

“Anything but War is Good Enough” – Conflict Mapping, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Executive Summary

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Introduction

This research report was created for the non-profit peace-building organisation Generations For Peace (GFP). The organisation works in communities across Africa, Asia and Europe to achieve conflict transformation at the grassroots level. Whilst there have been GFP activities in Sarajevo, GFP is yet to implement a full-length programme in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This research report was commissioned to contribute to GFP's future programmatic efforts in the country in two main ways. First, to map and identify the contemporary community-level conflicts in Sarajevo; second, to outline and analyse these conflicts in order to map their origins and inter-relations. The research was deemed essential for GFP to get an overarching perspective of the conflict context and to design relevant programming in accordance with community needs.

The findings of this research provide information and recommendations as to what GFP needs to consider before designing, planning, and implementing future peace-building programmes in Sarajevo. This research thereby feeds into GFP's focus on ensuring accurately targeted grassroots programming with a tailored focus on specific issues in one or several communities.

The fieldwork for this research was conducted in Sarajevo between 27 July and 7 August 2015. The data was collected in two ways. First, 45 citizens of Sarajevo were surveyed in order to generate quantitative data. These individuals were sampled according to age, gender, ethnicity, and religious background. Second, the same people that were surveyed also participated in focus group sessions in order to gather additional qualitative data. The quantitative data collected through the surveys was analysed through the use of basic and conventional statistical methods. The qualitative data from the focus groups were analysed using discourse analysis and qualitative coding.

Conflict Context

Sarajevo, the economic, political and cultural capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina, was chosen for this conflict map due to its ethno-religious diversity. Both the Ottoman (1463 – 1878) and the Austro-Hungarian (1878 – 1918) occupations contributed to the ethno-religious diversity of the city. Still, while eruptions of violence arguably took place during these periods, large-scale conflicts between different ethnic groups were mostly absent. During the era of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SPRY) (1943 – 1990), tensions between the different ethnic groups began to mount in Sarajevo. Yet, these remained suppressed under the pan-Yugoslavian communist nation state headed by Josip Broz Tito.

However, following Tito's death in 1980, these tensions would increase with the growing nationalism in Bosnia and Herzegovina, eventually culminating in the Bosnian War (1992 – 1995). The war affected

Sarajevo particularly hard, with the city experiencing high levels of violence between the various ethnic groups during an almost four-year long siege. Some of these tensions still remain prominent features of the citizens' daily lives and increase the likelihood of outbreaks of inter-group violence. Arguably, considering the ongoing complex ethno-religious demography of Sarajevo, it is important to capture as many elements as possible in order to gain an adequate understanding of the context.

Conceptual Framework

In order to carry out a comprehensive overview of the relevant conflicts in Sarajevo, a flexible framework, allowing for the analysis of a plurality of factors, was needed. The framework selected was Sandole's Three Pillar Approach.¹ This analytical framework was selected because the breadth of its analytical scope. In the framework, Sandole outlines three distinct "Pillars" in order to facilitate the analysis and understanding of a specific conflict: Pillar 1 focuses on parties, issues, and objectives of a conflict; Pillar 2 outlines causes and conditions and; Pillar 3 seeks to identify third party interventions. This framework allowed the researcher to identify and analyse the most relevant community-based conflicts in Sarajevo today alongside providing an analysis of how these factors interact and inter-relate. And, by way of this framework, the researcher was able to make concrete recommendations as to the feasibility of transforming the relevant conflicts in Sarajevo at the grassroots level. These recommendations are built on the findings, which are detailed below.

Findings

The research identifies three main conflicts at the grassroots level that could potentially be addressed through community-based peace-building programmes: inter-ethnic conflict, corruption, and gender inequality.

