



## **Firefly International**

**Cross-cultural creative projects  
combating social division worldwide**



Annual Report April 2006 – March 2007

## Annual report

Over this year Firefly continued in it's work in Brcko, Bosnia, along with working on the development of it's international programmes. These formed two separate, but intertwined aspects of Firefly's work, through support of the locally managed project in Bosnia, along with encouragement of international collaboration and international volunteering projects through the European Commission's Youth in Action programme, which Firefly became an officially registered partner. We welcomed new volunteers to the project, both local and international and events continued and diversified within Firefly Bosnia.

The project in Bosnia continued to be managed by Gordana Varčakovic, along with assistant from Mirela Mitrovic. They were joined this year for specific project by Sanjin Vosanovic and Dina Vosanovic. Local volunteers were also heavily involved, with Borislav Maric running a weekly table tennis tournament, Nikolina and other members of the dance group continuing dance workshops and Denis running Spanish language classes and workshops.

The political situation in Brcko has remained stable in general, however the departure of the International community in 2007 made the reconciliation work of Firefly vital in this delicate political climate.

This year was a difficult one for Firefly, as Firefly's Director, Ellie Maxwell continued her fight against cancer. She was supported in this by her husband and her family and by staff and volunteers of Firefly.

The following annual report has been compiled from individual reports from Gordana Varčakovic, Ellie Maxwell and staff members and volunteers.

**Jack Richold, Edinburgh, August 2007**

## **CHILDRENS DAY**

Children's Day took place on 18<sup>th</sup> June and due to the clement weather could be held outdoors, in front of Youth Centre. This year it was decided to hold it in the afternoon, as a result of feedback from participants on previous. There were a lot of varied activities for the children: sack races; whipped cream pie eating, bingo, dancing, performance, recitation etc. There were many prizes donated from the local community for the various competitions throughout the day. Also, spectators and participants got bingo numbers, so at the end there was present for each person. Another partner organisation, Kuca Prijateljstva from Brodusa, Brcko, participated this event with dance group and recitations.

## **WINTER FESTIVAL**

The winter culture festival took place in February 2007. Gordana and Kristina Varčakovic wrote the project proposal to the local government for Winter Culture Festival 2007. As a result of their satisfaction with the other festivals Firefly had coordinated, the local government donated a larger sum towards this festival. It had a similar format to Childrens Day, but involved local bands and musicians playing to entertain young people and adults in the evening time.

## **TRAINING AND SEMINARS**

On 23<sup>rd</sup> November Slobodan Djuric represented Firefly at the workshop 'Sexual and reproductive health of young people in Brcko district region' as a part of project 'Improvement of Sexual Health for young people in BiH', facilitated by Omladinski Centar Vermont. This project was implemented over the last four years in Banja Luka, Bihac, Brcko district and Mostar. The project is supported by UN (UNFPA) population fond and is implemented with help from the Foundation Partnerships in Health (FPH). Themes of this workshop were: promotion of education standards, what the project achieved till now and future plans, new steps in the project. This workshop was attended by representatives of schools, the educational department, the health department, government, media, NGOs, UNFPA and FPH.

## **SUMMER CAMPS 2006**

Firefly's summer camps are a chance for some of the poorest and most vulnerable children to have a holiday away from the political and social tensions of their home areas. Most of these children have not ever travelled outside Bosnia or even their own home town, except as refugees. The camps provide a neutral space for children to recover from the trauma of the conflict and space away from continuing tensions. They also allow time and space for children from different ethnic groups to spend time together, making friends and creating cross-community links - it is vital that

these links are created so that children do not grow up thinking it is normal for different ethnicities to live separately. All participants are children from Brcko and the outlying returnee areas, and attend activities at our youth centres or those of our partner organisations, in Bosnia. During the camp, children take part in numerous games and activities together each day, as well as preparing a performance or event for the final evening.

The summer camps preparation started in July 2005. This year two simultaneous camps were organised: Music and Drama. The summer camps were held from 8<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> July 2006. 22 children between 8 and 20 years, 5 young volunteers between 15 and 25 years old from Brcko district and a number of international volunteers from United Kingdom and USA were involved in this project. Young people between 15 and 18 years old from previous years applied to work as youth volunteers on the camps, and 6 were chosen. Adnan and Mirela organised training sessions for the these volunteers, to give them a chance to get to know each other better, to build a team, to give them ideas and tools to use in organising activities and workshops, and to prepare them for their responsibilities and duties during the camp. The local volunteers also all attended First Aid training sessions prior to the summer camps. These training sessions took place in July and were organised by Pamela Fairbrother, who also attended the summer camp as an international volunteer. Summer camp 2006 took place in “Veli Joza”, Savudrija, Croatia. Participants and volunteers met in Brcko district on 6<sup>th</sup> July to prepare the plan of activities, and on 7<sup>th</sup> July they all traveled together by bus to Savudrija. As in previous years we were able to offer several places to young people from the Brodusa returnee area of Brcko district by collaborating with Kuca Prijateljstva (‘House of Friendship’) who run a centre there. 5 participants attended the camp from this organisation.

