

**Evaluation of
Human Rights Office Tuzla
(HROT)**

**For The Danish Centre for Human Rights
Steven Sampson**

February 2000

EVALUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICE TUZLA (HROT)

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Message from the Director

The Danish Centre for Human Rights (DCHR) initiated its partnership programmes with democratic governments, universities and NGO's in developing countries at the beginning of the nineties. Until then, DCHR had conducted analyses of the human rights situation in different regions. Though the analyses were met with both interest and acknowledgement, the question arose as to how to apply the principles in practice. How could structures and organisations be established for human rights to become an active part of society?

The question was indeed a challenging one. In Denmark, the development of a democracy had been fundamentally different from the situation found in many of the newly established democracies in developing countries. DCHR could therefore merely provide fragments of a pattern but no fully fledged solutions. As a result of this, an open and experimenting dialogue was effected between DCHR and local partners.

The initiation of DCHR partnership programmes took place at a time where the international human rights environment was shifting its focus and a new agenda was fostered. This agenda has three leading principles:

The first principle is the implementation of human rights. The UN World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in 1993 endorsed the historically unique Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action which focuses on international and national implementation mechanisms. As from the signing of the UN World Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, the emphasis had primarily been on the establishment and consolidation of international norms and conventions. The Vienna Declaration represents an international landmark in terms of translating these norms into practice.

The second principle is the active role that human rights can play in the prevention of conflicts. New conflict patterns have arisen since 1989, and there is a need for stable solutions in especially the African and

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European regions. One of the prime concerns is how the principle of non-discrimination, and tolerance in general, can be implemented and sustained. This is of fundamental importance to the ongoing developments in for instance the Balkans and Rwanda. A major reason for the escalation of problems in these areas is the absence of a dialogue between different groupings in society. A central objective is therefore to provide the settings for such a dialogue to emerge and be sustained. This objective forms part of a Nordic approach focussing on the establishment of a dialogue between ethnic groups and between governmental authorities and civil society. The interplay between human rights and conflict prevention is an area which requires further development.

The third principle is that of local ownership. The partners define the problems to be addressed and the strategies to be applied, and they spearhead the actual implementation on the ground. The DCHR serves as a source of ideas and inspiration and acts as a sparring partner.

Finally it should be stressed that Danida's willingness to support DCHR's work financially as well as the availability of expertise from a range of Danish key institutions to act as resource persons on DCHR's partnership programmes have been of ultimate value. DCHR has benefited from expertise provided by public institutions, including ministries, the police and prison service, courts, the Ombudsman, universities, and independent institutions such as NGOs, the educational establishment, lawyers and journalists. These assisting measures have been an essential prerequisite for the work of DCHR and its partners for the past decade.

Morten Kjærum, Director, September 2000

Foreword

At the beginning of the 1990s the Danish Centre for Human Rights (DCHR) initiated partnership programmes in two regions, namely Southern Africa and the Baltic Sea States. Since 1996, DCHR has expanded its regional involvement. Today, the project portfolio of the Centre encompasses thirty countries in Central Europe, the Baltic Sea States and CIS countries, the Balkans, Africa, Asia and Central America.

One of the common denominators of these programmes is that they fall under the rubric of democracy and human rights and Danish development policy objectives (Danida programme countries, FRESTA and assistance to Central and Eastern Europe).

Initially DCHR's strategy was to capacitate civil society organisations. In some of the new democracies where NGOs were virtually non existing, DCHR assisted in building up sectoral programmes for the support of NGOs. In 1993, DCHR broadened its programmes in order to include the state and independent institutions financed by the public sector. Such a holistic approach was deemed necessary since all three sectors - the state, independent institutions and NGOs - constitute major actors in establishing and securing a dynamic and interactive democracy.

During 1998, DCHR aligned its partnership programmes with the Centre's own strategic plan, focussing on capacity building and a number of target groups in the field of human rights and the rule of law. Target groups comprise parliaments, the state administration, courts, ombudsmen, national human rights institutions, universities, educational institutions, civil society and intergovernmental organisations.

The methodological approach includes coaching, strategic planning, programme development in accordance with the logical framework approach, institutional development and capacity building in the fields of

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management and administration.

Monitoring, reviews and evaluations form an integral part of establishing sound partnership programmes. The evaluations are conducted by external and independent consultants who have the sole responsibility for drafting the reports and the conclusions. In most evaluations, consultants are seconded by the DCHR project manager in charge of the programmes together with local experts in order to ensure that relevant information is retrieved, including non-documented communication. In addition, it is of the utmost importance that the wealth of information that is gathered during the evaluations, but which is not necessarily included in the reports, remains with those who are responsible for the programmes.

DCHR intends to publish as many of the evaluations as possible. However, evaluations which contain confidential information or which are mainly administrative capacity assessments and do not focus on the implementation of activities, will not be published.

The evaluations of DCHR's partnership programmes have proven that vision, planning, management, administration and profound professionalism in the field of human rights are essential prerequisites for performance and the ability to achieve results. In this respect, human rights institutions do not differ from other institutions.

When considering the favourable evaluations, these programmes tend to share a number of characteristics: i) ownership of the programmes is in the hands of the partner institutions; ii) managers possess a high level of integrity and professionalism and are committed to develop skills in the fields of human rights and institution building; iii) the institutions are developing proper administrative practices, including financial control; iv) it is fairly impossible to raise funds locally; v) there is a high degree of DCHR involvement and impact on the levels of institution building and training in human rights standards; and vi) cooperation between state

institutions and civil society organisations contributes constructively to the protection and promotion of human rights, for instance, in terms of legal drafting and law reform initiatives.

In the evaluation of the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights', which was commissioned by SIDA and carried out by the Nordic Africa Institute in conjunction with a Swedish university, the evaluators commented on "the Danish model". In their view, this model implies a high degree of DCHR involvement and coaching but without DCHR taking charge of the process or the results. However, according to other evaluators DCHR tends, at times, to be too involved. The evaluations will assist us in maintaining the best possible balance.

A fundamental principle guiding the partnership programmes is that DCHR does not station DCHR project managers or consultants in partnership institutions. Furthermore, cooperation is only sought with local organisations or institutions. Capacity building of partnership institutions and local human rights resource bases is thus highly prioritized, primarily by means of training and regular coaching provided by DCHR project managers and consultants.

The fact that DCHR is not involved in the daily management of partnership institutions ensures that the responsibility for decision-making and implementation lies solely with the institutions. The partners are thus responsible for their own successes and mistakes. It should be noted, however, that there is a considerable degree of professional capacity in several of the countries in which DCHR is engaged even though these countries are poor in terms of GNP.

Although most human rights institutions in developing countries and the new democracies find it difficult to raise local funds, some have successfully managed to attract co-funding from other international

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donors. DCHR has therefore gradually withdrawn its funding from some programmes after the institutions have been consolidated and other donors have taken over.

Recently, DCHR hosted a meeting for representatives from, inter alia, the Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and DCHR project managers with a view to evaluating the publication of the first evaluations. Among other topics, the meeting addressed DCHR's past experience within project implementation and improvements which can be derived from the conclusions in terms of the future impact of DCHR's projects and its development of indicators in respect hereof. Further, the DCHR has initiated a study on human rights indicators the purpose of which is to provide DCHR project managers, partners as well as external stakeholders in Denmark and in the countries where we work, with assessment tools which allow international comparison in terms of processes of democratisation and compliance with fundamental rights.

By continuing to further developing these concepts, it is our hope that this study along with the present series of evaluations will contribute to the further consolidation of DCHR's work and as a source of inspiration to others.

Birgit Lindsnæs, Head of Project Department, September, 2000

About the Project: Human Rights Office in Tuzla, Bosnia-Hercegovina

Human Rights Office (HRO) in Tuzla was established in 1995 at a time when the war was still ongoing in Bosnia-Hercegovina. The HRO was established by ordinary citizens who at the time had no professional background in working with human rights, but the founders were led by the idea of never having to experience war again in their country. The founders showed great civil courage in standing up against the ethnic stereotypes and the hate-speech promoted by the war-makers, and the HRO has persistently carried out its work under difficult economic conditions. Thus, the HRO has contributed to making Tuzla a symbol of tolerance in Bosnia-Hercegovina.

After the Dayton peace-agreement was signed in December 1995, the HRO has devoted its work to implementing the human rights principles inherent in the Dayton-agreement into the daily life of Bosnia-Hercegovina. It has mainly been done in the way of breaking down the borderlines between the ethnic groups, at the same time emphasizing that human rights are for all people no matter their ethnic belonging. An important part of the work has been information about human rights, for instance by producing a series of ten video films based on the human rights provisions in the Dayton-agreement.

Another very important aspect of HRO's work has been the establishment of "Network 10". It is a network of NGOs in both entities (the Federation and Republica Srpska), and a great part of this network cooperation consists of training and capacity-building of the NGOs across the borderline between the two entities. The HRO in Tuzla has also been actively involved in establishing a Human Rights Office in Bijeljina (R.S.). Working mainly at grassroot level, the HRO in Tuzla is trying to expand the "Network 10" into a more comprehensive network of human rights organizations in the whole area of Bosnia-Hercegovina.

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The HRO is also a member of the Balkan Human Rights Network, a region-wide network of human rights organizations on the Balkans that was established in 1998.

During the time of its existence the HRO has been a partner of the Danish Centre for Human Rights, and the HRO has received financial support from the Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It is as an evaluation of this mutual cooperation that the present report has been produced.

Erik André Andersen, Project Manager, 22 October 2000

Evaluation

1. Introduction

1.1. General remarks

This report evaluates the activity of the Human Rights Office Tuzla (HROT), a human rights NGO with offices in Tuzla, operating in Bosnia since late 1995, and with most of its support provided by the Danish Centre for Human Rights (DCHR). As stated in the Terms of Reference (Annex 1), one goal of the evaluation has been to assess the results of HROT's activity in terms of future support from the DCHR. An additional goal of the mission, however, has been to appraise the HROT's potential in activities relevant to other actors on the Bosnian human rights scene, largely within the framework of the DCHR-run Balkan Human Rights Network. As such, the report will use the HROT as a point of departure, examining relations between the HROT and other human rights actors—Bosnian human rights NGOs, international organizations and local authorities. Program recommendations are included which apply to both the HROT and directly to DCHR priorities in Bosnia.

1.2. Mission activities

The evaluation mission to Bosnia consisted of the consultant, accompanied by Morten Villumsen from the DCHR Project Department, who are responsible for Balkan Human Rights Network activities and for HROT. The mission was conducted from 23-30 January, 2000, of which nearly three days were lost due to travel time, ground transport and an unexpected flight cancellation in Vienna.

