Strategies for building local ownership of post-conflict rebuilding: some thoughts and lessons from a project in Serbia

By Rosemary Cairns

When I told my friends in northern Canada about the ambitious community development project I was going to work on in Western Serbia in the late summer of 2001, its scope seemed to them impossible - identify 60 communities and get 60 projects underway, one in each community, within 90 days of the project award. I joined the project's senior management team about 45 days[i] into that challenging schedule, as a specialist in community mobilization and development based in Uzice, one of the regional centres in Western Serbia.

For the next two years, I worked at a pace that, in retrospect, seems almost impossible[ii], working with both communities and vulnerable groups – women, youth, and Roma – to achieve the goals of the Community Revitalization through Democratic Action (CRDA) project in Western Serbia.[iii] This work introduced me to the complexities and challenges of rebuilding failed or fragile states in a way that encourages and empowers local ownership, which has become one of the key 21st century challenges for international peacebuilding.

After CRDA, I enrolled in a Master's program in the emerging field of Human Security and Peacebuilding, to learn the language and ideas behind the design of projects like CRDA. I had realized that these underlying elements influenced whether such projects built or "sucked out"[iv] local capacity and achieved local rather than international ownership.[v] I discovered that one challenge in rebuilding failed and fragile states is the lack of connection between practitioners who work in the field and the academic and policy community that debates post-conflict reconstruction theory.

One of the reasons is that the practitioners rarely write about their work. The reasons are varied. The pace of this work means they often move from one project to the next without much time for reflection.[vi] They may not be familiar with the academic language in which much of the theoretical debate takes place. The intensity of such projects often leads to organizational and personal ruptures that overshadow project achievements. Finally, continuing to find work in this field often means not questioning how such projects are organized and carried out.[vii]

Four years after CRDA Western Serbia began, the donor agency decided to evaluate its activities.[viii] By that time, the community mobilization team responsible for much of the work with the 60 community committees and vulnerable groups had been disbanded[ix] and thus our learning was not reflected in the evaluation. Two years of studying international intervention in failed states, however, has convinced me that writing about our community mobilization work could add to the existing knowledge base for post-conflict reconstruction in failed states[x] and thus inspired this article.

The Genesis of CRDA

I was told that CRDA effectively represented a scaling-up by the donor, USAID, of an approach piloted in Lebanon in which community-level democratization activities were linked with specific projects to rebuild communities and services.[xi] Part of its success came from the speed with which community-level initiative and commitment was

rewarded by actual project delivery, and this proved important in Serbia as well. Scaling up this pilot project to cover all of Serbia apart from Belgrade[xii] offered a chance to explore different ways of delivering such community-led revitalization activities and thus building grassroots democracy. The country was so large that five different implementing agencies were needed, and each implementer had a slightly different approach to working with communities. Some covered their entire region, working in all municipalities; others, like CRDA Western Serbia, worked in only some of the municipalities in their region. However, all emphasized working with citizens to revitalize communities. Another NGO was contracted by USAID for the complementary task of working with municipalities to improve and democratize their service delivery.

Working with three local NGOs based in Uzice, Valjevo and Sabac, the CRDA Western Serbia project team had encouraged communities to come together and create community committees that would propose and manage projects and provide a nucleus for capacity-building and democratization activities at the local level. The result was 60 community committees (CC) located within 13 of Western Serbia's 25 municipalities who had developed a number of possible projects for improving life in their communities. Most of the initial 60 projects involved infrastructure work – water, sewer, roads, and repair of schools and health facilities.

The entire CRDA team, made up of three smaller teams (infrastructure, economic development, and community mobilization) working out of two (later three) regional offices[xiii] and project headquarters in Belgrade, worked to choose, finalize, arrange logistics and procurement, and get these initial 60 projects underway by mid-October of 2001. Not surprisingly, given the speed and the fact that projects were chosen on September 11, 2001 when the entire team was in shock over the World Trade Tower attacks, there was some initial confusion in some CC's about which projects had been approved. However, the work was underway – and that, in itself, was a different experience for many communities, where donors or government had often promised projects that did not materialize or were begun but not completed. Seeing tangible results convinced CC members of the value of investing both their time and the resources needed to generate the required 25% community contribution to projects.

The project approvals were announced to communities during a series of 60 Open Town Hall meetings, held within a one-week period in September, and facilitated by local facilitators identified through the three NGOs. Even before the CC's and projects were chosen, our small Community Mobilization (CM) team had worked with this group to plan the meeting format, identify questions and problems that might arise, and brainstorm the logistics of holding so many meetings over such a large area in such a small time period. These people, who became known as CRDA community facilitators, worked in a variety of occupations and through their usual work and community connections, our new facilitation approaches also found their way into areas as diverse as Serbian educational reform and local bar association meetings[xiv]. For us, they helped build community capacity, model women's leadership[xv], and increase awareness of CRDA, as well as expanding our small CM team for the 240 quarterly Open Town Hall meetings[xvi] that were part of the initial one-year CM work plan[xvii]. Over time, they proposed creative new approaches for bringing CRDA open town hall meetings to people during the summer raspberry season when people had no time to attend meetings. One,

from her own health experience, developed an innovative and life-saving project that delivered cervical cancer screening throughout the region[xviii].

Once the initial 60 projects were underway, project planning split into three streams: infrastructure, economic, and social. While the infrastructure team supervised the initial 60 projects and the economic team worked on business activities, the CM team worked to help CC's develop their capacity to cope with the increasing demands on them. Our first step was to help the communities develop and identify good projects, through a series of training workshops that brought CC's together by municipal area. Like all of our subsequent workshops, these blended training and practical work[xix], as CRDA's rapid schedule left no time for capacity-building work that was separate from project development and delivery. After a brief review of the elements of good proposals, the group divided into three or four smaller groups that identified several possible projects and explored how they could be implemented. Each small group presented one of their ideas to the larger group, which then voted on the proposals, and then the whole group worked on implementation planning for the most popular choice. Not only did this provide a practical insight into how projects were approved, but it helped encourage community ownership of the revitalization process.

To supplement team members' ongoing mentoring of CC work, we developed a menu of training activities, including effective communication, effective planning, and financing of projects, so each CC could choose the type of training it most needed. Training sessions were provided through a Belgrade-based NGO that had experience in delivering training in rural areas, and our team monitored the delivery and results. We also worked on our own team capacity in communication, facilitation and strategic planning, using the Technology of Participation (TOP) techniques developed by the Institute of Cultural Affairs over three decades of work in both developing countries and the inner city areas of developed countries. The TOP workshop and participatory strategic planning methods did more than teach people skills. By using peoples' problems, capacities and solutions as the material for the training, they encouraged shared understandings and often consensus on problems and solutions. Serbians readily took to this practical approach.

Bospo, an NGO based in Tuzla, Bosnia, just across the border from Western Serbia, had long experience in delivering these workshops in the local language, using local-language materials,[xx] and began a long-term relationship with the CM team in December 2001 by delivering the TOP workshop training in Serbian to our CM team and CRDA community facilitators. Bospo was affiliated with ICA Brussels and could issue certificates for the training programs, just like the ones I had received in Canada. Such certification was helpful for CC members in their personal lives[xxi] as well as in their CC work. While this was the first time TOP training was being used in Western Serbia, there were some strong local trainers (including some of our first CRDA community facilitators[xxii]) who used facilitation techniques and had done earlier training in the region. Our work added some new techniques to their training toolkits.

