WAR DIVIDES, MUSIC CONNECTS

Musicians without Borders - Annual Report 2013
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Introduction

Thoughts on Music, Empathy and Intercultural Dialogue
Principles behind the work and vision of Musicians without Borders

Music’s capacity to create empathy is at the heart of Musicians without Borders’ vision and work. As musicians, we know from experience what recent research has begun to explore and explain: that sharing music reduces aggression, fear and anxiety, and increases people’s ability to connect and to heal. Long-haired youths in a heavy metal garage band, children using sticks to tap rhythms together in a refugee camp or kindergarten, old women sitting in a circle, remembering a lost lullaby, or torture survivors writing their stories in songs – all can find connection, comfort and community in making music together. The music speaks to our common human sense of being and allows us to share it with others and feel it radiating back to us.

However, entering that musical space with people who have survived the trauma of war and violent conflict, or who grow up living in its shadow, requires a combination of skills, intuition and empathy on the part of the practitioners. A fine-tuned empathic capacity, along with highly developed musical, didactical and communication skills, is an essential quality for every Musicians without Borders’ trainer.

The capacity for empathy is perhaps difficult to define or measure, but it is easy to recognize. In the context of our work, the capacity for empathy may be recognized in practice by:

- A trainer’s ability to honor all participants, whatever their level of musical competence, and to stimulate and value musical progress – both of the group and its individual members – based not on arbitrary standards, but on the group or individual’s willingness to enter the shared musical space and move creatively within it;
- A trainer’s sensitivity to the overlapping dynamics of the participants’ context – such as traumatic past experiences, physical or psychological health issues, domestic or community problems, stress or depression – that may influence participants’ ability to engage in the process. Trainers must be prepared for complications and be able to navigate the complexities they encounter or intuit when not completely known or understood. This requires a high degree of flexibility and improvisational talent on the part of the trainer;
- A trainer’s sense for the right moment to ‘step back and let them shine their own light’, the ability to be a leader who encourages leadership and guides the process of empowerment, whose ego is sufficiently satisfied by the success of his/her teaching, rather than needing to be the central point of attention.

For Musicians without Borders, empathic sensitivity is also critical to the organizational and management functions behind the actual music-making, as reflected, for example, in:

- A manager’s ability to develop working relationships with local counterparts, based on mutual respect, taking into account differences in styles of leadership, communication and organization;
- A manager’s ability to listen attentively, to hear and understand the interests and wishes of the partner(s), and to (help) articulate the common ground of both/all partners thus making visible the added value for all in a collaboration while at the same time assuring that projects remain ‘on mission’;
- The ability of all Musicians without Borders staff, managers and trainers to communicate and cooperate within a non-linear organizational structure, with function and responsibility based
on competences and collaboration; ideally, this allows MwB simultaneously to function as an organization, a community and a network.

**Intercultural Dialogue- or not?**

Intercultural dialogue has become a common mantra of organizations and initiatives working in conflict and post-conflict regions. Musicians without Borders takes a different approach. While we often work in places that have been divided along ‘ethnic’ or ‘cultural’ lines, ‘intercultural dialogue’, as it is usually understood, is not part of our practice. The idea of ‘intercultural dialogue’ assumes and implies that the problems of post-war communities have their roots in cultural differences and can be addressed by bringing representatives of the different ‘cultures’ into contact and engaging them in dialogue – conversation – with each other. Musicians without Borders grounds its approach to peace-building in the conviction that, while cultural differences often come to play a role in war and armed conflict, they are more often the tools of political or economic forces than the real root of the conflict. Local and/or global political and economic interests are almost always involved and hidden agendas frequently manipulate both the real and contrived differences between people to incite the wars that lead to power or land grabs, at the expense of ordinary people of any and all cultural backgrounds.

In most regions where MwB works, people of different cultural backgrounds have, throughout most of their history, devised mechanisms to deal with their differences and have lived, more or less peacefully, as neighbors on shared space. A war which becomes defined along ethnic or cultural lines means that people of mixed families are forced either to choose one ‘ethnicity’ or to flee; that geographical territory once shared becomes divided into pieces identified with one or the other group, forcing members of the minority group to leave their homes and move to ‘the other side’; and that those who never saw themselves as members of one particular ‘ethnic group’ lose their voices within the society.

By the time the violence ends, of course, most people have become divided along those ‘cultural’ lines, whether they chose to be or not. So finding ways to re-connect across those divides is essential to any long-term peace-building process. But, for it to be meaningful, that process of re-connection must also address common needs, such as breaking out of post-war isolation, making up for lost time in skills learning and education, and providing handles for professional development and career aspirations.