During the five man-days available in Bosnia, meetings and discussions were held with eight HROT staff/members. An additional 16 meetings were held with representatives of other local and international human

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rights NGOs acquainted with HROT in Sarajevo, Tuzla and Bijeljina, with staff of the OSCE in Tuzla and Bijeljina, and with local Tuzla government (See Annex 2: List of Interviews Held and People Met).

Meetings were arranged by the DCHR from Copenhagen, at the suggestion of the HROT director Branka Rajner, and directly by the consultant. All the interviews, averaging 1-1.5 hours, were conducted personally by the consultant, in either English or German, and in some cases with the assistance of an interpreter. Morten Villumsen of DCHR participated in all the meetings and was available to add clarifying information regarding DCHR activities, the Danish FRESTA initiative supporting peace and stability in the Balkans and the Balkan Human Rights Network.

A number of documents were consulted from HROT and from these other organizations in order to gain an impression of the Bosnian NGO scene (Annex 3: List of Documents Consulted). The final day of the mission was spent discussing some of the results with HROT staff. Returning to Copenhagen, the consultant and Mr. Villumsen also met with former DCHR project staff who had either visited the HROT in Tuzla or had worked with them on their visits to Copenhagen. (Repeated inquiries to the National Endowment for Democracy, which has also supported the HROT, gave no result). The report was written in Copenhagen during the latter half of February 2000.

Despite the unexpectedly abbreviated length of the mission (effectively 5 man-days), we received excellent cooperation from HROT in rearranging our schedule. HROT arranged interviews and logistics, suggested alternative courses of action, stayed late for additional discussions, and made our mission activities as effective as possible. Besides the gracious assistance of HROT staff, the consultant also wishes to acknowledge the excellent cooperation received from all the other organizations and agencies interviewed, including the mayor of Tuzla.

1.3. Caveats and reliability

Readers familiar with the problems of fly-in/fly-out evaluation missions understand the inherent pitfalls in such an approach, which seeks to gather masses of documentary data in a short period, often being forced to overlook the nuances and contexts of the situation. At times, such missions generate a degree of resistance by local organizations and expatriate field officers to “yet another Western consultant” sent out by the home office. In this case, it is significant that our mission in Bosnia benefited from the good reputation of the DCHR and Danish aid generally. Equally important was the fact that I could commence my meetings with a brief description of two major Danish initiatives affecting Bosnia: the FRESTA program and the Balkan Human Rights Network. This allowed us to represent ourselves as not simply gathering data or deciding about funding, but as seeking to actually enhance a sustained Danish commitment to Bosnian civil society and human rights.

Taking into account the specific context of the evaluation, in view of the extended cooperative relationship between the DCHR and the HROT, and on the basis of the interviews, observations and documentation collected from a variety of sources in Bosnia and in Copenhagen, it is the consultant’s opinion that the data obtained were of sufficient breadth and reliability so as to formulate credible conclusions regarding the status of the HROT and of the human right scene in Bosnia.

1.4. Organization of this report

Following the specifications of the Terms of Reference, the report is divided into four main sections. Section 2, which follows, describes the

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Bosnian human rights situation generally, along with an introduction to the situation in Tuzla. Section 3 focuses on Human Rights Office Tuzla (hereafter HROT), its activities and their effects, and on HROT's internal organization. Section 4 focuses on collaborators, partners and related organizations which interface (or in some ways compete) with HROT; the most important of these is HRO Bijeljina due to its long-standing relations with the DCHR. Section 5 offers conclusions and recommendations for how HROT activities and management can be improved, together with some general issues for DCHR activities in Bosnia. The reader should note here that "capacity building" and "vision" problems are not limited to NGOs in Bosnia: the DCHR, having evolved into a large scale major international player on the human rights scene, must itself grapple with serious issues of its own capacity in handling grass-roots projects such as HROT.

Finally, it should be stressed that while DCHR project assistant Morten Villumsen accompanied the consultant on all interviews, participated in discussions, gathered data regarding the DCHR training activities, and has provided valuable comments on a draft of this evaluation report, the consultant alone assumes sole responsibility for the report's structure, content and conclusions.

2. The Bosnian human rights scene

It is not the purpose of this evaluation to provide a comprehensive analysis of the Bosnian Human Rights environment (see for example the recently released Country Report on Human Rights by the U.S. Department of State). Nevertheless, some discussion is necessary of general trends in the Bosnian human rights situation, implications for human rights, and DCHR support for civil society.

2.1. General trends

Human rights has been an essential part of Bosnian postwar NGO developments, and has been one of the cornerstones of the international community's effort to rebuild Bosnian society and the Bosnian governing structures. Immediately after the war, human rights initiatives were concentrated on documenting massacres, war crimes and other forms of interethnic and interpersonal violence, and on insuring basic humanitarian services to hundreds of thousands of refugees, displaced persons and traumatized victims. Problems of ensuring refugee rights, providing psycho-social assistance and humanitarian aid came together with newly established human rights initiatives aimed at disenfranchised groups. This has led to a plethora of self-described human rights organizations targeting refugees and displaced persons, whose problems range from psycho-social trauma, family break-up, lack of jobs, food and housing, to unclear rights of citizenship and property ownership.

The legal situation in Bosnia is also extremely complex, with 10 cantons, 2 entities and a national parliament; these organs are all under the strong influence of the international community led by the Office of the High Representative and the OSCE. The many legal legislative organs have led to a bewildering array of legal and administrative initiatives, law proposals and regulatory frameworks of overlapping and contradictory

nature, all necessitating a high level of legal documentation in an uncertain environment. This entails an extraordinary amount of human rights documentation and monitoring activity to examine which of the various governments and agencies are treating which groups in which ways, both in law and in actual practice. Laws may differ from one entity to another, and even from canton to canton; moreover, the same laws may be implemented quite differently between the two entities, or never implemented at all. Finally, there is the total state framework and the inevitable lack of coordination between national, entity, canton and local levels.

Bosnia's numerous legal aid, civic and human rights organizations must therefore not only keep track of new legal initiatives, but must also monitor their (lack of) implementation, file complaints, present cases towards complaint offices or ombudsmen, and carry out a host of additional legal activities. Citizens, too, must spend an inordinate amount of time finding out about their specific rights and obligations in the various parts of Bosnia; this applies also to the small number of returnees from abroad. The natural result of this process is an evolution from direct human rights assistance in a post-conflict situation to more legal service orientation in the rebuilding process. Human rights organizations are rapidly adjusting to these new priorities.

In the past year, two major trends can be remarked upon which have an immediate effect on the Bosnian human rights scene: one is the emergence of return to former home areas and restoration of property as the key issues. The second is the exit of donors.

2.2. "Return" and "Property" as key issues

Return of refugees is a consequence of the increasing normalization of Bosnian society, especially in the Federation, but also in parts of the Republika Srpska (RS) where the more extremist factions are now on the defensive. The normalization means that people can actually travel between the two Entities, and that small numbers are actually returning to claim their property. Violence and harassment have certainly not ceased (see the US Dept. of State report), but it has become more sporadic and controlled.

As virtually all those interviewed insisted, the question of “return” is basically a question of property restoration. Subsequently, the property restoration can also become a question of “minority rights”, since it is primarily members of different ethnic groups (Muslims to the RS for example) who seek to return. Throughout Bosnia, minority issues are reemerging as once ethnically pure areas now become mixed again. These rights also refract into issues of residential segregation, job discrimination, minority children schooling, military obligations, etc. Minority rights seem to be most assured in Tuzla and Sarajevo, and are most problematic in certain provincial and rural areas of the RS, particularly the eastern RS, to which Tuzla is a natural partner due to geographic proximity.

The “property question” has several nuances: first is the right of returnees to obtain their private property back; this involves legal proof of ownership, and the effort to evict the present residents, who may themselves be refugees from other parts of Bosnia. Second is the fact that those returning to other entities are also often minorities, i.e., Muslims return to the RS or Serbs and Croats back to Muslim dominated areas in the Federation. This makes the question of “return” also a question of minority rights. Third is the difference between the actual return and resettlement of former internally displaced persons and the property claims of international refugees and others who do not wish to actually occupy their former homes, but want simply to obtain title and then sell

them. The return of former refugees or displaced persons leads to the eviction of others from private and social property, thus creating a social/housing issue for the local authorities.

The result of this normalizing situation is that many human rights organizations are now preoccupied with property issues, precisely because it is these aspects that are uppermost on people's minds and because certain serious human rights problems of sheer physical security or protection from police harassment are now partially resolved. Interviews with organizations servicing individual queries (Job22, Forum of Tuzla Citizens, OSCE, HROT, HRO Bijeljina, etc.), indicate that the vast majority of individual inquiries to these human rights actors refer to return/property issues, necessitating increased competence in legal issues in both entities. As more and more people take the option of returning to their homes, there is every reason to believe that the return/property issue will remain prominent. Insofar as it involves such visible rights affecting individual families, "return" and "property" will remain passionate issues, in contrast to more abstract discussion of human rights ethics, codes, laws, etc. More importantly, the property question will inevitably spin off to a broad spectrum of basic human rights issues: minority rights, social rights, the rights of secondarily displaced persons, etc.

For Bosnia's human rights organizations, it means continuing development to take on these new tasks, especially knowledge of new legal and regulatory measures, developing systems to monitor the implementation of these regulations and cooperate with officials, and the necessary skills to ensure that laws and regulations are respected and that abuses are brought out into the open. Helping individual citizens with concrete problems must be matched with a more sophisticated policy oriented, advocacy and information activity. Foreign expertise and training may be helpful here, but the application of foreign models must cope with a Bosnian situation which is unique and which requires

individuals and organizations who are locally grounded and committed.

In sum, many other human rights questions have been resolved via legislation or the passage of time—things have normalized—while the question of return and restoration of property is now uppermost as a human rights issue.

2.3. Donor exit

The second major conclusion regarding the Bosnian human rights scene involves the exit of major international donor organizations. It is difficult to precisely chart the exit of these donors; several of them have spoken of reduced budgets (OSCE by 15%, Quaker Peace and Service by an undetermined amount), the total cessation of programs (WFP has ended distribution of food parcels), the transfer of functions from foreign to Bosnian project managers, and the creation of new, cloned NGOs to replace the exiting humanitarian organizations (The German-funded Amica has now become the local organization Prijatelica).