Inter-ethnic relations

The first conflict identified is that of inter-ethnic relations between the three main ethnic groups in the country; Bosniaks, Bosnian Serbs, and Bosnian Croats. This research, therefore, reiterates the findings of the bulk of the literature on the inter-ethnic relations and the ongoing impact of the Bosnian War on human relations in the country today.² However, one interesting and novel finding that emerged within this report, is that there is a significant difference in acceptance across different types of inter-ethnic relationships. For example, members of all three groups expressed that they were less comfortable with the idea of inter-ethnic marriages vis-à-vis inter-ethnic friendships, with the Bosnian Serbs (38 per cent less comfortable)

¹ Sandole, Dennis. "A Comprehensive Mapping of Conflict and Conflict Resolution: A Three Pillar Approach." *Peace and Conflict Studies* 5, no. 2 (1998). <http://www.gmu.edu/programs/icar/pcs/sandole.htm>

² Burg, Steven L., and Paul S. Shoup. *Ethnic Conflict and International Intervention: Crisis in Bosnia-Herzegovina, 1990-93*, 33; Kivimäki, Timo, Marina Kramer, and Paul Pasch. "The Dynamics of Conflict in the Multi-Ethnic State of Bosnia and Herzegovina." Sarajevo: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, March 2012

expressing the largest discrepancy between the two types of relations. This demonstrates that despite the long history of inter-ethnic mixing in Sarajevo, inter-ethnic relations remain tense to this day.

Corruption

The second conflict identified is corruption. The research unearthed that corruption is not only a cause for conflict at a macro or structural level, but also at the individual level. For example, several participants bluntly stated that corruption between people is directly influenced by inter-ethnic tensions and in turn helps perpetuate those tensions. Because of its prevalence at the individual level, the findings show that corruption often impacts on daily life in Sarajevo by perpetuating negative inter-group attitudes and relations, thereby entrenching pre-existing divisions.

Specifically, corruption is raised in this research as an expression of the weak national identity in Bosnia and Herzegovina. That is, certain services in the society are available to people not based on citizenship, but rather decided based on ethnicity. Most research participants referenced employment, university-level studies, and health services as being affected by corruption and ethnic favouritism. In other words, the ability of an individual to access each of these depend on ethnicity more than anything else. The findings demonstrate clearly that corruption and ethnicity shape every day interactions and peoples' access to essential services.

Moreover, the researcher also found an additional type of corruption, centred on a gendered dynamic. In this case, women were experiencing sexual harassment when applying for jobs. This means that some participants consider corruption to lead to discrimination based on gender as well as ethnicity. This finding indicates that corruption is not only a structural or cultural problem featuring inter-ethnic bias; rather, it also features a gendered dimension. Thus, the findings show that corruption is closely linked to issues of gender inequality, which will be discussed in the paragraphs below.

Gender inequality

Finally, the third conflict identified is gender inequality. Several of the participants of the focus groups raised discrimination against women in every day interactions as an issue in Sarajevo. The types of harassment experienced ranged from verbal to physical forms. This research report argues that these types of discrimination can be traced to ingrained patriarchy, expectations, and understanding of gender norms. These are in turn reinforced by the lack of safe spaces and support structures for women as well as the lack of credible public institutions.

Moreover, the series of focus group discussions featuring people of different age groups unearthed that the diversity of the citizens of Sarajevo, not only along the lines of ethnicity and religion, but also age and cultural perspective, is generating a complex view of women in contemporary society. According to the

participants, the different perceptions of what a woman should be like often lead to situations where the choices or behaviour of a woman is contested. More specifically, it was expressed that women are often discriminated against by both men and other women, if deviating from certain norms.

From the findings, the three conflicts discussed above – ethnicity, corruption and gender – clearly play a large role in contemporary Bosnia and Herzegovina. Based on the sample used for the purpose of this research, inter-ethnic relations, corruption, and gender inequality are important factors to consider when designing and planning future peace-building programmes in Sarajevo. Since they are mutually reinforcing, they are all important to acknowledge, no matter which of these specific factors one decides to focus on.

While future research would ensure an even more comprehensive understanding of this conflict context, this research has identified and analysed important areas that can help to improve future programme cycles in Sarajevo. In sum, it represents a positive step for improving GFP programming in the country and making it more attuned to the local community. This report and its recommendations, detailed below, can also be used by other organisations working in the Bosnian and Herzegovinan context.

