnia and Herzegovina was established by the Dayton Peace Agreement in 1995 following four years of bloodshed. The country is composed out of two parts or 'entities': The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FB&H) and Republika Srpska, and with the city of Brčko functioning as a district. Both cities in this research are situated in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina which is comprised of 12 cantons.

[6] The Municipality of Bugojno is one of 12 municipalities in Central Bosnia Canton (the seat of the canton being in Travnik) in FB&H and is situated at the crossroad of three bigger B&H cities: Sarajevo, Banja Luka and Mostar. According to the 1991 population census, this municipality had 46,889 inhabitants out of which Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims) were 19,697 (42.0%), Croats (Catholics) 16,031 (34.2%), Serbs (Serbian Orthodox) 8,673 (18.50%) and 2,488 (5.3%) Others. Today there are around 34,559 inhabitants in Bugojno, with a similar ethnic composition but a decreased number of Serbs, who left the city during the war (according the preliminary data of the 2013 census, which is the first census after 1991. Data on ethnic composition is still not available).

[7] The Municipality of Livno is the biggest municipality and the seat of Canton 10/Herceg-Bosna Canton in the FB&H. According to the 1991 population census, the municipality had 40,600 inhabitants. According to preliminary data from the 2013 census, the number of inhabitants today is 37,487. The ethnic composition is as follows: 72.22% Croats (Catholics), 14.26% Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims), 9.63% Serbs (Serbian Orthodox) and 4% Others.

[8] Strategic project areas for which EWI grants funding to their partner organizations are: 1. peace building and reconciliation, 2. faith-based ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue & cooperation and 3. women's rights.

[9] Due to social and historic circumstances in B&H, ethnic and religious affiliation is largely overlapping: Bosniaks are Bosnian Muslims, Croats are Catholics and Serbs are Serbian Orthodox Christians.

[10] Project proposal "Žene nositeljice mira i pomirenja" ("Women bearers of peace and reconciliation")

Therefore in contexts of societal transition, similar to B&H's, social relations are usually marked by an increased level of group closenesss which is usually based on people's ethnically (or religiously) defined identification. In this regard, the establishment of healthy social relations becomes a *conditio sine qua non* for the further development of B&H's society. Therefore in this paper, I offer a study of grassroots micro interventions analyzed against their contribution to building healthier social relations and social trust and grounded in social capital theories.

Social capital

The concept of social capital[11] stems from the presupposition that relations and links are important, that social networks in which humans cooperate and their everyday mutual relations are valuable. These networks, within which each individual is embedded (to greater or lesser extents), have value in two senses: 1. they provide the basis through which people are able to pursue their individual goals and 2. at the same time they have the potential to provide the 'glue' that facilitates greater social cohesion. (cit. Field in Nixon, 2009, 18).

Harvard professor Robert D. Putnam states that the basic components of social capital are 1. social relationships and networks and 2. norms of trust and mutual assistance/reciprocity stemming from these networks. For him, social capital is a way in which social relations are built and relaxed by promoting the interactions which primarily empower norms of generalized trust (cit. in Sander, T. and Lowney, K., 2006). When giving negative examples which lack this type of social capital he lists B&H (together with Belfast).[12] Also, the results of prior research[13] in B&H indicate that the level of generalized social capital in Bosnia is at a very low level. E.g. only 10% of people think that people generally can be trusted.[14]

The classification of social networks according to the level at which they are established includes the following: micro level (family and friends), meso level (neighborhood, working place, local community) and macro (state) level (Nixon, 2009, 18). The level studied in this paper is primarily the meso, as the place where communal cooperation is established. USA sociologist James Coleman also focused his work on manifestations of social capital at the meso level. He was interested in "groups, associations, organizations and institutions and the ways in which their structures facilitate certain actions of individuals within that structure" (cit. in Nixon, 2009, 27). For Coleman, social capital boils down to ability of people to work together in groups and he identifies three main elements of such social capital **1. trust, 2. networks of obligations and reciprocity**, and **3. the flow of information.** Therefore this research is attempting to analyze whether the project beneficiaries on the ground have managed to achieve a greater degree of mutual trust and whether this has brought

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[11] For the history of the term see: Christiaan Grootaert and Thierry van Bastelaer, ed., *Understanding and Measuring Social Capital: A Multidisciplinary Tool for Practitioners* (Washington DC: World Bank, 2002), 2, 12. For evolution of the term in the works of Pierre Bourdieu, James Coleman and Roberta Putnam, see: Stephen Baron, John Field and Tom Schuller, ed., *Social Capital: Critical Perspectives* (Oxford: Oxford University press, 2000), 2-12. (cit. according to Alibašić)

[12] "Bonding social capital is a kind of sociological Super Glue, whereas bridging social capital provides a sociological WD-40. If you get sick, the people who bring you chicken soup are likely to represent your bonding social capital. On the other hand, a society that has only bonding social capital will look like Belfast or Bosnia -- segregated into mutually hostile camps. So a pluralist democracy requires lots of bridging social capital, not just the bonding variety". Robert D. Putnam and Lewis M. Feldstein, *Better Together: Restoring the American Community* (New York: Simon & Shuster Paperbacks, 2004).

