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## ACTIVITY BRIEF

### Cross-Border Cooperation and Reconciliation (CBCR)

#### USAID

#### Regional Services Center



*Initial sports, cultural and youth cooperation grows into more intensive phase of joint planning and economic development.*

#### Partners:

Catholic Relief Services

#### Geographic Targets:

Knin (Croatia)/Drvar (BiH) /Bosansko Grahovo (BiH)

Gjilan/Gnjilane (Kosovo)/Kumanovo (Macedonia)

Osijek (Croatia)/Sombor (Serbia)

Kozarska Dubica (BiH)/Hrvatska Dubica (Croatia)

Bosanska Gradiska (BiH), Stara Gradiska (Croatia), Okucani (Croatia)

#### Project Duration:

2004-2006

#### Contact Information:

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Sanda Richtmann, Chief of Party, CRS

#### Activity Background

Ethnic tensions continue to hinder cooperation between communities in the Balkans, with border regions being particularly vulnerable. Acting as a catalyst and mentor throughout the process, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) promotes interethnic reconciliation and improves the responsiveness of local governments in neighboring communities by supporting their joint efforts to improve their social and economic relationships. This \$1.18 million program is funded through funds transferred from the Department of State to USAID in support of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe.

#### Core Interventions

- Participating communities have jointly identified priority projects, including youth and media, natural resources protection, tourism promotion, and rural employment.
- Projects are implemented by committee members from both sides of the border representing ethnic minorities, local municipalities, NGOs, and business.
- CRS trains community leaders in communication and conflict resolution skills, mentoring them through the challenges of cooperating across borders and ethnicities for the first time since hostilities in the 90's.

#### Activity Results

- The vast majority of project participants report improvements in behavior, including increased openness to reestablishing communication, interaction and volunteerism.
- Over 1700 people have actively assisted in organizing events that have attracted 15,000 participants.
- Cross-border events far exceed targets for multi-ethnic representation of participants, and local contributions have surpassed initial targets, signaling grassroots commitment.
- Seven agricultural associations from Kosovo and Macedonia formed Agro Union to continue joint efforts to improve capacity and business opportunities in the future. A second cross-border business fair drew over 900 visitors.
- Cross-border activities promote rural tourism opportunities, including: peace bicycle trail linking Sombor and Osijek, recreational island between Hrvatska Dubica and Kozarska Dubica, and manufacture of traditional products for sale to tourists in Knin, Drvar and Bosansko Grahovo.
- Committed to sustainability, cross-border committees are designing new activities to continue past the life of the current project.
- Local municipalities have laid the foundation for long-term sustainability of cooperation by including cross-border cooperation in municipal strategic budget; developing joint strategic plans; and signing formal cooperation protocol.

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