



Del editor

Estimados amigos y amigas,

Llegó el 2004, un nuevo año con sus nuevos propósitos de enmienda y mejora. Y también en BSF Euskadi queremos hacer enmiendas para el nuevo año.

Queremos que en el año 2004 aumente el número de socios, de voluntarios y de patrocinadores dentro de todo el Estado. También queremos mejorar en infraestructura, fortaleciendo nuestros sistemas administrativos y nuestra relación con los socios y amigos de BSF.

Por este motivo, queremos agradecer vuestra colaboración al extender el mensaje de BSF y pedir os que sigáis diseminando nuestra labor, compartiendo con otros nuestras ideas y valores de solidaridad.

Esperamos que el año que empieza sea para vosotros un buen año solidario y de éxito en vuestros planes y proyectos personales.

Recibid un afectuoso saludo.

Michel Fernández Sáenz de Ormijana
Editor
michelf@euskalnet.net

Este boletín se publica con la colaboración de:

Proyecto del mes

Nuestro proyecto para enero es el Proyecto de Integración Rural, una iniciativa de recuperación psicológica realizada en varias aldeas de Kosovo donde se concentraba una población infantil muy afectada por el conflicto bélico, muchos de ellos víctimas directas de una u otra forma (huérfanos, hogares destruidos, expulsión forzosa...).

El proyecto fue una continuación de iniciativas similares anteriores y fue financiado parcialmente por UNICEF. Los voluntarios responsables de

llevarlo a cabo fueron Madeleine Mosse, Craig Willis y Teuta Hyseni.

Estos voluntarios han sido los autores del informe que os presentamos a continuación sobre los resultados del proyecto de integración rural.

VILLAGE INTEGRATION PROJECT

Overall, this was a highly successful project. Children of mixed ethnicities gained confidence, interacted with each other, formed friendships, and had fun together. Useful discussions were held and the children learned to listen and respect each other's opinions and ideas.

The objectives of the workshops were:

- Provide children an opportunity to interact with peers from different ethnic backgrounds.
- Promote tolerance between children, break down barriers and challenge stereotypes.
- Encourage children to co-operate and work together as a group towards common goals.
- Encourage children to listen to each other and respect the ideas and feelings of others.
- Build children's confidence in expressing their ideas and feelings.
- Increase children's awareness and understanding of their emotions.
- Teach manual co-ordination skills through games and art.
- Train local facilitators in constructive children's activities.

These objectives were achieved in the workshops.

Project Implementation and Contents

Groups of children were drawn from six different villages.

Villages	Albanian children	Roma children	Bosniak children
Lozane & Dobri Do	10	6	-
Raushiq & Papracane	9	3	4
Ljubenic & Strelc I Eperm	11	5	-
Zahac & Trebovic	10	-	3

The programme for all workshops begun with fun activities and group exercises in order to encourage trust and co-operation between the children. The children then explore a range of social issues through games and discussion. Themes such as aggression, violence and conflict resolution, ambitions, emotions, school experiences, self-images, self esteem, shyness, social awareness and tolerance were explored.

Integration

The children were encouraged to integrate as much as possible. Although relations between the different ethnicities were at first strained, by the end of the workshops, there was much more acceptance by the Albanians of the Roma's than the Bosniaks. Inroads were achieved in integrating the children; by the end of the workshops, improvements in this field were clearly visible. The children, were at times, manipulated to play together in mixed teams, but in the end, it proved to be a natural process.

Social Exploration

In the beginning the children were very shy, stiff and unconfident. They tended to focus intently on the workshop leader as if they had to 'obey the teacher'. They came across as very shy, but eventually, they realised the workshop leader was not a teacher who was going to get angry or even beat them, so they started to relax a bit more and some even went on to become quite disruptive during the sessions.

Towards the end of the workshops, it was evident progress had been made as they all started to participate more in the sessions and they realised the workshop leader's limit, their own limits and eventually, a right balance was achieved.

Overall, they learned how to overcome their shyness. What was also evident was how they became more confident in themselves - they were closely observed as they played games or when they sat talking amongst themselves. They were helped to understand their own emotions and feelings.