To support processes of re-connection without identifying people by ethnic or cultural labels, Musicians without Borders works to create a neutral musical space in which participants can both identify (themselves) and relate (to each other) primarily as musicians. We take their talents, passions and potentials seriously and offer them real chances for musical growth and creative development, contact and connection to other young musicians (often through social media) and, where possible, a path to employment. We then trust the music to do its work and leave it to them to choose whether, and how, to meet ‘the other’ outside the musical space. What we invariably see is friendships emerging, along with empowerment and a feeling of relief at not being primarily defined by ethnicity or culture. In fact, these same principles apply to our projects which do not bring people of different backgrounds together, but rather work to build resilience and a culture of nonviolence and participation for youth and children suffering from the effects of conflict in their own ‘monocultural’ communities.
It is this fine line of balancing between the real divides that have been created or greatly exacerbated by war, and the ability to tap into shared passions and creativities that is definitive of Musicians without Borders’ vision and program. That music can provide the space in which this fine line can be navigated, has everything to do with its quality of creating a place of empathy.

Laura Hassler, Director
Community Music Programs

1.1 Palestine Community Music (Palestine)

2013 was a year for consolidation, capacity building and anchoring the music and nonviolence projects in the many Palestinian communities in which we are now active. As the project’s scope has expanded to reach many more target groups, partners decided in the course of the year to change its name from ‘Music Bus goes Middle East’ to ‘Palestine Community Music’ to reflect the impact on diverse target groups on the West Bank.

A new focus was the training of assistant trainers. Although almost none of MwB’s trainees on the West Bank has any formal musical background, a number of them have become talented and inspired workshop leaders, integrating Musicians without Borders’ community music approach, the nonviolence leadership training from Holy Land Trust, and their own music preferences and knowledge of the local culture. The most talented and dedicated of these trainees were chosen to follow extra training as trainers’ assistants.

Under supervision of Project Manager Fabienne van Eck and Field Coordinator Ahmad Al Azzeh, the trainees organized activities for huge numbers of children and youth, while the Music and Nonviolence training program also led to new initiatives. By the end of 2013, more than 100 Palestinian workshop leaders had been trained; they now bring regular music activities to more than 5000 West Bank children in refugee camps, isolated villages, cancer hospitals, schools, orphanages and centers for children with special needs. The project has expanded to include a structural rap teaching, performing and recording program, samba drum groups for nonviolent vigils and demonstrations, and special new music projects for deaf youth.

Music and Nonviolence Leadership training

The project’s success is based on its unique combination of music training with principles of nonviolence leadership and communication. Partner Holy Land Trust provided training in nonviolence leadership for 27 young people, from Beit Sahur refugee camp and Ghirass Cultural Center, who had previously received samba or rap music training. We also helped international volunteers who use music in their work with children to gain more insights into community music methods and practical tools for including all children and using music specifically to support children’s social and emotional development. When a music training session is organized, participants now come from the entire West Bank to attend.

Musicians without Borders’ workshop leader training program (Music and Nonviolence) partnered with Ghirass Cultural Center and the Ministry of Education, allowing us to teach 15 kindergarten teachers and 5 staff members from the Ghirass Cultural Center. These trainings were followed up and our trainers witnessed the integration of their activities into the different curricula, which will ensure that many children will be reached.
year after year. More than 1500 children took part in the supervised music workshops.

**Training Assistant Music Trainers**

In order to respond to the requests for more Music Workshop Leader trainings and further anchor the project in the community, 14 assistants have been trained, including two rappers and three deaf women. This training also gave some of them access to job opportunities, thanks to their newly acquired skills. Some trainees still need additional training in singing and didactic skills.

**Rap for Social Change**

The rap activities were further embedded in the project. For one series of rap workshops, we created a group made up exclusively of girls from the refugee camps, after they had expressed their eagerness and interest in rap. The specific inclusion of girls in the traditionally ‘boys’ world’ of rap music created a sense of fellowship among the youth and inspired two other rap workshop leaders to include more girls in subsequent activities. After these workshops, the group that composed the best song won the chance to record at the Dheisheh camp's Studio Haifa sound studio, built in 2012 with the support from the Netherlands Representative Office.

