

CIVIL SOCIETY IN SREBRENICA POSTS TWO NEW WEBSITES AND ATTRACTS 200 VISITORS TO RUG EXHIBITION IN BALTIMORE

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Srebrenica, Bosnia: In a sign of the resurgence of civil society in northeastern Bosnia, and of its determination to contribute to the rebuilding of the region, two prominent community groups have posted new web sites in Bosnia and launched a promotional campaign in the United States, with support from The Advocacy Project (AP).

The two organizations are [Bosfam](#), a Tuzla-based support group for displaced women, and the Forum of Srebrenica NGOs, a network of grassroots organizations.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the Atlantic, The Advocacy Project recently organized an exhibition in Baltimore of traditional carpets (kilims) made by the women of Bosfam. The exhibition was profiled in a prominent Baltimore paper and has attracted over 200 visitors.

The two web sites were designed by the Tuzla-based Center for Information Technology (CIT), which also provided web site training for officials from Bosfam and the NGO Forum. Both sites are in Bosnian and English, and both have incorporated a 'Content Management System' which allows users with only basic skills to add text and photographs with ease. This will ensure that the sites are maintained and integrated into the advocacy of the two organizations. AP's field project manager, Peter Lippman, managed all aspects of the project. Funding was provided by the Dutch Refugee Foundation (Stichting Vluchteling).

The launch of the two sites follows the eighth anniversary of the 1995 Srebrenica massacre, which took the lives of approximately 7,000 Muslim men and boys. The remains of 282 victims were buried on July 11 in the new cemetery of Potocari, near Srebrenica, where the massacre occurred.

According to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), around 1,300 non-Serb Bosnians have now returned to Srebrenica. While this is still a tiny percentage of the 30,000 who were displaced by the war, the pace of return has picked up, underscoring the need for an active civil society. A special interactive section of the Forum's new site provides legal advice about return and allows visitors to submit legal queries.

The Forum's membership has doubled this year to 17 organizations, many representing both Serbs and Muslims. The Forum is now seeking 100,000 Euros (117,000 USD) to restore a war-damaged building in the center of town. This building has been promised to the Forum rent-free by the local government, but it needs major repair. Once restored, the new center will serve as a vital hub for civil society organizations from Srebrenica and the neighboring municipalities of

Bratunac and Milici, and will make it easier for the region's NGOs to coordinate their advocacy and their activities with aid donors. The campaign will be promoted on the network's new web site.

The Bosfam site is designed to showcase and market handicrafts produced by Bosfam's members. These include traditional woven carpets (kilims), sweaters, knitted wool socks, and fashionable hand-made dresses. These products are pictured online, with prices and ordering information. In addition, the site describes the work of Bosfam and tells the story of its women members. It contains a dynamic, regularly-updated photo gallery.

Bosfam's new site is one of several components of AP's program of support for the organization. Marta Schaaf, an AP intern who is working with Bosfam this summer, has helped to draft a proposal that seeks funding to strengthen Bosfam and open a new Bosfam resource center in Srebrenica itself.

Meanwhile, in the United States, Kelly Kliebhan, AP's Outreach Coordinator, has arranged for a sampling of Bosfam's kilims to be exhibited at a gallery in Baltimore. These events allow Ms. Kliebhan to promote Bosfam's message of reconciliation and the skill of Bosfam's weavers.

So far the Baltimore exhibition has attracted well over 200 visitors and generated over 3,000 USD in carpet orders and donations for Bosfam's proposed center. It was profiled by a columnist in the Baltimore Sun and was also featured on local radio programs. Several more such events are planned for the remainder of this year in the United States.

- Find more on our support of Bosfam in the [diaries](#) of Marta's work.
- For more information on the Bosfam rugs please email dcoffice@advocacynet.org or contact us # 202 758 3328.