

FACILITATING LOCAL MULTIETHNIC GOVERNANCE IN POSTWAR BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

James S. Rogan*

1. Introduction

The fratricidal four-year war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Bosnia) ended with the signing of the General Framework Agreement for Peace (GFAP) in November 1995. The GFAP (hereinafter: Dayton Accords) did not seek just peace; it established a framework in which to begin the reconciliation, reintegration and reconstruction of Bosnia. Foremost among the Dayton Accords' landmark provisions are those establishing the right of refugees and displaced persons to return to their prewar homes and vote in the elections held in their prewar municipalities.¹ Implementation of these provisions is fundamental not only to help make Bosnia a multiethnic democracy but also a viable state.

Bosnia thus embarked on the unprecedented path of a country undergoing two daunting and simultaneous transitions: moving from ethnic warfare to multiethnic peace and from socialism to democracy.² While Bosnian citizens and their leaders are responsible for implementing the Dayton Accords, a broad ensemble of international organizations were mandated in the Accords to oversee and assist the process of carrying out its provisions.

But while the International Community can force apart Bosnian armies and conduct the country's elections, it can neither make Bosnians live together nor make Bosnians govern themselves democratically. This must be done by Bosnians. What the International Community can do is *facilitate* the efforts of Bosnians to rebuild multiethnic communities and begin democratic practices and institutions themselves. In Bosnia's tense postwar

* The author is indebted to James Ross for his initial concept of the project and Darko Stancic for his invaluable comanagement of the project.

¹ Principal return language includes GFAP Annex 7.1., which states in pertinent part: "All refugees and displaced persons have the right freely to return to their homes of origin." Furthermore, Article II.1., reads: "The Parties undertake to create in their territories the political, economic and social conditions conducive to the voluntary return and harmonious reintegration of refugees and displaced persons, without preference for any particular group." Pertinent provisions on voting include Annex 3, Article IV.1., in pertinent part: "A citizen who no longer lives in the municipality in which he or she resided in 1991 shall, as a general rule, be expected to vote, in person or by absentee ballot, in that municipality." And IV.2.: "Such a citizen may, however, apply to the [Provisional Election] Commission to cast his or her ballot elsewhere."

² For the purposes of this paper I will focus only on Bosnia's transition to democracy and not its transition to capitalism.

The war destroyed much of the physical infrastructure and economic base of the country, which was heavily agrarian.⁷ At the close of the war, annual per capita income fell to about 500 USD (compared to 1,900 USD in 1990), and industrial output in 1994 was 5 percent of the 1990 output. There was extensive damage to water supply, power generation, roads and central telecommunications facilities. A government survey in July 1995 estimated that 63 percent of housing units sustained at least some damage, and 18 percent of units were destroyed (defined as more than 60 percent damaged). All sectors of the economy also suffered from major losses in human resources as a result of migration, mobilization into the military and war casualties.⁸ Unemployment in 1997 hovered around 50 percent in the Federation, but Republika Srpska's economic plight was even more severe.⁹

Many of the direly needed public services were also casualties of the war. And many are—or were—the responsibilities of municipalities. Health hazards exist from deteriorating water and sewer systems; water supplies in many municipalities—especially those hosting larger populations—are grossly insufficient, sewage systems and treatment plants do not operate and solid waste collection and disposal have practically collapsed.¹⁰ Education has also suffered, with enrollments at all levels falling by over 50 percent, with many schools damaged or destroyed, and those which function typically exhibiting discriminatory management.

1.2. Minorities and Return

The social upheaval from Bosnia's war is the most dramatic Europe has witnessed since the Second World War. Bosnia not only produced the most refugees in Europe, 1.3 million, but still suffers the most internal social displacement.¹¹ Of Bosnia's original 4.4 million people, 2.5 million—nearly 60 percent of the population—are displaced.¹² Fleeing war next door, some 40,000 Croatian Serb refugees relocated to Republika Srpska.¹³ According to a 1996 census, one half of displaced persons in Republika Srpska were living in

⁷ Before the war, some 40 percent of Bosnia's labor force was employed in agriculture, but only 16 percent of the 570,000 farms were larger than 5 ha. *Reconstruction and Return Task Force Action Plan* (1998) Office of the High Representative (OHR), March, p. 8.