[13] So far several studies of social capital in B&H were conducted. These are: The World Bank study *Local Level Institutions and Social Capital* (2002), the Balkan analysis group study "Trust in transition" (2004), the UNDP and Oxford Research International study *The Silent Majority Speaks: Snapshots of Today and Visions of the Future of Bosnia and Herzegovina* from 2007, and *Social trust in Bosnia and Herzegovina* which Šalaj conducted in 2009 for the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung and the UNDP report on human development for 2009 *The Ties that Bind: Social capital in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (2009).

[14] The standard question on 'generalized trust' is: 'generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or you can't be too careful when dealing with people?' (Nixon, 2009, 40)

them a greater opportunity for mutual information exchange. Previous studies of social capital also show that people with weaker social networks in B&H society are the ones belonging to ethnic minorities living in areas with other ethnic majorities, then internally displaced persons, returnees belonging to a minority group, older persons and women in rural areas. In different ways, persons in my sample belong to one or even more of these mentioned categories.

However, social networks as such are not a source of social good. They are seen as resources that can be utilized in different ways. Therefore a difference needs to be made between inclusive and exclusive social capital (Nixon, 2009, 27), since through their particular power dynamics they can exclude and deny as significantly as they include and enable (cit. Coleman in Nixon, 2009, 28) (an example of excluding social networks and relationships is corruption and bribery among people belonging to a certain group). On the other side, inclusive social capital is the capital which builds open networks that encourage a diverse membership and contributes to human development by increasing the choices and opportunities of the members of the community in which this social capital exists. Therefore it is important to classify social capital according to the nature of relationships it fosters. There are two main types[15]: **1. bonding social capital** (horizontal relationships connecting people on the basis of similarity, mostly kinship or ethno-religiously based networks) and **2. bridging social capital** (horizontal relationships connecting people from different backgrounds/groups, i.e. different ethnic or religious groups through acquaintanceships, work in the local community or the working place...). Bridging social capital can facilitate a better flow of information, provide the basis for civic associations and, through encouraging greater diversity, enable better social cohesion (cit. Field in Nixon, 2009, 27). Bridging social capital is especially important in plural, heterogeneous societies since it ensures healthy and harmonious relations. As previously mentioned, the war in B&H caused a fragmentation of previously existing social networks, now into a bigger number of smaller ethnically homogenous networks. Alibašić therefore states that "there is no doubt that the main responsibility for this situation lays on ethnic nationalisms and state projects based on them". He states that in past, "Bosnia could have been congratulated for its significant reserves of bridging social capital that had different forms during Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian and Yugoslav eras" (Alibašić, 2005, 5). The projects which I analyze were designed in such a way to have a potential for building this very important type of social capital and therefore I believed that the application of this theoretical approach is useful for analysis of these projects and organizations. When it comes to this bridging type of social capital, civil society organizations that initiate social actions and often tend to decrease social inequalities (like the ones that are subjects of this research) make civil society an indicator, but also example of inclusive social capital.

There are two things which prove to be important preconditions for bridging social capital building at the meso level to happen: (1) to appeal to people's motivations to be personally involved in its building and (2) to orchestrate opportunities to bring people together (like the ones created through the EWI funded projects) (Sander, T. and Lowney, K., 2006, 15). First, when it comes to people's motivation it is very important to know what benefits people see in the establishment of social links in order to offer them opportunities to achieve some of these benefits. As previously stated, the benefits which can result from increased social capital are twofold: social benefits[16] and individual benefits. As this is qualitative research performed on a relatively small sample I decided to focus on the benefits which individual project beneficiaries gained through these projects. Second, when it

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[15] Along with binding and bridging there is also linking social capital (vertical relationship connecting people with dissimilar social standing and spanning power differentials such as representatives of public and private institutions).

[16] Enhanced democratic structures and practices, stronger and a more plural civil society, enhanced economic development due to better cooperation and decreased transaction costs, a greater level of innovation due to a better flow of information, a greater human capital and better human resources, greater social cohesion, a decrease in the level of prejudice and discrimination.

comes to creating opportunities for bringing people together to create social networks and capital it is important to mention that this is not possible without the subjects which assist in creation of such opportunities but also the building (and activation) of social capital. Without the mediation of such subjects this remains only unused potential or *dead capital*. Such subjects can be individual leaders, organized groups, civil society organizations, trade unions, etc. (cit. Krisha in Alibašić, 2005, 7). I thought that it was important for this research to see whether these three organizations managed to play such a role during the mentioned projects.

Research
Framework

According to previously presented theoretical framework, the subject of this research is building bridging social capital at the meso level through three projects supported by EWI and implemented in two deeply divided cities in Central Bosnia: Bugojno and Livno.

The operationalization of the subject was performed through four research tasks/questions. I already mentioned the three main elements of social capital, i.e. 1. trust, 2. networks of obligations/reciprocity and 3. the flow of information. This research is focused on the following: *task a. to study whether the beneficiaries of the projects have established **new contacts** and **a degree of mutual trust**; task b. to study whether this brought them a **greater possibility to engage in a mutual information exchange***. Since the benefits which individuals have due to the establishment of social networks are directly connected to their continued motivation of being within them, it was also important to study (*task c.*) the **benefits which beneficiaries of the projects gained** *through their participation in projects*. And additionally to study (*task d.*) **the role that these organizations** *have had as subjects creating opportunities for building and activating social capital*.

