



# comunidadsegura

Good practices *magazine* Year III · Number 9 · October 2011



From the

# Ashes of War

# Facing the past to BUILD THE FUTURE

War returned to Europe in a major way in the early 1990s, as the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia fell apart. The results of the violent conflicts that raged then are still being felt today. The peacemaking and peacebuilding challenges remain considerable for the countries of the former Yugoslavia, even though conflict in this region no longer dominates the headlines.

Southeastern Europe was chosen as the setting for the fifth of the regional “best or promising practices” seminar (13 – 14 September 2011, Zagreb, Croatia) leading up to the 2nd Ministerial Review Conference of the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development. It proved an interesting and important choice. The seminar revealed not only the nature of the continuing peace challenges among the peoples of this region but also a broad range of initiatives being taken by the governments and civil society organizations in seeking to overcome them.

This seminar also provided important insights into the special dimensions of what an agenda on armed violence reduction and prevention means in a region recovering from war. Provided here are accounts from civil society organizations that participated in the seminar which illustrate a number of these dimensions. From a focus on the “tools” of violence (mines, small arms and light weapons) to work with the victims and perpetrators of armed violence, from “trauma healing” and “dealing with the past” to building confidence in justice and policing systems, from work with youth to nonviolent

strategies for conflict transformation, these accounts reveal the multifaceted nature of programming which is required if true recovery is to be possible and sustainable peace is to be established. “Development” too takes on a special meaning in such a post-war setting where the “remnants of war” (both the hardware and the memories as manifested in current behaviours) can be seen as inhibitors of economic and social development.

What these accounts also tell us is that achieving “measurable reductions in the global burden of armed violence” (Geneva Declaration) will require much more than a series of programs and policy developments. It will also require continuing efforts at overcoming enmity between and among peoples.

This is the last of the series of five “good practices” magazines devoted to gathering evidence of civil society programming in armed violence and development as a contribution to the 2nd Ministerial Review Conference. Achieving this has been the result of a rich partnership between the Quaker UN Office and the talented and creative colleagues at Comunidad Segura. I wish to thank them personally for the vital contribution they have made. The work goes on, the challenges remain many, but the light that has been shone on the work of civil society organizations in settings across the world should give us all hope that it is possible to overcome, prevent, and restore.

**David ATWOOD**

*Quaker UN Office*



**Project coordinator:**  
Mayra Jucá  
mayra@vivario.org.br

**Magazine editors:**  
Lis Horta Moriconi  
lismoriconi@vivario.org.br

**Danielle Renwick**

**Comunidad Segura Team:**  
Shelley de Botton, Lis Horta Moriconi, Andrea Domínguez, Marina Lemle, Danielle Renwick and Mélanie Montinard.

**Cover photo:**  
A landmine victim in Bosnia,  
photographer Paul Jeffrey for the  
Landmine Survivor Initiatives

**Design:**  
Domingos Sávio – Imagem & Texto Ltda.

**Collaboration:**  
David Atwood

This edition was produced with the collaboration of the participants of the Regional Seminar on “Best Practices in Reducing Armed Violence in Europe”.

# PROVIDING RIGHTS-BASED SUPPORT TO LANDMINE SURVIVORS:

## Peer Support-Based Integrated Approach to Survivors' Assistance

By Amir Mujanovic, LSI Executive Director

### Landmine situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina

There is a great potential for landmine accidents in Bosnia and Herzegovina, since 2.8% of the area is still contaminated by landmines, affecting 1631 communities and almost 1 million people.

Landmines continue to pose a threat to people and impede development. The number of victims peaked at 8,000 and has been steadily declining to a few dozen victims per year. Landmine incidents have not been eradicated, however. From August 1st to mid-September 2011, four landmine incidents were reported (four dead and two injured).

### Landmine Survivors Initiatives

Landmine Survivors Initiatives (LSI) is a non-governmental organization (NGO) established by and for landmine survivors. Survivors helping survivors is the hallmark of LSI's approach and program. Peer support itself is the most successful service LSI offers. Our experience has taught us that peer support is most effective as part of

an integrated approach to survivor recovery combined with health and employment assistance and advocacy.

LSI presently employs six landmine survivors as outreach workers. The program extensively incorporates and uses group peer support methodology, since groups are a more cost-effective way to provide support to trauma survivors than home visits.

If a survivor is unable to pay, LSI provides a direct assistance grant in the form of goods (prosthetics, food, tools, building material, sales stock) and services (training, education). LSI has provided more than 800 grants to survivors to start or expand their small businesses to help them reach economic independence.