⁸ *Reconstruction of Bosnia*, The World Bank.

⁹ *Reconstruction and Return*, OHR, p. 25; the unemployment figure was calculated by UNHCR in *UNHCR Position on Categories of Persons from Bosnia and Herzegovina Who Are in Continued Need of International Protection* (1998) UNHCR, June.

¹⁰ *Reconstruction of Bosnia*, The World Bank.

¹¹ The term "refugee" refers to displaced persons who fled to other countries; "displaced persons" pertains to displaced persons who remained in Bosnia. "Relocation" refers to a displaced person finding temporary or permanent residence in a municipality other than his or her prewar municipality; "return" means the return of a displaced person to his or her prewar home or municipality. The term "minority return" shall be used henceforth to refer to returnees who become minorities in their prewar municipality.

¹² *Reconstruction and Return* (1998) OHR.

¹³ *A Regional Strategy for Sustainable Return* (1998) UNHCR, June 9.

ensure minority rights. A State Law on Citizenship of Bosnia came into force on January 1, 1998, but UNHCR reported in 1998 that accompanying regulations had lagged.¹⁹

Pursuant to the Dayton Accords, each refugee or displaced person has the right to return to his or her prewar home. The refugee or displaced person has the choice to return or not. For the vast majority of refugees and displaced persons, returning home means becoming a minority.²⁰ The right to return is accompanied by a right to claim their prewar homes and properties.²¹ Appropriate State and Entity legislation on displaced persons and refugees in accordance with Accords Annex 7, as well as on property, were slow in passage. Implementation has been problematic and rights violations have been numerous.²²

Central to the issue of minority return is the fact that the underlying causes which led to the war and ethnic cleansing remain. What had been a nationalist wartime effort to move populations to create majority areas has become a postwar operation to consolidate those majority areas. This may be less ideological than political. To the nationalist parties²³ dominating Bosnia's political landscape in 1997, minority return or the conditions which result in minority return translates into a loss of power. Hence, relocation to majority areas has become their *raison d'être*.

In short, hardliners prevent their "own" people from leaving and "others" from entering their municipality. They instill a fear of return in their own displaced majority population, using loyal local media, by arguing to them that they would be unsafe minorities in their prewar municipalities. Simultaneously, the same authorities ensure that their own town is not safe for return, by organizing violence against minority returnees (and thereby fulfilling the warnings of other nationalist local authorities to their own displaced majority populations) and resorting to other bureaucratic obstacles and intimidation tactics.²⁴ Just as return is a local affair, preventing it is also a local affair.

¹⁹ *UNHCR Position on Categories of Persons from Bosnia and Herzegovina Who Are in Continued Need of International Protection*, UNHCR.

²⁰ *Statistics Package* (1998) UNHCR, January 15. UNHCR cautions that many of its figures are estimates. It further advises that data on the disposition of refugees and internally displaced persons, as well as their pattern of movement is very limited.

²¹ GFAP, Annex 7.1. states in pertinent part: "[All refugees and displaced persons] shall have the right to have restored to them property of which they were deprived in the course of hostilities since 1991 and to be compensated for any property that cannot be restored to them."

²² During and after the conflict, nationalist parties also passed legislation in both Entities which deprived refugees and displaced persons of their property and housing rights. Into 1997 the majority of cases before local human rights institutions related to violations of property rights. Four Federation laws relating to property and housing came into effect in April 1998, though implementation has been problematic. In Republika Srpska, a law on abandoned property contravenes the GFAP, though movement toward appropriate laws was visible in 1998. *UNHCR Position on Categories of Persons from Bosnia and Herzegovina Who Are in Continued Need of International Protection* (1998) UNHCR, June. p. 3.