While concrete summary data is lacking, there is virtually a universal perception among Bosnians that the internationals are “abandoning” Bosnia for more “sexy” destinations such as Kosovo. Within the Federation, it is thought that more internationals are moving their activities into the formerly hostile RS. In the RS, however, it is difficult to document so much new interest. This feeling of “betrayal” is particularly acute in Tuzla, which had a comparable overabundance of

international assistance. Tuzla expatriate field staff may be leaving, even as those in the Sarajevo home office remain.

This exit of expatriates is not simply the replacement of foreigners with locals. Many expatriates possess key skills for project management and

information about international funding sources. The Bosnians who replace them, for all their local skills and capacity, may sorely lack the cosmopolitan network and fund-raising ability of many expatriate staff.

Taking into consideration the Danish initiatives under FRESTA generally, and more specifically the Balkan Human Rights Network and its associated activities, it is clear that the Danish initiative can have a decisive effect on the resigned mood among many Bosnians. In other words, a strong, visible Danish initiative at precisely this moment can have a large effect on Bosnian human rights organizations, if instituted effectively.

2.4. Bosnian human rights organizations

Among the approximately 1100 Bosnian NGOs, literally hundreds of them refer to themselves as human rights organizations. The vast majority of these concern the rights of vulnerable groups: women, children, minorities, refugees/displaced persons. Others carry out civic education and public awareness and may in this sense may be said to be more specifically human rights related. These more generic human rights organizations monitor legislation, provide legal aid, or implement human rights awareness or education programs with the public or with specialized groups such as jurists, teachers or officials.

The generic human rights organizations have largely been founded, financed and managed with considerable support and guidance from Western human rights organizations. Most of these human rights groups operate in the international human rights scene, attend or sponsor international conferences and publish materials in both Bosnian and English. The various Helsinki groups, the Helsinki Citizens Assembly, the Human Rights Center at the University of Sarajevo, the Forum of Tuzla Citizens, and the Human Rights Offices in Tuzla and Bijeljina are

examples of these. Aside from organizing meetings and seminars, carrying out training and awareness raising, and monitoring legislation, these organizations also handle individual complaints of abuses, inform authorities and international organs of violations, organize education in schools and universities, and as NGOs are active in the capacity building of the NGO sector generally.

As is true for the rest of the NGO sector, human rights organizations in the Federation are more organized and internationally connected than in the RS. They are generally weaker and therefore require more resource inputs, both in terms of training and organizational development; the relatively weaker developed human rights NGOs in the RS can be largely attributed to the more hostile political climate and overt harassment under which the RS human rights NGOs have had to operate, though overt harassment and violence seems to have ceased.

2.5. Human rights networks

Most Bosnian human rights activists have informal contacts with other human rights activists in the country and abroad, often meeting at conferences. As for more formalized network relations, Bosnian NGOs have their closest regional contacts with parallel organizations in Zagreb. Beyond that are a variety of contacts with major human rights organizations in Northern Europe, and especially the DCHR through its newly started Balkan Human Rights Network meetings.

According to the Forum of Tuzla Citizens, a new human rights network is also in formation in Bosnia, though information about this remains unclear.

Finally, the HROT has developed its own network, called Network 10 (for the ten major cities of Bosnia); however, this network is a broader

grouping of NGOs in various sectors and not specifically human rights oriented in the strict sense.

Due to the stabilization and political developments in Croatia and the RS, there is a general trend toward more cross-entity cooperation among NGOs.

Network thinking has always been very popular. It remains to be seen what these networks can accomplish in concrete terms. At present, the cooperation has led to several common seminars and exchanges of information. Network wide programs and activities, however, are not so well developed.

2.6. The OSCE

The principal international “player” at the local level for every human rights organization is the OSCE. Because of their many field offices, the OSCE plays a crucial role in monitoring human rights developments and linking human rights organizations and other NGOs. The OSCE’s Human Rights Office handles human rights issues generally, while the Democratization Office is in charge of monitoring and assisting civil society, which includes NGOs and human rights NGOs. At present, OSCE staff and budgets are being reduced or transferred, and an increased role is now being given to local Bosnian OSCE staff, known as

“national democratization officers”. These individuals can play a crucial long term role in Bosnia.

Discussions with OSCE indicate a close link to the activities of local NGOs and to human rights organizations particularly. OSCE normally maintains a list of local NGOs and has often provided a venue for NGO meetings in human rights and other sectors. OSCE’s Democratization or

Human Rights officers also refer people with complaints to the proper authorities, to appropriate organizations or to lawyers, and OSCE occasionally communicate citizen complaints directly through their links with local government. The OSCE are a natural reference point for any human rights program. The OSCE's strength is their network of field offices and monitoring activities, from which they can forward recommendations to the OHR for eventual action, while they can also exert pressure on local authorities if abuses are identified. OSCE's weakness is its lack of substantial funds for local grass-roots work; at best, they can make contact with potential donors, but this is not done on any systematic basis.

2.7 The Tuzla human rights and NGO scene

Tuzla is known as having the most well developed local NGO organizations in Bosnia. Because it was never a battleground during the war, Tuzla retained its multicultural character and was an initial base for many international aid organizations and their NGO developments. Tuzla has maintained an opposition political party more conducive to building tolerance and civil society. Finally, being close to the RS, Tuzla has provided a platform for programs by international and local NGOs working in the RS.

Tuzla's strong NGOs come partly from the many international organizations who have provided training and continuous capacity building assistance. The German organization Amica, for example, runs several programs to help women and families with psychosocial assistance, child care, job training, and legal issues. Amica has now evolved into the local NGO Prijatelica.

Tuzla has also strong women's organizations who receive grants and also

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carry out network activities with other organizations via the Bosnian Women's Initiative.

The Forum for Tuzla Citizens is a high profile human rights and political lobby organization and part of the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly. They are currently carrying out several projects, attend national and international conferences, and conduct studies of problems such as repatriation, reconciliation and property issues.

The local Tuzla OSCE office keeps in contact with many of the NGOs and will often approach a suitable one if it has some activities it would like to initiate. OSCE has also played a part in helping to establish a Tuzla NGO Forum, an umbrella organization with about 20 active NGO members.

Finally, the Tuzla mayor and city and canton administration have frequent contacts with local NGOs, often via the OSCE and other international humanitarian aid offices. The Tuzla urban administration also has a local "commission for human rights" which collects complaints. However, this commission is not known among local human rights organizations and seems not to be very active.

In sum, the Tuzla NGO scene is quite active, but at the same time, the exit of internationals is also being felt here. This has led to sharper competition among local NGOs for donors, necessitating a buildup of fundraising and capacity building skills. In this environment, the various NGOs seek to profile their specific skills especially toward potential international donors. In this environment, the Human Rights Office Tuzla cultivates an image of local, grass-roots activity in human rights education and awareness with a variety of target groups.

3. HRO Tuzla

Human Rights Office Tuzla (HROT) is a Bosnian association of citizens whose main objectives are the dissemination of information about human rights in limited and public fora, and assistance in human rights related issues to specific groups of the population. Established in late 1995, HROT carries out its activities through its Tuzla office (with a staff of 5, two of which are salaried), via partnerships with local human rights NGOs in the federation and the RS, and with international partners who provide donations and support (Scottish European Aid, DCHR). In practice, HROT carries out a number of independent activities, each of which is funded separately. Ms Branka Rajner is the director and from its inception has been the driving force behind HROT. Presently, DCHR is providing about two-thirds of HROT financial support, the remainder having been covered by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and a variety of other smaller donors.

3.1. History and development

HROT took shape after a meeting between Ulli Kern of the Geneva office of the Helsinki Citizens Assembly and Ms Branka Rajner, HROT's present executive director. With the support of Mr. Kern, who had access to a variety of funding sources at the end of the war, Ms Rajner and several colleagues from Tuzla then formed the association of citizens in October 1995. Some months later they had obtained support from the Danish Centre for Human Rights, Scottish European Aid, and other donors. Mr. Kern played a crucial role in helping to establish HROT, and spent considerable time in Bosnia until his return to Switzerland in early 1998. Since then, Ms. Rajner has been the driving personality within the organization and is now its present executive director. Ms. Rajner is a well known personality in Bosnian human rights circles, especially for her dedication, integrity and grass-roots commitment. Especially notable

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is her persistence and courage in opening up the RS for human rights initiatives.

HROT currently occupies two rooms in a modest villa in the center of Tuzla. An extra room and kitchen are available in the warmer months. The offices are minimally equipped, but the photocopy machine is inadequate, and copying tasks are done at a copy service nearby.

According to Bosnian law, 30 founders are required to constitute an organization and many of these original 30 remain members of HROT, now said to number 50 members. Since this founding general assembly in 1995, however, no other members meeting has been held. This situation will soon be remedied as HROT is making slight revisions in its statutes, which would normally require a new meeting.

HROT has a managing board, which does not meet formally but whose members apparently meet informally about every two months. Until now the executive director has also been a board member, although this will change with the new statutes.

HROT staff consists of the full time salaried director and the information officer, who is half time and whose remaining salary is paid by the OSCE community facilitation program (which supports monthly meetings on relevant issues); there is also a part time legal specialist, a volunteer translator, and an English part-time volunteer who also helps out with office tasks and English language writing of reports, lists, editing, etc. A former full time press/information officer has left the staff and not been replaced. In sum, the present full-time staff of HROT is about 1.5 positions.

Since its founding, HROT has concentrated on what may be called “grass-roots” human rights activities, bringing people together,

conducting smaller round tables, participating in the human rights training of other NGOs, and publishing a small newsletter distributed in English and Bosnian with 15 and 35 subscribers, respectively. Individual activities within these areas may be partially financed by other donors, such as the OSCE.

HROT has been supported by the DCHR, NED and Scottish European Aid for various project activities, with about two-thirds of the support coming from the DCHR. Running costs for the HROT (salaries, rent, utilities, equipment) are embedded in the various project activity budgets. Hence, each project has its own individual costs, which together suffice to keep the office going. This quite irregular budgeting situation will presumably be remedied in the future.

According to the DCHR, the financial relationship between the DCHR and HROT has been affected by funding delays and short term perspectives. During 1996-98 several delays were experienced in the Danish foreign ministry due to new priorities and the need to redraft project proposals and wait for funds. This, plus the Danish policy of not funding running costs, has led HROT to be extremely project- and short-term oriented, creating disadvantages in building organizational stability and capacity. In 1999, several HROT project activities in the RS were also delayed due to the war in Kosovo and turmoil in the RS. These activities, e.g., the Srebrenica and Bijeljina projects, have been carried over into the current year 2000 and have temporarily alleviated some of HROT's funding problems.