### Selected Achievements

- reached more than 2,700 landmine survivors in 85 of the most mine affected municipalities in all Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- helped 800 survivors start or expand their small businesses.
- provided 900 survivors with quality prosthetic devices, improved their dwellings, including handicap access.

### Challenges

- There is a need for a regional approach, since most of the countries in the region struggle with similar challenges regarding the ratification and implementation of disarmament treaties (Mine Ban Treaty, Convention on Cluster Munitions, Convention on Conventional Weapons) and Human Rights treaty (Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities).

**Country:**  
Bosnia and Herzegovina

**Organization:**  
Landmine Survivors Initiatives



# Counting the Victims

Vesna Teršelič is a Croatian peace activist who currently runs an NGO called Documenta, the Center for Dealing With the Past. She spoke in

Zagreb about the legacy of violence in the Balkans, the need for both improved information on war-related

fatalities and more transparent institutions.

"In Croatia, we're still coping with the legacy of the 1990s. We're also still dealing with the legacy of World War II, and the executions that took place in its aftermath.

We've witnessed how sensitive the question of violence still is. Those wounds still affect how people vote,

and they are used in elections. Politicians speak about that violence instead of talking about current economic or political problems."

## Counting the Victims

"The legacy of the war of the 1990s is difficult to grasp. Human rights organizations estimate that more than 22,000 people were killed or are still missing in Croatia. That number rises to 130,000 in post-Yugoslav countries.

We do not have full lists of the victims. Human rights organizations are working to document the names, but a full list of all the people killed has not been published.

This is important. Not just for the families, but also to build a context. We have lived through the experience of manipulation with numbers. This happened after World War II, with all the executions that took place then. We shouldn't allow the numbers of people who were killed in the 1990s to be manipulated. This will be important to history textbooks, to remember in the future.

There is a Ministry of Internal Affairs data collection department that registers violent crime. They provide general data on crime statistics, but it's very difficult to research specific public cases."

## Social Development

"Unemployment is widespread in Croatia, especially in the villages. Violence is of course related to development. We need to look at long term social indicators for people who live in villages that were destroyed during the war.

To bring this discussion to our institutions, the question of effectiveness and accountability in our justice systems is a difficult one. Human rights groups systematically monitor casualties of violence, and that is very often the only information available. [Their websites are often] the only places where you find indictments and verdicts by the Supreme Court. These documents are available on separate sites and have not been consolidated. It is also difficult to check on the outcome and repercussions of these cases."

## Bringing a National Task to the Local Level

"War crimes trials will not bring the appropriate response to all families and society at large concerning war crimes. Civil society has started an initiative for regional commissions to establish facts about crimes and victims.

Armed violence is not just a problem of post-war countries. This work on violence reduction is such a contribution to prevention. I hope that the monitoring will be extended from war crimes trials and will involve partnerships between government and civil society."

Country:  
Croatia  
Organization:  
Documenta



# Reconnecting with Life and Development

By Suzana Bozić

"My Story" may be a small volunteer project in Bosnia and Herzegovina but it nevertheless shows the healing power of words. Volunteers organize public meetings where victims of violence during the conflict tell their stories to people in their communities.

"You must understand that victims of violence have not been reintegrated to civilian life as they should," said Suzana Bozić of Caritas Bishop's Conference, an organization that has been working with victims assistance for many years, on many fronts.



**"A victim is a victim, and a crime is a crime. We do not ask the question 'from which side?'"**

"Ninety-five percent of the victims of war are unemployed. Although their rights are foreseen in the law, it simply has not been implemented yet. They lack social security and do not have pensions. Most of them have Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)," said Bozić.

Bozić's organization would like victims to be more actively involved in the recovery of the nation, and has called for sources of employment, such as greenhouses or sewing kits, that would fit the profile of the groups they tend to. "Often victims have land, so that would be a simple solution, but they need an initial investment that is not coming." "My Story" is perhaps one way victims take the therapeutic initiative of reentering social life.

In Bozić's words, post traumatic stress disorder is "...treacherous, it is tricky." Many have survived the most terrifying experiences coming out of war and seem "fine" until years later they are hit with the symptoms of PTSD and basically lose the ground they stand on. "You lose your connection

with normal life, as if it were a film you are watching, and from which you are detached, and cannot reconnect to," said Bozić.