Once our core team[xxiii] had learned TOP methods, we invited CC's to send members to attend regional training sessions. This process helped build networks among CC's and, as many of those who attended the training were women, among female members of CC's as well. While CRDA rules required that at least one third of the CC members be female[xxiv], local governance had been primarily the domain of men and

women did not always feel comfortable speaking up.[xxv] TOP training, networking, and the role modelling of women's leadership by myself, CM team members, and CRDA community facilitators, helped support women in participating more effectively in CC work. As we could not pay CC members for their time, we made sure the training was held in a pleasant location over a weekend and included meals, an important part of traditional Serbian hospitality.[xxvi] This made it easier for women to arrange for others to take care of their household and family work while they were at the training. We delivered many such trainings over the next 18 months.

One of these first TOP sessions attracted a Roma man from Sabac, Dragan Nikolic, who soaked up the knowledge and began to apply it once he returned home. His presentations began to impress the Sabac municipal administration – so much that other Roma men from Sabac began to ask for similar training so the municipal authorities would also listen to them. Eventually, Dragan worked with our Bospo facilitators as a co-facilitator of TOP training sessions for both Roma communities and our regular CC's in the Sabac region, thus training many people who had much more formal education than he did. Thus was a huge achievement for a member of a minority group that has often been left out of governance, and also modelled an effective and constructive form of leadership within the Roma community.[xxvii]

Developing the Community Social Service Projects

Our next challenge was how to develop the community social service projects. Based on my experience in Northern Canada[xxviii], I created two kinds of CSSPs. One was designed to fund a project of up to $20,000 within each of the 13 municipalities. This project would be chosen by all the CC's in that municipal area, encouraging them to work together and focus on a larger picture. One was for vulnerable groups that often had difficulty making their voices heard within communities – women, youth, and Roma. We created three regional cluster committees, one each for women, youth, and Roma. Each had three representatives from the north, central and south parts of Western Serbia. This two-phase model allowed us to solicit CSS proposals from both communities and vulnerable groups, and to build in an effective local component to the evaluation and review process. Final project approval came from the Chief of Party, the person in charge of the overall CRDA Western Serbia project.

The initial work plan called for us to develop 10 CSSPs in the first year, but neither the work plan nor the project proposal was helpful in suggesting how we should do this.[xxix] The answer came, as it most often did, from local knowledge. The CM team member based in Uzice was a teacher and lifelong resident of Uzice, and had worked with an international development agency in the field and in its regional head office before joining CRDA. She had invited people from a range of sectors within Uzice to a meeting to help identify possible social projects, and it had become clear at this meeting that key social sectors – education, health, and social services – did not have much contact and did not always know what other sectors were doing. At the same time, many CC members had expressed concern about how they were going to develop projects in a specialized area that many of them didn't know much about – social services.

From these factors evolved a quarterly series of Social Planning meetings which brought together representatives from the education, health, and social services sectors within each of our 13 municipalities.[xxx] Each meeting followed a standard format devised

by the CM team. First, each sector spoke briefly about its work, capacity, and activities. Then each sector met separately and identified three key sectoral needs, and then three projects that CRDA might fund. Each sector then presented its findings to the whole group. Given the participants' busy schedules, social planning meetings were held in the afternoon or evening and included lunch or dinner, which also allowed for informal networking among the participants. Minutes were typed up and distributed to the CC's, and proposed projects were presented to the CC's, who then chose the one they thought was most important and relevant. This process combined two desirable goals – projects were developed by people with expertise and chosen by CC members.

The social planning process had three interesting effects. It informed the community about the different social sectors; it began to create new kinds of accountability between professionals and community members[xxxi]; and it created networks within the social sector, which had been severely hit by years of sanctions and poverty[xxxii]. With time, such networks could encourage new joint approaches towards meeting community needs and sharing scarce resources. CC members and other community groups began to attend the meetings as well, and community awareness about the social sector began to increase. (Later, I realized that this process provided a potential model for larger reform within Serbia as a whole, when a Serbian consultant retained to advise the government on health service reform learned about the social planning model and asked us to share the meeting notes.)[xxxiii]

We also assisted the infrastructure team in developing their next projects by bringing together CCs and municipal authorities. This model grew out of the recognition that CRDA-funded small infrastructure projects to repair water or sewage systems in part of a municipality could affect the overall municipal system. CC's did not always know what the municipality planned, or how their proposed project would fit within the overall system, in part because of the lack of public participation in municipal planning.[xxxiv] During these meetings, CC's each presented their proposed infrastructure projects, the CRDA engineers reviewed and discussed these with the CC's, and the municipal authorities presented information about proposed capital and public works spending to the CC's.

These meetings also had interesting effects. They meant all CCs within a municipality learned about the infrastructure plans of other groups, and - by sharing municipal information with citizens - began to educate citizens about the complexities of municipal infrastructure and financing. They also created a model for municipal accountability to citizens. Serbian engineers working with CRDA learned the value of facilitation and participatory strategic planning – something we built on later through a pilot Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA).

In working with communities to develop projects, the Community Mobilization team had identified the need to clearly document the project development and approval process. With the aid of an Indian consultant who had worked extensively in Africa, we developed and charted a model that was eventually adopted by our parent agency to manage its social and capacity-building projects in other parts of Serbia. Ultimately, the overall CRDA Western Serbia project process was streamlined with the goal of involving Community Committees more effectively in the project review and approval process.

Developing an Overall Plan

One of the challenges in delivering a project like CRDA in a country with a history of authoritarian governance where many rural areas had been effectively left out of development, where participatory decision-making[xxxv] was seldom practiced, and where the CRDA team faced such a heavy workload, was to help the whole region to begin thinking about strategic priorities. We needed a way of holding a meeting that would allow people to discuss and identify their own priorities for the future of Western Serbia. That method turned out to be Open Space Technology, developed by American organization consultant Harrison Owen and used extensively in the North American business, community development, and the nonprofit sector and increasingly in peacebuilding overseas as well.[xxxvi] I had seen Siberian facilitators introduce Open Space to women in the Taimyr Republic in the summer of 2001, and thought it might work in Serbia as well.

One of my colleagues in Northern Canada had worked extensively with Open Space, and put me in touch with Harrison. Initially, knowing how busy Harrison was, I had only hoped for some hints about how to use Open Space and some names of potential facilitators. I was overjoyed when Harrison said he would be happy to facilitate the session himself, and would stay for another day to answer our facilitators' questions about how Open Space could be used in their work. Harrison's vast experience and CV impressed everyone, especially those who had never heard of Open Space and were dubious about whether it would work in Serbia.[xxxvii]

Our team set about the planning process. The manager of the Valjevo hotel that we used for our TOP training sessions booked his hotel and another local hotel for our 150 participants. We located five computers that people could use to type up their session reports. We arranged for each CC to send participants, invited municipal representatives, and invited our CRDA community facilitators. The entire CRDA team came from Belgrade. One wall of the hotel's ballroom was covered with sticky notes that listed times and rooms; this would be where the conference agenda would be compiled by the participants. All had been invited to think on the question Harrison had devised: "What kind of Western Serbia would you love to live in in 2006?"

Sitting in the ballroom of the Grand Hotel with 150 people sitting in two rows of chairs encircling the room, I wondered what would happen when Harrison invited participants to come into the centre of the circle, name a topic they would like to discuss, write the topic on paper, and post it on the wall with a room and time attached. What if no one came forward? As it turned out, I didn't need to worry. Our group already had a core group of people who had developed confidence in facilitation and participatory planning, and had many ideas to share. Barely a minute after Harrison's invitation, the centre of the room was a busy place, and the agenda on the wall was filling up. Soon, all the participants were at the wall, signing up for sessions. In less than half an hour, the ballroom was empty and the meeting rooms were buzzing with discussion, led by the "convenors" who had suggested the topic.