In November, the rap workshop leaders attended a series of trainings from the English hip-hop activist Philip Wright. In December, the German rapper Danny Fresh visited Studio Haifa to give a workshop to our leaders and their most talented students, resulting in the creation of a new song. They also learned how to use traditional instruments for beat-making and other production skills. We organized two community performances for more than 300 people and the rappers recorded another CD, with numerous songs written by the young artists.
Samba Groups

The Samba groups found an all-around trainer in Derek Beckvold, who joined the project team as a volunteer for two months in the fall of 2013. Among other samba groups, one unique ensemble consisted of three young deaf women. The groups continue to practice once or twice a week to strengthen participants’ skills. Some sessions are led by the youth themselves. The participants use their drumming, combining samba rhythms with Middle Eastern rhythms, in local events, including nonviolent demonstrations and summer camp celebrations, attended by hundreds of children and adults.

Deaf, Proud and Musical!

Since the first deaf youth joined the music project, we have witnessed the participation of more deaf youth and children in the various workshops, such as the Samba groups and the rap workshops. Our video created by Palestinian deaf youth and refugee rappers was selected to be shown during a meeting with members of the European Parliament (Human Rights, Culture and other Parliamentary Committees) as well as diverse representatives of the European Commission in Brussels. The video will be featured on a DVD that will be shared among human rights organizations and other relevant entities. Our local team uses the video at presentations and events in Palestinian universities, celebrating people with special needs. Several such events have been attended by the deaf trainees and a sign interpreter (also a MwB trainee). Strengthening children’s resilience and advocating for human rights through music in Palestine have become the two main project goals.

“When we started the trainings, I began to break the borders of fear. When I started to work with people with special needs, I felt this is the right place for me to work. When I give children the music workshops they become very excited and happy and this makes me happy too”

1.2 Rwanda Youth Music (Rwanda)

Rwanda Youth Music was imagined and designed in the summer of 2011 by MwB trainer and project manager, Danny Felsteiner Mekori, and a group of young ‘peer parents’ who participated in the program of partner organisation WE-ACTx for Hope, a medical clinic for HIV/AIDS patients in Kigali. The WE-ACTx peer parents are youth between the ages of 15 and 25. They are trained by WE-ACTx to support young HIV+ children as mentors and ‘big brothers and sisters’. The music training project adds to their skills, so that they can use singing, dancing, trust-building games, instruments, body-percussion and song-writing in their work with the children. We call them ‘youth leaders’.

After the successful results of a pilot project in early 2012, Musicians without Borders continued the training of 25 youth leaders to strengthen their pedagogical, didactic and musical skills to be able to function independently as music workshop leaders. The youth leaders graduated from the training in March 2013. With increasing confidence and expertise, they have used their skills in music workshops, performances and children’s support activities, both at WE-ACTx for Hope, and as workshop leaders employed by MwB in the Rwanda Outreach program, reaching almost 2000 HIV+ children throughout the year.

In 2012, MwB had built relationships with local musicians and forged a partnership with the Kigali Music School, where the youth leaders now receive instrumental, vocal, and songwriting coaching from local Rwandan musicians for 3 hours every week. In August 2013, the project was visited by Monique Udo, founder of Music for Children and active with children’s music projects in Uganda. Monique worked with children in WE-ACTx’s annual summer camp, teaching them to play recorders, and gave saxophone and recorder lessons to the youth leaders and the music teachers at the Kigali Music School. She left behind a dozen recorders and melodicas for the youth leaders to practice and use in teaching the children.

In September 2013, MwB expanded the project’s scope by establishing Rwanda’s first professional music therapy post at the WE-ACTx clinic and integrating it into our project. Chris Nicholson was employed as music therapist. The consultative evaluation of the pilot project revealed that music therapy had proved effective in the clinical care of HIV patients in Rwanda, adding considerable value to patients’ psychosocial treatment.

Chris Nicholson has been involved with project management and has gradually shared responsibilities with Danny Felsteiner while Danny began to take on other crucial responsibilities for Musicians without Borders.
The youth leaders took initiative to start new projects at St Famille, Nyamirambo and Nyacyonga, expanding the project’s impact and bringing on-going benefits to children in a wider geographical area. The youth leaders run weekly music classes for children in guitar, drums, piano, traditional dance and modern dance. The children and youth leaders arrive an hour before regular support activities begin, voluntarily, to take part in the music program. Musicians without Borders currently employs fourteen youth leaders to facilitate workshops while two of them have been trained in coordination, IT skills and reporting, and are now employed to coordinate the program.

1.3 From Woman to Woman (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

This project was designed to introduce music as a therapeutic tool into the healing work of Bosnian partner Snaga Žene (Woman Power). Snaga Žene offers emergency help and medical and psycho-social aid to the many women and children in the Tuzla-Srebrenica region who were victims of the Bosnian war, including hundreds still living in refugee camps. MwB trainers worked with local female musicians and dancers, training them to use music to help address severe, persisting war-trauma. In addition, the project aims to share new tools with Snaga Žene to enhance its own PR and fundraising capacity, using social media and video skills.