"Our most important message," said Bozić, "is that a victim is a victim, and a crime is a crime. We do not ask the question 'from which side?'. We want to heal those who are ill and restore relations in society. We do not want to further the disintegration caused by the conflict."

Victims undergo therapy prior to entering the "My Story" program. Once they are well, they can

**"You lose your connection with normal life, as if it were a film you are watching, and from which you are detached, and cannot reconnect to."**

choose to join the public telling of their experiences. This always takes place in small groups, in controlled settings: three victims of different ethnic groups relate their first-hand experiences in the presence of a professionally-trained facilitator. "What happened was not simple," said Bozić, "sometimes a victim comes from a group that had armies committing atrocities, but the message they want to give is simple: peace."

**Country:**  
Bosnia and Herzegovina

**Organization:**  
Caritas Bishop's Conference/  
Network for Building Peace

# The Value of Integrating People and Institutions

Igor Dordević first launched into peace work in the late 90s in the immediate aftermath of conflict. He took part in an initiative that sent peace teams to local communities in the area of the cities of Osijek and Vukovar, which are just 35 kilometers apart.

“The area is very ethnically mixed. There were more than 27 ethnic nationalities, Hungarians, Roma, German, many, and it went from a booming agricultural area, to being severely impacted by the fighting. Osijek, particularly, went from a population of 120,000 before the war to 20,000 just after, (Osijek now has 105,00 people).”

**Country:**  
Croatia

**Organization:**  
Center for Peace, Non-Violence and Human Rights

Dordević and his peace team colleagues went to these cities in 1998 when many who were exiled from their houses returned after the conflict.

“There was a high risk back then of re-sparking the conflict. We went to ten communities, a mix of small villages and cities to help them reconnect to urban life.

We formed peace teams of mixed nationalities, diverse backgrounds and we parachuted into those communities to work on peace and reconciliation,” said Dordević.

Dordević found that locals were ready to tolerate their ethnically or religiously different neighbors, but would not communicate or collaborate with them. “These were people they had known for years, who lived in the same street, their houses were next to each other, and yet they would not talk to each other,” said Dordević. In his view, the peace teams helped prevent the area from devolving into conflict.

Fifteen years down the road, Dordević is again involved in violence prevention in the area. “Our concern now is with the new generation, with violence prevention among high school students and we came to the

conclusion that we need better collaboration among different levels of government and sectors,” said Dordević. To this end, the new project, the Councils for Violence Prevention, has created a platform for mutual cooperation among diverse entities. The councils are chaired by the Mayor and they include the police, the municipality, NGOs, the school system, the social services and health professionals.

The Councils first began in Croatia in 2007 and 2008. In Osijek the council began in 2009 and in Vukovar and Beli Manastir about a year ago. And their goals: to stem domestic

violence and to prevent peer violence among children and youths.

“We have created teams that include local police officers, a group of education professionals, psychologists and social workers. We want to be able to fill the gaps in the system and prevent valuable information from being lost,” said Dordević. “You need someone looking directly at the process to make it work. That role can be taken by an individual, or an organization, but it is crucial that it is fulfilled.”

**“Our concern now is with the new generation, with violence prevention among high school students.”**



# War Veterans

## Step out of the Shadow of War

Goran Bozicević is a long-time peace activist who began his life's work under extraordinary circumstances – in 1993 he became an anti-war activist in Pakrac, a city then ravaged by war. The work at Pakrac eventually became an international model and pioneering example of peacebuilding in the region.

Bozicević currently heads the Miramida Peace Center in Groznanj, a beautiful town on Croatia's Istrian peninsula. Miramida was a haven for exhausted peace activists and Bozicević found a new calling running peacebuilding seminars for war veterans. "Istria was a place that received a wide range of people without overt hostility, this made it a heaven for different nationalities and gave the center diversity from its beginnings," said Bozicević.

Bozicević believes peacebuilding should include as many groups as possible. "War veterans are a very important group in Croatia, they have prestige because they are credited with having made the country independent. They are influential, and are in their 'best' years, age 40 to 60. If they take up the flag of peace, their message speaks so much louder to the public," said Bozicević.



Miramida began to reach out to war veterans in 2003. As a group, war veterans are not typically seen as vulnerable since most veterans in Croatia receive pensions, have money to live on and are organized. However, according to Bozicević, "The real problem is that civil society hesitates to engage with them."

According to Bozicević, veterans tend to live in the past and to recycle the war all the time. This can be a sign of trauma but it is also something around which they can build their identities. In either case, it can stave off progress towards real peace. As Bozicević

said, quoting his Chilean friend Roberta Baci, "It is false to say that time cures all, time cures nothing, processes in time lead to cure."