Today the HROT considers itself to be linked to the DCHR, and to have good connections to a host of Bosnian NGOs and local authorities. The organization, and particularly Ms. Rajner, are personally known and appreciated by numerous Bosnian NGOs, by local officials and by international organs operating in Tuzla.

3.2. Past and current activities

HROT considers itself a grass-roots organization. Its human rights documentation, research and political lobbying interests and resources are limited, and it is the clear intention of the director and the staff that human rights activities should impact people in their everyday lives, both in Tuzla, and in nearby towns in the RS. This view has affected the kinds of activities carried out by HROT over the past few years.

3.2.1 Human rights education seminars for specialized groups

Since its founding in 1995, HROT has organized, co-organized, and/or participated in dozens of seminars on human rights issues. These have been funded by various international agencies and by HROT's own donors, and have had a variety of target groups: teachers, journalists, youth activists, lawyers, judges, local authorities, other NGOs, etc. Two particularly successful human rights education seminars were conducted with judges and teachers, and another public meeting with politicians on women's maternity leave as a human right led to changes in the Tuzla canton maternity leave regulations.

Of note here is that the seminars have not always been one-off affairs but have had a cumulative character, so that participants get to know each other and trainers obtain better skills.

3.2.2 Human rights education for women, refugees and displaced persons

Besides training those in specialized fields, HROT has conducted a series of seminars for women refugees in Tuzla and with Serb refugees in

several towns in the RS (Doboj, Brcko, Bijeljina) and will soon commence in Srebrenica. This series of 9 seminars, called the “Towards Democracy” project, covers a range of various human, civil and social rights of particular interest to returning refugees in the respective Entities. The seminars have a social aspect in that after the meetings the two groups, which often relate to each other in a cold or hostile way, discover common experiences and interests. Of particular importance is the cross border component. HROT cooperates with a local RS organization, e.g. HRO Bijeljina or a women’s group in Srebrenica, but organizes and administers the meetings. HROT was among the first Federation NGO to begin any activity in Srebrenica.

3.2.3 Legal assistance

HROT together with local lawyers has opened a citizen legal information centers in Brcko. Over 200 people received advice during the six month project. HROT offers informal legal assistance to citizens of Tuzla through its own specialists.

3.2.4 Public awareness activity

HROT has carried out a variety of public campaigns on specific human rights issues or international human rights days. These include posters in the street, public meetings, and events in schools and with youth in connection with the anniversary of Human Rights Day or of the Dayton Agreement. A major effort was a series of 7 television programs on the Dayton Agreement and human rights which was broadcast over Bosnian and local TV. The programs, very well received and complimented upon by the television staff, included Serb, Croat and Bosniak perspectives on human rights, a program on the rights of women, and one on the Roma community. Awareness of minority rights is especially important to HROT. These activities have continued as a form of human rights education, particularly for youth.

HROT has also organized a number of public meetings, particularly using the OSCE community facilitator function held by Ms Lukacevic, who works half time at the HROT as program officer and information officer.

3.2.5 Youth activities

Although youth activities have been sporadic, in 1999 they were revitalized, including distribution of leaflets, participation at various seminars in Bosnia and abroad, and building links to youth branch in Bijeljina. Several members of the youth group have participated in national and international meetings, seminars and networks.

3.2.6 Information and NGO networking

HROT publishes a monthly 2-3 page newsletter in Bosnian and English with about 50 subscribers (15 of which are in English) who receive the newsletter by fax or by post. The newsletter publishes news of activities of other organizations and of major events affecting the human rights scene. Some towns, such as Doboje, Bijeljina and Bihac, are covered well because of personal contacts there via the Network 10 group organized by HROT.

HROT has had continual contacts with HRO Bijeljina in reaching target groups, organizing seminars, attending meetings, and through the Network 10 collaboration.

HROT has played a role in organizing and participating in the Tuzla NGO Forum.

HROT is part of the DCHR-supported Balkan Human Rights Network, participating in two meetings in 1999, and playing a coordinating role in refugee-related issues and on regional issues. This activity will continue

in the current year.

3.2.7 NGO capacity building

Under the LEA Link project, the HROT organized a seminar project on improving NGO legal framework. This project is now completed.

3.2.8 Expert activities

Staff of HROT are frequently called upon to make presentations for other human rights seminars, to act as trainers or facilitators. Ms Rajner, Ms Terzic (a lawyer) and Ms Lukacevic are particularly active. Ms Rajner has been very active in the MIRamiDA initiative, a series of seminars for politicians, authorities and other groups, and she has addressed meetings of women's groups, particularly in the RS. Ms Lukacevic, in her work as community facilitator for the OSCE, helps to organize one public meeting per month on pressing issues. Many of these meetings have derivative or spin-off effects on HROT activities.

In sum, the major projects up to 1999 have included: the Towards Democracy, LEA Link, the newsletter, Network 10 activities, and the TV series. Additional smaller projects, though time consuming, were various seminars and public debates on topics such as the rights of the disabled, language tolerance, conflict resolution, elections, maternity leave, old people's issues, property rights, anniversary of the declaration of human rights, a series of youth-related meetings and seminars, and about 15 national and international meetings on various human rights topics. Several international human rights activists and NGO representatives visited the center, and Ms Rajner and Ms. Lukacevic attended numerous seminars. Institution building and funding were largely in the hand of the DCHR, as the main donor, supplemented by NED.

With its small paid staff, each of these individual activities can be time-

consuming in terms of organizational efforts. The actual selection of topics, however, is not listed in any strategy but is apparently done according to the HROT staff's own interests or by an approach from a member or individual with whom the HROT is in contact. The HROT then tries to put together a program, recruit specialists, formulate a project proposal and procure funds. In the early years of the HROT, considerable funds came from Switzerland due to Mr. Kern's connections. Today they come from a variety of organizations, including Quaker Peace and Service, Scottish European Aid/Bosnian Women's Initiative and OSCE.

HROT has received recognition from local radio and TV, where Ms Rajner and legal advisors Mr. Mukic and Ms Terzic have been frequent guests. Their efforts have also been immensely appreciated in letters and evaluations written by various course participants and staff members of international organizations and NGOs.

3.3 Ongoing and future projects

In the coming year several of the above activities will continue, as they were not totally completed in 1999 because of the war in Kosovo.

3.3.1 Seminars for women refugees in Srebrenica and Tuzla

Using the same model as the previous set of seminars, a group of 10 women from each city (Bosniak/Croat women from the RS now living in Tuzla and Serb refugee women now living in Srebrenica) will be brought together for seminars and training on the rights of return, including housing, employment, family, private property and women's rights issues. The training will also teach skills of conflict resolution,

communication and cooperation. Meetings will be held alternatively in Tuzla and Srebrenica. Topics include the constitution and human rights provisions, family law, work, education, health, other information relevant to women on return to the two entities. This will clearly be the HROT's flagship project during the coming year.

3.3.2 Public awareness

Public tribunals are being organized on issues relevant to the general public. Through Ms Lukacevic's role as OSCE community facilitator for the canton, HROT staff will participate in future public meetings where human rights are a theme.

Single events will also be organized, especially by the youth group "Y".

3.3.3 Education programs for professionals

Human rights education programs will continue for judges, teachers, public officials and possibly prison guards. Human rights curriculum in the schools is also a possibility.

3.3.4 Information and networking

Continuation of newsletter distribution.

Continuing of Network 10 seminars with a specific focus on advocacy issues and on fundraising.

Continuation of Balkan Human Rights Network activities on refugee

rights and regional issues.

Participation and spin-off activities in the monthly meetings of the Tuzla Forum of NGOs.

3.3.5 Beginning legal monitoring

Ms. Rajner and other staff members expressed a wish to commence a legal monitoring project. This activity would monitor human rights initiatives and legislation as well as violations in the region.

3.3.6 Expansion of youth activities

The youth group will become more active in its public awareness and recruiting activities particularly in schools and in organizing a student association.

3.3.7 Continuation of expert activities

Staff of the HROT will continue to be invited and participate as experts and trainers in a wide variety of public meetings, smaller seminars and conferences both in Bosnia and abroad, and particularly in the RS.

3.3.8 Future plans

The director and several staff cite several key areas for future activities. These include: human rights education for teachers and parents; a program for prison guards for human rights protection in prisons; human rights training for public officials; continuing with the information and newsletter activities; monitoring legislation and advising local government, and more work on advocacy and lobbying.

The staff have several times stressed the importance of working with “regular people” rather than with international elites and experts. While this is a laudable grass-roots approach, it offers little perspective for organizational growth unless those in the target groups also become members of the organization. The latter has not occurred, however.

3.4. The impact and image of the HROT

The impact of the HROT activities has been measured for some seminars and meetings. Universally, these measures show a well satisfied target group who compliment the HROT on the seminar organization and on helping them gain new insights and concrete knowledge. The women in the Towards Democracy project were particularly appreciative of HROT, praising Ms. Rajner for her dedication and understanding, as well as Ms Lukacevic and the staff. HRO Bijeljina were also very laudatory as to HROT’s assistance, as were the Organization of Sarajevo Serbs, OSCE and others.

Independent evaluations of the LEA Link and Towards Democracy projects conducted by donor organizations also show a very positive appreciation of the HROT’s role, particularly Ms. Rajner for her dedication, engagement, and organization. Her courage in being the first to enter the RS and organize these seminars, often with serious logistical problems connected with physical security, were often remarked upon by other organizations.

A variety of international personnel have also sent recommendation letters and testimonials attesting to the organizational skills, dedication and integrity of the HROT and of Ms Rajner and to her grass-roots commitment. Recommendations have come, for example, from the senior democratization officer of OSCE Tuzla and from Mr. Salvisberg, the human rights advisor at the OHR.

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Finally, in a variety of unsolicited remarks, local OSCE staff and several local NGOs have remarked on the important role of HROT Tuzla in helping to found and sustain human rights activity in Bosnia, and on the key role played by Ms Rajner and her organization role in Tuzla and in the RS. Women's organizations and youth particularly compliment her for her receptive attitude in organizing training, listening to their needs, etc.

While the HROT's outreach programs and seminars have had a positive impact on the target groups and impressed the donors, the newsletter seems to play but a minor role. The 50 organizations receiving it seem chosen haphazardly. No one interviewed mentioned the newsletter as being of any importance. Many newsletter recipients were in fact unaware that they received it. And since it is not distributed electronically it loses a large potential audience.

In sum, the HROT has earned a reputation as an effective, local grass-roots organ of integrity and personal impact. The small paid staff does a considerable amount of work, and the organization depends crucially on voluntary labour contribution. The contribution of the volunteers and experts attests to the strong personal commitment of HROT activists.