Local musician Almerisa Delic (who had worked for 8 years in MwB’s children’s project ‘The Music Bus’) was hired as the project’s local music coordinator. Project manager Iulia Socea provided the PR and fundraising training and film maker Stu Jolley worked with Snaga Žene staff to teach the basics of film making.

Within the Snaga Žene house in Tuzla, Almerisa set up a women’s choir of predominantly older women plus several Snaga Žene staff members, to sing traditional Bosnian Sevdah songs. Once it had acquired enough repertoire, the choir’s mission became to share their music with women less fortunate than they, especially the women in the camps. The choir members began to write their own poems and songs and all looked forward to the twice weekly rehearsals with great anticipation.
“I can hardly wait to go there again on Monday, we practice twice a week, and it makes me feel like... like a butterfly on a flower”

- Participant From Woman to Woman, 2013

During the summer of 2013, MwB trainers Marijke Smedema and Lis Murphy (both of whom had lived and worked in Bosnia and speak the language) provided two week-long training sessions in community music to four young women volunteers at Snaga Žene with backgrounds in folk dance and basic musical abilities. The trainees subsequently accompanied Almerisa on her visits to the refugee camps and to Srebrenica and Potocari, where they assisted her in delivering the music workshops.

Among the beneficiaries, the attitude towards music differed from woman to woman. Some women were at first reluctant to sing since they saw singing as an expression of joy and celebration, something they were not ready to do, while others acknowledged the need for music as a way of expressing their emotions and releasing stress. Therefore, the team introduced the use of simple movement exercises and used small hand percussion instruments, which most of the women were willing to play, slowly moving toward more active use of voice and the body.

Calling itself “Brave Roses”, the women’s choir performed a number of times for women in the camps. The performances encouraged the choir members, who felt that through singing, they could contribute to the well-being of their fellow countrywomen. Their visits became an opportunity to exchange views and stories with the women in the camps, also about their new experiences with music and ways of using music in their daily lives. At the end of the year, the ‘Brave Roses’ led an event for the women from the Ježevac and Viša refugee camps to celebrate the end of the year together with music and dance, leaving everybody involved with renewed hope for the upcoming year.
2 Rock School Program

2.1 Mitrovica Rock School (Kosovo)

The Mitrovica Rock School began in 2008 in the north Kosovo city of Mitrovica, a city rigidly divided along ethnic lines between Serbs and Albanians since the Kosovo war in 1999. The rock school intended to restore Mitrovica’s pre-war tradition as a rock ‘n’ roll town, using a shared passion for music as a vehicle for bridging the divide between youth from the city’s north and south neighborhoods. The project was a joint initiative of local musicians, Musicians without Borders and Community Building Mitrovica (CBM). Musicians without Borders had experience in applying music for post-war reconciliation, while Community Building Mitrovica had a network on both sides of Mitrovica and in-depth knowledge of the city’s political situation. MwB invited the Dutch pop-rock music conservatory, Fontys Rock Academy, as project partner, to introduce the principles of formal rock education in Kosovo. CBM’s Dutch partner IKV-Pax Christi provided needed financial support in the first critical year.

A first plan to establish the school in a single location proved “a bridge too far”: the divide was too rigid and participants from the north side of the town could not be persuaded to cross the main bridge for daily lessons. So instead, the project was restructured: daily lessons were given at separate but connected branches in north and south Mitrovica and students came together for regular summer schools and training weeks in “neutral territory.” Today, the Mitrovica Rock School has a stable student body of some 80 students and provides approximately 50 lesson hours per week, including group lessons and band coaching. Over 350 youth have attended the school, many for several years, and some have risen from beginners to seniors and assistant teachers. The school’s system includes possibilities for advancement within the organization: senior students are promoted to work as trainee teachers, two of whom have already become teachers at the school. Other students receive training in sound engineering or are given the opportunity to learn and participate in event management.
Summer Schools and Ambassador Bands

The central interethnic event of the school year is the annual Skopje Summer School in nearby Macedonia, only a few hours bus ride from Mitrovica. In Skopje, students are placed in mixed bands and given the challenge of preparing a program together to present at the Summer School’s closing outdoor rock concert. To date, at least 150 students have played in mixed bands during the Summer Schools. The positive reactions led in 2011 to a pilot project to expand on the success: one long-term mixed band was formed, The Artchitects, comprised of several of the best students from each side of the city. The Artchitects are still together today, having produced a complete album of original songs and been invited for six international tours.