In Bozicević's view, people are ready to talk about the past when they are ready to talk about everything. "Our veterans are now more concerned with Croatia's future and the European Union. This is a real shift," said Bozicević. "You need to take responsibility for your community, and that is how you can take a step out of the shadow of war."

**Country:**  
Croatia

**Organization:**  
Miramida Center  
– Regional  
Peacebuilding  
Exchange

# THE WAR TRAUMA CENTER: Healing Individuals

The War Trauma Center, founded to provide psychological support to residents of Novi Sad, Serbia, is now open to all Serbian citizens affected by war trauma. The center's main goal is to offer support to war veterans and people with direct war experience.

In Serbia, the men and women who experienced combat or violence during the crisis in the Balkans are described as soldiers who were mobilized in military exercises, or anti-terrorist activities. Only soldiers engaged during NATO bombing campaigns currently have veterans' status.

Lane Stopher of the War Trauma Center describes its work as "stabilizing individuals." Over the past 12 years, the center has served close to 2,000 individuals. Most of them are men, age 20 to 50, who turn to the center for psychotherapy.

According to Stopher, "the government of Serbia has announced it will recognize approximately

400,000 people as war veterans." Until the pending recognition is made official, Stopher notes that veterans (having been engaged in combat or not) do not receive

formal state support and largely do without the support of their communities. "They tend to be 'highly' marginalized in society today," said Stopher, who sees the Center's work as effective in violence reduction.

**"When we offer veterans psychological support, [there is] a decrease in domestic violence; and [they] find they can hold jobs."**

The center's director Miloš Antić commented that there are no official numbers regarding Serbians who experienced combat during the Balkan crisis, noting that any estimates of the number of veterans in Serbia

may easily slide into error. In addition, "people are affected by war trauma at very different levels," noted Antić.

According to Stopher, violence is a self-perpetuating cycle that pushes victims to take the role of perpetrators. "When we offer veterans psychological support, we see results: I can say that we see a decrease in domestic violence; and veterans who for the first time find they can hold jobs," said Stopher.

The War Trauma Center's Constructive Usage of War Experience program invites war veterans to rethink their past

and connect to youths through controlled dialogue settings, in the presence of a facilitator. The meetings are opportunities to:

- Break down prejudices between veterans and youth.
- Give credibility to veterans and to their war experience in society.
- Deconstruct the notion of war: as an "interesting and entertaining experience."
- Constructively use veterans' experience with the aim of breaking down prejudices regarding "those on the other side" and build up a critical relationship to war and the recent war past.
- Constructively use veterans' experience with the aim of preventing violence amongst youth.

## The Cost of Trauma

As Stopher says, "As much as society would like to portray soldiers and veterans as strong hero types who use lethal force without any real consequences, it does not match reality. It is a disservice to masculinity, and it is also a mistake to think that it is possible to use lethal force and not have to suffer the consequences."

**"It is also a mistake to think that it is possible to use lethal force and not have to suffer the consequences."**

Country:  
Serbia

Organization:  
The War Trauma  
Center

# TOO MANY Guns

**Comunidad Segura interviewed the civil society organization Center for Security Studies' Sanjia Mihajlović, about Small Arms and Light Weapons, SALW, awareness in Bosnia. Born in Sarajevo,**

**Mihajlović lived through the war, studied economics at the London School of Economics, and has moved back to Bosnia.**

**Country:**  
**Bosnia**  
**Organization:**  
**Center for Security Studies**

*Bosnia being a post-conflict country, one would expect the population to be aware of the SALW risks, is this true?*

*No not at all, we conducted a SALW survey in 2005 and a SALW survey in 2010, and we came to the conclusion that the numbers of arms increased.*

*Increased in actual numbers, or there are better records being kept now?*

*No this includes legal SALW licensees, so actual numbers of SALW have increased in the population. I would say that news monitoring shows that at least once a week a child has played with a gun without really knowing*

*what it is and has in the process either injured himself or herself or a member of their family or one of their peers. It shows that SALW awareness, an understanding of the problems or dangers associated with firearms has to be a continuous process.*

*What kind of an increase are we talking about from 2005 to 2010?*

*Well we don't have the final data yet, since the survey has yet to be published by the UNDP.*