²³ The leading nationalist parties at the time of the 1997 municipal elections were: the Bosnian Croat *Hrvatska demokratska zajednica* (HDZ); the Bosnian Serb *Srpska demokratska stranka* (SDS) and *Srpska radikalna stranka* (SRS); and the Bosniak *Stranka demokratske akcije* (SDA). The Bosnian Croat and Bosnian Serb nationalist parties tended to feature more virulent anti-minority return postures.

2.1. *The Situation of the Municipality*

In 1997 Bosnia had 136 municipalities.²⁷ The average voter population of each municipality was 18,500. Accounting for the 18-year-old-and-under population results in a slightly higher number. Bosnia's larger municipalities, such as Banja Luka and Zenica, are home to populations on the order of 150,000.²⁸

Municipal governments in the former Yugoslavia enjoyed a degree of autonomy unmatched in Eastern Europe.²⁹ Yugoslav municipalities collected taxes, received a portion of the revenue from their local economic enterprises and appointed directors of “socially” owned enterprises, schools, hospitals, post offices, utilities and transportation.³⁰ The structural decentralization, however, competed with the centralizing political tendency of the Communist Party. Therefore, the ostensible Yugoslav decentralization effort was fraught with a power struggle between competency and decision-making autonomy until its collapse in 1991.

During the war municipal governments were typically composed of members of one ethnic group—often responsible for ethnic cleansing themselves—who were installed by their respective nationalist party without a democratic mandate. Power normally was concentrated in the executive. Those installed customarily lacked any public administration skills; rather, they were selected for their political obedience and ability to govern in a draconian fashion.³¹

After the war, municipal governance is subject to political leverage at higher levels and the postwar advent of an elaborate legal-constitutional structure, both the work of nationalist parties. The new structure has blurred the assignation of competencies between governmental levels and reassigned many formerly held by municipalities to higher bodies. The combination of a confusing and centralizing governmental structure imbued with divisive nationalist partisanship has retarded local governance.

The centralization is most visible in the Federation. As part of the Washington Agreement of 1994, which put an end to the Muslim-Croat war and began a structure for cooperation, ten cantons were created. The canton constitutions granted cantons nearly all powers not assigned to the Federation Entity, including: establishing and controlling police; appointing judges to cantonal and municipal courts; education and cultural policy; regulating and providing housing and public services; regulating local energy production and land use; regulating and promoting local businesses and charitable organizations;

²⁷ Eleven “split municipalities” existed and, due to unresolved political issues, did not hold elections in September 1997.

²⁸ The Sarajevo city area comprises nine city-municipalities; Mostar comprises six.

²⁹ In fact, Yugoslavia's decentralized structure may have been less the result of Yugoslav state policy than a legacy of the Partisan forces which forged the Yugoslav state; during World War II, locally controlled Partisan military structures were so successfully entrenched that they provided the *de facto* decentralized governance structures after the war. See Denitch, Bogdan (1977) “The Evolution of Yugoslav Federalism,” *Journal of Federalism*, Fall. p. 111.

³⁰ See Lampe, John (1996) *Yugoslavia As History*, Cambridge. pp. 251-3.

³¹ The last municipal elections were held in 1990, before the war; See Milicevic, Nedjo (1997) “The Situation of Local and Regional Democracy in Bosnia and Herzegovina.”

similar portfolios, including “nominations,” “immunities,” “awards,” “statutory issues,” “sanitation,” “economic relationships,” “protection of rights and freedoms,” “environment” and “development.” If the municipal structure is an operational blueprint, much needs to be done for a clearer delineation of municipal responsibilities and roles, particularly in Republika Srpska.

