

Julia Dowling
The Advocacy Project/BOSFAM, Bosnia and Herzegovina
JJCF Mid-Project Evaluation Report

In the following project report, I detail the activities and outcomes my fellowship has provided from the last three months in Bosnia. With the assistance of JJCF, I have made significant progress on the majority of my proposed goals. Additionally, the report describes next steps in the fellowship, and how the project has changed due to circumstances foreseen only when I had worked in the country for several weeks.

Activities and Outcomes

Over the course of three months, I have completed several activities outlined in my project proposal, as well as several additional important activities that were unexpected before arrival in Bosnia. For the Advocacy Project and outreach to my US-based network, I have produced eight blogs, including two video-blogs. I have also incorporated several of my best photos into my entries – my flickr page currently has one hundred and sixty fully edited photographs documenting my time here. My personal communications have reached hundreds of people through reposting blog entries on my facebook and twitter pages.

I have also updated and continue to manage much of BOSFAM's online communications. During June and July, I edited and re-wrote large sections of the English-language content which was outdated and, in some cases, unclear. One such section is our "About Us" section. I also re-organized and, when necessary, added new content to make navigating the website easier. This has included minor changes to the format of the webpage – adding new main menu tabs for a "projects" section, clarifying contact information, and expanding a section on our founder and director, Munira "Beba" Hadzic. I have also regularly contributed to BOSFAM's "News" section and several of our facebook pages. For our website and social media communications, I work closely with a Bosnian colleague who manages our online shop and relevant facebook page (BIS-BOSFAM). Through our collaboration we are able to create new, multi-lingual content in both English and Bosnian. I have also assisted in training her on managing and troubleshooting the website – something that I am proud of because of its sustainability even after I have left the organization.

In addition to the above work, which has mainly been based in Tuzla, I have spent a significant amount of time working and building relationships in our new center in Srebrenica. The other Peace Fellow, Quinn, and I attended the Srebrenica memorial and burial ceremony in Potocari on 11 July during which 613 victims from the 1995 genocide were buried. We also participated in the 32 kilometer-long last day of the Peace March for the victims of genocide, which arrived in Potocari the night before the ceremony began.

One week after 11 July, the Advocacy Project Director, Iain Guest, spent two days in Bosnia with Quinn, BOSFAM Director Beba Hadzic, and me. Iain worked with Quinn and me to discuss steps forward for project design and fundraising for the new Srebrenica center. To create new projects that best assisted the community, we undertook designing and implementing a needs assessment, the results of which we would use for future project design. Quinn and I created a survey of fifteen questions and, with the help of our Bosnian colleagues, translated and

administered it to eighteen women over the course of two weeks. We were able to collect film and photographs of the women to accompany the narrative answers that will be used for project design and proposals.

Overall, our findings thus far have supported the efficacy of BOSFAM's already-existing projects, but these projects must also be scaled up to reach more people and address such diverse needs. This coming fall we have plans to create specific opportunities for young women in the community, as well as reach an increased number of older women in Srebrenica. In addition to our survey, we conducted stakeholder mapping by coordinating meetings with at least five of the major organizations also working in Srebrenica, including the United Nations Development Program, CARE, and several local, community-based organizations. Through our meetings, we have been able to assess *what* and *how* other organizations are serving the local community; in our efforts to complement and not compete with other organizations and available resources, we will be developing new programs that address needs that have thus far been neglected.

In mid-August, Quinn and I wrote and submitted an important grant proposal to the US Embassy in Sarajevo in response to a call for proposals relating to Women's Empowerment work. The project, titled the *Srebrenica Women's Network*, aims to bring Srebrenica residents and Diaspora for a series of roundtable discussions on pressing issues the town faces. Through such roundtables, the project will promote collective problem solving as well as rebuilding relationships as women work together to improve Srebrenica's economy, political system, and re-energize its culture. The proposal, with a budget of \$73,000, is currently under review by a committee at the US Embassy.

In addition to quantitative outputs, the past three months with BOSFAM have produced many qualitative, less measurable positive results. BOSFAM's daily routine includes two breaks for coffee – in the morning and in the afternoon – when all of the staff and weavers present sit down for Bosnian coffee, occasional cookies and cakes, and conversation. Even at the beginning of my time with BOSFAM, when I could speak very little Bosnian, it was important that I was present for at least one coffee session each day. Through this, and generally spending time in the handicraft shop where 2 or 3 staff usually work, my relationships with BOSFAM's Bosnian constituents has grown and solidified. With the older women who weave carpets this has been especially important and relevant to my peace fellowship. After developing a trusting relationship, the older women have been willing to share much of their life stories, including war traumas and current challenges; this sort of information has affected my time personally and professionally, becoming key to developing effective new programs, grant writing, and my own social media communications.