*How would you describe the center's work re SALW?*

*Raising awareness on the dangers of legal and illegal guns in Bosnia. Raising awareness on the surrender of legal and illegal SALW during amnesty campaigns. We currently do not have a law on amnesty. This is sporadic, whenever there is a law in one of the cantons we take up that work. The CSS has for the past four years been lending its expertise to a state working group on devising a law on arms control.*

*Do you see legislation emerging on gun control in BH?*

*Hopefully, it may be enacted in the next few years, perhaps.*

*How do Bosnians see guns?*

*We have the old sort of communist legacy that sees gun as quite normal. We all have a gun in our house. Most men were conscripted into the army at the age of 18. All males were members of the reserve forces so they had to have a gun in the house. That is what my father and my grandfather did, and everybody else.*

*But there were never that many incidents with guns. The SALW Survey Bosnia 2005 published in cooperation with UNDP, reports on this. In those days guns were not associated with as much trouble as they are nowadays. Children did not get a hold of them, they were not associated with criminal incidents. It is as if the guns were 'inactive'.*

*Now with the outbreak of war, and the general sense of insecurity, most people kept the guns that they acquired during or after the conflict, as they didn't generally feel safe in post-war Bosnia.*

*How about fear of violence?*

*The fear of violence is something that is very prevalent in Bosnia. We have the fear of ethnic violence, that is the main dividing factor in our society. You have three ethnicities or three nations in our society under one roof and those were*



Photo by UNDP.

the three warring nations that 15 years ago were at each others' throats. You have the fear of juvenile delinquency, of criminal violence. Although juvenile delinquency has become quite violent delinquents don't usually resort to guns, but use 'cold weapons', such as knives, baseball bats, etc. There is also the fear of unintentional violence. It is very cheap to buy hand grenades in the black market, and there have been

many instances of children bringing hand grenades to schools. This is also true of guns; children bring them to school, to show off in the playground.

So Sanjia, if I randomly knock on the door of a house in Bosnia, I will most likely find that they have a gun?  
Right.

Will they be worried about the fact that they have a gun?

No. Young affluent and educated people may perhaps see that having a gun in the house is a source of more harm than good. But older segments of the population, or parts of the population that are seen as secluded or marginalized in any way will see guns as a positive thing.

## Taking SALW Awareness to Secondary Schools

ALB-AID is an NGO based in Albania's northeastern city of Kukës. The organization was created to work with victims of landmines and small arms. Since 2009 the area has been declared free of landmines. Therefore ALB-AID changed its focus to Small Arms and Light Weapons risk education.

Jonuz Kola of ALB-AID reports that Albania is preparing to abide by European Union standards, and that a new bill for a new gun law is about to be passed to regulate and license gun producers and owners. "We estimate that there may be 200,000 to 300,000 guns in the nation. This information we get from monitoring media reports on gun violence."

Kola adds that it is difficult to precisely estimate the number of guns in circulation because all the military arms depots were

looted in Albania in 1997. Accurate, reliable information on SALW has therefore been hard to gather.

According to Kola, the organization's approach to gun violence reduction focuses on two areas: the prevention of accidental violence caused by exposure to small arms and the prevention of deliberate gun violence, which in Albania is generally fueled by property disputes.

"Our gun culture restricts the use of guns to certain types of confrontations. Suicides and domestic violence are still rarely associated with gun violence due to

traditional customs." As an example, Kola reported that none of the 75 suicides recorded by August this year involved guns.

However, Kola also stated that "Our key concern today is to reach young people in secondary schools. We have what I would describe as a 'big problem' with pistols and grenades in schools, that has been aggravated over the past two years." By way of illustration Kola reported that there are 20 to 40 accidents with hand grenades per year, many in schools.

Kola states that "One aspect of gun control is to take illegal guns out of circulation, and there is a systematic effort to do so in Albania. We have five factories destroying guns every day." Kola also said "It is our belief that a real guarantee for peace lies in the minds of our high schoolers. We should make SALW risk awareness a part of the school curriculum." ALB-AID has geared up to meet that challenge.



Country:  
Albania

Organization:  
ALB-AID

# Demystifying Guns as Violence Prevention



initiative instead of simply trying to put a distance between young people and guns, puts them directly in contact with firearms.

“Every second day there is an incident of violence among high school students, soccer fan groups are getting more

violent, our region is economically depressed. We found, in our case, that actually having young people touch and use guns, does wonders in taking away the glamour of firearms, and dulls their interest in them,” said Dedović. Most young people are introduced to firearms through the movies, according to Dedović, and once they actually hold them in their hands and shoot them, “70% lose interest”, said Dedović.