A clearer plan for municipal action is imperative in Bosnia. Municipalities bear the majority of administrative responsibilities in relocation and minority return. Municipalities are responsible for personal records and documentation—from birth records to marriage certificates—and for issuing identity cards and displaced persons cards, which are required for the displaced person to receive food, medical and other assistance, as well as for his or her overall reintegration into the municipality. Municipalities register minority returnees and, in so doing, have the responsibility for the first and most immediate interaction with the returnee. Access to such documentation—by both minority returnees and relocated displaced persons belonging to the majority—has been problematic and subject to bureaucratic obstacles and the political whims of municipalities.

The fact that three municipalities have or had their government placed under International Administration demonstrates how strategic and draconian ethnic control of a municipality can be. In 1994 Mostar was placed under European Union administration; in 1995 the Dayton Accords placed Brcko under an International Supervisor to oversee the arbitration of its control and to enforce a fully multiethnic municipal administration; and in 1998 Srebrenica had its own Interim Executive Board named and chaired by the OSCE. In each case the use of ethnic quotas and/or special electoral formulas were established by the administration. Governance in each municipality is at a standstill.

2.2. *Municipal Elections and New Minority Councilors*

The elections held on September 13–14, 1997, for 136 municipal councils,³⁵ organized and supervised by the OSCE, were at once an important step for Bosnia’s fledgling democracy and an endgame of ethnic territorial control. Voting laws were critical for minority return and the election of minority councilors. Under the Dayton Accords, any eligible voter could register to vote in the elections held in his or her prewar municipality. Citizens also had the right to apply to vote elsewhere: either in his or her current municipality (of relocation) or in a future municipality where he or she intended to reside.³⁶

³⁵ Originally scheduled to take place on September 14, 1996, with the presidential, national, entity and cantonal elections, the municipal elections were already delayed one year due to the nationalist parties’ manipulation of the voters register in 1996 and after. I will use the term municipal “councils” for consistency. In Republika Srpska, municipal bodies are translated as “assemblies.”

³⁶ GFAP Annex 3.IV. states: “A citizen who no longer lives in the municipality in which he or she resided in 1991 shall, as a general rule, be expected to vote, in person or by absentee ballot, in that municipality as confirmed by the local election commission and the Provisional Election Commission. Such a citizen may, however, apply to the Commission to cast his or her ballot elsewhere. The exercise of a refugee’s right to vote shall be interpreted as confirmation of his or

accuracy of the election results. The second step—in reality a series of steps—led to Final Certification on a municipality-by-municipality basis. Final Certification required meeting several criteria made explicit in the Rules and based on fundamental democratic principles of council procedure and minority representation.³⁹

To monitor and mediate the installation of councilors in accordance with the PEC Rules the International Community established an interagency structure of Election Results Implementation Committees (ERICs), headquartered in Sarajevo (the National ERIC) and administered by the OSCE.⁴⁰ Where municipalities did not comply, the structure became punitive; the NERIC would recommend to the OSCE Head of Mission and Chair of the PEC to refuse or even revoke Final Certification, which could carry negative implications for donor projects and investment in that municipality.⁴¹

4. Implementation of the OSCE Project

Once elected, nonresident and resident councilors confronted the first step of constructing multiethnic, democratic local governance: meeting each other for the first time after the war. It was amidst this fundamental tension that the OSCE Democratization Department⁴² launched its first local governance project, the *Introduction Project*. Designed with a

³⁹ Article 235.5., *Rules and Regulations*. Provisional Election Commission.

⁴⁰ The National ERIC comprises representatives from the Office of the High Representative (OHR), the International Police Task Force (IPTF), SFOR, European Community Monitoring Mission (ECMM), United Nations Civil Affairs (UNCA), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the heads of the OSCE Democratization and Human Rights Departments, a Bosnian representatives from both Entities and the national government, and is chaired by the OSCE Special Deputy Head of Mission, as designee of the OSCE Head of Mission in consultation with the High Representative.

⁴¹ Final Certification was granted by the OSCE Head of Mission, after consultation with the Provisional Election Commission (Art. 235.5.). In certain cases Final Certification of a municipality posed a punitive measure against resident councilors and parties obstructing nonresident installation, including nonresident obstruction.