After each session, a participant typed up the meeting notes and posted them on the wall. In the large evening circle, people shared the "news". At the end of the two days, the walls were covered with the key findings. Then we distributed six coloured dots to each participant, and asked them to help identify the most important issues by placing their dots on the ones they considered most vital. They could put all their dots on one, or

spread them out among six issues. This technique, called "dotmocracy," identified six key issues for Western Serbia as a region that ranged from action on water problems to involving vulnerable groups in community activities.

Working with Vulnerable Groups

The invitation for women, youth and Roma to submit CSS proposals, and the creation of cluster committees for women, youth and Roma, gave us a way to work with these groups in a cross-cutting way across the region. As with the CC's, creating committees provided an organizational structure that gave these groups an effective voice within CRDA[xxxviii]. However, just as with the Open Town Hall meetings, our small CM team needed additional support to carry out this work, and so we asked the three NGOs for help. The Roma population was concentrated around Sabac, and so it made sense for Osvit, in Sabac, to co-ordinate the Roma cluster meetings. Uzice Centre for Human Rights already had been working extensively with women's groups, so it made sense for them to co-ordinate the women's cluster committee meetings. Valjevo had a strong youth presence and it made sense for the Valjevo Human Rights Committee to co-ordinate the youth cluster meetings. This process created additional linkages within the region, as all three NGO's worked together to identify cluster committee participants from their region, and helped build relationships within the region that could outlast CRDA.

As my team was busy with their work with the 60 CCs, I spearheaded the cluster committee work. In particular, I worked with the Roma communities who – like the aboriginal peoples I had worked with in northern Canada for two decades – often existed outside established municipal structures and processes, and thus often outside CC's as well. Many Roma lived in poverty and suffered, like aboriginal Canadians, from stereotyping within the wider society that in turn led to a lack of belief that they could change their circumstances through their own efforts. It took time, and many meetings and visits to Roma communities in the Sabac and Valjevo regions, to develop trust between us and to convince people that the one thing I could offer – building their skills to advocate for, and meet their own needs – was a valuable contribution[xxxix]. Creating the ability to plan and advocate for their communities could create more equal relationships between Roma and non-Roma communities. Without the Roma cluster program, it would not have been possible to have such discussions in an organized way.

One of the particular concerns for Roma was education of their children, both before they began formal schooling and within the school system itself. Poverty and sanitation problems, as well as parents' lack of formal education, meant Roma children often had a difficult time at school. One of our first Roma projects involved providing intensive support for children's learning in Uzice, and made it possible for several Roma children to move into the higher levels of education for the first time – a source of great pride for the small Roma community in Uzice. The cluster approach made it possible for us to provide the additional support Roma communities needed to develop and implement such projects, and setting aside specific funds meant the CC's did not see the Roma projects as competition for scarce resources.

As they got to know me, Roma people invited me into their homes and communities to see how they lived. Roma leaders in Valjevo took me to see one community, Dubrava, that they themselves called the poorest Roma community in all of Serbia. It had one well, from which people pulled water up in buckets, and people told

me that this lack of water – which meant washing clothes and children was often a challenge – had caused people in nearby schools to give Roma children a difficult time. Dubrava actually fell within a municipality that was not one of the 13 CRDA Western Serbia worked with, but the Roma cluster program allowed us to work with them to develop – and have approved – a pre-school program for Dubrava.[xl]

The Roma cluster projects also encouraged one municipality that was not part of CRDA to pay particular attention to Roma concerns. One of the Roma projects involved upgrading a school that served students from within the CC areas as well as students from a nearby Roma community that fell within the non-CRDA municipality's boundaries. The upgrading also would make it possible for the Roma community to have office space within the school and thus be able to advocate more effectively for their interests. The CM team worked hard to persuade our existing CC's in the area to support this project and thus build bridges between the Roma and non-Roma communities, and eventually, this persuasion was successful.

Other Roma projects focused on their cultural achievements in art and music, and helped change some of the negative perceptions of Roma. One project, in Sabac, built on the Day of Roma celebration[xli] organized by the Roma NGO community, expanding this to highlight the dance and art achievements of Roma groups in the entire region. Another project, in Valjevo, included a Roma evening as part of a two-week community celebration of the arts and music and was the first time Roma musicians had been included in this annual event. These projects were a source of great pride within the Roma community, as they were organized and run by Roma organizations and showcased their capacity and achievements within the wider community.

Eventually, Roma leaders asked me to organize TOP trainings specifically for Roma community members. If I organized the training, they would identify participants and organize their travel to the course in Valjevo. Thus, a large group of Roma people gathered in the same ballroom where we had held the Open Space conference, learning the same workshop and planning skills as CC members. And the Roma cluster committee developed its capacity to such an extent that committee members evaluated and ranked the year 2 Roma CSS proposals, so that the projects we put forward for consideration by the overall CRDA team were the ones chosen by Roma people themselves.[xlii]

The women's cluster committee members took a slightly different route. They began to consider developing three regional projects to address their concerns, primarily family violence and women's health issues, rather than a series of small projects. The success of the Save the Life project, developed by a CRDA community facilitator, had made a big impression on the cluster committee, CRDA team, and Western Serbia. By reaching out to men and through the Orthodox Church, encouraging them to help save the lives of their wives, mothers, sisters and daughters, this project created widespread support for a cervical cancer screening program that detected a number of cases early enough for surgery to be effective. The women's centre in Uzice, through a program called Jefimija, had created a similar network focused on the early detection and treatment of breast cancer, which CRDA had supported as one of the first women's cluster projects. In both cases, the programs effectively addressed the stigma attached to serious illnesses such as cancer that made it difficult for women to seek early diagnosis and treatment – a phenomenon that was common throughout eastern Europe[xliii]. Eventually, when USAID earmarked CRDA money for reproductive health (RH)

programs, CRDA Western Serbia drew on similar projects developed through the social planning process as a basis for its RH activities.

Domestic violence was, as it is in the developed world, a common but often hidden problem in Serbia. Some women were aware of programs implemented in the US to deal with and prevent such violence, as one American agency had brought women from Western Serbia to see such activities in the US. Another CRDA implementer brought the director of a US city shelter to Serbia to share her knowledge, and invited us to meet with her. That in turn encouraged women in Uzice to organize a larger meeting to help plan a project to address domestic violence, and women in Valjevo developed a similar proposal, although USAID rules about including police in such projects made them more challenging to implement.[xliv]

The women's cluster committee had discussed the need to involve women more actively in their communities, and both CC's and their women members had asked us to help support women in CC participation. We were able to support two projects in this area. Osvit held a series of round table discussions in the Sabac area to encourage women to be aware of how political and economic reform affected them and thus to become more active in community affairs. The other, "Women in Focus", was modelled on the Norwegian-funded "Women Can Do It" program and developed and delivered by the Uzice Centre for Human Rights. This project identified existing women leaders in the CC's and CRDA team, who were invited to a train the trainer session. In turn, these trainers went home and organized training sessions for the women in their communities, thus sharing the learning widely. Each session developed a series of potential micro-projects that could benefit both women and the community.