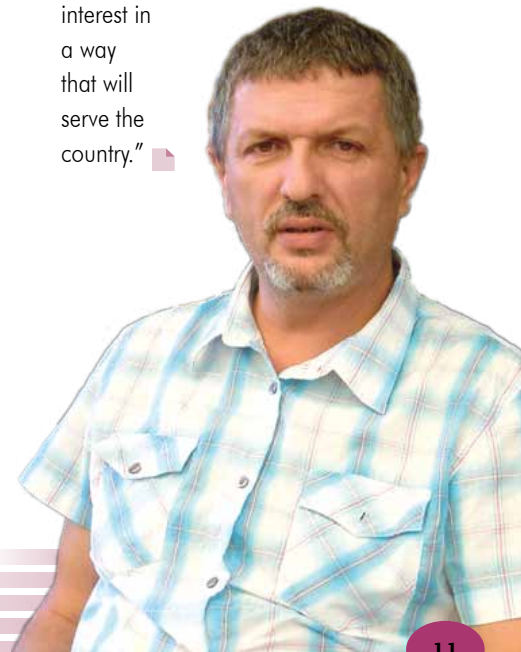
Every year 1200 high school students, boys and girls, take a course that is not yet part of the curriculum, but that is given during the second to last year in high school. They are taken to army barracks, given the opportunity to handle guns and shoot at targets. “We are negotiating with the Ministry of Education to include this program in the

curriculum, we believe that young people should have this experience, they should have training in First Aid, and learn for example, how to use a fire extinguisher.

According to Dedović, currently in Montenegro young people do not use guns in violence, they use cold arms, or set things on fire. Gun violence is confined to criminal groups who are older, if the program goals are met, this is not likely to change.

Asked about the other 30% of high schoolers, Dedović notes the program invites young people who show enduring interest in firearms to go into the military, or join a police academy. “This way,” said Dedović, “we direct their interest in a way that will serve the country.”

**Country:**  
Montenegro  
**Organization:**  
Alpha Centar



Montenegro is a small country, of 750,000 people, and the crisis in the Balkans did not touch its territory. On the other hand, many from Montenegro went to the conflict and came back with guns, ammunition and experiences. According to a recent survey carried out by Alpha Centar monitoring news media and collecting police reports, 11 children below age 16 have died over the past 5 years from accidents with guns.

“For such a small population, the statistic is alarming,” said Aleksandar Dedović, head of the organization based in Nikšić, Montenegro.

Alpha Centar like many civil society organizations in the region is especially concerned with preventing what they see as the rising threat of violence among teenagers and young adults. In the case of this organization from Montenegro, their

# No Fun with Guns



Nearly two decades after the bloody Balkans war, Kosovar civil society is working to heal the wounds of the past and build a brighter future. The Forum for Civic Initiatives, or FIQ, is a nonprofit organization founded in 2000 that promotes civilian disarmament as a way to maintain post-conflict peace.

FIQ is one of a handful of organizations behind the new nationwide campaign, “There is no fun with shooting: Don’t shoot,” a joint effort between police and civil society actors to combat a troubling phenomenon: recreational

arms use at celebrations, like weddings.

“‘Don’t Shoot’ aims to stop public shooting at family celebrations. We’ve

seen a rise in accidents and trauma [due to this phenomenon],” says Florentina Hajdari, a research

assistant with FIQ. “The shootings are raising fear in the population, since they occur every day. In a post-war country it’s a big problem to hear shooting every day.”

The NGO and police-led educational campaign, launched in March, has sought to change public opinion through radio spots, broadcasts, national televised debates and appearances, distribution of posters and fliers, and online social networking.

While some opponents of the movement, which is currently present in seven municipalities, argue that shooting guns into the air at weddings is part of ancient local tradition, Hajdari counters that, “the habit only started after the

Second World War. After the Kosovo – Serbia War the ‘celebrations’ became more intense since the number of guns increased in Kosovo.”

The wedding campaign is part of a larger strategy to reduce gun violence and improve police-civilian relations in Kosovo. “In a post-war country, uniforms incite fear somehow,” says Hajdari. As a result, police officers have begun to dress in plain clothes, and “...we have seen trust in police is increasing. Service is getting better and faster.”