Regarding their way of expressing anger and aggression, they all understood that violence and fighting is not the solution and that is okay and good to apologise afterwards. But at the same time, they are children who are playful, mischievous and right in the middle of exploring their identity, personality, limits, and goals.

Excursions

Excursions for the village integration groups took place in Rugova.

A 'treasure hunt' was undertaken for the Lozane and Dobri Do group. It started from Karagac Park in Peja and ended in the Rugova valley. The theme of the day was 'friendship'.

Raushiq and Papracane children also enjoyed a day out to Rugova involving a whole range of activities such as exploring caves (with an experienced caver), walking along the Rugova valley as well as social activities.



The Rugova Canyon, part of a projected transnational natural area, was a good destination for excursions in the project.

Another simple excursion was quite popular: to a bakery to watch the process of pastry making.

Other Activities

BSF Volunteers and staff were able to visit some homes where contact with the family seemed potentially useful. One home visit with a child who was painfully withdrawn so encouraged the child that she became much more involved and responsive within activities. For the most part there was not a need observed to supply clothing. However, winter coats and blankets were obtained for one family where there was a need.

Conclusions

Children, even many who have very difficult circumstances, showed openness and understanding to increasing their emotional expression, gaining confidence in themselves, and in their ability to

communicate constructively with their peers. These are small but valuable steps for these children.

Their school directors chose many of the children because they are having a difficult time in their schools: disruptive, shy or unhappy. They were all good children - so perhaps there are children in much more difficult situations that the directors prefer not to introduce. Nevertheless, these are children who need and benefit very much from special programs, and whose families and schools benefit as well from their improved self-confidence and happiness.



The Drina river has some lovely places for good outings and excursions with local youth within some of this and other project activities.

Overall, it is also evident that inroads were made in building tolerance between children from different ethnic groups. With support and encouragement, the children are willing to make these steps as well.

The children were offered 'social tools' for life and an increased awareness of themselves, others and their social environment.

¿Cómo puedo colaborar con Balkan Sunflowers?

- Trabajando como voluntario en nuestros proyectos en Kosovo, Albania y Macedonia. Si dispones del tiempo y las circunstancias, pídenos una solicitud.
- Apoyando nuestros proyectos económicamente. Puedes enviarnos un cheque o transferir cualquier cantidad o ingresarla directamente en la cuenta de BSF Euskadi de Bilbao Bizkaia Kutxa:
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- Colaborando con nuestras iniciativas, charlas, eventos, etc. Te mantendremos informado. Y si deseas poner en marcha alguna iniciativa de recaudación de fondos, información, etc., ponte en contacto con nosotros y te ayudaremos.

COMIENZO DEL NUEVO AÑO 2004

Como siempre, al comienzo de un nuevo año realizamos un balance de las actividades y logros del año anterior y, francamente, creemos que ha sido muy positivo.

Hemos logrado una consolidación de nuestra presencia en Euskadi y el Estado, y la estructura de nuestros proyectos en los Balcanes es cada vez mejor.

Igualmente, hemos conseguido que nuestras relaciones con instituciones como la OSCE, UNICEF, ACNUR, UNMIK y otras organizaciones gubernamentales y no gubernamentales, que son tradicionalmente buenas, sean aún mejores y más vigorosas, con acuerdos de cooperación en varios de los proyectos de larga duración, y muy especialmente en proyectos relacionados con minorías étnicas.

En las próximas semanas produciremos nuestra memoria anual y balance económico en los que incluiremos los detalles sobre cantidad y tipo de proyectos, ingresos y gastos, etc., que haremos llegar a todos los que nos lo pidáis.

También queremos recordaros que al iniciar el año, todos los socios de BSF Euskadi deben ingresar su cuota anual de 18 euros. Os recordamos los números de cuenta en los que podéis hacer efectivo vuestra contribución, bien por transferencia o imposición directa.

Bilbao Bizkaia Kutxa (BBK)

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Nuevamente, os pedimos que nos notifiquéis vuestro abono o transferencia, remitiéndonos el justificante de ingreso por correo o fax, o simplemente enviándonos un email.