Seen from the center and from an international perspective, however, grass-roots activities may also constitute potential weaknesses. The HROT does not carry out sophisticated documentation activities, reporting, lobbying, international human rights policy making or legal aid activities. Such work is carried out by other organizations in Sarajevo and Tuzla, for example by Forum of Tuzla Citizens. The legal service organization Job 22 carries out large scale citizen advising. If HROT does carry out any of these activities, it does not keep any "traffic report" of the number of clients and how their cases are handled.

3.5 Internal organization and management

Two issues will be taken up in this section: activities and organization of the staff, both paid and unpaid, and the overall organization of HROT as an NGO.

3.5.1. Staff

At present Branka Rajner, the executive director, is the only full-time paid staff member of HROT. The program officer, Ms. Lukacevic is part-time paid, receiving an additional salary as OSCE community facilitator. A Bosnian translator works as a volunteer, though collecting some translation fees on project funds. An English volunteer translator also works some hours per day. Additional specialists, lawyers for example, work part time, paid as specialists according to the project. A former media officer/journalist, Mr. Muzic, is no longer with the organization.

Ms Rajner is responsible for formulating and execution of all project related activities, including reporting and accounting. Her previous bank experience is certainly an asset in project management activities.

Ms Lukacevic handles a variety of English language tasks including contact with donors or specialists abroad, as well as the editing of the newsletter, and writing of reports. She collects information to be placed in the newsletter and to be disseminated to the Network 10 group. She also writes invitations and the follow-up reports for the network seminars. For the youth she helps organize meetings, and in addition carries out work for the OSCE.

The two volunteers, one Bosnian, one British, assist in translating to English, writing the English language newsletter and preparing monthly reports. The English volunteer is particularly active, having written the monthly newsletter and the entire annual report, a task which would

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normally be done by a permanent staff member.

Ms Terzic, a lawyer, works a couple of hours daily on legal issues and is also a paid trainer in the various project activities. She has been particularly active on NGO legislation and other juridical issues.

A variety of other HROT members, board members, specialists and youth offer periodic assistance. Jurists and judges, for example, service on the board or are members, and also participate as paid specialists for the various courses and seminars or are available for the public tribunals organized by Ms Lukacevic as part of her OSCE community facilitator duties. As several staff and members have remarked, HROT has existed long enough that “we are a family” and that people work here for free because they want to, and because they have confidence in Ms Rajner’s work. In this sense, the staff work has a truly voluntary element.

Many members, nonmembers and local acquaintances stop by the office with ideas for projects or reports of activities, and all have commented upon Ms Rajner’s personal receptivity to them. HROT in this sense serves as a platform for a variety of civic activities, which in the Bosnian context can all be classified as human rights related. The youth group, for example, is contemplating organizing a student rights association and have been offered the use of HROT facilities, and the HROT office is always open as a venue for their meetings.

All staff members emphasize the lack of a strict division of labor in activities. “We are a team,” “we are a family”, “we don’t have any hierarchy,” “we are all good friends,” “we are a grass-roots organization”, and other remarks highlighting informal relations prevail. Another board member complemented the HROT for its grass-roots approach: “the HROT really feels the pulse of what is going on.”

The lack of a specific division of labor may be understandable and

praiseworthy in a small office with an activist, committed director. Such a situation depends on a continuing, voluntary commitment by individuals who have their own specific interests and concerns. While HROT has elaborated an activity plan, it has no long term strategy for staff development or training beyond the Network 10 initiatives. Nor has any come down from DCHR.

At present, HROT contains only one full time responsible staff member, Ms Rajner. Ms Lukacevic puts in a full day but is in fact paid only half time due to her OSCE duties. The reliance on volunteer staff for crucial routine duties (report writing, newsletter) is effective only insofar as such individuals are available. However, volunteers come and go. Further development of the HROT requires at least one more full time, English language staff member with considerable experience in NGO development, fundraising and information skills. The information and fundraising skills are particularly necessary because of the director's lack of active English language skills needed in international forums which serve to publicize the organization and to raise funds. While much international communication can take place in German, the realities of today's international NGO scene and human rights initiatives is that it is an anglophone world. It is particularly in information and fundraising beyond Bosnia's borders that English is needed.

Besides the need for more English language skills at the director's level, a second problem is the way in which volunteer staff and members should be used. Some policy or routine should be developed to use and keep volunteer staff, and plans should be made for the inevitable moment when volunteers leave to go elsewhere. Key functions such as report writing should be carried out by the permanent staff.

3.5.2. Staff training and development

HROT staff have had a continuing training and monitoring relationship

with the DCHR (see Annex 4: Monitoring and Training activities of the DCHR and HROT). Several DCHR staff members have conducted monitoring and training missions in Tuzla, one staff member was there for two months to help with the newsletter and another staff member was visiting the organization several times over a half-year period, and the HROT director and program officer have been to Denmark for human rights training, consultations and proposal writing. Several staff members from the DCHR have familiarized themselves with the HROT. While it is difficult to calculate the exact number of DCHR inputs in person-days and while there has been some staff rotation on the part of the DCHR, the total amount of DCHR input for HROT staff development is certainly impressive. The impact of this training will be discussed in the conclusion.

The HROT staff has attended some training in fundraising and NGO management, and HROT, via Network 10 is instrumental in helping other NGOs to develop their capacities. A trainer has also come from Croatia to do SWOT analysis, but like so much intensive training it is difficult to determine lasting effects. A SWOT analysis conducted during a training session revealed lack of planning and unstructured work routines as one of the weaknesses; and lack of stable funding as one of the key threats.

Asked about their own desires for the future, staff members, board and specialists generally cite a continuation of present activities, increasing the impact of the newsletter, increasing youth related activities, continuing with grass-roots activities in the RS and beginning monitoring activities are most frequently cited. In addition, organizational consolidation via new statutes is frequently mentioned. These are relatively modest goals for an organization which has been running with four years of donor support and continuous monitoring by the DCHR staff. To be able to attract donors in the future the organization should preferably have a more dynamic and strategic approach. On the other hand, the goals also reflect the HROT's continued grass-roots

commitment, and a realism that the funding will not increase.

3.5.3 Organizational structure

According to the HROT statutes, the general assembly of the HROT is the highest decision making organ. Strategic decisions are to be decided by an executive board, together with a board of experts (lawyers, economists). The staff, led by the executive director, are supposed to carry out the decisions of the board.

In fact, no general assembly has been held since the founding meeting of HROT. Nor has the board had any formal meetings. The executive director, who also sits on the board, carries out activities in consultation with board members, who meet informally every couple of months. But there is no agenda, no list of activities and no record of decisions taken.

While members and board members have frequent contact with the staff, stopping in and discussing matters of interest, the lack of a formal NGO management structure is very problematic. Normally, the board is an instrument of a dynamic executive director. This situation needs to be rectified, and according to the director, a new general assembly will be held to approve the revised draft statutes.

Of course, formal statutes, meetings, minutes and organizations do not in themselves guarantee an effective organization. Nevertheless, in building up a culture of effective civic organizations, these formal decision making structures are important for several reasons.

The primary reason is they help make the organizations more transparent. Without such transparency, we have no formal record of how strategies are arrived at, how programs are decided upon, or how measures are taken. To the outsider, an organization thus becomes cryptic,

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personalized, or mysterious. In some cases, such organizations may be regarded as the property of the salaried director, a small sinecure. This may be wholly untrue, but the lack of a visible, public organizational structure contributes to such an image. An informalized or personalized structure may be unproblematic as long as an organization has its own funding and runs well, or when donors simply are not interested in the formal organization; but when funding is scarce and donors need transparency, or when problems arise as to staff or strategy, a formal structure is necessary to head off the problems.

Second, the lack of an active formalized board means that the board receives no formal training on how to act as a board, take decisions, or deal with the inevitable conflict with staff. Board training can be instrumental in helping the HROT develop a more viable long-term strategy to face the inevitable exit of foreign donors.

Third, the lack of transparency perpetuates the founder syndrome whereby the initial driving leadership in the organization remains without any further development: HROT may become too much identified with the director.

Fourth, the presence of the director on the board may conflict with competence and create serious difficulties for both HROT, the director herself, and eventually embarrass the DCHR.

Fifth, since there are no records of meetings, agendas, or formal decisions, potential donors would find it difficult to see the organization behind the staff. More formal record keeping about decisions would also obviate the need for some of the DCHR monitoring visits.

Finally, the lack of member meetings and board meetings robs HROT of the possibility to use these meetings as public relations tools toward the community, towards other NGOs, toward local donors, and foreign

donors. A typical fundraising strategy is to invite a potential donor to a meeting (general assembly, board meeting). This is impossible if such meetings are never held.

It is regrettable that the DCHR, despite its impressive inputs in program monitoring and training, did not see fit to clear up these organizational shortcomings. The formalistic structures of general assemblies, board meetings, agendas, resolutions and minutes may not seem necessary when the organization functions well, but they become essential in cases of organizational development and conflict. It is in such situations that procedures must be as transparent as possible. This lack of organizational structure is all the more important inasmuch as HROT as the lead organization within the Network 10 cooperation, a project intended to build capacity for NGOs. In this case HROT needs to be a model of internal NGO organization.

One recent consequence of the lack of formal structure in the HROT is its failure to obtain a place among the 30 candidate NGOs for the USAID Democracy Network Program, a major NGO capacity-building initiative. Despite the fact that several human rights NGOs are being supported by the DEMNET program and that HROT is eminently qualified and needs the kind of organizational development which DEMNET offers, HROT simply failed to meet the formal requirements of the program. Ironically, HRO Bijeljina, DISS and other Network 10 members have been accepted in the DEMNET program. The DCHR must take some responsibility for failing to inform, or even push, HROT about the DEMNET initiative in time.

These critiques aside, it should be remarked that the HROT has become aware of its organizational shortcomings, and in connection with its recertification as a legal NGO, has developed a new set of statutes. Among the changes are that the number of board members has been reduced to five, and that the director will no longer serve on the board.

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Yet even here, the key aspect is that these changes be ratified by a new members meeting and by formalized board decisions. Also needed is a renewed commitment to regular, formalized board meetings with written agendas and decisions (e.g., held every 2-3 months). With this mandate, the activities of the staff, in practice those of Ms Rajner and Ms Lukacevic, will have much more backing. Since relations between board and staff are always dynamic, it is important to set this relationship in motion, also in order to ensure the members (who again have not met collectively in 5 years) that HROT is evolving as an organization and not just as the staff.

