



WWW Build-A-Village Service Project

Since the Balkans War of the 1990's, there have been many attempts at social and economic recovery throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina (part of the former Yugoslavia). The municipality called Canton Ten, which is the largest geographic area in Bosnia but has the smallest population, suffered the most destruction from the war. Bosansko Grahovo is located in Canton Ten, just across the border from Croatia.

Many possess the desire to help this war-torn area, but sometimes the desire to help without the wisdom of local community members can result in greater problems than existed originally. For example, immediately following the war, everyone in Bosansko Grahovo received a cow from an international NGO. Unfortunately, many did not have the capacity to raise a cow, as they had no experience in agriculture, so many of these cows were sold for very low cost because the market was flooded. Build-A-Village exists as a response to many ineffective forms of giving.

Build-A-Village

Build-A-Village is a program which employs a methodology that moves from immediate relief through development work. The idea behind this program is to **“teach a person how to fish”** rather than **“give a person a fish.”** Build-A-Village works with the assumption that many might already be skilled fishermen, but need the tools to do their work. Therefore, Build-A-Village attempts to provide the tools so that people in the area may support themselves back into recovery. The idea is that the people themselves possess the knowledge necessary to pull themselves out of poverty.

Agriculture in the area was once a supplemental form of income but now serves as the population's primary source of income. Because of the milk collection project begun by the local women's association and supported by over \$22,000 in gifts from Disciples Women, many are receiving loans through the Build-A-Village Community Entrepreneur Fund (CEF) loan program to purchase cows in order to sell the milk. This has been very beneficial for both projects, making them dependent on one another. The milk collection provides a great opportunity for the people to become self-sustaining and the loan project provides access to credit in order to increase the production of milk and expand current sales.

In December 2006, Church World Service, in partnership with Disciples Week of Compassion, launched the multi-year "Build a Village" development program in the



municipality of Bosansko Grahovo in response to the desires of local people to strengthen their capabilities to lead their own development. Build-A-Village seeks to improve livelihoods in these struggling post-war rural communities in a sustainable, holistic and participatory manner. The goal is to reduce poverty and improve the quality of life through an integrated rural development strategy designed to gradually address local priorities. The Build-A-Village approach concentrates on both short and long-term development objectives as Week of Compassion, Church World Service and local partners work alongside organized community groups to effectuate positive change. Returnees to Bosansko Grahovo play a key role in identifying and prioritizing their own needs, as well as designing responses that leverage local and international resources.

Bosansko Grahovo is the neediest municipality in all of Bosnia and Herzegovina, having suffered massive war-time destruction estimated at 97 percent. Despite considerable reconstruction, most villages in the area still lack electricity, running water, or access to health services. Today, over ten years after the war, those who returned to the area have managed to reconstruct at least a portion of their houses, and most have livestock and barns to cover their immediate food needs. However, reconstruction of livelihoods is proceeding much slower. More than 90 percent of all returnees are still unemployed. Agriculture, which was once a supplemental source of income, is now the only source of income for the returnee population.



Bombed building in downtown

Of the 1000 families living in the municipality, 700 (2100 people) secure their livelihoods through farming. Over 80 percent of current returnees are farmers whose homes were destroyed, along with their barns, livestock, and farming equipment. Farmers lost the markets to sell their products, do not receive any support for investment, and consequently, are incapable of employing others.

To confront these harsh social and economic realities, the Build-A-Village program identified four specific, sustainable development projects. Disciples, through Week of Compassion, have been instrumental in providing support for all these projects:

- **Veterinary Service** so that the precious livestock remain healthy and are well cared for; establishing a
- **Milk Cooperative** so the returnees can begin to generate an income and regain their dignity. This project was the focus of the pre-trip service project for the WWW 2007 participants.;
- **Primary Health Care** so that those in the community receive basic health and medical attention; and the establishment of a
- **Community Entrepreneur Fund** so families participating in Build-A-Village are able to overcome the hardships of their daily struggle to survive. The flexible revolving structure of the Fund helps community members identify income opportunities, organize trainings, perform evaluations, and make investment decisions. The returns from the Fund are then re-invested into the community.



Women's Association President with new milk cooler

The Build-A-Village program is increasing the self-reliance of local people to provide

for their own food needs, plan for long-term solutions and create innovative and locally appropriate income-generating activities. We Disciples should be extremely proud of our participation in this integrative, sustainable and holistic development program. Together with both Church World Service and local Bosnian organizations and partners, we are truly making a difference in an entire war-torn municipality!

To help support our brothers and sisters in Bosnia, join with Disciples Women by making a contribution for the Build-A-Village project. Checks should be made payable to Week of Compassion, with “**WWW: Build-A-Village Service Project**” listed on the memo line, and sent to:

Week of Compassion, PO Box 1986, Indianapolis, IN 46206-1986

Gifts may also be made online by visiting www.weekofcompassion.org and following the donations link. Please click on “**WWW: Build-A-Village Service Project**” as the designated project.

Questions?

Contact Elaine Cleveland in the Week of Compassion office at (317) 713-2442 or Beverly Ledwon in the Office of Disciples Women at (888) 346-2631.

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For information on the next Woman-to-Woman Worldwide experience, sponsored by the Office of Disciples Women, a ministry of Disciples Home Missions, visit www.discipleswomen.org.



Pictures by the
WWW 2007 Participants.
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CHURCH WORLD SERVICE



Restructured Home

WWW Participant, Delores Gay (Florida) with Bosnia woman.



Women's Rug Maker Co-op