In another mass media campaign, in 2009, FIQ supported a student movement to raise awareness about the dangers of these illicit weapons with the message: ‘With wisdom,

not a gun’. The nine-day media campaign reached more than 3,000 direct participants in activities such as debates and lectures, and estimates that it reached more than 150,000 through television, radio and online outreach. Hajdari says the strong local

ownership of the campaign “... increased trust and engagement between the local community and the police and government.”



**Country:**  
Kosovo

**Organization:**  
The Forum for  
Civic Initiatives,  
FIQ

# Mobilizing Young Men to Take Positive Action for Change

**By John Crowover,**

*Young Men Initiative Program Advisor*

The **Young Men Initiative (YMI)** is a promising, evidence-based strategy for engaging young men throughout the Western Balkans to promote gender equality and prevent violence. The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs supported CARE International's YMI pilot program, with activities taking place from 2007 to 2010 and reaching over 4,000 young men ages 14-18.

The activities were grounded in "gender conscious practice" and seek to engage young men in critical reflections about how society influences their attitudes and behaviors; to help them develop skills necessary to overcome harmful or restrictive social expectations; and to act in more equitable and non-violent ways. The YMI is also strongly focused on mobilizing young men to take positive action for change.

This is a crucial issue, because despite positive and significant achievements in policies and practices, violence against women is still widespread at all levels of society in all Council of Europe member states. An overview suggests that one-fifth to one-quarter of all women have experienced physical violence at least once during their adult lives, and more than one-tenth have suffered sexual violence involving the use of force. Secondary data analysis supports an estimate that about 12%

to 15% of all women have been in a relationship of domestic abuse after the age of 16.

Young men are often themselves victims. They are more likely than other population segments to commit suicide, harm themselves through alcohol, die on the road, and to be suspended or expelled from school. They are also arrested and charged with crimes more frequently than young women.

Young men's violence is nearly always carried out in groups, against those who are weaker – smaller boys, boys seen as effeminate, gay youth, and boys/young men from "other groups." The challenge is clear: We have to help young men find alternative, non-violent identities that are respected and recognized.

How and to what extent boys and men internalize prevailing inequitable social definitions of manhood and gender-related norms affects their health and well-being, that of their partners, and their use of violence against women. Greater gender equality will reduce the pressures on men to conform to damaging and rigid forms of masculinity. This is likely to reduce men's violence, help to strengthen community safety and develop peaceful conflict resolution and improve family interaction.

YMI seeks to address gender patterned behaviours, in two phases. The pilot phase was comprised of workshops in five locations in three

countries: Banja Luka and Sarajevo in Bosnia and Herzegovina; Zagreb in Croatia and; Belgrade and Prokuplje in Serbia. The second phase was a social marketing campaign.

## **The Budi Musko ("Be a Man") campaign**

*Budi Musko* has two main objectives: to promote the image of the educational workshops as something "cool" for young men to do and to reinforce and spread key messages from the workshops. The development of the campaign was a youth-inspired, youth-led process that brought together the local Youth NGO partners and young men from all of the pilot sites.

There is evidence to suggest that YMI interventions were meaningful for the young men who participated in the project. From the survey data, young men who were exposed to the campaign generally showed more gender equitable attitudes and positive changes related to sexual violence and decreased use of violence. Even with a possible self-selection bias, the consistency of the "exposed" group's results suggest that YMI activities may have helped to solidify their attitudes and behaviors in a more positive, gender-equitable and non-violent direction.

**Countries:**  
Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia

**Organization:**  
CARE International



# THERE IS NO PLACE FOR SENSATIONALISM IN **Peace**

**Country:**  
Macedonia

**Organization:**  
Journalists for  
Human Rights

**Natasha Dokovska is the executive director of Journalists for Human Rights, a Macedonian association for journalists who cover human rights, established in 1992 and formalized in 1998.**

**Since the war in the Balkans, the organization has played a key role in raising local awareness of gun control, educating journalists on how to cover the issue and urging them to avoid "sensationalist" reporting. Dokovska spoke with Comunidad Segura.**

*Do you raise awareness as journalists? Or as advocates?*

We do this as advocates, with campaigns, with the Parliamentarian lobby. We established that within our national assembly. They support our lobby by proposing laws and articles to laws.

*What are the current gun laws in Macedonia?*

The law is like the law in the European Union. It's a good law. Not excellent, but it's good. We were involved in passing that law.

*Do you have statistics on gun use in Macedonia?*

This is a very difficult issue. Our Ministry of Interior says it's not a big issue, but of course it is. One in three women in Macedonia is threatened by a gun at some point in her life. Meaning, she is shown a gun, hit with a gun, etc.