Asimismo, deseamos recordaros que si vuestros datos personales (dirección, teléfono o email) ha cambiado en este último año, por favor, notificárnoslo también para actualizar nuestros ficheros.

Esperamos que el año 2004 suponga un nuevo año de éxitos en nuestro compromiso solidario. Queremos aumentar el número de proyectos, el número de voluntarios internacionales (especialmente y en lo que nos toca, de voluntarios enviados por BSF Euskadi) y las actividades que llevamos a cabo en Euskadi y el Estado.

Nor dira BSF Euskadi?

BSF Euskadi elkartea 2002 urtetik inskribatua da Eusko Jaurlaritzaren Elkarteen Erroldan, AS/B/09572/2002 zenbakiaz.

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HISTORIA DE UN VOLUNTARIO

Como ejemplo de la labor que realizan los voluntarios internacionales de Balkan Sunflowers, y de cómo se sienten y son las personas que deciden dar de su tiempo y recursos, os ofrecemos las vivencias de una voluntaria que estuvo en nuestros proyectos de Shutka, en Macedonia. Esperamos que os guste y sirva de inspiración para quienes podáis vivir esta experiencia en primera persona.

Shutka - a living and learning experience

By Alana McConnon

Shutka is a community of Roma people in Skopje, Macedonia. Balkan Sunflowers has established projects for the children and youth of the community and Roma refugees from Kosovo who are now living there.

The first project I was involved with was English lessons for about 40 children. By the time my group of international volunteers, arrived the number of English classes doubled and the timetable also included dance and art classes as well as organised games and activities outside in the playground. Children responded as children everywhere do with curiosity and enthusiasm. The presence of a group of international people in their community certainly sparked curiosity and interest.

How to describe Shutka? Quite simply it is a community where old traditions blend with new, where there is individuality as well as a very strong sense of family and community unity. At present there are about 40,000 inhabitants. Living standards vary, as with most communities anywhere, from very comfortable houses with all the modern conveniences to the most basic single-room huts constructed from whatever materials were at hand at the time and often with no running water. There is a colourful street bazaar and produce market, several small independent market shops and a promenade called 'Little Paris' where you just have

to be seen! Several of the residents have spent some time living in other European countries or have relatives living there who come back to Shutka to visit during the summer.

Cultural traditions run strongly throughout the community. There is rarely a day go by without at least one fiesta happening. Everyone, horses and carts, buses, taxis and pedestrians stop as a procession slowly passes through the streets of Shutka. Roma women, often dressed in traditional sparkling costumes, lead the ever present brass bands with their special style of dance that try as I might I could not imitate. Processions occur for every occasion, weddings, circumcisions, birthdays, anniversaries or possibly for no special reason. Whatever the occasion everyone has a great time. The music from the band stays with you long after the procession has finally reached the destination - a playing field or a street blocked by tables of food and drink - there they continue to dance and play music into the night.

To work and live in this community, albeit for a very short time, was invaluable in reminding oneself of the importance of enjoying and celebrating life. On the other hand, however, it was also a sobering experience as it was apparent that many many people live there, as in a lot of places, under very difficult circumstances. The expectations of hard but rewarding work both mentally and physically were met. At times it felt as if it just wasn't enough, although their responses were always so positive and they were so receptive to almost everything that we did with them.

But is it enough to just have fun playing with the kids in their own environment? What was important was to be a positive influence and to give some personal attention where there may not have been any previously. The challenges of being involved in a different culture, that is, of living a different way of life, coping with the cultural and language differences, as well as learning from the culture itself had to be met by us as volunteers.

It was tough at times witnessing different approaches to problem solving. An important reminder about accepting other ways of dealing with problems not necessarily of our own personal choice. This is not unique to living in the Roma community it applies equally to almost any other community in the world. A way to improve this is to show by example alternative approaches.