The youth cluster committee asked us to organize a strategic planning session to build their skills in planning, and we subsequently organized a camp in Uzice – using facilities maintained by the Uzice Red Cross as part of its disaster preparedness work – for youth representatives from all the CC's. The camp allowed young people to identify their own priorities for activities; learn how to plan, develop and promote community projects; and discuss how the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia had affected their communities, their families, and themselves – not a topic they had discussed before. Oddly enough, this came about through a discussion between two avid football fans about the rules designed to prevent hooliganism; they wanted to develop a project that would change these rules. Discussing conflict during soccer games[xlv] led into the larger discussion.

By strengthening the capacity of Roma, women and youth to participate in their communities while also working with the CC's to build their skills and capacities, we helped strengthen and "thicken" democracy at the community level in ways that would last beyond the life of CRDA. To use an analogy, we were working with both the warp and the weft of community fabric, strengthening it in an integrated way from two different directions.

This is not to say that CC's were not concerned about the vulnerable people in their communities. In fact, many of the social projects they chose to support were aimed at providing help and assistance to people who were – in the North American terminology – differently abled. Some of these projects helped make municipalities more accessible to those in wheelchairs; some provided support to people with visual impairments. Many of the 60 or so projects developed over two years focused on

education, upgrading schools and providing much-needed equipment, and on health, upgrading health facilities and services. Some provided support for people with addictions, a much-needed area of social support in Serbia. Others supported cultural activities.[xlvi] The Community Mobilization team worked hard with the communities in developing these projects, which – despite translation challenges - compared very favourably with projects I had seen developed by community groups in North America.

Integrating Program Activities

The quarterly Open Town Hall meetings provided a forum at which the CRDA team and Community Committees could report to the community on their activities and plans. In each case, the CM team developed the agenda during our regular team meetings, and arranged for the participation of the other teams. But in summer, when it was time to harvest the raspberries – an important cash crop in Western Serbia, few people had time to attend such meetings. Thus we took the Open Town Hall meetings to them, using social and sports gatherings to provide updates and promote CRDA through our presence and through colourful t-shirts that we distributed widely (a common practice in Serbia).

The CC's played a key role in managing CRDA projects, although the question of how to develop effective community monitoring – especially of infrastructure projects - was a challenge. As the program expanded, demands on CC members grew accordingly.[xlvii] While the economic revitalization component of CRDA initially focused on encouraging small and medium enterprises and cooperatives, public works projects also became part of the economic program, and the CC's played key roles in organizing these clean-up activities which were linked with an infrastructure project to supply additional garbage containers. Such projects had to be linked with municipal reform in order to be effective in the long term, however. Many of the "wild" garbage dumps cleaned up during such projects had developed because MZ's and municipalities did not pick up garbage, in part because people did not pay for this service. This had created a self-reinforcing cycle that required a changed relationship between local government and citizens to achieve effective change.

Eventually, as CC's found themselves focusing on a number of different projects at once and as projects began to address such linked problems, CRDA Western Serbia began to focus on how we could better integrate our activities within the program. Some of the participatory planning approaches used by the CM team were helpful in doing this at both the community and CRDA team levels. PRA offered one way of bringing the whole CRDA team together at the community level.

We piloted a Participatory Rural Appraisal project in one small rural MZ within Mionica municipality.[xlviii] This began with training for the overall CRDA team that included the CRDA community facilitators so they could also learn these techniques. PRA, developed as a way of working with communities where literacy levels are low, needs an extensive commitment of time by the project team and the community. This meant extensive preparatory discussion with the community, as we would live there during the three days of the PRA[xlix]. We were careful to emphasize that hosting the PRA did not guarantee that the community would get any CRDA funding; oddly enough, because the usual practice was to make promises that did not materialize, our insistence on this point apparently added to our credibility.

The series of PRA exercises, and the facilitation skills of the CM team put together with the expertise of the economic and infrastructure teams, helped create an amazing result in this small community. By the end of the third day, the community members had identified their key problems and their own resources, had identified three solutions they could generate internally, and set a timetable, identified tasks, and assigned the tasks to specific people. The economic revitalization team provided them with needed expertise, and the community soon carried out its plan so successfully that they did indeed generate a project that CRDA supported. The PRA empowered the community in a remarkable way, and made the CRDA team aware of the complementary nature of their skills and knowledge and the power of focusing on community capacity and knowledge in a co-ordinated way.[1]

Lessons Learned

I want to conclude by reflecting on some of the key lessons that are applicable to the challenge of achieving local ownership of post-conflict reconstruction.

1) **Activities vs. Capacity-building**:

In his recent book on state building[li], Francis Fukuyama suggests that while everyone acknowledges the importance of capacity-building, donor demands and processes usually mean that activities end up being more important than process.[lii] Governments and donors track progress through statistics – the number of students, patients, or beneficiaries served – which creates a short-term focus for project delivery. Capacity, while key to the long-term change desired by such state-building projects, is more difficult to measure and is a long-term process that may sometimes involve going backwards as well as forwards.[liii]

I believe capacity-building and program delivery can be combined, although this is difficult to plan effectively in advance as it evolves from local circumstances and knowledge combined with international expertise, in response to challenges that arise during implementation. Social planning meetings help build local social service capacity while also identifying projects, for example. Regional TOP training for CC members builds capacity while helping to develop projects. Strategic planning sessions for team members help the program manager plan in a more participatory way while also building team capacity and understanding of the planning context.

Community Mobilization activities hailed by the donor as innovative grew naturally out of the need to find solutions to problems as they arose and the combination of local and international knowledge that characterized our work. We met weekly for the first six months, then biweekly[liv], and we developed standardized formats for meetings and activities. This effectively used local experience, built team members' confidence[lv] and encouraged peer-sharing, and ensured activities were consistent across the region. Part of my role was to clearly identify program needs so team members could use their expertise and local knowledge to find useful solutions and approaches.

Combining capacity-building with program delivery requires careful attention and effort to building the skills of team members, both local and international. Thus managing such a project means managing process as well as activities, and requires international staff to be aware of, and able to articulate, emerging challenges and the parameters within which these can be addressed[lvi]. Backstopping by head offices needs a macro-, not a micro-

management, focus. Project monitoring by the donor also is affected, as it is easier to measure concrete activities than capacity that is being or has been built.

While capacity-building is often seen as focused on local people, complex projects that bring together specialized areas of expertise also require capacity-building among the senior team and across disciplines. Engineers, economists, and community development staff all approach their work differently. In an integrated project with a theme such as "community revitalization through democratic action," they must work together closely, which means learning about each other's specialty. Delivering parts of a program separately forces communities to do the coordination, which may well reduce rather than build community capacity.

2) The Benefits and Challenges of Quick-start Programs

Quick start programs like CRDA build credibility with communities by showing tangible early results, especially where people have become skeptical about glowing promises of a better future that do not materialize. This credibility, and the promise of a long-term relationship (CRDA was a five-year program), encourages communities to commit effort and their own resources towards the program activities.

However, delivering many small projects so quickly puts great demands on the project team, especially when there is little time for advance planning, when the region is regarded as high-risk in terms of program spending, and when the program is primarily driven by community-based planning and implementation. Centralizing project authority reduces administrative costs but slows project delivery; decentralizing authority requires the kind of local capacity that the project is intended to create or build upon.