Building on this success, we developed the Ambassador Band Program, aimed at creating more such high-profile mixed bands. Despite the tensions in the city (the program was launched in May 2013, at the time of the breakthrough in the EC-sponsored talks between Belgrade and Pristina and subsequent outbreaks of violence in Mitrovica), nearly all senior students applied to participate, generating four new ethnically mixed bands, all with songs written together across the divide. The Ambassador Band program has now become a fixed element of the school’s curriculum, a phase toward which all senior students work.

“It doesn’t matter if it’s rock, pop, jazz, or house, what matters is GOOD MUSIC. And it’s also very important to have good people to support you and to work with you, like I do at the Mitrovica Rock School.”

- Jelena Zafirovic, singer and guitarist

The Ambassador Band program finally aims to connect young people from former Yugoslavia through rock music, drawing inspiration both from ex-Yugoslav rock and from other European music scenes, to create a truly artistic experience that transcends ethnic labels and definitions. In the multi-step competitive program, interethnic bands play together for a longer period of time, writing and recording their original material throughout the process. Once the band has gone through the first steps of the program, its recordings and photo and video materials are used to secure paid bookings at festivals across Europe, with the Mitrovica Rock School working as the bands’ promoters, to ensure the program’s sustainability beyond the project period.

To ensure fairness and boost motivation, the Ambassador Band Program is structured as a competition, with a tour to Berlin (Germany), the formerly divided city of culture, as the grand prize, but since ‘music has no losers’, all bands win touring and recording prizes, whether regional or international.
Local Ownership

The Mitrovica Rock School was registered as a Kosovo NGO in December 2012, achieving one of the project’s key goals: moving to the status of a local cultural institution, run by local staff. The role of Musicians without Borders has shifted from direct project management to capacity building, coaching, advising and supporting the school’s fundraising efforts. The music-related capacity building was greatly enhanced mid-2013 by the addition of bass player, teacher and band coach Eric Wels as MwB’s Rock School Program Coordinator.

While all local management has been transferred from Musicians without Borders to the local Board of Directors (Director and Assistant), all project partners are represented on the Mitrovica Rock School’s Supervisory Board, which is chaired by Musicians without Borders.

2.2 Mostar Rock School (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Having heard of the Mitrovica Rock School, local rock musicians from Mostar (Bosnia and Herzegovina) approached Musicians without Borders in 2011 with an appeal to help them establish a similar school in the ethnically divided city of Mostar. MwB succeeded in raising enough interest and funding to bring 16 musical youth from Mostar’s two sides, plus 4 local rock musicians, to join the 2012 Skopje Summer School. The young participants returned home so enthused that there was an immediate waiting list for enrollment in the new Mostar Rock School.

After its official opening in October 2012, the Mostar Rock School provided rock music lessons on guitar, bass, drums, keyboard and vocals to a steady student body of approximately 55 students. The school organized many performances in its home base, Pavarotti Music Center, as well as the Abrasovic Youth Center in Mostar, with occasional concerts in surrounding towns, such as Stolac, Nevesinje, Jablanice and Siroki Brijeg – towns that also suffer from ethnic divisions, hatred and intolerance, where youth have virtually no opportunities to explore their talents and creativity or to meet “the other” on neutral territory.
MwB’s methodologies are based on successful working experience at the Mitrovica Rock School, adapted to the situation in Mostar and modified on the basis of the experience gained during the first year of activities. During the course of 2013, it became increasingly clear that, while the local team worked very hard and successfully, its agenda was somewhat different from that of MwB. MwB’s Rock School program model designs a school’s curriculum intentionally to create and/or encourage the musical meeting of youth from different sides of the ethnic divide. This means that the program and curriculum are heavily weighted toward playing in (mixed) bands. The local Mostar team’s preference, however, was to concentrate on skills development, relying on the reputation of the school and its teachers to attract ambitious young musicians from both sides of the city, but not specifically bringing them together in bands. Much effort was put into finding common ground.

Meanwhile, the school’s financial basis, covered by generous grants through July 2013, had weakened, partially due to the shrinking donor base for projects in Bosnia, partially due to questions on the part of some donors regarding the school’s reconciliatory goals. At the close of 2013, Musicians without Borders was preparing a grant application to an EU fund for continuation, while the Mostar Rock School local team was discussing strategies for staying open with greatly reduced funding. The Mostar Rock School has been registered as a local NGO.

3. Community Partnerships

‘Community partnerships’ are projects provided by Musicians without Borders at the request of a legal entity/organization, in which the requesting organization is responsible for providing pre-conditions, logistics and organization, and project funding as mutually agreed and defined by the project budget. Musicians without Borders then provides expertise: training, project planning and development and supervision.