It is recommended that the DCHR take a more active role in the management of the organization. As a major donor, DCHR could demand a place on the board as a voting participant. A more practical recommendation, however, would be for the DCHR to have an “observer” function on the board as long it is funding HROT. That is, the DCHR representative would be invited to participate at meetings, be consulted by board members, receive agendas and be informed of decisions, but would not vote. Such formal observer status can help create a climate of organizational management. Already planned DCHR trips to Bosnia could be coordinated with board meetings.

An alternative would be for HROT to invite an OSCE officer to sit as observer on the board; the obvious candidate would be the national democratization officer.

To summarize: Over the 4 years of its existence, HROT has conducted a variety of activities with a small, dedicated staff and volunteers. They have kept their grass-roots focus, made concrete impact on small groups of people, and are known for their integrity and local/regional knowledge. Considerable contact with the DCHR in a program monitoring and training capacity has not led the HROT to develop long-term strategy or to evolve as an organization. The HROT have retained

their modest, grass-roots goals. While laudable, this lack of organizational growth may be problematic in the future. Moreover, the HROT have neglected to consolidate themselves as an organization, and while this may not be so crucial when there is sufficient funding and when operations work smoothly, there are more serious consequences when funds are needed and donors need to be attracted.

4. Partners and collaborators of the HROT

This section examines seven organizations which collaborate with the HROT, focusing particularly on the affiliate Network 10 groups and the interface between them. In describing these organizations, the goals of this section are: (1) to provide a more well-rounded picture of the human rights NGO situation around Tuzla; (2) to assess HROT activities in the context of these other organizations; and (3) in view of the DCHR's forthcoming engagement in the Balkan Human Rights Network and the FRESTA initiative, to provide additional information for concrete DCHR human rights initiatives in BiH.

4.1 Democratic Initiative of Sarajevo Serbs (DISS)

DISS serves the human rights and legal service needs of Serbs living on the outskirts of Sarajevo. Originally started in 1996 by Serbs who wanted to remain in Sarajevo, DISS has now, according to its director, become a multicultural association. It contains 2000 members of whom about 35 are active. Its activities include an office and hotline for human rights, dealing largely with property and return issues; a local radio station, Radio DISS; an ambulance service for medical services and transport; and a company providing various services, commercial services and health to the local Serb community.

DISS cooperates with several other organization in areas of human rights protection and health. It has carried out projects in Trebinje with displaced persons, in Ilidzja with NGO information, with a Serb women's organization, and has conducted various psychosocial projects. Its staff of 10 includes volunteers who collect data on human rights violations and use video camera, digital photo and Dictaphone to record all interviews. Beginning in 1999 they have received financing by the

Netherlands' embassy.

Their major field of activity is monitoring the two hundred thousand Serb refugees and the violations of rights with respect to property, jobs and freedom of movement. They cooperate with the OHR, OSCE, UNHCR, and keep track of Serbs living abroad, updating them about the human rights situation in BiH, and especially about recent developments in the legal sphere.

DISS has been accepted as one of the first group of 30 Bosnia NGOs in the USAID financed Democracy Network Program which will help them to improve their project management skills, develop strategy and to build capacity. Participation in DEMNET will not affect DISS collaboration in the Network 10 activities being managed by HROT.

DISS is well acquainted with the activities of HROT and the director has been many times to Tuzla. Their collaboration with HROT stretches back at least three years, and they frequently exchange information. DISS staff attend Network 10 seminars on NGO development. They are very satisfied with HROT and Network 10 because of the relevance of the themes. Tuzla plans and consults with them about Network activities and were very satisfied with the trainers (from Croatia and BiH). Finally, the DISS director would like to see HROT carrying out more coordination work, strengthening the quality and kind of coordination. He sees many good ideas, but there is a need for more follow-up and implementation.

4.2 Forum of Tuzla Citizens

The Forum of Tuzla Citizens is one of the best known civic education organization in Bosnia. It has a permanent staff of 3, plus an additional 12 persons paid through project funds from a host of donors. Forum members frequently travel abroad, and participate in several national and

international networks for human rights, civic education and reconciliation. They are often commissioned by international organizations to write reports and hold conferences. For example, one of the most recent projects (Netherlands financed) involves an analysis of the legal, political and social obstacles to return in Tuzla and Bijeljina.

The Forum of Tuzla Citizens has made great efforts to extend its links to sympathetic groups in the RS. They have conducted projects for direct aid to displaced persons, human rights education through radio broadcasts, brochures in primary schools, and have a project to visit prisons. There is a clear overlap between their goals and activities and these of the HROT.

The Citizens' Forum organizes roundtables, public meetings, public broadcasts, commission for truth and reconciliation. It also addresses complaints by individuals, of which they have received 1000 over the past three years.

The Forum's project portfolio includes the following: 1) refugees and confidence building facilitating "real return" and resolving property disputes; 2) monitoring of human rights through the Helsinki assembly; 3) establishment of 8 centers of democratic alternatives, 4) human rights education under the Olaf Palme center; 5) an NED project on democracy and civil society, 6) an ABF (Göteborg) project for a computer school.

The Forum distinguishes itself by a more open confrontational attitude towards the local and national authorities, often issuing public statements critical of the authorities.

Despite clear overlap in goals and activities and being in the same town, there is little contact or cooperation between the Tuzla Citizens' Forum and the HROT. This state of tension was identified by DCHR in their

report of 1996 and seems not to have changed. There seemed to have been some antipathy between Forum leaders and HROT co-founder Ulli Kern over his apparently more non-confrontational style with the authorities. Another reason for the tension may be competition for funding support, although the Citizens' Forum, with sizable offices, professional information and permanent staff, has been successful in procuring stable funding. Finally, there is a simple ideological position, by which the Forum of Tuzla Citizens sees itself as a public oppositional force with a high profile, and views HROT as working more quietly, not speaking out on abuses.

For its part, the HROT sees the Citizens' Forum as an elite group who attend conferences and seminars and are out of touch or without impact on "real people".

The Tuzla Citizens' Forum is involved in several networks and is constructing its own, though further information on this new network was unavailable.

It would be incumbent on a future DCHR initiative to try to establish some kind of cooperation between the Tuzla Citizens' Forum and HROT, although the visions, budgets and staffs of the two organizations are quite different.

4.3 Association of Tuzla Women

One of 20 diverse women's' groups in Tuzla, the Association of Tuzla Women evolved out of the older antifascist women's organization. It is a multiethnic group with some 5000 members and has carried out a variety of projects both during and since the war. The association has no paid staff but nevertheless manages to run a variety of activities of a cultural and social nature using a core of active members. The offices have been

donated by the mayor and equipment came from the USAID. The Association of Tuzla Women are members of Network 10 and speak well of Ms Rajner and HROT. Ms Rajner herself is also a member.

The women's group sent 10 persons to participate in the Network 10 seminars. They found the training in non-violent communication particularly useful.

The women's group has yet to find genuine donors, which they explain in terms of donors fear about large organizations (who may be perceived as political holdovers from the former order and therefore not truly independent NGOs).

The Association of Tuzla Women have sought training in computer and English, and to pay a teacher. They have also worked in health education, holding public meetings. The director, with an economist/engineering background, has a plan for a factory to employ women to produce healthy food. They would very much like to work with returnees from abroad and to establish some kind of effective returnee integration program.

4.4 Amica

Amica, recently renamed Prijateljica, is a large, well-run social service NGO supporting women and families. For five years Amica has been supported by a variety of donors, mostly German, and has benefited from the continuous presence of a German advisor, Ms Klek, who helps organize the NGO, trains staff and maintains links with donors. As part of the German donor's exit strategy, Prijateljica was created, and it is fortunate that the organization has also been able to tap into the funds from the PHARE LIEN program and is now part of the USAID-financed DEMNET program for NGO capacity building. Prijateljica has 30 staff,

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paid and unpaid, running a variety of projects, and have even been able to purchase their own villa. Ms Klek has clearly been instrumental here.

The various projects of Amica/Prijateljica include the following:

- (1) a project house offering psychosocial assistance to 15 women and their children, and also helping with legal problems related to housing, domestic violence and utilities.
- (2) women's clubs in three houses, including an exchange with Srebrenica. (It was via Ms Rajner and HROT that the links to the clubs were established).
- (3) employment projects: laundry, gardening, sewing, home services, funded by the Bosnian Women's Initiative.
- (4) a primary school for adults (10% of the women are illiterate).
- (5) aid to returnee children (from abroad) in Bosnian language and math.
- (6) a program for a women's center in Srebrenica including Internet, children's activities, exchange between Tuzla and Srebrenica.
- (7) return to villages in RS; job training, housing construction and gardening.

Amica has been a Network 10 partner and is part of other networks. It also cooperates with HROT in its activity in Srebrenica. Ms Klek and the staff of Amica/Prijateljica spoke highly of HROT and of Ms Rajner for their grass-roots and local knowledge approach. They were well aware of the uncertainty of funding for other organizations which affects so many NGOs.

Amica/Prijateljica has benefited from extraordinary stable and long term funding and a full time expatriate consultant with clear leadership abilities, organizing skills, and donor connections. One cannot predict what will happen as the new organization emerges, but the various connections to PHARE LIEN and to the DEMNET program will

certainly give it some material, organizational and networking advantages.

4.5 Scottish European Aid

HROT's "Towards Democracy" project was funded by Scottish European Aid (SEA), which administers the UNHCR program for local NGOs in areas of income generation, education and capacity building and community services. SEA also administers the USAID-funded Bosnian Women's Initiative (BWI), which is aimed at empowering women. In this capacity, SEA has helped fund HROT's work with displaced persons from Dobož in Tuzla, and other displaced persons in Brčko, Bijeljina and now Srebrenica.

SEA administered 58 projects conducted by 50 different NGOs in 1998, and 41 projects by 22 NGOs in 1999. SEA's activity includes collecting project proposals, drawing up contracts, organizing training seminars, reviewing monthly reports, holding informal meetings with recipients and generally helping the NGOs manage the financial/administrative aspects of their project grants.

SEA regards HROT as one of the most competent of the recipient organizations, with extremely thorough reporting. The HROT was itself a small organization, but they had skillfully used many outside consultants. HROT was viewed as particularly effective in building bridges between

entities. Cross-border projects are difficult, and SEA program officer maintains that HROT should be complimented on its efforts.