Some blend of quick-start with early capacity-building seems to me to be crucial as a way of beginning to build the capacity for more decentralized delivery. One way to do this could be to involve capable regional NGOs as effective partners in the entire project planning and delivery process. Many already work with communities in their region through a variety of internationally-funded activities. Involving them early on, and continuing to involve them as partners in planning and delivery, achieves several goals. It makes the best use of the time and skills of international and project staff. It helps build networks and long-term capacity in the region and thus supports sustainability. And in a region where the diaspora contributes extensively to rebuilding, it allows effective leveraging of international and diaspora resources.

In effect, this would add a pre-quick start phase to such projects, when the project staff can spend time with both the NGOs and donor to clarify goals, processes, values, and accountability. Trying to build this capacity during the quick start process itself is too stressful for everyone concerned. However, this requires understanding and agreement by the donor that building regional NGO capacity is part of building local community capacity, as well as clear agreements about accountability and process between the NGOs and the project team, and between the project team and the donor.

3) Balancing Local and Headquarters Authority

Trying to build effective local ownership of post-conflict reconstruction means changing the locus of power within development relationships, and thus poses difficulties in terms of accountability, transparency, and management. One of the criticisms of much donor-

funded activity in fragile states is that it ends up being externally focused, reporting to donors outside rather than encouraging a government to be accountable to its citizens.[lvii] Changing this focus is challenging because of the many layers of management and accountability within development agencies, donors and governments. While organization charts may make reporting relationships look straightforward, what usually happens in practice is more complex. Project offices in fragile states are responsible to both their headquarters and the donor's country office, which in turn is responsible to its headquarters (and sometimes regional offices), which in turn responds to the legislators who provide the highest level of direction to the donor agency. Especially where governance has been authoritarian, local donor staff who monitor project activities may see their role as finding fault rather than achievement, further complicating this cycle. The result can be micro-management by various actors that makes it difficult to do the long-term planning within which local capacity can be nurtured and also makes it difficult for communities to get a clear picture of project planning. One can end up focusing on the individual branches of the trees rather than the forest. Project proposals that seem straightforward can evolve in response to actions by legislators, the donor agency, and the project's head office: USAID's congressional earmarks are one example[lviii]. Soldiers call this "mission creep". Project management thus is akin to playing several games of multi-dimensional chess simultaneously.

Community-level governance may be just as complex, because of life under authoritarian regimes, political and family connections, municipal governance structure, geography, conflict, past history or other factors. Most democratization projects try to make this system more transparent, accountable, and effective, but this is much more difficult if one's own project process is as complex and opaque as the governance structure one is trying to change. Saying "do as I say, not as I do" is no more effective in building good governance than in raising children.

Good governance comes from clear processes, clear accountability, and clear models. Effective meetings and decision-making, transparent procedures, ongoing reflection and evaluation by the team, and values that are modelled as well as stated, can help build local ownership even if project management is complex. This takes sustained effort, as people are often most comfortable with what they know, and in many post-conflict states, that has been an authoritarian, harsh and manipulative managerial style with advancement depending primarily on connections and not competence. For communities and local staff, as much learning comes from their personal interaction with team members as from the project process. One South African NGO suggests, in fact, that all development is ultimately about relationships.[lix]

(One study[lx] noted that Ambassador William Farrand's residence in Brčko district in Bosnia was an important factor in supporting the major organizational changes needed to establish good governance there, and suggested that long-term commitment to local residence by international staff should be a part of all such activities. Part of the reason it works well, I think, is because it connects international staff to the community in a way that is not possible if one lives in a large city where one socializes with the other internationals and only visits project communities occasionally.[lxi] And of course, as part of the project's value comes from the money it pumps into the local economy, placing the project office and most staff in the region maximizes the project's economic benefits to local communities[lxii].)

Charting the entire project decision-making process[lxiii] can very helpful in supporting increased local ownership as well as helping the project team work effectively. Communities understand that governance involves many actors; clarifying the project process helps strengthen their role within the process, although such clarity can also cause unease within development organizations – precisely because knowledge does change the power relationship.

Acknowledging community achievement and promoting community-led success stories, as well as the implementer's achievements, encourages imitation and builds capacity, especially in fragile states where most people get their information from family, friends, and neighbours. In our case, when communities heard through CRDA about innovative community projects elsewhere, they began to make visits to learn how the other community had developed its successful activity. This is what South Africa's CDRA calls "horizontal learning" – learning from neighbours.[lxiv]

Traditional customs can provide effective indigenous anchors for community development programs. In Serbia, for example, there is a long tradition of successful people giving something back to their community in a tangible form that has funded public buildings and wells in rural areas.[lxv] However, as such traditions may have been forgotten or been co-opted by governments for their own ends, the first step may be to help people re-discover or re-value these traditions.[lxvi]

In short, post-conflict peacebuilding in a fragile state is as much about learning and sharing as it is about teaching and doing. Our community mobilization work was both effective and innovative because it blended local and international knowledge and contacts; built on, supported, and worked to expand local capacity; strengthened regional as well as local networks; built capacity as an integral part of project delivery; recognized that clear organizational structures and processes help build better local governance[lxvii]; worked with vulnerable groups to help them become part of the larger community; and created models that allowed effective sharing among ordinary citizens, municipal authorities, and professional groups.

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[i] The project award was made in mid-July 2001. I joined the project at the end of August. Both the grantee and sub-grantee organizations were American. I worked for the sub-grantee and reported administratively both to the sub-grantee's Belgrade office and to the Chief of Party, the project team leader, who worked for the grantee. Initially, I was the only female member of the five-member senior management team; after the first year, a female engineer led the infrastructure team.

[ii] In fact, I spent the winter of 2003 in effective hibernation back in Yellowknife, slowly depressurizing and spending a great deal of time sleeping!

[iii] The USAID Sada website describes the CRDA program as follows: "One of the primary programs of the USAID/SCG/Serbia mission is the Community Revitalization through Democratic Action (CRDA) Program. This is planned as a five-year, $200 million program covering all of Serbia except for metropolitan Belgrade and the province of Kosovo. It is a civil society program that uses community development activities to build trust between different ethnic and religious groups, to demonstrate the value of citizen participation, to support grass roots democratic action and to bring immediate improvement in people's living conditions."(http://www.sada.usaid.org.yu/en/index.cfm). As of August 2004, there were over 3,000 completed projects." (Czajkowska et al, 2005:4)

[iv] In his recent book on state building, Francis Fukuyama credits Michael Ignatieff with having originated this concept. Speaking of international rebuilding in Somalia, Haiti, Cambodia, Bosnia, Kosovo, and East Timor during the 1990s, Fukuyama says: "But the rhetoric of the international community stresses 'capacity-building' while the reality has been rather a kind of 'capacity sucking out', to use Ignatieff's (2002) memorable phrase." He explains that this is because the richly endowed, capable international community tends to "crowd out rather than complement the extremely weak state capacities of the targeted countries." (Fukuyama 2005:139)

[v] My thesis looked at "islands of achievement" in fragile states as a potential basis for new approaches to international peacebuilding. This involved case studies of Somaliland, where people rebuilt their society and created an innovative governance model that blended traditional and modern approaches, and Brčko District in Bosnia, where the international community's directive approach built strong locally-led governance.