We were involved in teaching English to several groups of students from four to sixteen years of age and a few adults. But playing with the children outside in the hot summer sun was where we felt we were doing something really positive. We played favourites such as basketball, volleyball and football and we exchanged game ideas. The children very eagerly taught us their favourite games and they learnt games from us that we used to play at school in our home countries. Sometimes we just "hung out" together communicating in a crazy language combination of English-Roma-Macedonian-German and Croatian learning the Capueira, singing songs and laughing lots.

The children had their own code of behaviour in the playground, an instance of stealing, cheating, or aggressive or unfair play was not tolerated. They accepted and respected the introduction of the "everybody plays" rule and also "everyone will get a turn in turn" - no one was excluded from having fun. It was really great to see them implement these rules themselves after a very short time, in particular the children who had initially found it hard to play with the others because of their aggressive behaviour.



A family in front of their house in Shutka.

A pattern emerged after the first week that the majority of the children playing outside were not those who attended the English lessons. Many of the English students had been exposed to either learning a foreign language or English itself when they had lived with their parents in another European country such as Germany or Italy. These children were familiar with the classroom and learning. Most studied very hard to make fantastic progress with their English by the end of the three week period. The children in the playground however were less used to the classroom

environment but they were curious. Faces peered through the window to see what was going on, bodies climbed through the window in some instances to join in. The early morning young children's class became a bit chaotic at times but we all had fun and learned something, the serious students and the 'visitors'.

The last class of the day with the teenagers also changed focus. After successfully inviting some thirteen and fourteen year old boys from the playground into the lessons in the second week it was revealed that their educational experiences were not of the same level as those of children younger than themselves. Most likely due to non attendance at school over the years. On seeing their discomfort and confusion it was decided that they needed some extra attention but how? A visit to a nearby ice cream shop proved a good decision where a poster of South American actress Cassandra was the attraction not the ice cream itself: "Are we going to see Cassandra today?" One of these lessons went along the lines of: "What is it?" (pointing to objects in the shop) "It is a table...It is a chair...It is Cassandra." "Is it a picture?" "No, it is Cassandra." Well you couldn't argue with that could you? Although the 'lessons' would never make up the deficit of missed years of education at least those five boys could feel good about learning something new. Even if the pronunciation of thirty three will be a mystery to them! Therefore the English lessons became a medium for improving confidence and general cognitive skills and the learning of a foreign language a secondary aim.

At the conclusion of our group's three weeks all the students received a certificate marking their achievement in learning English. For some it was their progress which was rewarded, for others it was their motivation and determination to take on something that may have been beyond their immediate capability that was rewarded. In either case there were a lot of very proud students at the certificate ceremony.

As could be expected leaving was hard for us, some special relationships had been developed amongst the volunteers and the children. But how about the children? How were they feeling? How many times had they got to know someone, maybe trust them and then be left alone again? But wait a new bunch of volunteers has just arrived full of energy and commitment to give these children something special. To have fun with them, give them the

opportunity to find out a little more about others outside of the Roma community and Macedonia, and in some small way to give them a sense of empowerment and achievement. It was a living and learning experience on both sides, one that I sincerely hope is repeated many times.

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O por fax al número:

(+34) 943 206907

Os presentamos a continuación un artículo sobre Albania, otro de los países balcánicos donde BSF trabaja. De hecho, Albania fue el primer país donde desarrollamos nuestros proyectos bajo nuestra denominación Balkan Sunflowers, en los campamentos de refugiados creados a consecuencia de la crisis de Kosovo en la primavera de 1999.

Albania: An Overview

This pint-sized, sunny slice of Adriatic coast has been ground down for years by poverty, blood vendettas, illiteracy and too many five year plans. For years boatloads of refugees have fled for a better life elsewhere, but Albania still manages to pack a wild punch of traditional Mediterranean charm and Soviet style efficiency. It is a giddy blend of religions, styles, cultures and landscapes, from Sunni Muslim to Albanian Orthodox, from idyllic beach resort and rocky mountain peak to intensely cultivated field. Relics from one of the longest dictatorships in Eastern Europe rub shoulders with citrus orchards, olive groves and vineyards. Decrepit, Chinese-built factories stand next to breathtaking mosques; ornately decorated orthodox churches face off 'Soviet Brutal' palaces of culture.