4.6 Human Rights Organization Bijeljina

Bijeljina is the second town in the RS after Banja Luka. The town was previously a hard-core Pale stronghold but has lately undergone political fragmentation, thus giving some open space for NGOs and human rights organizations. The OSCE field office in Bijeljina reports that there are six human rights organizations. Bijeljina has an NGO Forum of 20 NGOs, and OSCE has established a civil society/NGO resource center with library, newspapers, meeting room and Internet. Due to poor relations between OSCE and the local Helsinki Committee, the OSCE Democratization Office regards HRO Bijeljina as one of their primary contacts.

Building NGOs in Bijeljina, particularly human rights NGOs, has been hazardous, but to date the harassment has been reduced. Certainly, however, the political climate for civil society and human rights is much more negative in Bijeljina than in Tuzla. On the other hand, there are new pressures being placed on the returning Bosniak and Roma in Bijeljina.

The OSCE-funded NGO resource center, called "New Hopes" is a reading room and meeting place for NGO activists. The center also organize training for NGOs and capacity building courses. They are planning advocacy training as well. HRO Bijeljina is known by them as a well trained and competent organization and a mobilizing force in the local Bijeljina NGO Forum. The center also mentioned that human rights issues are gradually evolving into mobilization around issues of anti-corruption and accountability of public administration. Roundtables are planned on issues of corruption.

HRO Bijeljina was the first and remains the primary NGO contact for HROT in the RS. The HRO Bijeljina has two counselors, one director and three affiliated lawyers. They have worked with the DCHR for three years and have been supported by the HROT as well. Their first contact was in 1996. Ms Rajner is in fact a member of the board of HRO Bijeljina, and the organization is also part of Network 10. HRO Bijeljina

was instrumental in organizing a group of Bijeljina women to participate in democracy seminars with women in Tuzla.

HRO Bijeljina staff have previously benefited from NED and DCHR support. HRO Bijeljina will also be benefiting from the Democracy Network program to provide capacity building funds and training for an initial group of 30 Bosnian NGOs.

HRO Bijeljina specializes in research on the legal situation in the RS, and most of its members are legal specialists. It has carried out three major projects:

(1) For the Open Society Institute (Soros) it has carried out a critical analysis of social legislation in the RS, including social protection, family, pension and health. Although the project was to cost 30.000DM they did it for 7.000DM.

(2) HRO Bijeljina provides individual consultation free of charge for people with legal problems, the vast majority of these dealing with property claims. Over a three-year period HRO Bijeljina's legal services have helped 7.000 people, and their offices currently sees 3-5 persons per day.

(3) HRO Bijeljina organizes public meetings ("tribunes") on social problems between experts and the public. Most of the problems again center on property restoration, including displaced persons, restoration of property in the Federation, and returnees to Bijeljina seeking to have property restored. Since most of the returnees to Bijeljina are Muslims, within an overwhelmingly Serb area, there is also an ethnic minority dimension.

HRO Bijeljina cooperates with the Helsinki Citizens Assembly in Banja

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Luka with Lex International, with Amica and is a member of the local Bijeljina Forum of NGOs. Within the RS, HRO Bijeljina is one of the better known organizations. The DEMNET program is also giving them a more national exposure. In September 1999 they participated in cross-entity training of judges.

HRO Bijeljina has begun to have more cooperation with local officials, and their December 1999 roundtable was attended by, Bijeljina's deputy mayor. Local government has begun to accept their presence and there have not been obstacles.

A meeting was held with the entire board membership of HRO Bijeljina. They see their major task as making their organization sustainable, and they would like to see some kind of NGO house built in Bijeljina, what they called a "house of human rights". They spoke of providing an Internet server for youth, Internet café, a center for young people and for helping the unemployed to find jobs. They want to exert more pressure for better NGO laws; a sponsorship law is also needed.

The vision of the board members is that HRO Bijeljina should become a more developed institution. They see themselves providing more information to the public, representing clients in court, and they would like to make a contribution to the drafting of the law. They would also like to implement human rights education among young people and in the schools generally.

Board members repeatedly mentioned their good cooperation with HROT in ideas and in practical level. It is clear that relations with HROT and Ms Rajner are very good.

HRO Bijeljina seems to have a different profile than that of HROT. This may be due to the many lawyers and jurists on the board, as well as the more difficult political conditions in Bijeljina and the RS which require

more vigilant legal analysis. It is significant our planned meeting with the staff became a meeting with all the board members; that the organization had coped with difficult conditions; that they were well respected by the local OSCE office; and that they had visions for future programs in both human rights and NGO development generally; that they had long-term strategy and an engaged core of activists. While some of their ideas may be unrealistic at the present time, others can certainly be developed through their participation in the DEMNET program. With the eventual normalization of the situation in Bijeljina, HRO Bijeljina has the opportunity to become a major local human rights organization for the RS. One can shortly envision the end of the big-brother-little-brother relationship between HRO Tuzla and HRO Bijeljina and a more equal relationship between the two.

Common to both HRO Bijeljina and HROT is a lack of any systematic board training. Some kind of common board training might be advisable, also in order to sharpen the board consciousness of the two organizations and to exchange ideas.

4.7 OSCE Tuzla

OSCE is an important partner for HRO Tuzla in that it may suggest an activity to the HROT, respond positively to a proposal from HROT, or facilitate contact among several NGOs or human rights organizations. Moreover, HROT's program officer, Ms Lukacevic, is one of OSCE's 19 community facilitators in Bosnia, and there is a considerable overlap between her OSCE job and her duties at HROT. Therefore, further information on OSCE's tasks in Tuzla and relations with HROT is relevant.

OSCE has two offices whose tasks touch upon the work of organizations such as HROT. The OSCE Office of Human Rights monitors the human

rights situation and takes note of human rights violations, reporting some violations to the Office of the High Representative. The Democratization and Civil Society Office handles relations with NGOs, governance and local administration. OSCE's strength is its many field officers and representatives, an increasing number of whom are local Bosnians. OSCE has seen its budget decline by 15% in the past year, primarily in favor of concentrating more activity in the RS and in moving their tasks to Kosovo.

OSCE's human rights offices are increasingly going to work with local NGOs. The local NGO partners are classified into 1) core groups who draft laws and function as advisory bodies in key human rights policy areas; 2) implementing groups who carry out awareness, education or monitoring activities; and 3) those NGOs acting on behalf of particular social groups (minorities, women, handicapped, returnees) who are affected by human rights policies and actions. HROT would be classified as falling into the second category.

OSCE's civil society development activities include awarding funds or materials to local NGOs for public awareness campaigns, events, human rights education, elections, political party development, information campaigns, etc. HROT has benefited from OSCE funds for various human rights education campaigns in schools and for celebration of the anniversary of human rights day. The OSCE Democratization Officer has selected HROT because they are effective and reliable. In other cases, HROT has approached the OSCE to suggest a campaign, such as funds for printing brochures.

HROT's reputation was known to the OSCE officer before he came to Tuzla, especially their activities in Srebrenica. HROT's organizing of public events for young people in the schools was also known, and OSCE have supported HROT with printing costs, brochures, and the like.

The OSCE's Community Facilitation Project began in early 1999. The project involves a series of public meetings held in the OSCE district on key issues. The community facilitator for the region (in this case Ms Lukacevic) identifies issues, establishes dialogue between citizens and authorities, and recruits specialists or others to address the meeting. There are 19 such facilitators in all BiH, Ms Lukacevic being the only one in Tuzla. One meeting is held each month. Topics include problems of heat and water (which are often politicized), geriatric care, minority people (in this case Serbs) living alone, etc.

OSCE has especially complimented the HROT and Ms. Rajner for their inter-entity grass-roots work in the RS. The OSCE's employment of Ms Lukacevic as community facilitator also speaks well for their appreciation of the HROT.

4.8 Summary

These examples of human rights organizations reveal the variety of priorities, resources and activities carried out by other human rights groups in Tuzla or in cooperation with HROT. All have high levels of activity and many have uncertain funding. Some organizations have expatriate staff, others have large local staff, some have been recognized for their development potential by being included in the DEMNET program or in other networks. All, except the Forum of Tuzla Citizens, express universally high opinions of HROT.

Several are involved in the Network 10 program, which in concrete terms consists of a series of common meetings and communication by newsletter. The common meetings presumably lead to participation by NGOs' staff and outside experts for joint projects, but at the moment these have not materialized. In fact, there seems to be little systematic basis for which NGOs are included in Network 10, since some of the organizations are not core human rights organizations but have other

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profiles, such as women's groups. The questions to be addressed here would be, first, what is exactly the uniqueness of this particular network? What resources, skills, interests does this group of 10 have which others do not have? Second, what specific role does HROT play in this network? Is it purely a coordinating secretariat? Or does it have concrete skills and capacities it wishes to diffuse to ostensibly less developed organizations. The answers to these questions remain unclear.

These questions about the nature of Network 10 become more pressing as the Forum has talked of setting up its own network and in view of the development of the Danish funded Balkan Human Rights Network (BHRN). The obvious issue here is how does Network 10 fit into the DCHR's plans for the BHRN? This is particularly pressing since Network 10 members are practically randomly chosen if we use any kind of established human rights criteria.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

On the basis of the interviews, observations and documentation during a brief stay in Bosnia, the study of documents, and data from the DCHR staff in Copenhagen, we can conclude that the Human Rights Office Tuzla is a well-functioning grass-roots human rights organization whose primary effectiveness has been in impacting specific groups of professionals and returnees as to human rights issues. Its work in Tuzla and in the RS is of a pioneer character in helping to bring civil society and human rights thinking to vulnerable groups. Its loose, informal organizational structure and the committed nature of staff and volunteers shows a true civic spirit within the organization. It is clear that the director and staff (both paid and unpaid) see themselves as fulfilling a mission in the true sense of this word. The HROT's commitment to promoting human rights is unquestioned and its image as a committed grass-roots organization is well-deserved.

Serious organizational shortcomings have been recognized and are now being ironed out. This should increase input from members and board so as to make HROT more effective without limiting the voluntary component. This will also help it in consolidating a strategy which goes beyond short-term, project thinking.

HROT has had considerable international support in the form of funding, program monitoring and training, primarily by the DCHR. HROT's organizational structure needs to be consolidated and the organization itself needs to decide whether it will continue its valuable grass-roots approach or elevate its goals to a more ambitious, elite level. The latter takes a different kind of commitment, involves new kinds of elite/international activities. It requires additional staff, needs more stable funding, and demands additional skills of the kind possessed by national level human rights organizations such as the University Center in Sarajevo or the Forum of Tuzla Citizens.