[vi] Anthropologist Steve Sampson, who has done extensive research in eastern Europe and the Balkans, describes it well: "As most people in the business know, the everyday world of democracy assistance, human rights promotion and civil society aid is filled with pressing deadlines, continuous meetings, quickly drafted memoranda, complicated project designs, appraisal reports, evaluation schemes, capacity assessments, and budget redrafts. There is little space for reflection while a project is in process: and once it is over, then it is usually, quickly, onto the next." (2002b)

[vii] Carothers notes that despite the expenditure of about $2 billion per year on democracy promotion among the world, the topic is :"remarkably understudied, and the gap between what we want to accomplish and what we really know about how to accomplish it remains dauntingly wide". Democracy promoters tend to be activists focused on the challenge at hand; most of the institutions they work for must show quick and impressive results and have "few incentives to invest heavily in research and reflection," he suggests. "The

academic world has not stepped up to the plate to fill this gap. Democracy promotion is only weakly present in scholarly research circles. It sits awkwardly in between the disciplines of international relations, comparative politics, development studies, and law—related to all four but not finding a home in any one. And being a practical domain, carried out in distant countries where easily obtainable numerical research data are scarce, the subject is not a tempting target for the many academic researchers who are either preoccupied by theoretical concerns or rely primarily on quantitative methods." Most of the learning is in the minds of practitioners rather than in written form. (2004:2-3)

[viii] Czajkowska, B., Dunbar, J., Keshishian, M., Sahley, C., Strickland, K. (2005). Assessment of the Serbian Community Revitalization through Democratic Action Activity (CRDA). Produced for USAID/Serbia and Montenegro. Final version February 1, 2005.

[ix] As part of the project integration process, the grantee took over the community mobilization program and ended its agreement with the sub-grantee.

[x] The CRDA model has, for example, been applied in Iraq, and a number of the Serbian implementers are involved in these projects there as well.

[xi] I learned this from discussions with the Chief of Party; sub-grantees do not have direct dealings with the donor agency.

[xii] Belgrade was excluded under USAID rules. However, CRDA Western Serbia's main project office was located in Belgrade.

[xiii] The grantee established offices in Uzice and Sabac early on. By agreement between the grantee and sub-grantee, I was responsible for establishing the office in Vajevo. Sabac is a large industrial city in the northern part of Western Serbia; Valjevo is located in the centre; and Uzice is a city of about 80,000 in the south. It takes about two hours to drive from Uzice to Valjevo, another 1.5 hours from Valjevo to Sabac, and about four hours to drive from Uzice to Belgrade. As I lived in Uzice, I spent much of my time on the road. In the first six months, I travelled almost 70,000 kilometres.

[xiv] Some of our facilitators introduced Open Space into the planning process for educational reform, and the Valjevo bar association liked TOP so much that it began to use this method to hold its regular meetings.

[xv] At least half the facilitators were women. For the first round of Open Town Hall meetings, I travelled around the Valjevo region with the two CRDA community facilitators and an interpreter from Uzice – all four of us women. This was an unusual sight in many of the rural areas around Valjevo. In the Sabac and Uzice areas, CM team members travelled with the facilitators; the CM team member for Valjevo was not recruited until after the first round of Open Town Hall meetings had been completed.

[xvi] Each CC held one Open Town Hall meeting each quarter; thus over a year, 240 such meetings took place.

[xvii] This plan had been developed between representatives of the grantee and sub-grantee before I arrived in Serbia.

[xviii] This project, known as Save the Life, was funded as one of the first round of women's cluster projects. Later, it was expanded as part of the Reproductive Health program. The facilitator, Lilja Maksimovic, did an amazing job of organizing the project, working with doctors and nurses to do the testing on weekends, and through this initial project, improved equipment for early detection of cervical cancer was installed in Sabac, Valjevo and Uzice. She reached out to men, encouraging them to save the lives of their wives, mothers, daughters, and sisters, and persuaded priests of the Serbian Orthodox Church to promote the project through their church work. This brilliant strategy made men partners with women in battling cervical cancer. Working only with women would not have been as effective. This project is profiled at http://www.ird-bg.org.yu/english.php?mainid=101&ID=13.

[xix] The format for these training sessions was developed by the CM team member in Uzice, Nevena Kurepa, and used by all the other CM team members in their own parts of the region.

[xx] Before leaving Canada, I had contacted Jo Nelson, the ICA-Canada member who had delivered the Community Development Intensive training program I had completed several years earlier. Jo gave me the names of ICA-certified trainers operating in the Balkans region, and Bospo was closest to us. As I had taken many TOP training courses through ICA, I knew what was taking place in our training workshops even though they were delivered in Serbian, which I did not speak. Bospo's trainers typed up the workshop notes in English for me as part of their workshop report.

[xxi] Training courses that do not provide certificates are less credible on CV's. Given lack of access to formal education and to organizational management training in rural Serbia, certified training helps people in finding paid work – and thus CC participation has some tangible ancillary benefits for members. Once

CRDA began to supply a computer and printer to each CC to help in preparing project proposals, CC members asked us to organize computer training courses (computer training in schools was one of the educational casualties of the past decade). Thus the training and capacity building process expanded as the program did.

xxii Branka Pavlovic, who worked with Osvit in Sabac, was part of the highly-respected Tim Tri (Team Three) training organization, and had delivered training to a number of people in the region through that organization. Brankica Jeremic, of Uzice Centre for Human Rights, also did extensive training work throughout the region.

xxiii Our team, which grew gradually from the two people who had already been recruited before I arrived to ten in all, supported by a highly competent finance manager of our parent organization in Belgrade, included many skilled people. It included two psychologists, a teacher, a skilled administrator who wanted to do community work, an accountant who had worked with the finance ministry, a logistician with excellent knowledge of the region, a lawyer, a professional driver and mechanic, and a linguist. A number had been involved with humanitarian relief distribution. Some had delivered training internationally. Such a wealth of knowledge and expertise was a tremendous resource for the whole team. Many former CM team members now work with international organizations doing training, community development, and economic development, thus further supporting democratization and good governance within Serbia.

xxiv One senior USAID official who visited us wondered if it was actually democratic to require such quotas. Our answer was that it created a requirement for participation by women that we could then build on to make truly effective. While initially some of the women may have been token appointments in order to meet the requirement for projects, their CC membership allowed us to invite them to attend TOP trainings and later Women in Focus that gave them the skills and confidence to speak up. (In fact, some CC's had mostly women members, which caused some to joke about the need for a quota for male participation.)

xxv This was not just a concern for the women. Some of the CC's approached us for help in encouraging women's participation, as they were not sure how to do this. Sometimes simple techniques such as the round robin - encouraging individuals to make a list of concerns or possible activities, and then going around the circle and ask each person to volunteer one item on their list each time - helped because it made it possible for the women's voices to be heard.

xxvi Not only did this echo Serbian hospitality but (as I learned from one of the CM team members) it meant some participants got one good meal in the day. Poverty is very real in Serbia, although pride and the obligations of hospitality disguise its extent. Privatization has meant that many factories closed, or stopped paying salaries when new owners took over, and public institutions such as hospitals, social welfare centres, and schools were starved of resources for many years. Thus, even professional people earn salaries that are very low in western terms; some people still work in factories but don't get paid at all.

xxvii My observation was that, given the poverty and the undoubted needs of the Roma community, a particular dynamic has developed over time between Roma and non-Roma. In Belgrade, for example, Roma live in extreme poverty and many are involved in recycling waste and in begging. In the region, some local NGOs and people provide humanitarian support to Roma people. However, Roma communities tend to be located away from larger communities and are not officially surveyed or serviced. As individual identity is tied to a residential address, many Roma people effectively do not exist in official terms. Thus their only alternative has been to seek humanitarian aid through international NGOs and local communities, making them supplicants rather than actors.