In 2013, Musicians without Borders worked to develop new ‘community partnerships’ with partners working in Northern Ireland and in Tanzania. In addition, MwB was approached by organizations working in the Caucasus, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Timor-Leste, with requests for advice and partnership, to bring music to these regions as a force for reconciliation, healing and community building.

3.1 Singing the Bridge (Derry-Londonderry, Northern Ireland)

Since 2012, Musicians without Borders has been in regular contact with the Northern Irish organization, Cultúrlann Uí Chanáin, based in Derry-Londonderry, a city still scarred by years of armed conflict and historic divides. Cultúrlann, a center for Irish culture and history, sought a partnership with MwB to support its desire to use music to help bridge the divides in the city and
beyond. A first pilot project, called Singing the Bridge, was developed in close collaboration between the two organizations. Singing the Bridge became a 4-day participatory festival around the themes of community music and music therapy. It was held in late May, at locations on both sides of the river that divides Derry’s neighborhoods.

Musicians without Borders sent a team of 13 trainers, performers and staff, and provided workshops and performances throughout the festival. Over 100 local musicians, youth workers, social workers and community organizers participated. Most were from Derry-Londonderry, but others came from other cities and communities throughout Northern Ireland. The festival, in which MwB was able to give many ‘taster’ workshops on community music, songwriting, teaching music without words, samba percussion, body percussion, and improvisation, was a huge success, with high demand from participants at the closing evaluation session, for a sustained program.

In the remaining months of the year, MwB drafted a proposal for a long-term collaboration, while Cultúrlann worked to build local support and raise the necessary funding to continue. By the end of 2013, a project model had been agreed upon with four different components defined: a community music training program for local musicians working with young children in fragile neighborhoods; inclusive youth music projects; a singing program for women from both communities; and a music program for war and violence-traumatized men, including prisoners. We hope to be able to start implementation in the fall of 2014.

4. Musicians without Borders in the UK

Musicians without Borders was established and registered in Manchester in the UK in 2010, as an affiliate of Musicians without Borders, whose main office is located in the Netherlands. Our organizations base their work on the same principles and have been in close contact since the founding of the Manchester office. In 2013, MwB UK Director, Lis Murphy worked as trainer in MwB projects in Palestine and in Bosnia and Herzegovina. A brief report on 2013 MwB UK’s activities from Lis Murphy:

We delivered 110 singing and creative music workshops with refugees, asylum seekers, torture survivors and local people reaching 948 participants and over 20,000 audience members through 81 performances with over 70 partner organisations. We received media coverage reaching a wider audience estimated at 10,000.
4.1 Stone Flowers

Delivered in partnership with Freedom from Torture North-West, we successfully secured continued funding for our song-writing project ‘Stone Flowers’ which supports torture survivors living in North-West England. The group performed original material at the Imperial War Museum North. We received extensive media coverage for the project, including in programs on BBC World Service and articles in ‘Health Counselling and Psychotherapy Magazine’ and ‘Huffington Post’, and coverage on local radio and press.

4.2 Harmonise

The ‘Harmonise’ project supports young refugees and asylum seeker children through sharing songs and stories about the journey of refugees for the children and their classmates, to respond creatively to their experiences through music. The project reached seven primary schools in Greater Manchester, where young people learned songs from around the world in different languages and explored topics with music facilitators from refugee backgrounds. Groups wrote their own songs and joined together to perform songs in 12 different languages in a public performance, playing with acclaimed international music collective Beating Wing.

4.3 Training

We trained and employed four musicians from a refugee background to facilitate music workshops.
5. Organization

From January 2013, the Supervisory and Executive Boards agreed that a small increase in FTEs (full time equivalents) for our central office was not only urgently needed, but also a responsible choice, given the organization’s increasing success in building a broader financial support base. Starting in January, we went from 2.2 to 3.2 full time equivalents, augmented with a number of volunteers and several free-lancers. With Koen Braak’s resignation in June, due to his relocation to Sweden, we brought on a new Financial Administrator with a professional accounting background, Ms. Ilaria Modugno, in the second half of the year.

Managing a huge program with a limited office staff and with several key people geographically widely spread, we defined a working model based on ‘expertise clusters’ for each of the core tasks needed to support Musicians without Borders’ work. Each member of the MwB team is part of several clusters, sometimes as ‘lead’, otherwise as ‘support’. This model is useful in understanding the underlying structure that has evolved among us and makes it possible to cover the many necessary tasks-- strategic development, project management, fundraising, internal and external communications, event organizing, financial and office administration and management – despite our limited capacity.