The research lasted from January to July 2014. 23 respondents participated in the research. I performed three in-depth interviews with three presidents/project managers and 20 semi-structured interviews[17] with project beneficiaries[18]. All respondents were female. SPSS software was used for statistical data analysis.

Short description of organizations
I will shortly present the three organizations.

Li-Woman organization from Livno seems to be the most organized of the three. It has had continuity in its work and a significant and a constant focus on topics related to peace and reconciliation through inter-religious and inter-ethnic dialogue. This organization has implemented four projects financed by EWI. The subject of this research is their project entitled "Women bearers of peace and reconciliation" that was implemented in 2012 and 2013. During the research, a previous, EWI-funded project was also often mentioned, entitled "Women bearers of peace and reconciliation: Joint confessional education classes in schools" (2011 and 2012)[19]. In order to make a distinction, the first one will be addressed as "Women bearers of peace and reconciliation", and the second one as "Joint confessional education classes in schools". The first project, which is also direct subject of this research, "Women bearers of peace and reconciliation" (2012 and 2013) had the following key activities of addressing existing attitudes and building peace and reconciliation: 1. meetings of the

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[17] Due to unforeseen family circumstances of some of the key respondents, several interviews were performed in writing.

[18] The four main questions in the interviews followed the previously presented research tasks.

[19] All four EWI projects implemented by Li-Woman had the same title "Women bearers of peace and reconciliation" so it was a little bit difficult sometimes (both for the researcher and the respondents) to keep track of the project in question, since some of the beneficiaries participated in more than one of them.

local community and NGO representatives from Livno, Tomislavgrad, Glamoč, Drvar and Bosansko Grahovo[20] and devising a survey (for all five cities); 2. conducting a survey about the factors which positively or negatively influence peaceful coexistence, peace and reconciliation (204 citizens in all five cities); 3. workshops for representatives from the local communities and NGOs (in all five cities) discussing the factors from the survey; 4. two trainings for all representatives from local communities and NGOs (*Tolerance and communication*, *Public advocacy and mediation*); and 5. final meetings with representatives of the local communities and NGOs about further activities based on the results of the survey. The key activities of the second project "Joint confessional education classes in schools" were: 1. two public discussions at which religious officials from the city answered pupils' questions[21]; 2. a round table discussion with all stakeholders (representatives of the public schools, teachers, teachers of religion/religious officials...) in order to agree on the continuation of having joint confessional religious education classes in schools.

The informal group Albedo from Bugojno implemented a project in 2009 on the development and promotion of an Inter-religious Manual for High School Students. Their project included the following activities: 1. a religious literacy survey among Bosniak and Croat high school students (375 students); 2. theologians answering students' questions and dilemmas; 3. publication of an "Inter-religious Manual for High School Students" containing basic information on monotheistic religions and answers to students' questions; 4. a joint promotion for all students; and 5. a meeting of a smaller group of students and religious teachers to evaluate of the manual. This project was implemented in the deeply divided city of Bugojno in which the children are segregated within the educational system according to their ethnic background. This phenomenon is called "two schools under one roof"[22] and it is an *apartheid-like* practice present within the educational system in B&H in which children of two different ethnicities (in this case Bosniak and Croat) attend the same school in parallel *under the same roof* but do not interact and the classes are held separately. Joint activities of Bosniak and Croat children in Bugojno are scarce or none[23]. The project was successfully implemented in cooperation with prominent religious experts who have presented the tenets of monotheistic religions in a way that is appealing for a very sensible teen age. The person in charge of the project was Mrs. Mersiha Jusić, MSc.

The Sumejja Association of Bosniak women citizens of Bugojno[24] implemented a project called "The Bud" in 2009 and 2010. The project's aim was to establish communication and gradually build trust between Bosniak and Croat women. It is a common perception that people in Bugojno live next to each other but without regular communication or contact. The project activities were the following: 1. two psychological workshops (with 10 Bosniak and 10 Croat women participating) on prejudice and fighting prejudice; 2. two one-day excursions for all beneficiaries (visiting Mostar and the Blagaj Dervish *tekke* at the spring of the river Buna and visiting the Franciscan "Home of Peace" Center at Šćit); 3. two inter-religious round table discussions with presentations by Catholic and Islamic female theologians and with Q&A sessions. The person in charge of the project was Mrs. Merima Ždralović.

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[20] Canton 10 covers 6 municipalities: in 3 municipalities (Livno, Tomislavgrad and Kupres), Croats are the majority, with a Bosniaks minority. In the remaining 3 municipalities (Glamoč, Bosansko Grahovo and Drvar), the majority are Serbs, with Croats in the minority.

[21] Religious officers from the Catholic Church and the Islamic Community were present and the representative of the Serbian Orthodox Church did not receive Church approval to participate in the project.