Kicked around by the Balkan big boys for millennia and turned upside down by its very own Maoist Cultural Revolution in the 1960s, Albania is now tentatively embracing democracy, the outside world and a few foreign travellers. What won't ever change in Albania, though, are the spectacular forested mountains, the warm Mediterranean sun, and the heart-rendingly blue waters of the Adriatic.

Facts at a Glance

Full country name:	Republic of Albania
Total area:	27,748 sq km (10,822 sq. mi.)
Population:	3.3 million
Capital city:	Tirana (pop.: 400,000)
Ethnic makeup:	Albanians, with Greek, Vlach, Macedonian and Gypsy minorities
Main religions:	Sunni Muslim (70%), Albanian Orthodox (20%), Catholic (10%)
Government:	Republic

Environment

A few thousand square kilometres smaller than Belgium, Albania basks on the south-eastern shore of the Adriatic, just a hop, skip and a jump across the waves from Italy. It shares its southern border with Greece, Macedonia lies to the east, and Serbia and Montenegro and the province of Kosovo lie beyond its northern border. The interior of the country is mostly mountainous and over 36% is forested. Despite its position in Eastern Europe,



A statue of Skenderberg, Albania's national hero.

you know you're in the Mediterranean as the plains are extensively planted with olives, citrus and vineyards. A few large lakes, one of them the deepest in the Balkans (Lake Ohrid, at 294 metres, or 931 feet) stretch along the borders with Serbia and Montenegro, Macedonia and Greece. The Ionian coast, particularly the 'Riviera of Flowers' from

Vlora to Saranda, has some of the most beautiful scenery in the country.

Albania has six National Forests, 24 nature reserves and 2000 nature monuments, but the protection for all of these areas is mainly on paper. All parks are under threat from human activities such as hunting and wood cutting, and Albania simply does not have the money to pay for adequate park management. In 1994 hunting was prohibited, which led to some improvements in protected areas such as the Karavasta Lagoon in the Divjake National Park, the most western nesting site in Europe of the endangered Dalmatian Pelican. Environmental pollution is a major cause for concern; nearly all raw sewage is pumped into the rivers untreated, and instances of leaking effluent and deliberate discharges of chemicals from industry have grown to nightmarish proportions.



A street in Kruje; Albania's position as one of Europe's poorest countries has preserved many beautiful places and lifestyles.

Albania has hot, dry summers and cool, wet winters. Summers along the coast are moderated by sea breezes. Around 40% of the rain falls during the winter months, and in winter the central mountains are very cold as continental air masses move in. Even in the cities winter can be uncomfortably bracing, as most rooms are unheated and tap water can be icy.

History

The Illyrians, considered to be ancestors of today's Albanians, occupied the western Balkans in the 2nd millennium BC, and a convoy of interested warring states followed. The Greeks arrived in the 7th

century BC, set up self-governing colonies and in the main traded peacefully with the Illyrians, who set up their own tribal states by the 4th century BC. The Greeks took over the south, and still have a claim on it today. The expanding Roman Empire came to blows with an expanding Illyrian Empire based around Shkodra in present-day northern Albania, and the Illyrians came off the worse after the Romans sent 200 warships in 228 BC. The Romans spread their rule to the whole of the Balkans by 167 BC, and in the main Illyria enjoyed peace and prosperity, as long as you were not one of the slaves working on the agricultural estates.

When the Romans could not hold on any longer, the Visigoths, Huns, Ostrogoths and Slavs salivating outside city limits struck poses then compared armies during the 5th and 6th centuries AD. In the 11th century, the Byzantines, Bulgarians and Normans squabbled over the region. Serbia, the Turks under the Ottoman Empire and even the Venetians all came and stayed, but in 1479 the Ottomans invaded and ruled until 1912, letting the region languish as the most backward part of Europe. In 1878, the Albanian League at Prizren (in present-day Kosovo, Serbia) began a struggle for autonomy that continues today. The Turkish army squashed the first glimmers of independence in 1881, but further uprisings between 1910 and 1912 culminated in the declaration of independence and the formation of a provincial government led by Ismail Qemali. The London Ambassadors' Conference of 1913, however, put paid to aspirations of independence by ruling that Kosovo was definitely to be part of Serbia.