This working form requires a high degree of autonomy and the willingness to play different roles within different task groups, based not on hierarchy, but on expertise and mutual respect.

We make optimal use of Internet communication- especially Skype and Google tools to facilitate (daily) communication with our project managers, other team members and partner organizations located around the world (at the moment of writing, personnel and partners are based in Amsterdam, Eindhoven, Belgrade, Tuzla, Mitrovica, Manchester, Vienna, Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Derry-Londonderry and Kigali). While our organizational chart defines the final decision-making responsibilities, the cluster chart describes the actual daily functioning of an organization using its best resources as creatively as possible.

While our team’s efficiency has increased, so has the workload. We note, at year’s end, the reliance of our central office on the generous donation of time and skills by volunteers, and on the extraordinary hard work of our employees; and the need to provide increased support and resources to our dedicated project managers and field staff.
5.1 Communications and Fundraising

We continued in 2013 with the communications strategy set out in 2012: working to increase our on-line presence through social media (Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, Instagram), sending monthly e-newsletters (in English and Dutch), with two targeted fundraising drives per year, including printed direct mailings.

In late May, we launched a new, more user-friendly website and saw an immediate increase in visitors to the site. The website is constructed in a way that MwB project managers can easily add and edit information on their projects, resulting in more frequent updates and a much more lively site. Its enhanced functionality for donations has also resulted in more on-line donations and many new contributors from around the world.

Several large private donations helped raise our income significantly, including an unexpected legacy and a donation from an internal ‘sample sale’ at the Nike European headquarters and several generous gifts from family funds and private foundations.

While our general fundraising improved, the results of applications for grants to support specific project budgets were less positive than hoped and predicted. We attribute this to a number of factors, including: the shrinking donor community in several of the project regions (e.g. Bosnia, Rwanda), while both the need and the competition continue undiminished; policy changes in a number of previous donor countries (e.g. the Netherlands), where changes in government have resulted in drastic cut-backs in funding for development, peace-building and culture; and the overload on both our project management staff, who not only lead and coordinate the projects, but also lead the fundraising work needed to sustain them, as well as our office staff supporting them.

The shortfall in project income was largely compensated by our more successful general fundraising.

5.2 Partnership agreement with MwB UK

In an attempt to resolve the complications of there being two legally separate organizations under the name Musicians without Borders, a trial partnership agreement was drafted and agreed upon by Musicians without Borders (UK registered) and Musicians without Borders (International Office, Amsterdam) to collaborate in developing a cohesive marketing, communications and fundraising strategy. The two organisations agreed to share a combined website, with options for localized information and news. Agreements were also made regarding data protection and ownership. The one-year trial agreement is subject to review in August 2014.

5.3 Move to Amsterdam

In mid-2013 we were informed that the IFOR (International Fellowship of Reconciliation), in whose building our offices had been located for 14 years, would be moving from the Netherlands and selling its building. We had resolved several years ago to move
to Amsterdam at some point, for the proximity to other international and cultural organizations and networks. A lengthy and exhaustive search for suitable and affordable space ended with the choice for office space in the Doelenzaal in central Amsterdam, the home of the International Dance Theater and several socially engaged arts projects and organizations, such as the Dancing on the Edge Festival. On December 30, we bid our old office in Alkmaar farewell and moved happily into our new lodgings.

5.4 New Chair Supervisory Board

After 8 years of dedicated service, José van Hussen resigned at the end of the year as chair of the Supervisory Board of Musicians without Borders. The remaining Supervisory Board members unanimously chose Vice-Chair Johan Dorrestein to replace her, and were delighted with his acceptance. Musicians without Borders extended its heartfelt thanks to José at its organizational strategy meeting on December 28, 2013.
6. Musicians without Borders - The People

Supervisory Board
José van Hussen - Chair
Johan Dorrestein - Vice Chair
Jaap Wortel - Treasurer
Ian Ritchie
Fiona Campbell
André Buitenhuis
Lynn Kaplanian-Buller

Executive Board and Director
Laura Hassler

Head Office, Amsterdam
Laura Hassler - Director, organizational strategy and development, projects/ program supervision
Koen Braak - (January-June 2013) - Project support, office and financial administration
Ilaria Modugno - (from June 2013) Financial administrator
Syta Fokkema - Development and outreach, project fundraising, grant writing, communications
Srdan Kekanovic - Office support, outreach (events)
Ineke Braak - Volunteer Office Manager/ Program and outreach support