[22] More about this phenomenon here http://analitika.ba/en/publications/comment-negative-court-ruling-case-two-schools-under-one-roof

[23] Project proposal "Inter-religious Manual for High School Students"

[24] The organization later changed its name to "Association Sumejja Bugojno"

Results

Here is some general demographic data related to the sample of respondents. In terms of age, it was as follows: 20-29 (10%), 30-39 (15%), 40-49 (30), over 50 (45%). Interestingly, almost 50% of respondents (45%) were older then 50 (see Figure 1).
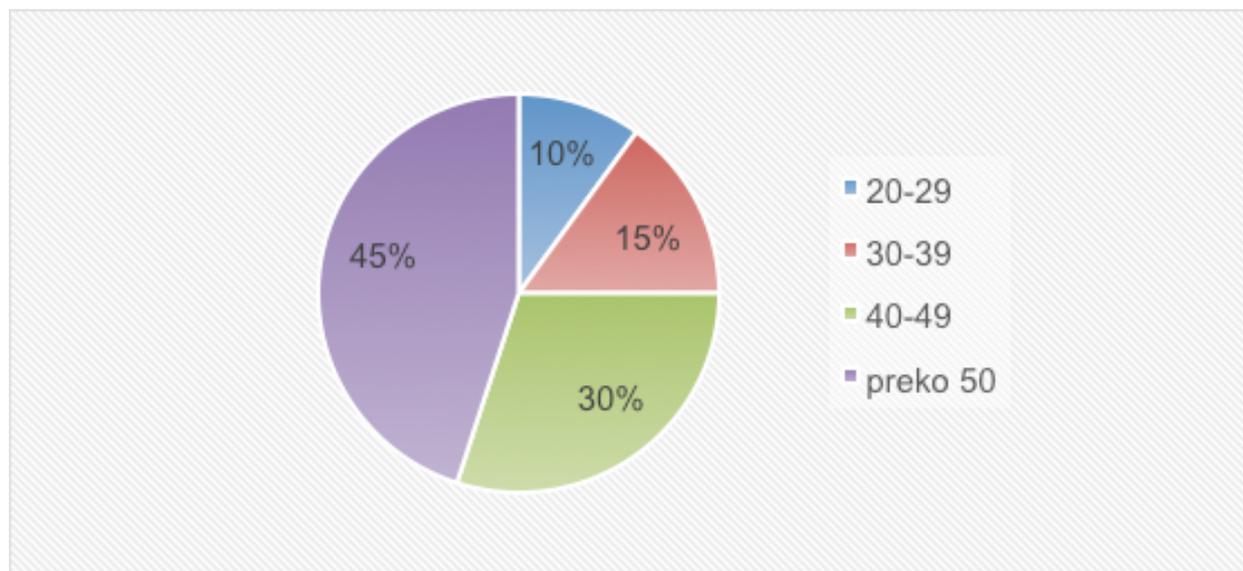

Figure 1

In terms of the levels of their education, 10% had only a primary school education, 50% a high school education, 5% are currently university students, 30% have an undergraduate degree and 5% a (post-)graduate level degree. 50% of all respondents had only high school education. Here is the graph for their educational level
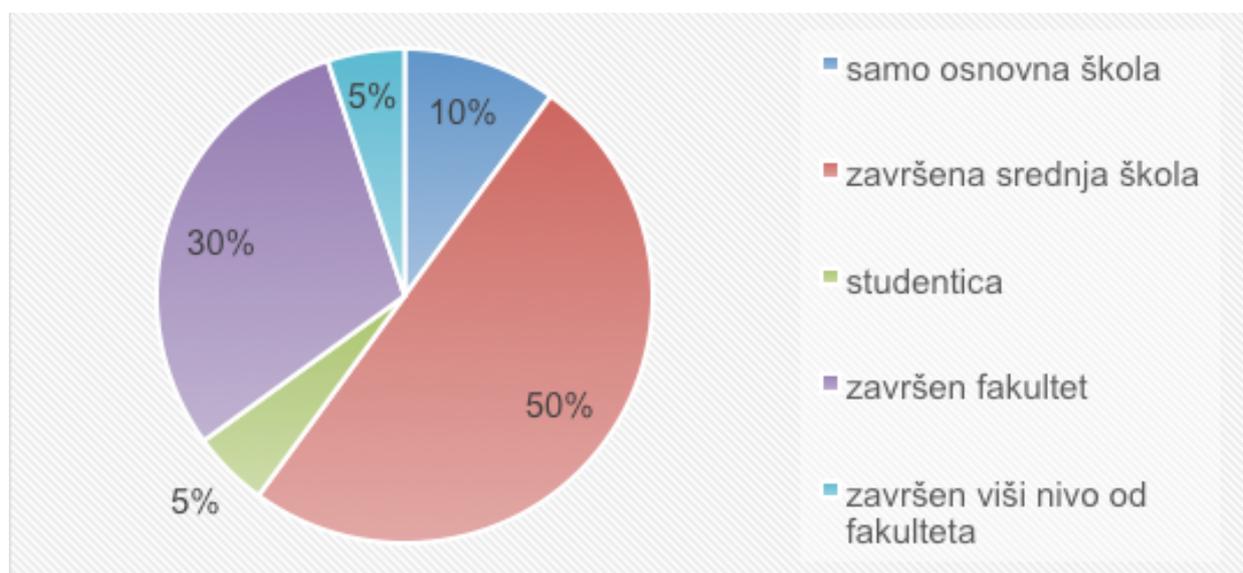

