



EVERYDAY
PEACE INDICATORS



Seeing peace in everyday life through Mostarians' eyes



Three decades after experiencing war, what do ordinary Mostarians think about peace in their city and neighborhoods? How do they assess the quality of their life together today? As research for the project *Mostar – Spaces to Activate and Rejuvenate*, Everyday Peace Indicators (EPI) worked with approximately 350 people in seven Mostar communities (*mjesne zajednice*) to get a detailed picture of what life together and peace is like for residents. Using women's, men's and youth focus groups and community voting, EPI gathered thousands of basic, everyday indicators of peaceful life together.

Instead of relying on statistics from national governments, international organizations or international experts, we now have the specific experiences, insights and needs of Mostarians concerning Mostarians' everyday life. Through the analysis of these indicators, we learned what is missing and what is working well in Mostar from these seven, representative urban and peri-urban communities from all parts of the city.

These specific yet crucial elements of peace are often missed in high-level discussions, which often fail to acknowledge the everyday needs of people and neighbourhoods.

EPI asked Mostarians what a peaceful life together looks like

KEY OBSERVATIONS

- **Mostarians were united in their desire for improving the quality of life in Mostar.**

Residents' concerns for peace tend to be everyday life topics related to *wellbeing and lifestyle* rather than principally security and political issues.

For example, city-wide and neighbourhood *infrastructure* and *public space* were two common priorities in all communities; e.g. rebuilding the ruins from the war, better handling of trash, more streetlighting, more sports facilities, better rain drainage, resolving parking issues.

However, politics and identity do seem to shape how people view these development issues: e.g. 'There is a common library on both sides of Mostar'; 'Both areas of the city are constructed equally'. These and other indicators suggest that development for a higher quality of life may be key to understanding how Mostar's communities perceive themselves and their social relations.

- **Mostarians voiced a wide variety of opinions about a peaceful life together.** Residents provided a vibrant scope of perspectives with differences not essentially based on geography or nationality.

Rather, indicators of peace were often very localized to the neighbourhood level. An increase in life together might look like: no more plastic bags 'decorating' the trees along the Radobolje river in **Podhum**; no longer seeing abandoned animals at Bunica in **Blagaj**; having a pool in **Potoci**; **Cim** residents caring for its basilica; lighting installed at **Bulevar's** 'circle'; young people hanging out at Nina's café in **Bijeli Brijeg**; and a new clinic opening in **Zalik**.

Additionally, men, women and youth across all seven communities prioritized different issues.

■ **Men** seemed particularly concerned with the management of *public space* and *infrastructure* as it is connected to *governance*, e.g. the new Bijeli Brijeg playground would not be quickly destroyed; there would be a drain for rainwater on the highway in Donji Zalik; the Cim intersection, Srnrčenjaci, is paved.

■ For **women** *health*, *infrastructure* and *business* were not only important to peace but also sometimes overlapping concerns: e.g. Cernica residents would have access to the nearby clinic on Bulevar, an irrigation system would be installed for Potoci agriculture, and the privileging of party members for employment would stop.

■ **Youth** perceptions differed dramatically from adults in their same neighbourhoods. Their concerns were related to: their own experiences as *youth*, to *sport*, to the *legacies of war*, and to *integration/acceptance*. Indicators of a peaceful life together included having many free educational, cultural youth centers like the American Corner; an open and free football field in Zalik; the disappearance of Herceg-Bosna flags around the city; disregard for a person's name (identity); the example of increased socializing during COVID's curfew and a widespread youth-initiated Instagram group helping those in need.

• **Despite their many differences, Mostarians were generally opposed to a divided city.** From Mostar's centre to the periphery, residents expressed the belief that their community does not benefit from ethnic division. Instead, they highlighted daily signs of cooperation (e.g. everyone helping each other), respect (e.g. people greeting each other with a smile), and equal treatment between

different groups (e.g. parents not raising children to hate others) as crucial to life together. Regular people look toward *individuals* (e.g. one man initiating and organizing cleanup of Trimuša park), *groups* (e.g. neighbourhood children organizing to build a football field and playground together), and the *local government* (e.g. young people were given a financial incentive for building stairs to the Neretva river) to create more integration and acceptance in Mostar.

Mostar residents cared greatly for issues dealing with *political coexistence and acceptance* (e.g. Mostarians feeling welcome in every part of town) and referring to actions and expressions of *social integration* (e.g. outsiders not asking Mostarians which side of the city they live on). One Bosniak entrepreneur expressed the detriment of division in economic terms as well: 'Bosniaks do not benefit if 100,000 Croats emigrate to Germany'; this negatively affects business in general.

Perhaps the biggest lesson from EPI's research is that perceptions of life together and peace in Mostar seem not primarily a question of violence, crime or national movements against residents of other ethnicities, but rather about ordinary topics of everyday life. These are concrete and aligned with real needs and visions for the city as well as those of particular local communities. EPI's observations also provide policy makers with a more nuanced vision of the pressing issues facing a selection of Mostar neighborhoods. Instead of treating peace as an abstract concept which can only be addressed at the governmental level, EPI's research gives concrete suggestions for the creation of a peaceful life together among the different communities in Mostar.

Mostar – Spaces to Activate and Rejuvenate is a project financed by the UK government and coordinated by People in Need (PIN), a Czech non-profit, non-governmental organization providing humanitarian and development aid in 30+ countries. Four organizations are equal partners in the consortium: Everyday Peace Indicators, the Youth Cultural Centre Abrašević, Local Democracy Agency Mostar and Nešto više.



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