Sophie Dorsman - Volunteer donor relations
Meagan Hughes - Volunteer fundraising/ international correspondence
Emily Den - Volunteer fundraising/ website editing
Irma Kort - Volunteer, Instrument Fund
Michael Austin - Consultant Communications, Fundraising
Laura Visser - Graphic design, house style, printed materials, websites
Danny Felsteiner Mekori - IT support, website design and maintenance

Project Management/ Regional Representation
Wendy Hassler-forest - Program Manager, MwB Rock School Program/ SEE Representative
Eric Wels - Program Coordinator Mitrovica and Mostar Rock School
Fabienne van Eck - Project Manager Palestine Community Music, Music Coach
Danny Felsteiner - Project Manager Rwanda Youth Music
Iulia Socea - Project Manager From Woman to Woman

Local Management
Dafina Kosova - Mitrovica Rock School, Director
Aleksandar Sovrlic - Mitrovica Rock School, Fundraising and Communications Officer
Orhan Maslo - Mostar Rock School, Local Project Manager
 Jasmina Kazazic - Mostar Rock School, Project Administrator
Ahmad al Azeh - Palestine Community Music, Field Coordinator
Almerisa Delic - From Woman to Woman, Music Coordinator
Chris Nicholson - Rwanda Youth Music, Music therapist, co-manager
Nadine Mutoni - Rwanda Youth Music, Logistics/Coordination/Outreach program
Dossa Moubarack - Rwanda Youth Music, Logistics/Coordination/Music leadership training
Augustin Habaimana - Rwanda Youth Music, Logistics/Coordination/Music leadership training
Emile Nshimiyimana - Rwanda Youth Music, Logistics/Coordination/Music leadership training

Musicians without Borders UK Office, Manchester
Lis Murphy - Artistic Director
Ralph Kennedy - (Jan. - Oct.) - Business Director, development
Nick Jones - (from November) - Business Director, development

Trainers
Marijke Smedema - music, didactics, theory, dance
Otto de Jong - music teaching, singing, body percussion, didactics
Sherwin Kirindongo - percussion, body percussion
Hanno Thomassen - community music, didactics, improvisation
Vincenta Besteman - dance/ movement therapy
Mark Rietema - samba percussion
Chris Nicholson - music therapy
Chris Colleye - percussion, body percussion
Joey Blake - vocals
Lis Murphy - vocals, children’s workshops, songwriting
Danny Felsteiner Mekori - music & dialogue, songwriting
Fabienne van Eck - music pedagogy, children’s workshops
Ruud Borgers - rock music, band coaching
Eric Wels - rock music, didactics, band coaching
Iulia Socea - PR/ social media, fundraising
Partners and Donors

Palestine Community Music

Partner:
Holy Land Trust, Bethlehem - Palestine

Donors:
SKN (Dutch Children’s Stamp Foundation)
Dutch Mennonite World Work Foundation
Prelude Foundation
British Shalom Salam Trust
Stichting IIC (Internationale Informatie en Communicatie)
Stichting Het Solidariteitsfonds
Stichting Talliq
Musicians Against Nuclear Arms
Rotary Club of Rancho Cotati

Rwanda Youth Music

Partners:
WeAct for Hope Clinic - Kigali, Rwanda
Oakdale Kigali Music School

Donors:
Netherlands Embassy to Rwanda
Nolte Stichting
FEMI Foundation

Rotary Australia
Alta Mane Foundation
The Edward Starr Charitable Trust
Pink Umbrella Foundation
Triodos Foundation
Rotary Bergen

From Woman to Woman

Partner:
Snaga Žene, Tuzla region – Bosnia and Herzegovina

Donors:
Transpetrol Foundation
Netherlands Embassy to Bosnia and Herzegovina
Cultures of Resistance Foundation

Mitrovica Rock School

Partners:
Community Building Mitrovica - Mitrovica, Kosovo
Fontys Rockacademie - Tilburg, the Netherlands

Donors:
Royal Norwegian Embassy to Kosovo
United States Embassy to Kosovo
Robert Bosch Stiftung
Swiss Cooperation Office in Kosovo
Luxemburg Caritas
Austrian Development Cooperation
**Mostar Rock School**

*Partners:*
Pavarotti Music Centre - Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina  
Fontys Rockacademie - Tilburg, the Netherlands

*Donors:*
Royal Norwegian Embassy to Bosnia and Herzegovina  
US Embassy to Bosnia and Herzegovina  
Stability Pact Fund through the German Embassy to Bosnia and Herzegovina  
Musicians without Borders

**Singing the Bridge**

*Partner & Donor:*
Cultúrlann Uí Chanáin - Derry-Londonderry, Northern Ireland
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