In the evenings, Veli Joze, the campsite, arranged for different countries to run a presentation of their country and culture, and after that there was a disco each night; at both of these activities Firefly’s participants had the chance to meet young people from different countries. There were also able to get to know young people from other countries at activities organised by the camp such as the football tournament, games without borders and volleyball. There were groups from France, Russia, Germany, Croatia and Austria at the campsite; many friendships were made and young people are currently still in touch, with a couple of future exchanges planned. Our group presented Bosnia to the camp on the second night; they performed a dance routine and sang together. Firefly also took part in a campsite talent show, and organised a disco on the beach for all camp participants on the last night.

The evaluation took place on the last day; the camp was finished without any serious problems.

Support for the camps came from a variety of sources; the Government of Brcko district covered costs of transport and insurance, and international volunteers raised the funds to cover the costs of accommodation and food for themselves and the children; they also bought materials for the caps. In particular, Dawn Jackson brought a lot of material, prizes and sweets. Parents organised passports and a court letter of permission for their children.

### **COMPUTER COURSE**

Mirela continued to coordinate information technology (Word, Excel and Photoshop) classes with Sanja Manojlovic. These classes can provide students with certificates in computing skills, which is seen as very beneficial in the jobs market.

### **LANGUAGE TUITION**

Gordana Varcokovic and Denis Valisavljevic continued to run English and Spanish Classes, which remain popular. These classes are seen as valuable for job prospects and communication with international organisations and volunteers, especially with peoples aspirations for Bosnia joining the EU in the future. In addition to this the Spanish Class was very involved in organising Spanish Cultural Day.

### **SPANISH CULTURAL DAY**

This took place on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2006. After several issues with arranging space for rehearsals in the youth centre this event was a great success and was seen as something new and refreshing in Brcko district. Many people came to watch and this was very refreshing, as generally it can be difficult in Brcko to motivate people to visit any event. Firefly's members read Spanish poets' poems, members of the Spanish classes performed a short play and dance choreography, and there were competitions in singing, drawing, along with different games where the audience could take a part. All participants and competitors received small presents for their contribution to this event. Representatives of local media including HIT television were present and information about this event was aired next day during central news broadcasting on HIT television. The general opinion was that this event was very well organised and should be continued and developed in future years.

### **MUSIC WORKSHOPS**

The Firefly music group from Brcko district meets two times a week now, with a new workshop time of Wednesdays from 5p.m.-7p.m. Also they are gathering new equipment, such as an Bass Guitar, which has been donated by the workshop leader, Sanjin Vosanovic. However this cannot be used in the Youth centre yet, because they do not have a bass amplifier there. Therefore, Sanjin is still bringing some participants to his home to give them lessons, especially because there is new member in the group and he want him to catch up on what the others learnt in the period before. The group works frequently and Sanjin is in the process of forming a group with the older youth which would work on their own ideas. There is interest for such work, but some equipment would be required.

Ritam Brckog ( a samba drumming band started and led by Daniel Gorman during the time he was here as a Firefly volunteer) received funding from the UK Association of Samba Schools to buy samba drums and equipment. However this project is on hold while there is a membership drive for it, as a lot of the previous members have gone on to college outside of Brcko.

## **UK ACTIVITIES**

### **STUDIO PROJECT**

The studio project continues to be coordinated by Firefly international and the Forest and has a wide variety of users. This culminated in a visit by members of Firefly Bosnia in early 2007 and a number of performances.

### **KIDS INTERNATIONAL FUNDRAISING WEBSITE**

KIND - Kids International Net Donations continued to run well this year. It was set up to help children's charities around the world; and to help their supporters. We noticed that many of the 'Give as you shop' and free donations sites don't allow charities' supporters to decide which charity they want to support. At most, they might allow you to choose the type of charity. This means that many smaller charities are overlooked in favour of a small number of larger, already well-funded charities.

KIND aims to allow even the smallest charity or non-profit to raise funds, since if you have only one supporter, the funds raised by that supporter can go directly to you. We will accept nominations by charities and supporters.

KIND is an entirely volunteer-run site and will not deduct any expenses from money raised. 100% of funds raised will be given directly to the children's charities listed. This works because Kids International is a co-operative group made up of a consortium of groups that support children in different ways; every organization that becomes a beneficiary also becomes a member of the group itself, and there are no staff members involved except for those of the constituent groups, each of whom contributes time to the site for free.

If a charity or its supporters select it, then all funds raised during that visit will go to that charity.

You can nominate a charity using the form provided - please list as many details as you can so we can find the charity you want to support. If you select 'All recipient charities', or 'All recipient UK charities', however, we will divide the funds only between those charities that conform to certain standards - for example, those charities or non-profits that can prove they are officially registered and monitored, have a transparent accounting process, and that can show that they will use funds to benefit children and not to further any other agendas - political, or religious, for example.

## **EVS**

Firefly became registered as a sending and hosting organisation of EVS and sent it's first volunteers abroad, including several to Breko. This is a fully funded programme and part of the European Commission's Youth in Action Programme.

## **IFS YOUTH SEMINAR**

Firefly was heavily involved in the IFS youth seminar, organised by Edinburgh University Settlement. This involved over 60 young people from throughout Europe, Russia and Eastern Europe coming to Edinburgh and taking part in workshops and activities together. Firefly chaired a number of these workshops and led 2 daily activities.