Figure 2

In terms of their current employment status 25% of the respondents stated that they are in full time employment. The figure was the same (25%) for the ones occasionally employed (when there is an employment opportunity). 15% were unemployed, 20% retired, 10% were housekeepers and 5% are currently students.
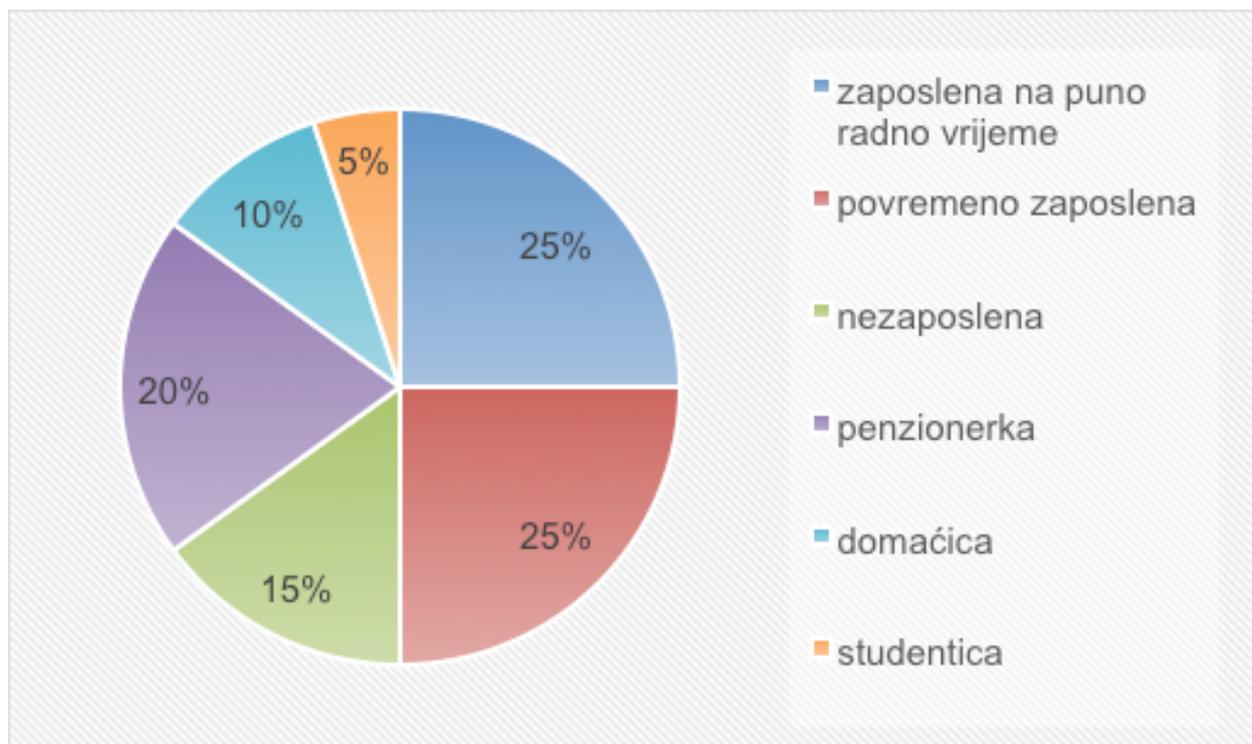
Figure 3

In terms of income, most of the respondents stated that they are "surviving with their current income" (70%), followed by 15% of those who are "barely surviving with the current income" and 10% "not easily surviving with the current income". Only one person stated that she "lives comfortably with the current income". Additionally, 55% of all respondents stated that they belong to a minority ethnic group in their city.

In terms of the questions, as previously mentioned, the four main interview questions/topics mirrored the four research tasks. Therefore the respondents were first asked about their ***new contacts acquired during project participation and the level of trust which was (not) developed during the project (task a).*** All respondents stated that during the project implementation they met some new persons they did not know before and that the project helped them broaden their network of friends and acquaintances. They also stated that to quite a significant degree these were people of a different ethnic group then theirs. When asked about the degree of established trust, 85% stated that the project contributed to an increase of trust for the other participants in the project and that now they are far more ready to participate in similar projects than before. A beneficiary of Albedo's project, a male high school student, stated: *For me this is something very big, I am used to being segregated all the time* (EWI final report Albedo, 2010, 19). A beneficiary of Li Woman's project, head of Cultural and Artistic Association from Drvar, stated: *I support this type of cooperation. I have been doing this job for 30 years now and I know from my own experience that the encounters of children/ youth from different groups contribute to peace and understanding. Many of them are afraid to go to other [unknown] places* (EWI final report Li Woman, 2013, 6). A Li Woman project beneficiary also from Drvar stated: *Before, I used to blame people of other ethnicities for being expelled from my city, becoming impoverished, coming back as a returnee and being unemployed for a long time, and the project helped me to understand that sometimes my communication was as well an obstacle for me fulfilling some of my rights.* Another respondent stated: *This project focused on women. I find this very important since women are the pillars of the family and they influence children. But also the fact that they are included and that someone works with them strengthens their self-esteem, tells them that*

they as well are an important social factor as opposed to the unfortunately still dominant patriarchal, backward milieu. This widens the horizons for women, especially those from villages. It allows them to leave their homes, their environments, to gain trust in other people, to see that out there in someone else's yard - of another faith and ethnicity - everything is almost the same as in her own. It allows them to understand that we are very often victims of stereotypes and the indoctrination of those who want to preserve the state as it is since it allows them to remain at their political positions.