xxviii In such a split system, cluster committees in effect act as an incubator that allows vulnerable groups to learn the skills they need to develop projects and to participate effectively in the community in a supportive context among their peers. Vulnerable groups need more support to develop projects and find their voice in the community than do those whose position is much stronger. Setting aside money specifically for vulnerable groups reduces the rivalry and bad feelings that could develop if vulnerable groups had to lobby within the CC for attention to their needs. In Serbia, while these two CSS project streams began separately, projects generated by women, youth and Roma slowly helped draw community attention to their capacities and needs in a way that did not detract from CC abilities to deal with pressing concerns such as water, sanitation, and road systems – and in fact, some projects developed that addressed both CC and vulnerable group needs. Further work could have led to more such integrated projects. Working within cluster committees allowed us to focus specifically on each vulnerable group, while also helping members of

vulnerable groups gain confidence to participate effectively in CC's; ideally, over five years, vulnerable groups could have been incorporated into the CC's.

xxix In the original proposal, most of the proposed measures for evaluating achievement in social projects were marked "TBD" – to be determined, and no specific structure or process for social projects was identified. One suggestion by the Chief of Party was to divide the money up among each individual community committee; however, this would have created a massive paper burden, as well as encouraging communities to focus on their own needs rather than the larger municipality of which they were part.

xxx As Melissa Labonte notes, "shifting the strategic enterprise of these activities [peacebuilding and democratization] from a deductive, structural perspective to an inductive, process-driven one brings local priorities to the fore, rather than subordinating them to donor priorities." (2003:271)

xxxi Some of the professionals found this difficult at first, as the Yugoslav system had relied on experts to identify needs and propose solutions without public consultation. Thus this kind of project review process was a major change in the governance process that had existed all during their professional careers.

xxxii In the education sector, for example, Milosevic had prohibited the use of any curriculum and training materials that had been produced outside Serbia, and thus schools and educators had been effectively isolated from developments in the outside world for a decade.

xxxiii Reforming social institutions in fragile or failed states requires bottom-up and top-down change simultaneously and in an integrated way so that each change feeds into the other. Change at the local level helps create pressure for change at the top; change at the top facilitates constructive change at the community level. The Westphalian state model does not encourage such a nuanced approach to institutional reform, focused as it is on the state level alone. During the 1990s, many democratization programs in fragile states chose to work around government, working only with civil society and communities and leaving governance reform to separate "good governance" programs. Thus the institutional reform process was bifurcated when it needed to be an integrated process driven as much from the bottom as from the top. In formerly authoritarian states, using participatory process to strengthen the social sector at the community level provides a model and basis for publicly-led reform of state institutions at the top as well. Apart from reforming how institutions work, however, there is - in the case of health care – the additional issue of equipment and buildings. If public social infrastructure has virtually collapsed, and projects are being driven from the community level as a way of dealing with this collapse, fragile states can find themselves with an unco-ordinated pattern of equipment and facilities developed primarily through community-driven projects. This can stimulate institutional reform at the top, if donors help the state work with communities in a participatory process that uses the community projects as the building blocks for a reformed and revived public health system. Chopra and Hohe suggest that effectively rebuilding governance in post-conflict states in a participatory way may require "the design of mechanisms for genuine popular participation in administrative bodies at the local level, which can also guarantee representation upward throughout the government building enterprise from the very beginning to ensure its social viability." (Chopra & Hohe, 2004:289)

xxxiv Additionally, many of the municipalities in Western Serbia had been opposed to Milosevic and thus had suffered from a lack of government financial support, as well as bearing much of the burden of supporting refugees who had fled from the conflict in neighbouring Bosnia. Thus finding the resources to run municipalities had been a challenge during much of the previous decade, especially in many Western Serbian municipalities.

xxxv Although the Yugoslav system seemed to give extensive power to workers in running the enterprises in which they worked, actual decision-making power was within the party structure, and thus despite the rhetoric about public participation in governance, participatory *decision-making* was rare.

xxxvi More information about Open Space Technology can be found at http://www.openspaceworld.org/.

xxxvii Some officials who were invited chose not to attend because there was no meeting agenda that they could review in advance. The essence of Open Space is that the participants themselves develop the agenda at the start of the meeting, based on the question that they have earlier been invited to consider.

xxxviii As I understand the concept, nodal governance theory stresses the importance of organizational structure in creating a microgovernance "node" that can then bring unrepresented people into governance. Nodal governance regards governance as a dynamic networked system made up of diverse nodes. All nodes have an institutional structure of some kind (even if not formally or legally recognized), stories (ways of thinking about matters the node governs), methods for exerting influence, and resources to support their work. Some nodes have "governmentness" as a characteristic, but this system also includes many nodes not

considered elements of governance in the traditional Westphalian model of state governance and international organization. Within nodal governance, microgovernance is understood as a way for local systems that have been excluded from governance to mobilize their knowledge and capacity and thus create a place and role for themselves within governance. See Burris et al 2005 for a complete explanation of the theory.

xxxix CRDA did not include humanitarian aid; it supported communities through the projects they developed. While we had created Roma cluster projects, this small fund could not begin to address the magnitude of the needs in Roma communities. I was heartened by the fact that some of the most respected Roma leaders approved of our approach and strategy.

xl Dragomir Pop-Mitic of Uzice, who worked with us as the clusters program officer, dedicated much time and effort in helping the Roma communities to translate their ideas into the lengthy project documents that we were required to develop to support CRDA funding.

xli The Roma Association celebrated World Day of Roma People in Sabac on April 7 in both 2002 and 2003. Roma were formally recognized as an ethnic minority in Serbia in 2001, which provided them with some new rights such as the right to have office space in a municipal building. However, attempting to exercise such rights brought resistance in some communities, and sometimes the Roma groups asked us for helping in interceding with the municipality.

xlii Some first year Roma CSS projects were developed by non-Roma with Roma participation in order to meet Roma needs and while this was helpful initially, it was obviously much better for Roma people themselves to develop their own project ideas and decide among themselves which of those proposals was most worthy of funding.

xliii I learned this from discussion that took place among women's advocates from around eastern Europe who attended a major Breast Cancer conference held in Bucharest, Romania, October 14-15, 2002.The conference was organized by the American International Health Alliance in cooperation with a Romanian NGO, the Renasterea Foundation for Education, Culture and Health, and the Romanian Ministry of Health and Family, and was sponsored by the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation, JSI and USAID. Participants came from Romania, Armenia, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Greece, Russia, Albania, Ukraine, Moldova and the US. The conference goal was to build strategies for improving breast cancer awareness throughout Central and Eastern Europe. (See http://www.aiha.com/index.jsp?sid=1&id=8262&pid=8240)

xliv In the case of such projects, we discovered very late that we needed special permission from USAID to include police in the training component of any domestic violence prevention project. As the police receive many of the complaints about domestic violence, involving them is of course crucially important in supporting such programs. Information about the expansion of these projects can be found at http://www.ird-bg.org.yu/english.php?mainid=101&ID=262.

xlv Some of the Serbian para-military forces who carried out ethnic cleansing activities in Bosnia had been recruited through some of the key Belgrade soccer clubs. Some Serbian scholars who have studied the genesis of the Bosnian war note that the first signs of growing ethnic conflict appeared among the fans of competing soccer clubs in the then-republics of Yugoslavia. See Football, Hooligans and War by Ivan Čolović, pp. 373-398, in Popov, N. (ed), The Road to War in Serbia: Trauma and Catharsis.

xlvi A full list of all CRDA Western Serbia projects can be found at the USAID Sada website at http://www.sada.usaid.org.yu/en/projects_partners.cfm.