Recommendations

A selection of the report's recommendations is provided here. For the full list, please refer to the complete report.

Research

- While this research uncovered some interesting findings, it also suffered from limitations that prevent the generalisability and extrapolation of the findings. It is therefore recommended that GFP, and GFPI in particular, consider conducting a large-scale conflict mapping project including a larger spread of citizens of Sarajevo and/or other parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina, depending on the location of the future programme. Doing so will increase the diversity of the research participants and thereby also the scope of GFP's knowledge of the local conflict context in Sarajevo. Such a project would also generate more representative data and generalisable findings that can inform future programmes even more accurately.

Programmes

- The findings of this research suggest that Sarajevo, with its long history of inter-ethnic mixture, is likely to be a conducive environment for the formation of inter-ethnic friendships. However, since positive inter-ethnic interactions are not taking place across all of Sarajevo, future GFP programmes should focus on promoting positive interaction in areas where basic interactions are

not taking place. One possible option raised by the participants would be to target ethnically mixed schools. In such segregated communities, using a Sport- or Arts For Peace-based programmes could improve levels of inter-ethnic interaction.

- Simultaneously, another finding of this research is the strong sense of political correctness associated with inter-ethnic tensions. That is, several participants were reluctant to speak freely about certain topics related to inter-ethnic tensions. This was in turn often manifested in the participants contradicting themselves or refusing to part take in the discussion. This aspect of the current society in Bosnia and Herzegovina is something for GFP to take into account when planning and designing future programmes.
- Another recommendation is to focus on sex- and gender-based violence instead of the inter-ethnic aspect. Since inter-ethnic relations has often been the focus of peace building in Bosnia and Herzegovina, it could be useful for GFP to branch out and target a different conflict.³ According to the researcher, the vehicles for peace building utilised by GFP, such as empowerment or advocacy, would be suitable for such programming, if only to provide an initial safe space for people to interact and exchange views.
- Finally, another suggestion is to plan community-based peace-building programmes that target other groups such as the Roma and Jewish communities. Considering the reportedly heavy inter-ethnic focus of previous peace-building efforts targeting only the three main ethnic groups,⁴ the novelty of this approach might offer a new entry point to long-term peace-building programmes in the country. Moreover, focusing on Roma and Jewish groups would also offer the potential to target conflicts that have previously been relatively unaddressed in Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, the findings of this research also uncovered significant stereotyping towards these groups. Thus, programmes will need to be carefully designed and planned to ensure that these 'safe options' are indeed safe.

Conclusion

The report has added to the literature by mapping and analysing the contemporary community conflicts in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Using an analytical framework previously untested in the country, Sandole's Three Pillar Approach, this research has generated important insights about both the practical applicability of conflict mapping and about this particular conflict context.

In mapping the conflict context, the research also uncovered insights about the nature of the conflicts present in Sarajevo as well the importance of factors such as inter-ethnic relations, corruption, and gender

³ Kalyvas, Stathis, and Nicholas Sambanis. "Bosnia's Civil War: Origins and Violent Dynamics." In *Understanding Civil War: Evidence and Analysis, Vol. 2--Europe, Central Asia, and Other Regions*, edited by Paul Collier and Nicholas Sambanis, 191–230. Washington, D.C.: World Bank Publications, 2005. 192

⁴ Donais, Timothy. *The Political Economy of Peacebuilding in Post-Dayton Bosnia*. Oxford: Routledge, 2005

inequality. In analysing how these conflicts are inter-linked, important recommendations for future peace-building programmes have also been provided. As Sarajevo is likely to remain an ethnically and religiously diverse capital, the lives and challenges of the people living in the local communities are important to acknowledge in order to maintain sustainable stability.

This report argues that while there is a lot to be done and several dimensions of various conflicts to transform, it remains important to continue to empower grassroots actors to bring about change at the community level. The long periods of relative peace throughout the history of Sarajevo demonstrate that this is possible to achieve once again. Through carefully designed and locally driven community-based initiatives, there is considerable potential to build sustainable peace.