Changes in Project Plan

The majority of my JJCF project proposal activities and goals have been completed or are progressing nicely towards completion within the next few months. However, several elements of the plan have changed and been adapted to better fit the cultural and logistical needs of BOSFAM and its vulnerable constituency. I decide not to conduct any media outreach ahead of or on the day of the 11 July memorial and burial – it seemed both inappropriate and unrealistic. Most of my main civil society contacts, including the weavers of BOSFAM, were burying their

own family members and therefore arranging interviews or photos would have been insensitive and destructive toward our relationship and their personal mourning process.

Furthermore, I had planned to create individual profiles on weavers and other BOSFAM employees through photos, video, and writing. Due to time constraints around the 11 July memorial, I was unable to spend the proper amount of time with individual weavers to record their stories. However, as I continue to work on our needs analysis and build projects around the results, I will be creating at least two profiles of Srebrenica-based BOSFAM constituents to couple with funding proposals. These profiles will be representative of our constituents whose needs are, as our analysis shows, mostly divided by age. Therefore, I will be creating a profile of both a younger and older woman with which BOSFAM has worked.

Next Steps

In the second half of my fellowship, I will continue with my communications work – I am currently focused on writing a strong blog about Srebrenica to be published in September. In addition to personal and Advocacy Project-required communications, Quinn and I are working (now remotely, as she has gone home to finish her degree) on a film about Srebrenica and BOSFAM's role in the town to support future funding proposals. While we have created a good foundation for the film, we still need to edit the piece to be shorter and capture more with less written narration.

Additionally, I am working on a document to support BOSFAM's development as it receives more international volunteers. This spreadsheet will contain information on all the grants we have received in the past five to six years, as well as a comprehensive list of foundations to consider when seeking funding. I have had a difficult time getting information from our Director about our funding history, and as we consistently work with new volunteers, it is critical that we have a living document that is passed down to volunteers to seek grants and other opportunities.

Within the next month, I will design a project and consequently write a proposal for the United States Institute of Peace annual grant contest. After the submission of that grant, I will be pursuing other sources of funding for BOSFAM so as to increase the services we are able to provide in both Srebrenica and Tuzla.

Recently, I have begun collaborating with a DC-based NGO that works with similarly vulnerable populations in the United States. The organization brings together arts, traditional crafts, and business training and development to help refugee women become economically self-sufficient. Over the next month, I will explore a potential partnership with this organization and BOSFAM which would enable us to sell our products to a wider, US-based market and receive some of the skills training the organization offers to its own clients. With this collaboration, I hope to see an increase in sales of BOSFAM products, which would make the organization less dependent on funders as well as provide greater income for individual weavers.

I will also begin teaching English-language classes to young women in our Srebrenica Center. While I have never taught English, I am excited about the challenge and the potential for connecting with youth in the town. During our needs analysis, it became clear that young

women both want and need foreign languages to succeed – and the Director and I both think that free English lessons will be a good asset for the community.

Finally, I plan to conduct media outreach to promote our new center and a different image of Srebrenica as a whole. I have several contacts at smaller social justice or faith-based media outlets – publications in these online and in-print outlets would be a good step in communicating positive or inspirational stories from Srebrenica, and dispelling the idea that the town is only for the 4,000+ bodies buried from the genocide.

Summary

Overall, the first three months of this fellowship have been challenging but immensely satisfying. Within three months, I have gone from speaking little Bosnian to being able to hold a conversation without serious difficulty. I have made incredible friends and working contacts – women who inspire me and who I am honored to write about in my own blogs as well as in funding proposals or traditional publications. The 11 July memorial certainly tested my emotional capacity and, though I have attended twice before, this year was especially challenging because my work with BOSFAM's weavers gave it a deeply personal context. As I move forward and spend more time in the Srebrenica center, my resolve to equip BOSFAM and the women it serves with the funding, project ideas, and staff it needs and deserves, I feel energized. I believe that, with the right outreach and funding, the women of Srebrenica can and will change the town for the better. My role is only to assist them in capacity, and make their vision a reality. With the assistance and support provided by JJCF and Gene specifically, I feel prepared to continue this difficult and critical work into the next three months.