⁴² The OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina comprises four main departments: Democratization, Human Rights, Regional Stabilization and Elections. The mission has field offices throughout Bosnia. The mandate of the OSCE in Bosnia does not include overseeing or assisting directly the return and reintegration of refugees. Mandates in this area belong chiefly to OHR and UNHCR. However, the OSCE mandate in 1997 was broad and robust in principal areas of democracy building which influence the conditions for return and reintegration: namely, Annex 3 of the GFAP called on the OSCE to promote free, fair and democratic elections, lay the foundation of representative government and ensure the progressive achievement of democratic goals throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina; grounded in Annex 3 and paragraphs 7 and 8 of the OSCE Copenhagen Document of 1990, the OSCE launched democratization initiatives in 1996 devoted to confidence-building and NGO development; the Lisbon Summit Document of December 1996 mandated the OSCE to assist democracy-building through concrete programs; in 1997 the Peace Implementation Council Steering Board Declarations in Sintra (May) and Bonn (December) called on the OSCE to ensure implementation of election results through participating and supporting related projects and to develop and strengthen democratic institutions, respectively.

the legal requirements for the implementation of election results established by PEC, and enforced by NERIC, and the local governance project were not formally linked but identical in aim.

The project was also predicated on the conviction that initial steps to building local multiethnic and democratic governance in a society that has suffered from ethnic conflict first requires creating physical association and dialogue. Therefore, the workshops sought to bring together whole municipal councils—resident and nonresident councilors, including those across the IEBL⁴⁵—during the post-election implementation period. Concretely, the workshops sought the following goals:

- to join newly elected councils in one-day, neutral forums for interethnic and interparty dialogue immediately following the September 13 and 14 municipal elections;
- to provide newly elected councilors with a foundation on the principles and functioning of local democratic governance based upon the European Charter on Local Self-Government;⁴⁶
- to employ interactive, problem-solving methodologies to facilitate and focus responsible dialogue among councilors and to encourage them to articulate their perspectives and problems of local governance in their municipalities;
- to prepare and strengthen the substantive and methodological capacity of selected Bosnian facilitators to conduct short workshops in local democratic governance so that they continue such initiatives independently.

The project sought localism in its planning, implementation and results. Localism refers to integrating the local population as much as possible in the planning and implementation of an initiative. This reflected the need for facilitators and councilors to take the first steps themselves and build a partnership in their own democratic development. Localism helps instill in implementers and participants alike a sense of responsibility for all stages of a social development initiative. Ten Bosnians, who possessed experience in law, democratic NGO development, media development, local administration and OSCE elections-related training, were hired to conduct the workshops. As no candidate appeared with complete expertise in local democratic governance, the OSCE opted to hire candidates with experience in areas related to democratization, a diligent and resilient manner, experience in various pedagogical pursuits and a willingness to embrace the aims of the project.

The OSCE prepared each facilitator in a train-the-trainer session with a basic understanding of the following aspects of local democratic governance:

-
- 6) the elected executive officers, council or assembly officers or councilors or deputies have been denied access to municipal funds or municipal material or other municipal assets.

The OSCE Head of Mission in his capacity as Chairman of the Provisional Election Commission, after consideration within the Commission, retains the discretion to approve Final Certification if an elected councilor or deputy, a political party or coalition has intentionally sought to obstruct the provisions in section (a) above.

⁴⁵ Inter-Entity Boundary Line, separating the Federation from Republika Srpska.

⁴⁶ Passed by the Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CLRAE) of the Council of Europe, October 15, 1985.

Workshops were conducted either by a team (two or more) of facilitators or by one facilitator. This depended on the strength of the facilitator and the climate and size of the municipality. For each workshop the ethnicities of the facilitators normally reflected the composition of the council. No problems occurred in this regard. Practically all workshops were conducted outside of the municipal building housing the council or assembly, most frequently in hotels or conference rooms. Each seminar ran from approximately 9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. and included lunch.