xlvii One crisis developed when, for a variety of reasons, the economic program began requiring CC's to approve micro-grant applications. There were so many of these applications in some regions that CC members complained they could not get their normal work done because their homes and waiting rooms were full of micro-grant applicants seeking their signatures. Eventually, a more organized review system was developed.

xlviii Oddly enough, this small community turned out to be the birthplace of the wife of former Canadian prime minister Brian Mulroney, as I learned on the transect walk across the community. I had introduced myself to the community as being both Irish, having been born in Belfast, and Canadian by citizenship, and thus people thought I would be interested to see Mrs. Mulroney's old home.

xlix Such small communities do not have hotels and stores, of course, and we had to stay in peoples' homes and arrange for additional food supplies so the community could cope with the additional strain of accommodating and feeding us for three days.

l In identifying possible solutions to problems such as power supply, for example, the knowledge of the CRDA engineers was crucial in helping the community understand what solutions were realistic and which

were not, and CRDA economic revitalization staff provided the expertise that supported the community in creating a cooperative that would market their produce as well as buy tools and seeds in bulk, and use the knowledge of an agricultural economist who worked in Belgrade but had been born in the community, to improve their cultivation practices.

[li] Fukuyama, F. (2005). State-building: governance and world order in the twenty-first century. Paperback edition, London: Profile Books Ltd., pages 138-141.

[lii] The evaluation of CRDA done in 2005 noted as follows: "CRDA has successfully leveraged resources from municipal governments and private contributions. However, the team is concerned that CRDA has developed an overriding emphasis on projects over process. This intense focus on projects may have left partners with less time to work on community mobilization than would normally be required for deep community engagement. More significantly, this project orientation has encouraged citizen committees (CCs) to focus their activities rather narrowly on project selection and proposal development, and has not encouraged them to develop their own identity and unique role in the community. Citizen participation stimulated by CRDA is centered on project related issues and has not necessarily translated into citizen participation in wider community affairs, nor an active engagement with local government. Generally, CRDA has not yet engaged this now more energized citizenry in a meaningful partnership with their locally elected leadership." (Czajkowska et al, 2005:5)

[liii] This is particularly challenging if the local donor staff's experience is, for example, in engineering and not community development.

[liv] Given that CM team members were based in Uzice, Valjevo, and Sabac, this meant extensive travel. At first, team meetings were held in Valjevo, in the centre of the region. Gradually, we began to rotate meetings between the three locations so as to spread out the burden of travel. After the first six months, we began meeting once every two weeks. Extensive regular communication also took place among team members through mobile phone and email. Setting regular meetings from the very beginning ensured we all shared the same information base, knew what others were doing, created consistency in our program delivery, and allowed the team to make maximum use of everyone's skills, knowledge and capacity. As I was required to submit weekly reports to the Chief of Party on CM activities, the meetings also helped me ensure these reports were as complete as possible. The weekly reports in turn helped me prepare the monthly report to our parent agency. In a project that moves as quickly as CRDA, weekly reporting was helpful in keeping track of achievements, and in planning.

[lv] The process of developing the agenda together allowed team members to understand and discuss the rationale for the meeting structure including the goals and purposes of each section of the agenda. As they had to help the other teams prepare presentations for the meeting, as well as facilitate the meeting itself, such understanding was vital in building their confidence. Knowing that everyone was using the same agenda all across the region meant the team members could share challenges, problems, ideas and concerns as peers. In adult education terms, this is called "making thinking visible". I had found such modelling was helpful in working with local people in small northern communities who would be running polling stations during elections and land claims votes.

[lvi] If international staff make all the decisions themselves, not only do local staff not learn effective decision-making, but the international staff miss out on the local knowledge that may have a major impact on decision-making. However, in countries with a history of authoritarian governance, few people will be willing to volunteer ideas unless they clearly understand what is possible and what is not. Thus the importance of being clear about the parameters of decision-making.

[lvii] Chopra and Hohe note that part of the process of allowing communities to be directly involved in the evolution of their cultural and political process in post-conflict states requires "the design of mechanisms for genuine popular participation in administrative bodies at the local level, which can also guarantee representation upward throughout the government building enterprise from the very beginning to ensure its social viability." (2004: 289)

[lviii] Earmarks are actions by Congress that require USAID programs to include certain specific activities as part of their work. Thus, introduction of a reproductive health earmark meant that a certain percentage of CRDA money had to be spent on reproductive health activities, even though this was not part of the original project proposal; similarly, an earmark on domestic violence meant ensuring specific expenditures in this area. The cluster CSS projects meant that CRDA Western Serbia effectively had a head start in responding to such earmarks.

[lix] Community Development Resource Association (CDRA) (2000-2001). "Measuring Development - Holding Infinity, a writing from the CDRA's Annual Report 2000/2001, Woodstock, South Africa. http://www.cdra.org.za.

[lx] In connection with a review of lessons learned from international intervention in Brcko, Kosovo and Northern Slavonia, the importance of staff being "willing 'to stay for the long haul'" is emphasized."The importance of longevity and continuity cannot be over-emphasized. Relationships are key to the success or failure of international intervention missions." (Binnendijk et al, 2006:49).

[lxi] One facilitator friend who has worked internationally over many decades told me that living in Uzice meant that people saw me as a part of the community even though I did not necessarily live as they did. I also found that living in Uzice meant that people in the area invited me to a range of community activities that I could not have participated in if I had lived in Belgrade and only travelled occasionally to Uzice. Similarly, spending much of my time on the road meant I saw people in Valjevo, Sabac, and many of the smaller communities on a fairly regular basis. Local facilitators were grateful when I could attend their training sessions for CC's, because my presence showed these sessions were important. Living on the road had challenges (I drafted and prepared reports and agendas in the car and in the back row of TOP training sessions, for example) but it also gave me a great deal of time with CM team members and local communities. I treasured and valued this interaction with local people and consider it one of the highlights of my time with CRDA.

[lxii] Thus, for example, I tried to make sure we held team meetings and workshops within CC communities, rather than in Belgrade, knowing that the dinars we spent locally benefitted local businesses and thus the overall local economy.

[lxiii] One of our CM team members, Milica Turnic, created a chart of the CRDA project development and review process to help her in her work. One CC member was curious and asked to see it, and the entire CC found it useful. The rest of the CM Team borrowed Milica's chart and also used it to help communities understand the process. The chart was quite complex, given the nature of the project, but that did not seem to bother anyone. The point was that they could see the linkages and connections, and where their work fitted into the plan.

[lxiv] Reeler, 2004-5.

[lxv] During a CRDA team workshop in October 2001, local staff suggested that this tradition could help greatly in identifying the required 25% community contribution to all CRDA projects. While our monitoring process did not look at where the contributions came from, it is possible that in at least some cases, successful people helped. Certainly a number of the CC members were retired people who regarded their CC participation as a way of giving back to their communities through community service.

[lxvi] A study done in Bosnia in 1997 by anthropologist Steve Sampson found that many of the old traditions of community cooperation and sharing still existed although many people had not realized it. People told him that if they had known of the strength of these traditions – an indigenous civil society – there would not have been a war. (2002a) In some areas, cooperative traditions known as moba were coopted by the Yugoslav government to drive rural industrial or agricultural development and this had left a bad taste in peoples' mouths. Some roads and public facilities, for example, were built by participants in summer youth camps; thus, when I first suggested such a camp, some local staff had a negative reaction to the idea.

[lxvii] See footnote [lxvii].