World War I temporarily wiped away further moves for independence as Albania was occupied by Greece, Serbia, France, Italy and Austria-Hungary in succession. From 1920 to 1939 the country governed itself, but Ahmet Zogu, representing the landed aristocracy, allied with Mussolini's Italy. That move sprang back to hit him in the face when the Italians invaded at the outbreak of World War II. The attitude of the main part of the Albanian population during the war is under dispute, but the communists, under Enver Hoxha, led the resistance against Italy and, after 1943, Germany. The communists consolidated power after the war, and proclaimed the People's Republic of Albania in 1946.

Two years later the country broke off relations with Yugoslavia and allied itself with Stalin's USSR. Britain and the USA backed a few Balkan-style Bay of Pigs operations - landings by right-wing Albanian

émigrés, which nevertheless failed to topple the communists. When Khrushchev demanded submarine bases in 1960, Albania broke off diplomatic relations. After the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, Albania left the Warsaw Pact altogether. It embarked on a self-reliant defence policy that has left the country littered with around 750,000 igloo-shaped concrete bunkers and pillboxes, some of which have since been painted in bright colours. After the break with the USSR in 1960, Albania turned toward China for its inspiration, even embarking on its own cultural revolution in 1966-67. Albania's special relationship with China ended in 1978.



Map of Albania

Hoxha died in 1985, and the new leader, Ramiz Alia, embarked on a liberalisation program and strengthened Albania's ties abroad. By early 1990 the collapse of communism in most of Eastern Europe had created a sense of expectation in Albania, and after student demonstrations in December the government agreed to allow opposition parties to exist. The communists won the 1991 elections, but by mid-May a general strike forced the ruling Socialist Party into a coalition with the opposition Democrats. Central economic planning was now on the skids, factories ceased production and the food distribution network broke down. By late 1991 the country faced chaos, and

food riots broke out in December. The EU, fearful of a refugee crisis, stepped up economic aid, and the Italian army set up a large military base south of Durrës to supervise food shipments.

Economic Profile	
GDP:	US\$4.4 billion
GDP per head:	US\$1290
Inflation:	17.4%
Industries:	Cement, chemicals, food processing, hydropower, mining, oil, textiles and clothing, timber
Major partners:	European Union, Macedonia, USA

The 1992 elections ended 47 years of communist rule, and the Democratic Party wasted no time in launching a witch hunt against former communists and party officials. By 1993, Amnesty International was prompted to condemn the increasing human rights violations in the country. Albania signed a military agreement with Turkey in 1992 and joined the Islamic Conference Association in a move to counter Greek territorial claims to southern Albania (which the Greeks call Northern Epiros). The mid to late 90s saw quick changes in prime ministers and presidents as the new democracy stumbled and nearly collapsed, and boatloads of refugees have sporadically fled and washed up on Italy's beaches as the political climate at home became sticky. Successive leaders consistently denounced Serbian repression of the ethnic Albanian majority in Kosovo.

Ideario de BSF

Balkan Sunflowers envía voluntarios procedentes de todo el mundo a trabajar como vecinos y amigos en la reconstrucción y recuperación sociales. Al organizar actividades sociales y culturales fomentamos el entendimiento, la transformación no violenta de los conflictos y la riqueza vital y cultural de la región balcánica.

Los voluntarios, mediante su trabajo por unas pocas semanas o muchos meses, contribuyen sus habilidades, experiencia y entusiasmo a sociedades exhaustas por el conflicto, y los voluntarios mismos se enriquecen al implicarse en el desarrollo comunitario.

Las actividades de Balkan Sunflowers se dirigen a la consecución de resultados concretos y a animar y preparar a los participantes y a sus comunidades para la continuación de los programas. Mediante los juegos, el arte, los deportes, el trabajo y la celebración de eventos, en respuesta altruista a experiencias traumáticas, servimos a las comunidades en las que vivimos.