Each seminar aimed to establish definitions of core topics in local democratic governance using a brief lecture format in the morning. These core topics served as the conceptual, substantive structure of the workshops from which a discussion of the concrete municipal problems of each municipality could be drawn and understood by the councilors. The interactive element of the workshops involved strategic questioning by the facilitators and various group problem-solving exercises.

The interactive dynamic sought three goals of facilitation. First, it sought to redirect attention from the facilitators to the participating councilors, building a partnership between them and the facilitators and instilling in the councilors a sense of ownership of the process at hand. Second, the interactive method aimed at making the conceptual discussions of democratic governance more concrete and relevant to the councilors, further engaging their interest. Third, it intended to empower the councilors to overcome their passivity to define problems they face and apply problem-solving tools to those problems. Facilitation includes offering ideas on how to take control and assumes that assistance is temporary, but results must be sustainable. Precisely because facilitation empowers those responsible for a situation and its outcome, the outcome can be sustained.

Exercises revolved around key questions of local democratic governance and democratic conduct, including:

- Allowing vote trading and seeking compromise between councilors on policy decisions;
- Defining which competencies are best assigned to the municipal level, as opposed to the central and regional levels;
- How to prevent abuse of public power, matching suggested instruments with various problematic scenarios of everyday life.

Exercises ensured that councilors felt they were not “told” what their problems were; they defined their problems for themselves. In a post-one-party system characterized by obedience, this strategy helps cultivate a more free-thinking initiative in individual councilors.

5. Results and Achievements

Given that the first goal of the project was to join whole councils in a climate which impeded physical association, attendance is an indicator worth consideration. Overall attendance averaged two-thirds of all councilors on each council. This figure was considered a very positive demonstration of interest in interethnic dialogue, especially for events which offered no remuneration and brandished no conditionality. Who showed

resistance to the OSCE-sponsored facilitators and arguments that the International Community could teach them nothing about democracy. The interactive methods aimed to turn around the resistance of the councilors by giving them more of the floor, and facilitators were prepared to listen and ultimately refocus discussion. Diatribes are a less genial form of dialogue, but the facilitators' example of staying the course demonstrated the value of *commitment to dialogue*. There was no extreme or violent behavior, even when topics such as language and common curriculum were discussed. Lunch consistently represented a surprisingly effective dialogue-building agent. Afternoons normally saw the most avid participation and lowering of ethnic barriers.

Of the issues in democratic governance raised in the workshops, several stood out as consistently receiving the most attention by councilors. Councilors requested that these issues be the subject matter for more intensive training in a follow-up program. These issues were:

- *Municipal finance*: how to fund projects from the International Community; how to persuade cantons to give more revenue-generating rights to municipalities; how to delegate responsibilities to nongovernmental organizations; how to develop intermunicipal cooperation on concrete projects.
- *Making a budget*: how to prioritize, plan and account for revenues and expenditures.
- *Political conflict resolution, procedure and tolerance on the council*: how to enact democratic procedures to prevent exit and ensure dialogue and inclusion; what should be included in a universal code of conduct for councilors.
- *Refugee and displaced person return*: how to, if at all, provide conditions for return and reintegration of refugees; what to do about relocated populations—should they be evicted and what to do with those who are not.
- *Education*: how to, if at all, create integrated schooling using a common curriculum; how to devise a policy of language that respects minority language rights.
- *Legal-constitutional matters (such as municipality-canton relations)*: how to, if at all, return to the municipalities competencies appropriated by cantons.
- *Transparency*: how to ensure transparency of documents (especially the budget) and council proceedings; how to create access of the public to council proceedings; how to work with the often critical press; how to combat corruption.

In the Federation, councilors exhibited a greater interest in legal-constitutional matters, largely due to the complex and poor canton-municipality relationship. This relationship contributed to one of the most consistent and forceful complaints of municipal councilors: the lack of responsibility and revenue.