It is up to the HROT as an independent Bosnian organization, in consultation with the DCHR, to decide whether this new kind of strategic commitment should be pursued, and if so, how. These questions are not just a matter of “capacity” but also of the willingness of the HROT board, staff and membership to move into such a sphere. Determining whether the willingness exists is something which must be worked out within the HROT. Only then can any serious capacity building, presumably with DCHR help, take place.

These recommendations are divided into activity recommendations, organizational recommendations and DCHR support recommendations

5.1 Activity recommendations

(1) The Towards Democracy Project should be consolidated as a package and either sold or diffused to other NGOs. The focus on refugee women should be expanded to include men as well.

(2) The Network 10 potential is at the moment limited to small training seminars; the real potential is a political lobby, something which seems not to have occurred. An obvious area of activity would be lobby or advocacy training. The problem, however, is that the common foundation of Network 10 is unclear. Who is in the network and who is not? Why is there a network at all? A major effort to rethink the strategy of Network 10 should be undertaken, perhaps with the help of external consultants.

(3) HROT should develop more comprehensive information activities linked to a concrete information strategy. The newsletter should be reevaluated. For whom is the newsletter intended beyond Network 10 members? Why should someone read it? If it is essential, then it should appear more frequently and certainly be available electronically so that it can reach a much larger list of subscribers. If not, the newsletter should be dropped as a granting category and be regarded as a peripheral

Conclusions and recommendations

activity, to be completed over a few hours once a month, with a brief summary in English. Funding should be for a gamut of information and communication activities and not simply for a print-only newsletter.

(4) Better contacts should be made with the Forum of Tuzla Citizens, perhaps with DCHR mediation and stimulated by the “carrot” of a joint project. The tensions are unproductive.

5.2 Staff and management recommendations

(1) Consideration should be given to supporting a full-time paid information/fundraising officer besides the director. The staff member would have information, publicity, fund-raising and outreach functions.

(2) HROT’s internal structure should be drastically consolidated, including regular members’ meetings (every 6 months) connected to public events and regular board meetings (at least every 2 months). These meetings should include a meeting agenda, record of decisions taken, report, etc. The DCHR, as principal donor, should consider having requesting from the HROT an “observer” status at members’ and board meetings, linking this with already planned/budget trips to Bosnia. Alternatively, an OSCE democratization officer could also be invited/informed of the meetings.

(3) HROT should develop a donor strategy and a plan of action. There are in fact many donors who would be willing to finance small, well-planned, visible projects dealing with refugee women and reconciliation, particularly in Srebrenica and other parts of the RS. Finding support for such projects should be a major goal of the HROT, with the assistance of the DCHR as part of the DCHR’s own long-term exit strategy. The DCHR should assume responsibility for training in donor procurement/fundraising with demonstrated results.

(4) Board and staff need upgraded training beyond the simple 2-day intensive seminar format. Rather, the training should be project oriented with a continuous commitment on the part of the training organization. Training in information and publicity, use of electronic media, fund raising, use of volunteers, lobby and advocacy are examples. If HROT seeks to develop a legal monitoring activity, then this could be used as a capacity-building training exercise.

5.3 DCHR support recommendations

As the DCHR has grown into a major policy-influencing, project-implementing, international oriented player, the HROT has become one of the DCHR's minor projects. This has meant a turnover of project staff in Copenhagen and insecurity of funding, with short term applications and unreasonable waiting periods from the Danish Foreign Ministry, and further waiting down the chain from the DCHR to HRO Tuzla. Under such short term and insecure "support", it is difficult to pursue and identify the desired "capacity building" in Tuzla. It is hoped that this situation will cease with advent of more long term, framework funding to the DCHR which can support running costs and provide stable and continuous monitoring of the HROT by the DCHR Project Department.

DCHR program support inputs have been considerable over the past four years. What is lacking is a form of follow up which makes demands of the HROT and gives rewards for progress. In particular, it means that the DCHR must be more active in helping the HROT to become more organizationally effective and to develop a more consolidated strategy, not just a set of projects.

However, inasmuch as the HROT is a grass-roots organization quite different from what the DCHR has become, it is incumbent upon the DCHR to evaluate its overall strategy for supporting grass-roots organizations versus the more elite organizations.

Conclusions and recommendations

The primary question for the DCHR is how the HROT as a local grass-roots organization fits into the DCHR own strategy framework. There are other partners in BiH which seem to fit the DCHR's own self-understanding as a national oriented, research-producing, high profile, international human rights organization. This is certainly the approach in the Balkan Human Rights Network. Organizations such as the Tuzla Citizens' Forum and Sarajevo Human Rights Center seem to fit more with the DCHR's increasingly sophisticated profile as a policy-oriented international player. HROT's grass-roots activities, impacting real people in provincial towns, seem to lie on the margins of DCHR strategy.

Grass-roots, cross-entity activities are certainly crucial for the development of civil society in Bosnia, and of human rights organizations. These activities should not be undervalued and deserve moral and material support. The DCHR must therefore make decisions as to what kind of relationship they would like to have with smaller, grass-roots organizations such as the HROT which are not going to have a policy making role. This is a matter for the DCHR's own strategy and priorities concerning support for international human rights NGOs.

In the meantime, one possibility is for the DCHR to utilize the HROT as a flagship for "grass-roots best practice"; to use the HROT as a training ground for other NGO people in the Balkans in the form of internships, but also as a form of staff training by which outsiders can come with new impulses to the HROT. DCHR could use the HROT to place staff members there as interns to gain knowledge of how small organizations operate in the Balkans. Such internships would help the HROT in its outside, information activities, while ensuring that DCHR interns learn what grass-roots human rights work is all about as opposed to the international legal/conference circuit.

Barring a major restructuring of personnel or change in strategy, HROT will at least for some time remain small and its profile limited. At present, they have neither the capacity nor the ambition to move in the

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international human rights scene. This is not necessarily a disadvantage; but we are speaking of two different worlds here. The DCHR must therefore decide whether and how it wants to support organizations whose mission, structure and capacity are on the margins of what DCHR normally supports.

Annexes

Annex 1: Terms of Reference

The Danish Centre for Human Rights has asked Steven Sampson to evaluate the cooperation between the Danish Centre for Human Rights and the Human Rights Office in Tuzla (HRO-Tuzla). The work comprises three days of preparation, a seven-day mission to Bosnia-Herzegovina, including travel, and six days of report writing.

The evaluation shall comprise the following:

1. To assert that the project components described in the cooperation agreement and time frame have been performed, inter alia, through interviews with the director of HRO-Tuzla, Ms Branka Rajner, and other staff and/or volunteers [auditing of the accounts not included].
2. To clarify how the HRO-Tuzla perceives the project implementation in the period 1996-1999, including the cooperation with DCHR and the value of the strategy plan as a tool.
3. To investigate the position, function and role of the HRO-Tuzla in the local community in the period 1996-1999, by interviewing selected representatives of the Network 10 (preferably including the HRO-Bijeljina) and through interviews with selected representatives of public institutions, foreign organisations and donors.
4. To have a constructive dialogue with HRO-Tuzla regarding the future work and function of the office, including the participation in the Balkan Human Rights Network.
5. To the extent possible investigate the human rights environment in the area and compare the HRO-Tuzla with other human rights actors, in the NGO and public sector, thereby identifying future potential partners of the DCHR and the Balkan Human Rights

Annex 1

Network.

On the evaluation mission the external consultant will be joined by Morten Villumsen, the Danish Centre for Human Rights. Morten Villumsen will assist in solving practical problems and will participate in the interviews or the main part hereof. The consultant, Steven Sampson, is the sole responsible for the evaluation and its conclusions. The mission will take place from January 23 to 30, 2000.

Steven Sampson will write an evaluation report for the Danish Centre for Human Rights. The report will be handed over to the DCHR no later than February 15, 2000. The Danish Centre for Human Rights will ensure that the HRO-Tuzla receives the report.

Annex 2:

List of Interviews Conducted

1. Human Rights Office Tuzla

Branka Rajner, Director
Elizabetha Lukacevic, Assistant/programme officer
Nihad Mesic, Volunteer, translator, newsletter
Tamsin Radford, Volunteer, translator, activity reports
Subhija Glinac, member, active in health issues
Mirjana Terzic, lawyer, vice-president of the Board
Jasenko Babic, activist, youth branch
Hikmeta Kuci, canton court judge, legal consultant

2. OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina

Regional office, Tuzla

Mona Dia, Senior Democratization Officer, Tuzla
Damir Hadzic, National Democratization Officer

Field Office Bijeljina

Catharina de Lange, Democratization Officer
Predrag Scekic, Assistant Democratization Officer

OSCE Reading Room Bijeljina (Centre for Democracy and New
Hopes/ Demokratski Centar “Nove Nade”)
Slavica Kokoruc, Manager
Lilijana Todorovic, Assistant

3. International NGOs

Quaker Peace and Service, Sarajevo
Nataschia Berlincioni, Program Officer
Celia McKeon, Program Officer

Mercy Corps Europe/Scottish European Aid, Tuzla
Alenka Savic, Bosnian Women’s Initiative Project Manager

European Human Rights Foundation NGO support program
Svetlana Djeric, director, Sarajevo

4. Municipality of Tuzla

Selim Beslagic, Mayor
Jozo Budimir, president, Committee for the Protection of Rights
and Freedoms
Ilijazov Sevala, member, Committee for the Protection of Rights
and Freedoms

5. Bosnian NGOs

Job 22, Sarajevo
Zdenko Eterovic, Legal Expert
Zade Jevtic, Data Base Manager
Marica Bender, Office Manager

Human Rights Centre, University of Sarajevo
Sacha Madecki, Librarian
Dino Abazovic, Project Manager
Aida Mehicevic, Program assistant

Democratic Initiative of Sarajevo Serbs
Dusan Sehouce, Director, section for human rights

Association of Women of Tuzla (Udruženje ņžena Tuzla)
Mujesira Haman, President

Forum of Tuzla Citizens (Forum Graxđana Tuzle)
Vehid Sehic, President

Amica (Priateljice)
Monica Klek, Manager

Human Rights Office – Bijeljina (Biro za Ljudska Prava)

List of Interviews Conducted

Predrag Maksimovic, executive director
Dusan Milanovic, president of board
Sreten Stanivukovic, member of board
Milorad Pavlovic, member of board
Danica Stepanovic, member of board
Pantelija Lakic, lawyer, legal consultant

Democracy Foundation of BiH
Igor Rajner, executive director

6. Danish Centre for Human Rights

Birgit Lindsnaes, Director of Project Department
Erik André Andersen, project manager
Morten Villumsen, project assistant

7. Others

The Danish Refugee Council, Copenhagen
Claus Larsen, former DCHR project officer for HROT

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