Then the respondents were asked ***whether a greater possibility for mutual information exchange was created (task b).*** When asked if after the project they exchanged some useful information with other participants, most of them answered affirmatively. All of them stated that since the project they feel more confident and open to seek information from persons they met during the project even if this has not been the case up till now. 70% of them stated that since the end of the project until the interview they have had some benefits due to contacts established during the projects. Here are some examples: a respondent who is a journalist stated: *Since I work as a journalist, these women from Glamoč, Livno, Tomislavgrad, Grahovo are now often my contacts for some other people and confirmation of some hints. Also women from organizations hire me to do the media part of some projects so that in the end I also financially benefit from it. Links and contacts as well as volunteering activities pay off in the end, this way or the other.* A respondent from Livno, Li Woman's project beneficiary, also stated that she received information on a medical project which was very useful for her. Similarly another respondent stated: *I used the new contacts to invite these women to come to our activities, which we in our women's organization of Grahovo have. They were happy to come* (Li Woman project beneficiary). A respondent from Bugojno, Sumejja's project beneficiary, stated: *I did not have a chance or need to exchange information but in any case I feel free if the need be, to call each and every one of them to ask for anything that I might need.* The following is also in a way a result of information exchange due to the project: *As a Catholic woman I teach language in the high school attended by Bosniak children (and in the same building there are is also separate educational system attended by Croat children). Bosniak children often ask me about Catholicism and this manual helped me to present in a simple way certain things and terms. It has been of enormous help ever since* (Albedo project beneficiary).

When asked about ***benefits gained from the project (task c)*** the respondents stated several things: spending time together, breaking down prejudices, trust building and meeting new people. A Sumejja project beneficiary stated: *Every activity in this project brought joy, which kept me going on for several days. This instilled hope in me that all people are the same and that we should live together in our diversity.* A Li Woman project beneficiary stated that *she has a 6-year-old grandson who often told her that he wanted to go to a mosque with his friends (he lives close to the mosque). After attending the training as a project activity she supported him in this. He went to the mosque and was very happy and spoke about it for days* (EWI final report Li Woman, 2013, 14). Two Sumejja project beneficiaries, both Bosniak women, stated that the main benefit for them is *that the project gave them the chance to enter a church for the first time. Although there is a Catholic Church in Bugojno, for their whole lives they were never invited nor in a position to enter it. But with the trip to Prozor/ Rama the circumstances allowed this for them*[25]. A 4th grade high school student from Bugojno, an

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[25] Although this is not a direct subject of this paper, here I will include some of the results from the survey that was performed during the implementation of the Li Woman project "Joint confessional education classes in schools". It was done before and after the joint class (of Islamic and Catholic students). Here are the answers to questions posed before and after the class: A. Before the class: What makes you different from other children? – Only my religion (45%). After the class: Do you think that you are more alike or different from other children? – I see now that we are more alike (86%). B. Before the class: Is it a good idea to have a joint confessional class with religious teachers and children from all religions? – Yes (72%). After the class: Was it a good idea to have a joint confessional class with religious teachers and children from all religions– Yes (97%). C. Before the class: Would you like to attend such a class? - Gladly (69%). After the class: Would you like to attend this class again? – Gladly (95%).

Albedo project beneficiary, stated: *These kinds of projects allow people to come closer and meet each other in order to reach a higher level of tolerance.* In this regard it is also interesting to look at the survey results of high school students' opinions after they were presented with the Inter-religious Manual. 95% stated that they learned from the manual *something that was unfamiliar to them previously and that they think that this knowledge will be of use for them in future* (EWI final report Albedo, 2010, 14). A student stated: *Great. I think this was so needed, and that this is a great way to learn about other religions. I also think that this manual will bring people closer and will result in better understanding between people.* Similarly, after Sumejja's project implementation, the beneficiaries filled out an evaluation form about the project in which eight (out of 20) stated that they learned something about their own religion and 17 that they learned something about the religion of others (EWI final report Sumejja, 2007, 8). A project assistant of Sumejja's EWI-funded project stated: *We all learned that the war wounds are still deep as well as the gap between people. A lot more work needs to be done in order for people to come closer truly and start looking toward a joint future. On the other side, we have also learned that although we are different, we still have a need to meet others. Through these meetings we understood that for women, learning about the religion of others really represented a true pleasure. They had a chance to clear up some of their dilemmas and ambiguities and they were happy for that. So we have learned that there are barriers, but also that there is a need to be in contact with people who are different than us.*