*Where did this information come from?*

Every year we do a 1,000-woman informal telephone survey with a coalition of 198 women's organizations in Macedonia. Our organization also collects information on women and violence, and keeps daily clippings on violence, the environment, and hate speech in Macedonia.

*Tell us about your journalist-training program.*

We educate journalists on vocabulary related to gun violence. After tensions with Albania – it was not a war; it was a civil conflict – between 2001 and 2003, we have also helped journalists deal with post-conflict stress. Today I would say a lot of journalists have a "peace problem." They have become very sensationalist. That's why we promote peace journalism.

*What is peace journalism?*

We're trying to reduce sensationalist publishing. We lobby first with the chief editors, the media owners, and journalists to publish less sensationalist news. The two major daily newspapers have accepted our lobbies and today you don't see sensationalist papers. We also work in education, with the ministry of education. We work with schoolteachers to improve educational materials and toys. We collected potentially harmful toys and video games in 2004, trading them in for educational materials, during the national disarmament campaign.

*What are your upcoming education initiatives?*

We're going to begin lecturing at a local university on peace journalism once a week. We always have 20 to 25 young people interested in taking the course. ■

# Regional Seminar on “Best Practices in Reducing Armed Violence in Europe”

13-14 September 2011, Zagreb, Croatia

## Civil Society Participants

### Mr. JONUZ KOLA

Executive Director  
ALB-AID  
Albania

### Ms. SANJA MIHAJLOVIĆ

Project Manager  
Centre for Security Studies  
Bosnia and Herzegovina

### Mrs. SUZANA BOŽIĆ

Project Coordinator  
Caritas of Bishop's Conference of Bosnia and Herzegovina / Network for Building Peace  
Bosnia and Herzegovina

### Mr. AMIR MUJANOVIĆ

Executive Director  
Landmines Survivors Initiatives  
Bosnia and Herzegovina

### Mr. IGOR DORDEVIĆ

Centre for Peace, Non Violence and Human Rights  
Croatia

### Mr. GORAN BOŽIČEVIĆ

MIRAMIDA Center  
Croatia

### Mrs. VESNA TERŠELIĆ

Documenta – Center for Dealing with the Past  
Croatia

### Mr. GORDAN BOSANAC

Center for Peace Studies  
Croatia

### ENVER KEQIKU

Kosovo Center for International Cooperation  
Kosovo

### Mrs. FLORENTINA HAJDARI

Research Assistant  
Forum for Civic Initiatives/Forumi për Iniciativa Qytetare  
Kosovo

### Ms. NATASHA DOKOVSKA

Executive Director  
Journalist for Human Rights  
Macedonia

### Mr. ALEKSANDAR DEDOVIĆ

Executive Director  
ALPHA Centre  
Montenegro

### Ms. MIRJANA KOSIĆ

Executive Director  
TransConflict Serbia  
Serbia

### Mr. LANE STOPHER

Management Team Member  
War Trauma Center  
Serbia

### Ms. ALMEDINA MUSIĆ

Head of Mission, HI South East Europe  
Handicap International Federation (HI)  
Regional

## Organizers

### Mr. ZACHARY TAYLOR

Conflict Specialist  
UNDP/ BCPR

### Ms. TAMARA KARAICA

Project Coordinator  
UNDP Croatia

### Mr. LUIGI DE MARTINO

Coordinator  
Geneva Declaration on Armed violence and Development (Secretariat)

### Mr. DAVID ATWOOD

Consultant, Armed Violence and Development Project  
QUNO

### Mr. PAULIN REGNARD

Disarmament and Peace Programme Officer  
QUNO

### Mrs. LIS HORTA MORICONI

Journalist  
Viva Rio

### Ms. NERINA CEVRA

Coordinator, Survivor Rights & Victim Assistance  
Action on Armed Violence



 **comunidadsegura**  
[www.comunidadesegura.org](http://www.comunidadesegura.org)



**Quaker United Nations Office  
Geneva**



**GENEVA  
DECLARATION**  
ON ARMED VIOLENCE AND DEVELOPMENT

**Comunidad Segura Magazine and ComunidadeSegura.org are a part of Viva Rio's projects in the field of Human Security. Both were conceived jointly with our partners to serve individuals, organizations, networks and working groups interested in issues pertaining to Human Security.**

*At [www.comunidadesegura.org](http://www.comunidadesegura.org), you will find articles, news, interviews, and documents in English, Spanish, Portuguese, and French.*