The liveliest debate was generated by basic problem-solving group exercises and strategic questioning by the facilitators. The most discussion—including interethnic discussion—occurred in these instances. Facilitators attempted to see that every participant was involved in discussion. Facilitators also tried to divide the workshop into interethnic groups to create more intimate conditions for interethnic cooperation. Yet in the larger municipalities, particularly Sarajevo, where the education level of the councilors was higher, the group exercises frequently proved too basic for the participants who grew apathetic easily.

The workshops demonstrated the degree to which councilors do not understand some fundamentals of democracy, in particular, (peaceful) political competition. While the

The practice helped the process of implementing election results and the granting of Final Certification, particularly meeting the minority representation criteria. Workshops assisted frank dialogue and negotiations over power-sharing arrangements on council bodies, which typically revolved around the representation of minorities. Dialogue created by the workshops sought to help build confidence, as well as highlight the democratic logic behind the Final Certification requirements.

Boycotting of council sessions by political parties was commonplace in the months immediately following the elections. Many councilors who, in concert through their party, were boycotting the initial convenings of municipal councils ultimately attended workshops. Immediately following one seminar, a stalemate over power sharing on that municipality's executive was broken, resulting in an inter-party agreement the next day. Similarly, a seminar brought together councilors for the first time in a municipality where negotiations were stalled in an internal party dispute over electing the mayor. The seminar provided new ideas to the councilors for a more democratic and legitimate procedure, which was adopted that night, and the mayor was elected soon after.

Lastly, Bosnian facilitators were essential to the success of the project. They possessed intimate knowledge of their region and the local actors; they removed the often cumbersome mediation of translators; they earned the confidence of participants more quickly, engendering more candid discussion; they guided group discussions with greater subtlety and effectiveness; and they helped detect shortcomings of the project, helping refine the project goals. These abilities not only modified the overall implementation of the project, but Bosnian facilitators were able to adapt the agenda as it went along during the workshop. This responsiveness to the varied needs and tones of the local situation was invaluable.

Because the facilitators worked their home districts, they often possessed sophisticated knowledge of the social and political realities in their areas. Also, they were able to interact with the councilors—whom they often knew personally—with great intuition and nuance. In conducting interactive methods and exercises, these capacities were central in guiding councilors in a way that did not compromise their sense of ownership and empowerment in assuming the issues in the seminar, as well as their new roles and responsibilities. Perhaps most important of all, being Bosnian, they would remain in Bosnia to conduct future workshops and monitor their own democratization process.

Fortunately, security problems did not arise. In several workshops, security assistance was requested of SFOR (NATO Stabilization Force) and the United Nations International Police Task Force (UNIPTF), which trains and monitors local police forces. Typically, this was to help nonresident councilors cross the IEBL or cross other majority areas in particularly tense regions. In one such instance, the workshop was conducted outside of the municipality as the majority of nonresident councilors had not yet accessed the municipality or the municipal hall due to violent interventions.

One example is worth mentioning. In another workshop in the Posavina region of Republika Srpska, where conflict was virulent, Federation councilors living across the IEBL who had not attended an assembly session received escort from UNIPTF into the municipality to attend the seminar. Before the close of the seminar, the Federation councilors informed the UNIPTF that the escort was no longer needed; the councilors preferred to travel with Republika Srpska police to the IEBL to reach their transportation in the Federation.

Local facilitators offer a cultural bridge for optimal communication of foreign concepts, especially in a politically tense and difficult environment. The involvement of local facilitators builds their own capacities for conducting future workshops themselves, independently. In Bosnia, the use of local facilitators helped build the confidence of councilors in their civil society counterparts—an important goal in a postsocialist society beginning with few, if any, civil society actors.

Facilitators, however, did not grasp all the nuances of democratic systems and institutions. Ongoing train-the-trainer seminars must be conducted to strengthen the capacity of Bosnians to train other Bosnians. This is a linchpin for sustainable democratic development.