The last question that they were answering was related to the ***role which that concrete organization had in creating an opportunity for them to meet and attend certain project activities (task d).*** In this regard, 55% stated that they would not have been able to establish the cooperation with persons they met through the project on their own. In this case a difference was noted between full time employed persons who all (100%) think that they would have been able to establish such cooperation even without the project, whereas most others thought that this would not have been possible. Therefore, the role of these organizations has proven to be very important, especially for those women who are otherwise not exposed to similar activities or contacts (e.g. employment or some other engagement). For example, a beneficiary of Sumejja from Bugojno stated: *Unfortunately Sumejja is no longer existent and we miss it a lot. They were the ones organizing us and we would love to have such an organization again. Especially gathering women from different ethnic groups. We would like to work and cooperate, but there is no one to gather us. We need a firm hand.*

When it comes to their previous experience in similar projects, prior to the one in question, 60% stated that that they did have a chance to participate in similar projects even before, whereas for 40% of them, this was the first of such an experience. Out of all respondents, 40% is still active in some organization apart from the one(s) in question. But for 60%, this is/was the only engagement in civil society. The intersection of data on educational background and prior project experience indicates that having a higher educational degree (undergraduate degree or more) represents an important factor in this regard. All persons with a higher educational degree had prior experience in similar projects and with the remaining part of the sample the ratio is 50:50 in terms of having or not having prior similar experience. Similarly, in relation to the question about their engagement with other organizations, 90% of all respondents with only a high school degree were/are not active in any other organizations, whereas 71.5% of all respondents with a higher educational degree is/was active in some other organizations as well. The intersection of the same answer with age or employment status did not have results as statistically relevant. In this sense the educational level seems to be the most important factor (together with previously stated employment status for contact establishment).

Having this in mind, it would be important to pay additional attention during the implementa-

tion of such projects so that the projects do not "only" incorporate the persons who are already socially networked but (i.e. through the criteria and application conditions by EWI) to ensure that socially excluded or less included persons (who do not have other opportunities for networking) are especially invited/engaged (e.g. returnees, women of lower and high school education, unemployed persons, women from rural parts of the municipality, etc.).

Additional insights

In terms of additional insights about the effects which these projects yielded, it is necessary to mention that Li Woman's project resulted in: women from Glamoč establishing a multiethnic women's organization, women from Drvar starting to work on establishing an organization dedicated to fighting gender based violence for women of all ethnicities and religions, a young women's organization from Kupres receiving a chance to further develop their capacities with Li Woman, and the radio station Studio N expressing their readiness to act as a partner for similar projects. Also, an informal citizen's group was established called *Coalition for Mutual Respect*, as well as the Interreligious council of the Canton. The organization Li Woman continued the good work and they seem to have a sustainable focus on these and similar topics and project areas.

When it comes to the informal group Albedo, they developed an all-encompassing inter-religious manual and promoted it among Bugojno high school students through this project. After this first version of the Manual, financed by EWI, they were approached by OSCE's field office in Travnik to widen the sample and reprint the manual. This was an upgraded version with a broader scope involving a bigger geographical area (not only Bugojno, but a wider region) and it was financially supported by OSCE. After this, CARE international published another version (with smaller modifications) (for their project "Peacebuilding Project for Youth"). The informal group Albedo was never registered but most of the persons who were at that time gathered around this initiative later established an organization called Impuls for legal and psychological assistance to women in Bugojno[26], which has been successfully working on the similar project areas.

Unfortunately a similar scenario did not occur for Sumejja. They did have such a successful project initiating communication and meetings of Bugojno women coming from different religious-ethnic groups (Bosniaks and Croats). The project managed to connect them and build initial trust among these women, but after this project Sumejja decreased and almost stopped their activities and Mrs. Merima **Ždralović resigned from the position of the president (in 2010). It seems that the organiza-**tion lacked the capacity for further work and knowledge about how to operate in the civil society sector (e.g. decision making, project drafting, administration and accounting) due to a generation gap that occurred between the "older" and "somewhat younger" members. In this regard, had they reacted in time and asked for support, maybe some type of capacity building training or other EWI support could have helped them overcome this situation. This organization today is almost not active at all and all respondents expressed their sadness about this fact. During this research and interviews they realized that maybe now the organization Sunce (one of Sumeja's previous project beneficiaries is a project manager of this multi-ethnic organization in Bugojno) could, if there would be some opportunities, gather Sumejja's project beneficiaries again in order to continue with their joint work as this was expressed as desirable by all respondents.

Another insight is that the total value of all three implemented projects was 12,000[27] Euro and that these are very humble funds when compared to their effects and number of beneficiaries.

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[26] In the meantime they were approved an EWI project in 2012 entitled "Učimo o našim pravima" (We learn about our rights).

[27] Li Woman had 6000 Euro, Albedo and Sumejja had 3000 Euro each.

Also, it was mentioned several times that EWI is a rare donor in its support of inter-religious and women's projects, especially projects which concretely focus on faith/religion. The experience of the organizations is that other donors do not want to support such projects and that they are in a way "afraid" of them/these topics. They were stating that they were almost always unsuccessful in their submission of similar project to other donors or that they would receive requirements for project proposal modifications. Therefore the organizations appreciate EWI's approach in which they set wide project topics and areas, do not impose too specific and concrete topics which would maybe not even be suitable for the local context (which donors often do in B&H) and in this way allow for organic local development.