Lesson 4: *Local confidence- and democracy-building workshops and other initiatives must be followed up and implemented on a continual basis.*

Interethnic dialogue and confidence must always be sustained. In a postwar society such as Bosnia's, there are few opportunities for people across the IEBL to meet in forum. Opportunities must continually be created. In the context of local governance, such opportunities would sustain interethnic reconciliation, improve networking between municipalities, unify municipalities and their needs to be a more forceful voice for decentralization, and improve communication between Bosnian municipalities and the International Community. Lastly, follow-up helps prevent the “vacuum effect” after a workshop, in which participants who relax and seem to espouse the content and spirit of the workshop, forget it all upon returning home to the usual conditions and pressures. Such workshops need to be part of the Bosnian reality, not an excursion from it.

Lesson 5: *Intermunicipal dialogue and cooperation should be a priority for the International Community.*

Not only does intermunicipal cooperation generate sustained dialogue on common problems, but sharing resources and strategies will help municipalities cope with less resources until higher bodies devolve competencies and funnel revenue. This is another first step toward sustainability in democratic development; mutual problem solving and cooperation over (scarce) resources. Efforts to “twin” Bosnian municipalities with other European municipalities should be pursued.

Lesson 6: *Municipal officials in Bosnia require concrete training in local democratic governance, public administration and ethics.*

Many of the skilled public servants have left Bosnia or were killed in the war. Many present councilors have no training in public administration or service. Improved understanding of the functioning of government based on the principles of democracy is necessary to improve the functioning of local government and to empower local officials against nationalist pressures. Nationalism and ethnic division are only heightened when public officials lack an understanding of their options for action.

Next to the returnees themselves, often civil society actors—namely local NGOs—know best the needs of the minority returnees. And, often, though not always, municipal governments know much about returnees' needs and the resources required to meet these needs. Therefore, the most effective plans for minorities and minority returnees must take place at the local level. Municipalities that wish to provide the appropriate conditions for minority return and reintegration must be given the competencies and wherewithal to do so. Otherwise, such a breakthrough in political will is wasted due to the inability of the municipal government to implement its plans.

Lesson 12: *Workshops must join municipal and canton representatives to define roles and responsibilities.*

This could also aid decentralization. Just as municipal councilors need to define their capacities, canton governments need to assess what they can and cannot do. In several instances, such workshops would involve much needed interethnic dialogue as well.

Lesson 13: *Municipal education policy may play a leading role in minority return and sustainable reintegration.*

In the workshops, many councilors said that they would consider returning home to their prewar municipality, but did not want their children to be subject to ethnically chauvinist curricula. Education policy, therefore, may not impact minority councilor return, but will impact minority returns generally. This includes canton education policy as well.

Lesson 14: *International organizations and donors should focus municipal project training and resources on municipalities that establish conditions for minority return.*

In the absence of locally driven financing, resources from international donors can assist local governments provide services, build management capacities and act as incentives for multiethnic cooperation and minority return. Projects should involve more than one municipality and should be sustainable.

A principal effort of the International Community to focus assistance on municipalities more open to minority return is the Open Cities Initiative of the UNHCR, begun in March 1997. The Open Cities Initiative invited municipalities to declare their openness to minority return in exchange for significant international aid, marshaled among agencies by the UNHCR. Another UN-related effort, the International Bureau for Humanitarian Initiatives (IBHI), provides facilitation and capacity-building assistance based on localism and targeting Open Cities.

Several municipalities, both in the Federation and Republika Srpska have been awarded Open City status as of the writing of this paper. However, returns to these municipalities have proven slow.⁴⁷ Further into 1998 various agencies were already investing and

⁴⁷ See *The Konjic Conundrum* (1998) International Crisis Group, June; for a discussion of the Open Cities Initiative, see *Minority Return* (1998) ICG, May.