Three implemented projects (inclusive of the one on Joint confessional education classes) included design and implementation of a survey as one of their activities (Li Woman with citizens, children, parents; Albedo with high school students). These were surveys with quite a significant sample (e.g. Li Woman had 820 respondents while Albedo had 375). Given a light methodological and expert assistance, these surveys could have become a basis for a smaller scale research which could have been published in a brochure/booklet as one project result (which of course the Albedo project did). Maybe it would be good for EWI to offer additional expert assistance on such occasions. Also these same two organizations (Li Woman and Albedo) had certain challenges during their project implementation in establishing cooperation with the Serbian Orthodox and the Catholic Church, respectively. Maybe it would be useful in such occasions if EWI could have acted as a mediator, which could (with its credibility and reputation) "decrease the tension" in the role of an "international donor" and with a top down approach, try to instill trust for all stakeholders in this sensitive process.

My last insight in relation to the implemented projects is related to thematic overlapping of the two projects: Li Woman's "Joint confessional educational classes" and Albedo's "Inter-religious Manual". These two projects are complementary and even some of their activities were identical (e.g. children asking questions about religions of others and religious officials answering them)[28]. Maybe this experience from these two projects could be condensed into one EWI Inter-religious interactive tool kit for pupils and students. This interactive tool kit could have its own web site with the upgraded version of the Manual for pupils and students (also the already existing one should be as it is available for free download online), plus a Teachers Manual, pre-prepared teaching units, handouts and working sheets that the teachers could use, etc. This tool kit could be a result of best cooperation practices of EWI and local B&H organizations and could be used in the region but also beyond (when translated to other languages).

Conclusion

All respondents stated that during their participation in the project they met some new persons whom they did not know before, and most of them stated that quite some of these persons belonged

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[28] The questions of pupils from Bugojno and Livno were very similar and speak quite illustratively about lack of knowledge about their neighbors, but also their mutual prejudices.

Here are some examples for Islam: *Why Muslims do not eat pork? Why do they take their shoes off when entering the mosque? Why Muslims do circumcision and why Muslim women do not go to funerals? Why do Muslim women cover and do they ever go to the beach? How can they survive and not eat for a whole day during Ramadan? Why is it that they need to go to Mecca at least once in their lifetime? Who prohibited pork and why? How does a woman become a Muslim? I do not understand why is it according to the Qur'an allowed to kill anyone who is not Muslim? Why is the term Islam linked to terrorism? Why does the imam "sing"?*

Here are some examples for Christianity: *How does a mass look like? Would they accept us in their house of worship to come and learn about it? Why is it that the priests do not marry? What is celebrated during Easter? Why do they go to the church at midnight on the Christmas eve? Why is it important for Catholics to get snow for Christmas? How come that Jesus is God if he himself was born by a human? How can a God have a mother, be born and live and be human? What does Virgin Mary mean to them? Why is Pope always dressed in white? What is the role of nuns? What is holy water? Do they believe in the same God as we do? Do Christians accept and respect other religions? How much?*

to an ethnic group that is different than their own. The projects contributed to an increase of trust among the project users and the respondents stated that they are more ready to participate on similar projects now than before. Most of them stated that they exchanged useful information with other participants after the project, and that they feel freer to do so now after the project than they were before. In terms of the benefits gained through the project, here is what they listed: spending time together, breaking down prejudice, trust building and meeting new people. The research proved that the project implementing organization/group had a significant role in creating an opportunity for them to meet and perform project activities since most of them stated that they would not have been able to establish such contacts on their own. This is especially true for the respondents who are less socially networked and therefore it would be good for EWI to require that the grassroots projects they fund include more socially excluded or less socially included persons. The projects also resulted in many positive effects, the establishment of new organizations and initiatives. Li Woman continued with their work, Albedo transformed itself to Impuls and registered as an organization and only Sumejja reduced its activities. Taking all this into account, it is possible to conclude that these initiatives made great changes with small amounts of money. In terms of the donor, namely EWI, the fact that the donor supported projects dealing with faith/religion proved to be very important since the experience of these organizations/groups is that donors rarely support projects without imposing the project topics. In this way the donor left space for organic local development. EWI could additionally, where possible, play roles/functions for their partners where they do not have a capacity (e.g. offer methodological and expert assistance or "diplomatic" mediation as suggested previously). An additional recommendation resulting from this research is that an EWI interreligious tool kit for pupils and students could be developed, for regional and global use, based on the B&H experience.

Finally it is possible to conclude that the local-level micro interventions supported by EWI have been and continue to be completely in the service of bridging social capital building at the meso level in these deeply divided local environments and that, taking a few previously mentioned remarks into account, it is indispensable to continue doing so. Through the previously mentioned activities, these women established trust and cooperation, new connections and widened their horizons. For some of them this was a unique chance to do so. By working together, these women are restoring destroyed social tissue, thereby establishing the foundations for a new future based on mutual respect and cooperation.

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